Canadian Arctic
Northwest Passage
20th August to 1st September 2019 (13 days)

The Northwest Passage is one of the world’s most historic and elusive sea routes, linking the vast Atlantic and Pacific Oceans through Canada’s High Arctic area. This cruise will see us sail in comfort through the same regions first explored by the intrepid Barrow, Parry and Franklin so many years ago. Herds of Walrus, rafts of seals, pods of whales, and the mighty Polar Bear are all targets on this fantastic historical and wildlife extravaganza. The Canadian Arctic is also host to a number of special birds, including the immaculate Ivory Gull, lovely King Eider, Snow Goose and Gyrfalcon, to name just a handful, while the scenery is simply spectacular!

In addition, there is plenty of historical interest and the stories of the ill-fated expedition by Sir John Franklin more than 150 years ago are central to our journey. Franklin made his last heroic foray into the Arctic in 1845 with two ships and 129 men, never to be heard from again. We visit the last known wintering site of his ships and other sites along the way where traces of the expedition have been found. For lovers of remote expedition cruising with a sense of adventure, this journey has it all!
THE TOUR AT A GLANCE...

THE ITINERARY

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ROUTE MAP

[Map showing the Northwest Passage itinerary with locations such as Edmonton, Cambridge Bay, Victory Point, Conningham Bay, Fort Ross, Beechey Island, Lancaster Sound, Mittimatalik, Gibb’s Fjord, Baffin Bay, Jacobshavn Icefjord, Sisimiut, Sondre Stromfjord, and Kangerlussuaq.]
THE TOUR IN DETAIL...

Day 1: Edmonton, Alberta to Cambridge Bay, Nunavut. We depart Edmonton this morning on our special charter flight to Cambridge Bay, a remote outpost above the Arctic Circle. Located on the southern shores of Victoria Island, today it is a centre for hunting, trapping and fishing. Upon arrival, we will enjoy a walking tour of the town and board our expedition ship, the Akademik Ioffe in the afternoon. After settling into our cabins and exploring the ship, we meet our expedition team and fellow passengers. Excitement is in the air as we enjoy a welcome cocktail and cast off, bound for the fabled Northwest Passage.

Day 2: Victory Point, King William Island. As we chart a course into the Northwest Passage, our on-board presentation series begins, and the legend of Sir John Franklin and his ‘lost expedition’ will begin to unravel. The mystery of what happened to Franklin was partially solved in September 2014, when a joint Parks Canada and Royal Canadian Geographic Society expedition, found the long lost Franklin shipwreck, HMS Erebus in the Victoria Strait. One Ocean Expeditions played a pivotal role in the search by carrying underwater search equipment on our ship as well as scientists, historians, researchers, dignitaries and sponsors of this history-defining mission. We aim to visit Victory Point, travelling very near the actual location of the wreck of HMS Erebus, all the while learning about the quest for exploration that eventually opened up the Arctic. Experts and marine archaeologists all agree, the second of Franklin’s lost ships, HMS Terror is likely to be in this vicinity. There is great optimism that it will also be found when ice conditions permit the search to resume.

Day 3: Conningham Bay. Having emerged from the exciting transit of the Bellot Strait, we then cross the broad Victoria Strait and arrive at Conningham Bay on the eastern shore of Prince Edward Island. Here, in the heart of the Northwest Passage, is perhaps one of the most remarkable wildlife sites in the Arctic and a known hotspot for Polar Bears. Beluga whales may come to the shallow inlet to rub their white skins against the gravel bottom - an annual and incredible ritual. What’s more, often when the tide recedes, the whales become trapped in the shallows, making them easy prey for the Polar Bear. It’s not uncommon to find mothers and their cubs here in...
sizeable numbers, while the skeletons of Belugas litter the shore – a grim testament to the ebb and flow of life in the wild Arctic.

**Day 4: Fort Ross and Bellot Strait.** If ice conditions permit, we will sail south through Prince Regent Inlet and approach the eastern end of the Bellot Strait. Fort Ross, located at the southern end of Somerset Island, is a former Hudson’s Bay Company fur trading outpost and ancient archaeological sites nearby tell an amazing story of over a thousand years of habitation at this site by the Inuit and their predecessors.

Upon leaving Fort Ross, we will attempt the passage of the Bellot Strait, entering at slack water, if possible, in order to avoid a current that can be over 7 knots during the peak flow. The mixing of waters in this strait provides an ample food source for marine mammals and we will again keep our eyes peeled for sightings of Bowhead Whale, Harp and Bearded Seals (with their seemingly nervous and doleful expressions) and even Polar Bear as we sail through. On the bird front, this area offers good chances for Thayer’s Gull, which breeds here during the summer months. Upon exiting the Bellot Strait, we will turn south in Victoria Strait, taking a bearing for King William Island.

**Day 5: Beechey Island.** Beechey Island holds great historic importance on our journey through the Northwest Passage. It is here that Sir John Franklin’s ill-fated expedition spent its last ‘comfortable’ winter in 1845 before disappearing into the icy vastness, sparking an incredible series of search expeditions that lasted almost three decades. A trip ashore at Beechey Island to visit the grave markers on a remote windswept beach gives one pause to wonder on the bravery (or foolhardiness) of these pioneering explorers, as they sought a way through the barren, frozen landscape. This is a thrilling location for history buffs and for many it will be the defining moment of our expedition.

