

EXPEDITION TO THE NORTH POLE

A Martin Charlton 25th Anniversary Expedition

15 days

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Day 1 Arrival in Helsinki, Finland

Today we begin our adventure with a brief visit to Helsinki.

Helsinki is situated right at the arrowhead of a peninsula, surrounded by an archipelago of over 300 islands. Affectionately known as the 'Daughter of the Baltic', this city is perfectly placed between its two great trading cousins, Stockholm and Moscow. In a European perspective, Helsinki is relatively young, yet it is Finland's sixth-oldest town. The Swedes, who extended their empire into Finland in 1155, founded the city of 'Helsingfors' (the name still used by the Swedes) in 1550 when King Gustav Vasa needed a site for a strategic, competitively placed trading port. It languished as a coastal backwater until Imperialist Russia invaded in 1809.

Overnight in Helsinki (city centre).

Included Meal(s): Dinner, if required.

Day 2 Helsinki: City Touring

Our touring today will be done by bus and on foot, taking in the most important and interesting parts of the city.

We will see the historical center and the diplomatic quarters, the Presidential Palace, City Hall, the Parliament building, Finlandia Hall and the Opera House. We will also be sure to stop at Senate Square, the Sibelius Monument and the Temppeliaukio Church (Church of the Rock). Helsinki's relatively young "Old Town" presents us with a tidy tangle of Art Nouveau and Neoclassical streets.

Senate Square is Helsinki's most historic and beautiful square - designed in the early 1800s at the height of the Russian Empire's fascination with the architectural glories of ancient Greece and Rome. The designer was Berlin-born Carl Ludvig Engel, who created other public buildings in St. Petersburg.

Quarried out of the natural bedrock, Temppeliaukio Church is one of Helsinki's highlights. Designed by architects Timo and Tuomo Suomalainen, the church opened in 1969. The interior was excavated and built directly out of solid rock and is bathed in natural light that enters through the glazed dome. The church is used frequently as a concert venue due to its excellent acoustics.

In the Sibelius Park is the world famous composer Jean Sibelius's (1865-1957) monument by Eila Hiltunen. Unveiled in 1967, the Sibelius Monument, resembling organ pipes, is made of welded steel with the bust of the composer on one side. A smaller version of the monument is located at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris.

We will also stop at the Kamppi Chapel, a Lutheran chapel located on the Narinkka Square. Also known as the "Chapel of Silence", this site is intended to be a place to calm down and have a moment of silence in one of the busiest areas in Finland.

Overnight in Helsinki.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Helsinki, Finland - Murmansk, Russia - Expedition Embarkation

Today we say farewell to Helsinki as we board our charter flight to Murmansk, Russia. Once in Murmansk we will embark upon our voyage to the North Pole.

With a population of over 300,000, Murmansk is the largest city in the Arctic and an important Russian naval base and commercial port. Unlike Arkhangelsk on the White Sea, its harbour does not freeze in winter. Murmansk's raison d'être is its port, kept ice-free by comparatively warm Gulf Stream waters. This bustling, rapidly modernising place gets much of its wealth from the cornucopia of minerals found beneath the ground of the Kola Peninsula, the controversial exploitation of natural resources in the Arctic, and close ties with its Scandinavian neighbours.

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Each Arctic summer, the iconic Russian icebreaker 50 Years of Victory comes out of commercial service in the extreme far north, clearing shipping lanes in the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean, to deliver 128 passengers at a time to that pinnacle of bucket list destinations, the geographic North Pole.

***IMPORTANT REMINDER:** Embracing the unexpected is part of the legacy and excitement of expedition travel. When traveling in extremely remote regions, our Expedition Team must allow the sea, the ice and the weather to guide our itinerary. This itinerary is a tentative outline of what you'll experience on this voyage. Please be aware that no specific itinerary can be guaranteed. A measure of flexibility is something all of us must bring to a polar expedition.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 4 Northbound in the Arctic Ocean

Being on board the '50 Years of Victory' and feeling the icebreaker as it crushes through the arctic pack ice is an experience you'll never forget. Just as memorable is boarding the ship's helicopter for a thrilling aerial view over the ship and the expansive Arctic Ocean.

As we head into the ice, two nuclear reactor thrusters generate up to 74,000 horsepower to muscle 50 Years of Victory through ice up to 3 meters thick, which it then crushes under its weight. Over the course of our journey, you'll feel that sheer power and muscle in your bones and soon discover why passengers, on disembarking at the end of their expedition, miss the sensation and sound of the icebreaker. It's an inexplicable, memorable and rare experience that can only be understood through living it!

