

# THE NORTHERN SEA ROUTE

A SPECIAL 27-DAY CRUISE ALONG  
THE NORTHEAST PASSAGE

EXPEDITION DOSSIER  
4 – 30 SEPTEMBER 2022



**Heritage Expeditions**

Antarctica • Western and South Pacific  
Subantarctic Islands • Russian Far East





Wrangel Island Reserve © S Blanc



Wrangel Island Reserve © A Russ



Wrangel Island Reserve © S Blanc



**T**he allure of the mysterious Northeast Passage has captivated adventurers for centuries. Its Russian-controlled waters are steeped in history and mystery, while abundant wildlife is found along its remote shores. Only a handful of passenger vessels have ever completed a transit of this waterway, but recent changes in the summer sea ice conditions mean that it is now possible for a brief time each summer. In 2017, we fulfilled our long held ambition of completing a successful Northeast Passage double transit. We are excited to once again be running this geographical odyssey from Anadyr to Murmansk in 2020. Join us as we trace the route of legendary Polar explorer Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld, navigate narrow fiords, search for unique wildlife, glimpse into the past and experience the warmth of Arctic hospitality in local villages.

Having been sought for centuries by European explorers who hypothesised upon its presence and economic benefits, The Great Northern Expedition of 1733-43, sponsored by Peter the Great, made many significant discoveries, but also revealed the route was not an economic trading proposition. It wasn't until 1878-1880 that Swedish explorer Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld completed the first ever transit proving that the route was navigable, albeit with some difficulty. In 1914-15 Boris Vil'kitskiy, with the icebreakers *Taymyr* and *Vaygach*, made the second transit of the Northern Sea Route as part of a major push by the Imperial Russian Navy to render it navigable for strategic purposes. The development of the Northern Sea Route became a central objective of the Soviet Union's policy for its Arctic regions so in 1932 the Northern Sea Route Administration was established.

The vast shallow waters north of Russia, protected by the expansive sea ice that covers the region for most of the year, are a refuge for many Arctic species; Polar Bears roam throughout but there are especially large concentrations on the reserves of Wrangel Island and Franz Josef Land. During our voyage we travel through the ranges of the Pacific, Laptev and Atlantic Walrus and there is the opportunity to encounter these iconic tooth walkers in large haulouts. The triumvirate of Arctic gulls – Ivory, Sabine's and the elusive Ross's Gulls all breed on the shores of the Northeast Passage and there are good opportunities to see all three. While Bowhead, Beluga and Narwhal Whales all call these waters home and our naturalists will be keeping close watch.

Venture ashore on some of the least known and seldom visited shores on the planet, Severnaya Zemlya Archipelago was the last major group of islands on earth to be discovered, the New Siberian Islands offer a wealth of opportunities for discovery. Sailing the mythical waters of Chukchi, East Siberian, Laptev, Kara & Barents Sea this is truly a geographic odyssey.

Our vessels were built for navigating passages like this, with *Akademik Shokalskiy* participating in a Soviet convoy in the late 1980s, and in 2017 transiting the passage twice unassisted with Heritage Expeditions. We invite you to join us on an historic journey to discover High Arctic landscapes that few people have witnessed, enjoy wildlife and wilderness experiences that until now have been the preserve of a few High Arctic explorers and researchers.



## ITINERARY

### Day 1: Murmansk

Murmansk is home to the Russia's icebreaker fleet and featured as a strategically important port throughout the history of Russia. Join your ship this afternoon and prepare for an evening departure from port. After we sail there will be introductions to ship and crew plus compulsory safety briefings.

### Days 2 to 3: Barents Sea

The Barents Sea was named in honour of Dutch seafarer and navigator, Willem Barents, who explored this region on expeditions in 1594 and 1596. During our two days at sea we will start our lecture series and as we move northwards there should be opportunities for spotting Humpback Whales and Harp Seals that feed in these waters.

### Days 4 to 6: Franz Josef Land

This huge archipelago of 192 islands located only 10 degrees from the North Pole offers numerous locations for us to explore. Closed to outsiders for decades Franz Josef Land is today one of the great Arctic wildlife refuges, its position close to the permanent ice of the Arctic Ocean yet accessible to

the rich waters of the Atlantic gifts these waters an unusual diversity and abundance of marine life. The islands were named in 1870 after Emperor Franz Josef when they were discovered by the Payer-Weyprecht expedition that was searching for the Northeast Passage. The islands have a fascinating and rich record of exploration, scientific research and habitation.