The island is also great for wildlife, with excellent chances for Polar Bear, which prey on the large concentrations of Harp Seal that reside here, while avian highlights include many thousands of fulmars, kittiwakes and Black Guillemot, as well as chances for Thick-billed Murre and Gyrfalcon, the latter of which breeds on the island. Belugas are regular in the surrounding waters; while Arctic Hare can be seen even from the ship itself.

**Day 6: Lancaster Sound and Devon Island.** Lancaster Sound is in many ways the wildlife ‘super-highway’ of the Arctic. A massive
outlet for water from the high Arctic Archipelago, there is a mixing of water here that is exceptionally rich in nutrients. Coupled with areas of open water for much of the year, Lancaster Sound is home to a diversity and concentration of wildlife that can be staggering, especially given the sparseness of the region.

If conditions are right, we could find Beluga to be plentiful, whilst we also have chances for extraordinary Narwhal, unique denizens of the Arctic seas with incredible spiral tusks that can reach an astonishing 10 feet (three metres) in length!

Another cetacean that occurs in smaller numbers is the Bowhead Whale. These huge creatures sport the longest baleen of all the world’s whales in their seemingly oversized heads, which account for about a third of the animal’s total length! Amazingly, Bowhead Whales consume around 2 tonnes (1800 kg) of food in the form of tiny planktonic creatures every day! This they sieve out of the water with baleens that measure up to 14 feet (4.3m) in length. These incredible structures are comprised of a series of overlapping plates consisting of a fingernail-like material called keratin, which they then use to trap their prey while swimming with their mouths wide open in the region’s plankton-rich waters.

Walrus numbers here are now recovering after they were heavily hunted in the past. Herds of these huge and sociable animals, growing up to 10 feet long and weighing up to a tonne, are usually spotted basking on suitable rocks and ice-flows and we can also expect some interesting encounters with these bizarre-looking arctic animals. However, it is the mighty Polar Bear that is our primary target here, and we will keep our eyes peeled for any of these super predators prowling on the edge of the sea ice, around the small islands or on the area’s ice floes. Please note that our stops along the shore of Lancaster Sound will depend very much on ice conditions and weather.

**Day 7: Mittimatalik (Pond Inlet).** We sight the wild north coast of Baffin Island and navigate through Navy Board Inlet. The vast landscapes of Sirmilik National Park surround us as we approach the remote Inuit community of Mittimatalik. We are welcomed ashore and a highlight will be a visit to the Natinnak Centre, where a fascinating cultural exhibit showcases aspects of daily life, culture and history of the people of the north. Inuit carvings, jewellery and other traditional craft are on display and purchasing such items from the local artisans is a great way to support the community. We

![Walrus by James Wakelin](image)

![Willow Ptarmigan by Alasdair Hunter](image)
enjoy meeting the local children of Mittimatalik and marvelling at their athletic abilities as they demonstrate the skills and challenges of traditional Inuit games. The skills and physical agility developed by such games were often those necessary for everyday survival in the harsh Arctic environment.

Day 8: Gibb’s Fjord. This morning we enter the spectacular Gibbs Fjord with towering cliffs all around us. Our expedition ship will seem dwarfed by the giant peaks and snowy glaciers as we cruise slowly along the dark waters. One past guest commented that Gibbs Fjord ‘was like something out of Lord of the Rings’ – and we think you’ll agree!

Day 9: Baffin Bay. Baffin Bay is a huge, ice-clogged body of water between north-east Canada and Greenland that connects the Arctic Ocean to the north and west with the Atlantic Ocean to the south by way of the Davis Strait. Our crossing of Baffin Bay will depend on the extent of ice at the time of our voyage, with our goal being to find the edge of this ice and then follow it around to the coast of Baffin Island. Our time at sea will be determined by the extent of this ice as well as the area’s wildlife. Pilot Whales, numerous species of Arctic seals and various seabirds abound in Baffin Bay, as do icebergs, especially close to the coast.

First inhabited by the Dorset and then Thule and Inuit people, the area was only reached in 1585 by Europeans. While non-navigable for most of the year due to its ice cover and icebergs, a huge polynya (an area of open water surrounded by ice) opens in the summer months near Smith Sound, with the result that the majority of the bay’s aquatic life is concentrated in that region. About 20,000 Belugas live in the bay, of which around 15,000 are concentrated in the North Waters alone. Occurring in pods often numbering up to 30 individuals, these iconic animals are easily identified by their striking white colouration, very rounded shape and lack of a dorsal fin. They have been labelled the
canaries of the sea’ due to the beautiful sounds they make when communicating with one another.

