

# The North Pole

## Aboard the icebreaker Yamal

July 01 - 16, 2005 and July 14 - 29, 2005

Few places have stirred the hearts and minds of explorers more than the North Pole. At the turn of the last century, voyages of discovery and adventure by sled, balloon, airship and ship set off for the top of the world – and failed. It was not until 1926 that the pole was seen for the first time and not until 1948 that anyone actually stood there.

But that is precisely what we hope to do on this historic voyage. Our aim is to stand at 90° North. It is the opportunity of a lifetime – so join us on an extraordinary voyage to the North Pole.

We sail on one of the world's most powerful icebreakers, the Yamal. Heading north from Murmansk, we cross the Barents Sea and break into the dense Arctic pack ice. Very few vessels have the power to negotiate such challenging ice conditions, yet we push northwards at speeds of up to 12 knots.

Our journey takes us through an ever-changing panorama of wind-polished ice up to five meters thick, narrow channels of dark green water and aquamarine pools scattered across the frozen sea. We will be able to enjoy the immense polar landscapes from the Bridge or deck of the ship and from our expertly-piloted helicopter. And along the way, in this stunning setting of ice and snow, we expect to encounter a variety of Arctic wildlife such as polar bears, walrus and ivory gulls.

From the Geographic North Pole – we will be among very few people ever to have been there - we head south to the wild and wonderful world of dense pack ice, towering volcanic mountains, icebergs and glaciers of Franz Josef Land. Then it is back across the Barents Sea to Murmansk, where our amazing journey comes to an end.



## Expedition Highlights

- Reach the North Pole – the ultimate goal for generations of explorers – and stand on the top of the world
- Experience our world-class icebreaker – one of the most powerful in the world – as it cuts through vast ice floes, pressure ridges and hummocks up to five meters thick
- Witness the frozen sea and immense polar landscapes from the ship and from an expertly-piloted helicopter
- Travel in comfort and safety on a ship with excellent accommodation and superb cuisine
- Encounter polar bears, walrus, ivory gulls and other rare and fascinating Arctic wildlife in a spectacular setting of snow and ice
- Visit the relatively unexplored Franz Josef Land
- Learn more about the Arctic with the help of an outstanding expedition team of naturalists, historians and other experts



# Voyage to the North Pole

## 90° North – The Top of the World

### Day 1 – Helsinki, Finland

A day of leisure with time to explore the charming capital of Finland before meeting fellow travelers at our hotel, the Radisson SAS Plaza Hotel, or similar centrally located hotel.

### Day 2 – Murmansk, Russia

This morning we transfer to the airport for our flight to Murmansk. Surrounded by birch and spruce forest, Murmansk is almost halfway between Moscow and the North Pole. With a population of about 400,000, it is the largest city north of the Arctic Circle, and the home port of Russia's nuclear icebreakers. We transfer to the port to embark the Yamal.

### Day 3 – Barents Sea

Today is our first full day at sea and there will be time to relax and explore our sophisticated icebreaker – home for most of the next two weeks. Join our naturalists and other experts in the lecture room for presentations on the wildlife, geology, history and other aspects of the Arctic. There will also be briefings on the proper use of the helicopter and conservation guidelines for visiting this remote corner of the world. In between, do not miss the opportunity to watch for abundant Arctic seabirds and whales as we sail north.



### Days 4-7 – Heading North

We enter the polar ice pack and continue north through a wonderful kaleidoscope of ice, snow and water. It is impossible not to marvel as the Yamal surges forward through thick ice, leaving huge blocks in its wake. Our resident experts continue their outstanding slide-illustrated presentations on all aspects of the Far North and we keep watch for a wealth of Arctic wildlife along the way. The ship's open Bridge policy enables us to watch navigation and icebreaking operations around the clock. Ice reconnaissance flights, together with ice charts received via satellite, help our experienced captain and officers guide the



Yamal steadily northwards. There will even be opportunities to board the helicopter for fantastic aerial views of our ship crashing its way towards the pole – and to land briefly on the ice. We also plan to stop the ship temporarily, put down the gangway, and invite everyone down for an invigorating walkabout.

### Day 8 - The North Pole

Depending on the ice conditions en route, we hope to arrive at our ultimate destination today. The approach itself is incredibly exciting and the ship buzzes with anticipation as we confidently work our way towards our ultimate goal – 90° North. Then comes the moment we have all been waiting for – we stand on the top of the world and wander out onto the ice to explore this other-worldly white and blue landscape that stretches for hundreds of kilometers in every direction. It is hard to believe that this is the place so many explorers have struggled and risked their lives to reach and there will be time for quiet contemplation as we consider their heroic efforts. Like all the best expeditions, we also find time for celebration. There will be once-in-a-lifetime festivities on the ice and – for those who dare – a very brief plunge into the Arctic Ocean!

### Days 9-11 – Heading South

Mission accomplished, we begin our adventurous journey south. Our exact route will depend on local conditions but, as before, the helicopter pilots stand ready for reconnaissance flights and excursions. This is another opportunity to enjoy the power of our icebreaker and the spectacular and ever-changing scenery. We look out for Arctic wildlife and, in particular, our chances of encountering polar bears on the return journey are good. Join our naturalists and other experts in the lecture room for more presentations on the wildlife, geology, history and other aspects of this magnificent wilderness – and take the opportunity to visit the ship's control center and engine room.

### Days 12-13 - Franz Josef Land, Russia

We enter a remote world of dense pack ice, towering volcanic mountains, icebergs and glaciers at Franz Josef Land. The most northerly point in Russia, this archipelago of 191 islands stretches 375 kilometers (233 miles) from west to east and 234 kilometers (145 miles) from north to south.

Undiscovered until 1873, it is still relatively unexplored. It is a naturalist's paradise. Polar bears and Arctic fox are common and often approach the ship quite closely - providing wonderful opportunities for photography. Beluga whales and narwhal live just offshore, there are good numbers of walrus and seals, and the rocky cliffs are packed with large colonies of seabirds.

We cruise along the rugged coasts of Franz Josef Land in Zodiac landing craft and enjoy spectacular views of glaciers, icebergs and steep volcanic plateaux from the air. We also plan to land at historic sites of early exploration (subject to permission). We plan to land at historic sites of early exploration (subject to permission) including Cape Norway where Norwegian explorer, Fridtjof Nansen, together with Hjalmar Johansen, spent the winter of 1896-97 after a bold attempt to reach the North Pole. They survived by hunting polar bears, seals and Arctic fox.

### Day 14 - Barents Sea

The final leg of our journey south – across the Barents Sea towards Murmansk. This is another chance to look for seabirds and whales and, of course, to join our expedition team in the lecture theatre as they review our unique journey of exploration and adventure.



Polar Plunge © Per Berneboogen

### Day 15 – Murmansk, Russia

The last day of the trip and time to say farewell to the Yamal and its crew. We disembark in Murmansk and transfer to the airport in time for our flight back to Helsinki. Our final night is spent at the centrally located Radisson SAS Plaza Hotel.

### Day 16 – Helsinki, Finland

After breakfast this morning at our hotel, we continue home independently.

Note: please read this itinerary as a guide only. Our exact program will vary to take best advantage of local weather and ice conditions and opportunities to experience wildlife. Our goal is to reach the North Pole. All landings on Franz Josef Land are subject to time as well as final governmental permission (not available at the time of publication). If ice conditions are particularly heavy, we may rely on our helicopters for excursions and therefore Zodiac landing craft may not be used.