During our time here we have a busy schedule of landings planned including Cape Triest on Alger Island where the famous 'Devil's Marbles' (spherical geodes) dot the landscape, Cape Flora on Northbrook Island where the remains of three historic expeditions are found in close proximity and Tikhaya Bay on Hooker Island where the numbers of guillemots and kittiwakes on the remarkable columnar cliffs of Rubini Rock are unforgettable. We also plan to include a visit to Cape Tegetthoff, the first part of Franz Josef Land to be discovered. There is a very healthy population of Polar Bears living amongst the archipelago and we will be keeping a close lookout for these both ashore and on any ice which remains. Sailing within the islands there are good chances



Franz Josef Land © A Breniere

to spot Beluga Whales and Bowhead Whale and if we are extremely fortunate we may find the extraordinary Narwhal with its unicorn-like single tusk.

## Days 7 to 8: Kara Sea

Lying between Novaya Zemlya, Franz Josef Land and the Severnaya Zemlya Archipelago with two of Russia's greatest rivers, the Ob and the Yenisei flowing in along its southern shore the Kara Sea is generally considered to be the coldest sea in Russia. The large relatively flat Ostrov Vize is along our route from Franz Josef Land and we will look to make a landing, conditions permitting. Interestingly this island was "discovered" by Vladimir Wiese who postulated on its presence after analysing the drift of the *St Anna*.

## Days 9 to 11: Severnaya Zemlya Archipelago

The Severnaya Zemlya Islands translated into English mean 'Northern Land'. They are on the border of the Kara and Laptev Seas and are an extension of the Taymyr Peninsula. These islands were not discovered until 1914-15 when Russian explorer Vilkitski finally charted the island, this was the last significant archipelago in the world to be discovered. The three largest islands are heavily

glaciated with deep fiords and majestic tidewater glaciers that are regularly calving icebergs, providing a magnificent environment for cruising. This is one of the last strongholds for Ivory Gulls and we look for an opportunity to visit a colony.

## Days 12 to 13: Laptev Sea

We enter the Laptev Sea through the Vilkitskiy Strait which separates the Severnaya Islands from the mainland of Russia and also marks the northern most point of the Eurasian continent. This is a significant milestone on our journey; traditionally the last area where the ice clears and the biological divide between the Pacific and Atlantic Ocean wildlife.

This sea is bounded by the Taymyr Peninsula and the Severnaya Islands in the west

and the Novosibirskie Islands in the east. It is named in honour of cousins who were both Arctic explorers. The Lena and the Yana are two of the larger rivers that drain into this sea.

Along the western shore of the Laptev Sea we will take the opportunity to explore the Taymyr Peninsula. Laptev Sea Walrus are only found in this area and we will be on the lookout for haulouts where we can spend time photographing this unique and quite isolated population of walrus. We may also have the chance to spot the lesser known Taymyr form of Herring Gull.

## Days 14 to 15: Noviye Sebirskiye (New Siberian Islands)

These islands, which consist of three major groups – Southern, Central (Anzhu) and Northern (De Long), mark the border between the Laptev and East Siberian Seas. It is from this vicinity that the famed polar explorer and researcher Fridtjof Nansen froze the *Fram* into the sea ice in his attempt to reach the geographic North Pole by means of the natural ice drift of the Arctic Ocean. The New Siberian Islands are renowned for the preservation of the remains of mammoth, rhinoceros and other Pleistocene inhabitants of



© A Breniere

the far north; it is not uncommon to encounter their fossil remains while we explore the islands. We have allowed two days for exploring this remarkable yet seldom visited archipelago, conditions permitting we hope to have the opportunity to visit all three island groups, each with their own unique geology and landscapes.

The highest island in the group is the small Ostrov Bennetta (Bennett Island) which is also one of the most northerly in the archipelago. On the southern shores of Great Lyakhovskiy Island there is an active meteorological station which is permanently manned by a small contingent.

## Day 16: East Siberian Sea

It was in this sea that the *Jeanette*, captained by George Washington De Long, became stuck fast and was crushed by ice in 1879. The men made their way from the sinking ship in open boats to the Kolmya River delta where many of them perished. Wreckage from the *Jeanette* found in Greenland in 1884 gave Nansen the idea for the now famous 1893-96 *Fram* Expedition drifting across the Arctic Ocean.