Other abundant animals of the region include Harp, Bearded and Ringed Seals, the latter of which forms the staple meal of the Polar Bear. Interestingly, these Ringed Seals are also occasionally preyed upon by Walruses, a surprising deviation from their typical diet of clams! The bay’s shores are also a habitat for a wide variety of plant and tree species, which in turn harbours wildlife such as Caribou, Arctic Wolf, Arctic Fox, Arctic Hare and lemmings. On the bird front, Little Auk is common; while Snowy Owl, Willow and Rock Ptarmigans, Gyrfalcon and Arctic Redpoll all occur in the surrounding countryside.

**Day 10: Jacobshavn Icefjord.** If one word could sum up today’s experience, it would be ‘ice’. Even our expedition team members, with years spent exploring both the Arctic and Antarctica, will take a moment to reflect on the awesome ice sculptures surrounding the ship in all directions. Truly one of the wonders of the world, the Jacobshavn Icefjord – a UNESCO World Heritage site - spews gigantic tabular icebergs out into Disko Bay. The glacier that creates these stunning monoliths advances at over 40 metres per day, creating around 50 cubic kilometres of ice annually. Our approach to Ilulissat is always dependent on the amount of ice in and around the mouth of the fjord. Our Captain and Officers are skilled ice navigators and our ship has one of the highest ice ratings of any vessel exploring Arctic waters. Ilulissat was the hometown of Knud Rasmussen, one of Greenland’s most famous early explorers. The town is home to a pretty harbour with colourful fishing boats and houses on shore.

**Day 11: Sisimiut.** Today we will explore the fjord behind the town of Sisimiut prior to visiting the town in the afternoon. We hope to meet a few of the traditional Greenlandic kayakers and perhaps even witness a demonstration of “Eskimo Rolling” by one of the former champions of the Greenland Kayaking Championships. For those who do not know, Eskimo rolling is the term used when a capsized kayak is righted without disembarking from the vessel – a very difficult feat for the inexperienced!

**Day 12: Sondre Stromfjord.** One of the world’s longest fjords, Sondre Stromfjord towers above the ship on either side as we sail up it. Our goal is not the end of the fjord, but rather some of the small side fjords along it that we can
zodiac into and explore on foot or by kayak. Major geologic and geomorphologic features will surround us and for those looking for living and breathing excitement, we will hope to find Muskox along the shores of the fjord as well. Soaring high above us will be the white-tailed sea eagle, majestic as always while riding the thermals off the ridges. We expect some fantastic hiking opportunities with hikes geared to all fitness levels.

**Day 13: Kangerlussuaq, Greenland.** Our journey through the Arctic is all but complete as we disembark the ship and make our way to the airport. A charter flight returns us to Canada’s capital city of Ottawa. On arrival, we bid farewell to our fellow passengers and our voyage comes to an end. A transfer is provided from the airport to a central location downtown.

**FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:**
The fee for the **Canadian Arctic - Northwest Passage** expedition is:

- **Triple Share:** US$ 9,995 per person sharing;
- **Twin semi-private:** US$ 11,795 per person sharing;
- **Twin Private:** US$ 13,995 per person sharing;
- **Superior:** US$ 15,295 per person sharing;
- **Shackleton suite:** US$ 16,795 per person sharing;
- **One Ocean suite:** US$ 18,695 per person sharing.

*(Please note: These prices do NOT include the return charter flights from Edmonton to Cambridge Bay and from Kangerlussuaq to Ottawa as mentioned in the itinerary. As a general guideline, we suggest you budget +/- US$1995 per person. We can book these flights on your behalf at no extra charge.)*

**This includes:**
- All meals, coffee and tea throughout the voyage aboard the ship;
- All lodgings, all miscellaneous service taxes and port charges throughout the programme;
- Shore excursions and activities, by Zodiac, as stated in the itinerary;
- Lectures by noted naturalists; and
- All guiding services (including expedition staff and tour leaders).

**The tour fee does not include:**
- ANY airfares, including the return charter flight from Edmonton to Cambridge Bay and from Kangerlussuaq to Ottawa as mentioned in the itinerary (see above);
- Visa fees;
- Arrival and departure taxes;
- All meals ashore;
- Any drinks;
- Tips for ship staff and other gratuities;
- Telephone calls; and
- Laundry and other items of a personal nature.

**IMPORTANT NOTES:**
a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies
listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour). The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.
b) Please also note that a Rockjumper leader may not accompany the expedition unless a minimum of 10 participants are signed up through Rockjumper. In the case that a Rockjumper leader is not on board, the professional expedition staff will take care of all participants signed up through Rockjumper.
c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.
d) As noted above, this itinerary is a guideline only and that the programme is dependent upon prevailing weather and ice conditions at the time as well as wildlife movements.

Special Notes:
This cruise is not specifically focused on either birds or mammals, but is rather an all-encompassing expedition of the Northwest Passage. Mammal speciation, densities and location change from year to year. Hunting is still permitted in the area, meaning some species such as Narwhal can be skittish.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE DETAILS:
This tour does not include ANY airfares (see above). The tour will depart from Edmonton, Canada on day 1. The tour will conclude at Ottawa International Airport after our charter flight back from Kangerlussuaq on day 13.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

FLIGHTS:
Edmonton International Airport (IATA: YEG), Canada is the main port of entry and exit for this tour and is well serviced by many of the world’s airlines. Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.