Expedition of a Lifetime: The 50 Years of Victory is one of only six nuclear-powered Arktika-class icebreakers built for civilian use in Russia. Despite all its burliness, 50 Years of Victory is more comfortable than you'd expect, with amenities that include gourmet meals and cozy cabins. Passengers also get the opportunity to rub shoulders with onboard experts who happily share their knowledge throughout the trip, through one-on-one chats and formal lectures. A marine biologist, ornithologist, historian, glaciologist and geologist all lend context to off-ship excursions and the expedition in general.

You can expect variable sailing conditions this far north. The crossing from Murmansk to the North Pole can take us anywhere from four to six days depending on the ice conditions. This means you'll have plenty of time to get to know your fellow travellers and shipmates, and be treated to lectures and discussions by the Expedition Team while looking out for birdlife. There are also many wonderful amenities on board for you to enjoy.'

Overnight on board 50 Years of Victory.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 5 On Board

We head north through dense, multi-year pack ice to the North Pole, a worthy goal for our amazing ship. Only very few vessels have the power to negotiate the challenging ice of the Arctic Basin. Navigating the polar pack at speeds up to 12 knots, we are enthralled by an ever-changing panorama of wind-polished ice, narrow channels of dark green water and aquamarine pools.

Cabins: The vessel accommodates passengers in first class outside cabins, all with private facilities, large windows, desk, television and other comforts such as hair dryers, tv's and dvd players. Each room has one twin bed and one sofa bed. Rooms are equipped with 220v/50Hz electrical outlets. Laundry service is available for a fee.

Overnight on board 50 Years of Victory.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 6 On Board

Today we continue our journey north.

Overnight on board 50 Years of Victory.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 7 On Board

Today we continue our journey north.

Overnight on board 50 Years of Victory.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 8 90° North - The North Pole!

The anticipation reaches a climax as we arrive at the North Pole! Many travellers find themselves overcome with emotion, while others are in a festive and celebratory mood. Take photos, call your family, wave a flag, and be sure you enjoy your moment at the top! Later, everyone will celebrate with a champagne toast and a barbecue on the ice. If the opportunity allows, you have the option of taking a polar plunge into the icy waters around the North Pole. This ship's staff will also attempt to launch passengers high above the Pole in their hot air balloon to commemorate this great moment (this is highly weather dependent).

This is a destination that belongs to all of us, yet few will ever reach it. All lines of longitude converge here at the top of the world, where a glance in any direction is a look south. Coveted by many countries, the North Pole is owned by no one.

Overnight on board 50 Years of Victory.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 9 Southbound in the Arctic Ocean

On our return voyage you can sit back and relax. As we head farther south you may get lucky and spot polar bears hunting for seals.

Overnight on board 50 Years of Victory.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 10 Franz Josef Land & the Arctic Ocean

Zodiac cruising grants you access to some of the world's least visited sites; to the narrow channels and sprawling tundra near Salisbury Island, or the mountainous and partially glaciated landscape of Nansen Island. In Franz Josef Land, the most northerly islands in Eurasia and a nature reserve within the Russian Arctic National Park system, you might feel as though you've stepped back in time. Our exploration opportunities are guided by Mother Nature, and no two expedition days are ever the same.

This group of 191 islands forms the most northerly archipelago in Eurasia and lies entirely within the Arctic Circle. Here, we will explore Cape Flora and discover historic remains from three ill-fated arctic expeditions. When conditions permit, the Zodiacs will be launched and we will cruise beneath towering cliffs to explore remote seabird colonies. The 50 Years of Victory helicopter will provide aerial sightseeing, and the Zodiacs will transfer us to seldom-visited landing sites.

Possible Landings at Franz Josef Land:

APOLLONOV ISLAND: This small island has a ridge that may provide a vantage point for viewing a walrus rookery, which is known to

haul-out on the island. Zodiac cruising to watch walrus from a distance is also a possibility.

BELL ISLAND: In 1881, Benjamin Leigh-Smith's expedition built a hut here, but the crew never had the opportunity to use it, as their ship was wrecked off the coast. The hut is in supreme condition and has a number of interesting inscriptions on its interior walls. Also found here is an old Russian isba (wooden hut), which may even predate the official 1873 discovery of Franz Josef Land.