## Day 17: Medvezhyi Islands

Today we will explore the little known and seldom visited



Medvezhyi Islands (Bear Islands), an archipelago of five granitic islands. As the name suggests, the islands have a sizeable population of Polar Bears which den on these shores over winter. A landing on the island of Chetyrekhstolbovoy offers the opportunity to hike to the unusual rock 'pillows' which the island is named after, the largest of these resembling Moai from a distance. The abandoned weather station here is a fascinating example of the effects of permafrost melting as it slowly slumps into the sea while the very land upon which it was built disintegrates. On Pushkareva Island investigate the old lighthouse or enjoy the Arctic flowers that cover the expansive tundra during the brief summer.

## Day 18: Ayon Island

Guarding the eastern approaches to the Kolyma Gulf, Ayon Island is relatively low lying with fertile tundra. The Chukchi people that call this island home are reindeer herders and hunters, during the soviet era over 20,000 reindeer were farmed on the island, today it is a more manageable 4,000. Despite the harsh Arctic climate, we will enjoy the warm hospitality of the local people as we learn about life on this remote island.

## Day 19: East Siberian Sea

Join your expedition team to learn more about the rich history and wildlife of the Northeast Passage as our expert lecturers share their knowledge while we transit the East Siberian Sea. This sea is defined by the Novosibirskie Islands in the west and Wrangel Island to the east, along its southern shores are three of Siberia's major rivers, the Indigirka, Alazaya and the Kolyma. The average depth is only 54 metres making it ideal habitat for walrus and Bowhead Whales.

## Days 20 to 22: Wrangel Island

Wrangel Island is one of those islands that you have to visit to appreciate. It is a Federal Nature Reserve and World Heritage Site of international significance. Its significance lies in the fact that it is a major Polar Bear denning area and one of the few areas of the Arctic to not be glaciated during recent glacial episodes. In fact it is sometimes referred to as a Polar Bear maternity ward on account of the large numbers of cubs born here. In addition to the Polar Bears for which it is renowned there are numerous other Arctic species which we will be looking for

including Musk Ox, Arctic Fox, Snow Geese and the Snowy Owls which breed here annually.

Because Wrangel has not been recently glaciated the diversity of tundra flora is exceptional and during walks ashore we should see the last flowers of summer. With three days scheduled to explore, the expedition team in conjunction with the local rangers will customise our program at Wrangel to deliver the very best opportunities to see and appreciate this truly remarkable island and its inhabitants.

### Day 23: Kolyuchin Island

Today we plan to land on Kolyuchin Island; a 4.2km long home to thousands of seabirds just north of the Russian mainland. Although we will be visiting after the peak of the breeding season, there should still be large numbers of Tufted and Horned Puffins, Brunnich's and Common Guillemots and Black-legged Kittiwakes. There may also be an opportunity to Zodiac cruise around the base of the cliffs where there are excellent photographic opportunities. As we set sail for Wrangel Island join your expedition team on deck as there will be good marine mammal watching opportunities – Humpback and Bowhead Whales have been seen in the area previously.



### Day 24: Uelen Village and Cape Dezhnev

This morning we visit Uelen; the most north-eastern village in Russia. We will get to enjoy the hospitality of the local people who are predominantly Chukchi. The village is the largest centre for traditional Chukchi and Inuit art in the world. A cultural performance and visit to their famous bone-carving studio and museum will conclude the afternoon's activities; works produced from this studio can be found in most of the major Russian museums.

During the afternoon we will arrive at Cape Dezhnev, the eastern extremity of the Eurasian continent. Named after the Cossack explorer Semyon Dezhnev, the first European to sail through the Bering Strait, it is sometimes possible to see the coast of America just 50 nautical miles away. Ashore, visit the monument erected in honour of Dezhnev as well as explore the remains of the traditional Chukchi village of Naukan from which the inhabitants were resettled in the 1950s. The Bering Strait is a vitally important migratory pathway, we may see flocks of King, Common and Spectacled Eiders passing south.

### Day 25: Whale Bone Alley and Gil'mimyl Hot Springs

We visit Whale Bone Alley on Yttygran Island, one of the most significant and intriguing archaeological sites in the Arctic. The name comes from the large number of Bowhead Whale jaw bones placed along the beach in the form of a pathway. The site is believed to date from the 14th century and its origins and purpose and even the identity of those that built it are still debated. The waters nearby remain rich feeding grounds for whales and weather permitting, we will look to take the Zodiacs in search of Gray Whales and walrus.

This afternoon we plan a landing at the Gil'mimyl Hot Springs. Deep within the hills of eastern Chukotka, this is a beautiful location for exploring the tundra with its rich plant life and the chance to see Sandhill Cranes which usually breed in the area.

### Day 26: Preobrazhnaya Bay

Crossing the Gulf of Anadyr there will be opportunities for wildlife watching. This afternoon we plan to explore the magnificent coastal cliffs of Preobrazhnaya Bay by Zodiac, these cliffs are home to an exceptional diversity and abundance of seabirds



Wrangel Island Reserve © K Ovsyanikova

including Brunnich's Guillemot, Crested and Parakeet Auklets plus Tufted and Horned Puffins.

## Day 27: Anadyr

After a final breakfast on board it will be time to disembark. There will be a complimentary transfer to the airport or to a central downtown hotel.

Those returning to Nome will join a charter flight that will depart Anadyr around midday and, because of the International Date Line will arrive back in Nome on the evening of the previous day. However, we strongly advise that you do not book any onward travel from Nome until the following day to allow for possible delays in the charter flight. Those returning to Moscow can either be

transferred to the airport or hotel in Anadyr, depending on their flight times.

## Important Notes:

**This expedition is subject to approval from various Russian Federal and Regional Authorities and may have to change depending on these approvals. Permits have been lodged for all the sites mentioned in the itinerary, depending on approvals these may have to be amended or substituted. We will endeavour to keep participants fully informed of any changes in the itinerary as and when they occur.**



Wrangel Island Reserve © Heritage Expeditions

## DATES: EASTBOUND

**Voyage #SOE220904  
Murmansk to Nome  
4 – 29 September 2022**

**Voyage #SOE220904  
Murmansk to Anadyr  
4 – 30 September 2022**

## PRICES

### Heritage Suite **\$30,400 pp\***

Large lounge area, separate bedroom with double bed, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin. Large forward and side facing windows allow great views.

### Mini Suite **\$28,400 pp\***

Separate bedroom with a double bed and a lounge area, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin. Mini Suites have windows.

### Superior Plus **\$27,400 pp\***

Two lower berths, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin. These cabins have windows.

### Superior **\$24,400 pp\***

One bunk (one upper and one lower berth), writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin. These cabins have windows.

### Main Deck **\$22,400 pp\***

Two lower berths, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private washbasin. Nearby shower and toilet facilities are shared with other Main Deck cabins. These cabins have a porthole.

\* The price listed includes the additional local payment of \$500 which is payable in US\$ cash onboard the ship. (All prices are per person in US\$).

## ADDITIONAL OPTION

### Private charter flight

**Anadyr to Nome **\$1,400 pp****

## PRICE INCLUDES

Local payment (payable on board), pre/post cruise transfers, all on board ship accommodation with meals and all expedition shore excursions.

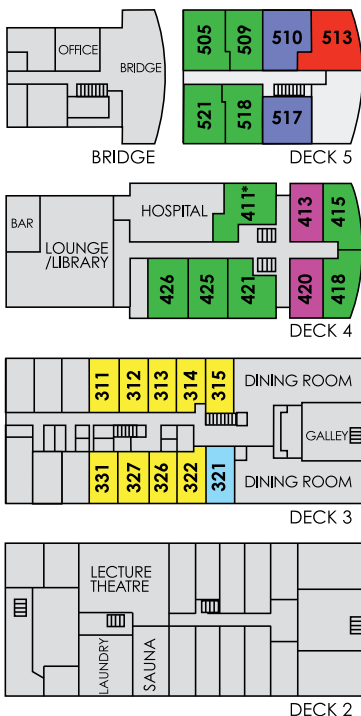
## PRICE EXCLUDES

All items of a personal nature, laundry, drinks, gratuities. International/ domestic or charter flights, visas and travel insurance.

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© P Tyree



■ **Heritage Suites:** Large lounge area, separate bedroom with double bed and a single bed in the lounge, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin. Large forward and side facing windows allow great views.

■ **Mini Suites:** Separate bedroom with a double bed and a single bed or sofa in the lounge, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin. Mini Suites have windows.

■ **Superior Plus Cabins:** Two lower berths, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin. These cabins have windows. \*Cabin 411 has a double bed with upper bunk.

■ **Superior Cabins:** One bunk (one upper and one lower berth), writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private bathroom with shower, toilet and washbasin. These cabins have windows.

■ **Main Deck Cabins:** Two lower berths, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private washbasin. Nearby shower and toilet facilities are shared with other Main Deck cabins. These cabins have a porthole.

■ **Main Deck Triple:** One bunk (one upper and one lower berth) and one additional lower berth, writing desk, wardrobe and drawers. Private washbasin. Nearby shower and toilet facilities are shared with other Main Deck cabins. These cabins have a porthole.



# Heritage Expeditions

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