CAPE HELLER, WILCZEK ISLAND: Historically significant markers can be found here, including the remains of a stone hut used by two men from the 1898–99 Walter Wellman expedition. There is a grave-site and large memorial post in honor of the one member who died here just after New Year's in 1899.

CALM BAY, HOOKER ISLAND: Sporadically in use today, this is the site of the archipelago's first-ever polar station, built in 1929. Memorials to Georgiy Sedov's wintering in 1913–14 are built here, and the remains of a glaciologist's hut can also be seen.

RUBINI ROCK, HOOKER ISLAND: Rubini Rock is considered by many to be home to the most impressive bird cliffs anywhere in Franz Josef Land. The cliffs feature a bounty of seabirds, and because of deep waters, ships are able to get up close to the edge of the cliffs for great views. Most of the shores are dominated by glacier fronts, while a large part of the island is ice covered.

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Overnight on board 50 Years of Victory.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 11 Franz Josef Land & the Arctic Ocean

Possible Landings at Franz Josef Land:

CAPE FLORA, NORTHBROOK ISLAND: More than half a dozen expeditions passed through here in the late 19th and early 20th centuries—the Jackson-Harmsworth expedition described in the book *A Thousand Days in the Arctic* was among them. Many buildings from the time are in ruins or have fallen into the sea, but some remain. Memorials and crosses have been erected in more recent years in memory of the survivors and victims of those early expeditions.

CAMBRIDGE STRAIT: Cambridge Strait is a well-known area for watching polar bears as they hunt for seals that frequent the area.

CAPE FLIGELY, RUDOLF ISLAND: The most northern point of the archipelago is marked with a copper plaque and a memorial cross. This is also the northernmost part of Europe, reaching farther north than Spitsbergen. The island is almost entirely ice covered, and temperatures only rise above freezing for a few short weeks each summer.

TEPLITZ BAY, RUDOLF ISLAND: With a long history of arctic exploration, this bay was first explored during Julius Payer's 1874 expedition. Once a base for long-distance Arctic flights, the bay is also home to an abandoned polar station. Ships have sunk in these icy waters; a wrecked aircraft lies on the ice cap, and monuments and graves pay homage to the early explorers who died here. For wildlife, both narwhal and beluga whales have been seen in these waters.

CAPE NORWAY, JACKSON ISLAND: Weather is always a factor in this northern part of the archipelago, which is sometimes unreachable, even for icebreakers. A variety of arctic flora is found in this area, making it particularly interesting for botanists. This is also where Fridtjof Nansen and Frederick Jackson stayed over winter 1895–96, and the remains of their stone hut can be visited.

CAPE TEGETTHOFF, HALL ISLAND: Impressive tall cliffs are home to large numbers of seabirds, while the ruins of the Walter Wellman 1898–99 expedition can also be found. With a diverse landscape, the island is great for exploring on foot, provided that polar bears aren't in the vicinity.

CHAMP ISLAND: Wildflowers of the tundra are a common sight, giving a bit of colour to an often bleak landscape. Of particular interest are the mysteriously perfectly rounded rocks scattered around parts of the island. They are up to seven feet (two meters) in diameter and have been nicknamed Devil's Marbles.

NEGRI FJORD: This is a scenic and narrow waterway that lies between MacKlintok Island and Hall Island toward the southern reaches of Franz Josef Land.

Overnight on board 50 Years of Victory.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 12 Southbound at Sea

Enjoy your time on deck or reminisce with your shipmates and new friends as you cross the Arctic Ocean back to Murmansk. Expedition staff will be on hand to answer any remaining questions and point out wildlife during the return journey.

Overnight on board 50 Years of Victory.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 13 Southbound at Sea

Our last full day at sea...

Overnight on board 50 Years of Victory.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 14 Disembarkation in Murmansk, Russia - Flight to Helsinki, Finland

Returning to Russia's most northerly city, it will be time to bid farewell to our ship, the 50 Years of Victory.

Our ship is scheduled to arrive back at the pier in Murmansk before 0800 local time, but may arrive earlier depending on Murmansk tides. After breakfast, and once the ship has docked, we will have time to bid farewell to the Expedition Team and shipmates before completing our disembarkation. The process takes about an hour.

After disembarkation we will transfer to the airport for our return charter flight to Helsinki where we will enjoy our farewell dinner.

Overnight in Helsinki (airport area).

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 15 Departure

Departure from Helsinki.

FOND FAREWELL!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast