

The Northwest Passage

Aboard *Sylvia Earle* | 28 July - 11 August 2023





Kangerlussuaq

DAY 1 | Friday 28 July

Position at 0700 on 28 July 2023

Latitude: 66°57.3'S

Longitude: 050°57.3'W

Course: At anchor

Speed: 0 knots

Wind Speed: NE 5 knots

Barometer: 1011

Air Temp: 98°C

Explore. Dream. Discover.

—Mark Twain

Today we arrived at the sunniest settlement in Greenland. Kangerlussuaq serves as the gateway to the Greenland ice cap as well as to the rest of the world. The majority of Kangerlussuaq's residents work in the tourism industry or at the airport, a region with many unique and beautiful places to discover.

At around 4.30pm, we came alongside with the Zodiacs and boarded the beautiful vessel via the Mudroom, where the Aurora team and onboard hotel staff welcomed us and showed us to our cabins. Then it was time to explore our new home-away-from-home, the *Sylvia Earle*.

Onboard we total 104 Expeditioners with nationalities representing Australia (24), Canada (24), New Zealand (2), Netherlands (1), Germany (2), UK (18), USA (30), Japan (1), Thailand (2) along with 19 Expedition team and 102 ship's crew from all over the world.

We had time to unpack, settle into cabins and enjoy delicious embarkation refreshments before Expedition Leader Susan called us together to welcome us aboard the *Sylvia Earle*. Susan gave us also a brief overview, showed us some nice slides about our upcoming Expedition and she explained, that we will encounter some pack ice during our voyage. Afterwards we received our lifeboat and safety briefing and readied ourselves for the abandon ship drill.

The sound of seven-short-one-long rings from the ship's signal system was our cue to don warm clothes, bulky orange lifejackets and gather at the muster station to sample our safety gear. Our safety officers and crew guided us up to the lifeboats to get us familiar with their whereabouts.

By 7:30 pm it was time to head into the dining room where a delicious meal was served complete with a delectable dessert.

During our meal, we admired the stunning landscape of the Kangerlussuaq Fjord. The small community of Kangerlussuaq gradually receded as we made our way past rocky slopes brilliant in the steely light. The fjord is 190 km long and between 1.5 km and 8 km wide, flowing from the estuary of Qinnguata Kuussua river to the southwest, and emptying into the Davis Strait. It is the longest fjord of Western Greenland. We had quite impressive views during our sail away.

While some enjoyed a nightcap at the Tektite bar, some of us wandered the outer decks while the rest of us made our way to cabins for a much-needed sleep.



Sisimiut

DAY 2 | Saturday 29 July 2023

Position at 0700 on 29 July 2023

Latitude: 66°51,6' N

Longitude: 054°11,2' W

Wind Speed: 10 knots NW

Barometer: 1010

Air Temp: 3°C

A first walk in any new country is one of the things which makes life on this planet worth being grateful for.

—Charles William Beebe

Our first expedition morning was marked by a balmy and sun-drenched visit to Sisimiut, Greenland's second largest town and northernmost year-round ice-free port in the country.

Sisimiut literally means "the residents at the foxholes". The site has been inhabited for the last 4,500 years, first by peoples of the Saqqaq culture, then Dorset culture, and then the Thule people, whose Inuit descendants form the majority of the current population.

It wasn't long after arrival before we dispersed amongst the brightly coloured buildings of town. Many of us enjoyed the opportunity to explore the museum, arts and crafts centre and church. Some took a stroll around the lake on the 'love trail' or hiked up to the highest point of town to take in the sweeping vistas across the water and surrounding mountains. Those on the bus tour were also able to make it to 'dog city' on the outskirts of town, where about 1,500 Greenlandic dogs (about a third of Sisimiut's human population!) lolled about in the sun alongside the sleds that they pull during the winter months.

After a tasty buffet lunch and small siesta, it was time to come together in the lecture theatre. Susan shared the plans for the following day, and a briefing from AECO (Association of Arctic Cruise Operators) about the 'dos and don'ts' during our visit to the Arctic. Of particular note, we learnt about the importance of our biosecurity checks and measures to help protect the Arctic wilderness. Liz then gave a short briefing about our Zodiac operations.

By mid-afternoon, a full fleet of vacuums were whirring in the lecture room as we completed our biosecurity checks, making sure that any organic matter or seeds inadvertently brought from home were removed from our outer clothing and backpacks. Down in the mudroom, we tried on our Muck Boots for size and made final adjustments to our Zodiac lifejackets in readiness for our outings over the coming days.

As evening approached, we re-emerged from our cabins in our finery to enjoy a cocktail or champagne and some delectable canapés; and to meet our Captain, Artem Kolmykov. He shared a few words about his seafaring career and our expedition, and then introduced his team of department heads. It was time to then raise our glasses to a successful voyage ahead. Cheers!



Ilulissat

DAY 3 | Sunday 30 July 2023

Position at 0700 on Sunday 30 July 2023

Latitude: 69°13.7'N

Longitude: 051°06.7'W

Course: At Anchor

Speed: At Anchor

Wind Speed: 3 knots from NNW

Barometer: 1008

Air Temp: 8°C

Nature is an infinite sphere of which the center is everywhere, and the circumference nowhere

—Blaise Pascal (1623-1662)

At this morning's wake-up call Susan announced soupy skies, but as we approached our anchorage the fog cleared, revealing towering icebergs parading along the horizon, continuing their journey from the Greenland Ice Sheet to the sea. We had arrived in Ilulissat ('icebergs' in Kalaallisut), home of the most productive glacier in the Northern Hemisphere, and the third-largest town in Greenland. Our goal today was to experience the UNESCO World Heritage listed Ilulissat Icefjord (Ilulissat Kangerlua), where the Jakobshavn Glacier (Sermeq Kujalleq) flows into the sea. After a delicious breakfast from the galley crew, we headed off to explore the ice fjord on foot, by local boat or by kayak.

Those who went ashore rode a local bus through town to the Ice fjord Centre, a striking new visitor's centre overlooking the ice fjord. The centre combines unique architecture with interactive exhibits, including the remarkable permanent exhibition "Sermeqpillugu Oqaluttuaq – The Story of the Ice". For the scientifically inclined, there was an informative video about local ice core research conducted by the East Greenland Ice-Core Project (EGRIP), and a virtual reality tour of their station. In a small gallery space, art installations and 'sound art' invited a more contemplative response to the ice. Of course, the Ilulissat Icefjord itself was the star of the show. A short walk along a gently undulating boardwalk transported us across the rolling tundra to a breathtaking viewpoint over the world-famous fjord.

While some of us stretched our legs on land, many of us approached the ice fjord by sea, either on small tour vessels piloted by local drivers, or with our kayaking team. We meandered amongst the immense masses of ice congregating at the outlet of the ice fjord, entranced by the various hues of white and blue. It was awe-inspiring to be in the presence of such ancient ice and witness its endless march towards the sea. Some of us had the pleasure of being accompanied by some unexpected guests - minke, humpback and even a fin whale stopped by for a visit.

Somehow, we managed to duck into the dining room for a delectable lunch in between our icy adventures. The galley team served up a scrumptious feast featuring no less than three international cuisines: Mexican tacos, Indian dahl and Japanese sushi!

In the evening we gathered to recap the day and look ahead to tomorrow. "MC" Kevin led the way collecting questions from the day, and the expedition team shed some light on the origins of the ice, the colour schemes of buildings in Greenland, and how Greenland got its name.



Kuannit, Disko Island (Qeqertarsuaq)

DAY 4 | Monday 31 July 2023

Position at 0700 on 31 July 2023

Latitude: 69°12'SN

Longitude: 053°05.6'W

Course: 268°

Speed: 268°

Wind Speed: 8 knots NW

Barometer: 1010

Air Temp: 5°C

Believe me my young friend, there is nothing, absolutely nothing,

half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats... simply messing.

—Water Rat to Mole from *Wind in the Willows*

We arrived on the southern coast of Disko Island on a warm day with calm seas and grey overcast skies. All around us, bergs from the nearby Illussat Ice fjord stood like sentinels around the *Sylvia Earle*. The rocky highland rose, grey on green, cleaved near the top by a thin band of morning mist.

After breakfast we headed out for our first Zodiac cruise of the expedition. A few kilometres east of the town of Qeqertarsuaq, stretches one of the most spectacular examples of "columnar jointing" in Greenland. All along the coast, stunning, geometrical rock formations towered over us, while meltwater cascaded gently down through lush green vegetation. We poked our noses into mysterious caves and even sailed through stone arches. It was like an alien temple on a distant world. Around our Zodiacs, fish darted through crystal clear water. Further along the coast, nesting gulls called down to us from their nests, 100 metres or more up the sheer cliff face. Finally, on our way back to the ship, we sat in awe, engines off, before colossal icebergs, listening to the hypnotic sounds of the waves and the gentle breeze. Then, all too soon, our cruise was over, and we motored home for lunch.

In the afternoon, the *Sylvia Earle* headed east, following the ever more spectacular coast of Disko Island. The air was warmer still and the ceiling lifted allowing us to see to the horizon, where the most distant icebergs seemed to elongate and invert, a curious and eerie effect known as "fata morgana". To the east, we witnessed an "ice sky", another marine effect, where the reflection of ice casts a thin white glow on clouds near the horizon. It was a perfect afternoon to be on deck, as we sailed past bergs of every size and shape, some huge and ragged, others worn smooth by the ocean, still others with arches and holes, all beautiful beyond description. The occasional whale was spotted along with pods of Harp seals proposing gracefully in the gentle seas.

On board, Aurora's educational program continued with presentations from Renato on photography and Alex on ice. Our daily recap and briefing was followed by another feast served by our galley and dining room teams. Then, after dinner, we were entertained in the bar by our ship's musician, Kevin. The day ended with the *Sylvia Earle* steaming north toward our next destination, the midnight sun lighting our way.



Uummannaq

DAY 5 | Tuesday 01 August 2023

Position at 0700 on 01 August 2023

Latitude: 70°41.1'N

Longitude: 52°14.6'W

Course: 129°

Speed: 8.5 knots

Wind Speed: 2 knots NE

Barometer: 1012

Air Temp: 14°C

Life is the essence of a never-ending adventure, Exciting never boring, otherwise there is no life.

—Anonymous

Today was to be our last day in Greenland before heading into the Davis Strait, sailing to Pond Inlet in Canada.

We arrived at Uummannaq in the early hours of the morning in wonderful summer weather with blue sky and no wind. The morning fog was just starting to lift over the settlement of Uummannaq and the huge icebergs surrounding the island as we made our approach. Stunning scenery!

Uummannaq is a town in the Avannaata municipality. With 1,407 inhabitants recorded in 2020, it is the eighth-largest town in Greenland and is home to the country's most northerly ferry terminal. It also has a heliport, and Air Greenland operates an air service. Founded in 1763, the town is a hunting and fishing base, with a canning factory and a marble quarry. The town is the hometown of Greenland's first female prime minister, Aleqa Hammond. The island is also home to Uummannaq Mountain, rising very sharply to a height of 1,170 (3,838 ft). Climbing it requires technical mountaineering skills.

Shortly after breakfast we landed at the quay in the centre of the settlement and 38 guests set off on a hike around the island. Some parts of the marked trail were steep and rocky, but for the most part it was an easy and scenic walk. On our way out of town we passed a nice football pitch with artificial and very green grass, and the graveyard of Uummannaq, a beautiful and solemn place, with rows of white wooden crosses and a lovely view of the sea and the icebergs. The hikers also passed by a turf hut in Spragle bay, a hut which Greenlandic and Danish children know as the home of Santa Claus. There is even a post box on the island where letters to Santa Claus can be posted.

Other guests chose to stroll around town, and among other things visited the local church and the museum.

After lunch, the *Sylvia Earle* started its journey into the Davis Strait, planning to go through a broad area of dense sea ice, with the prospect of possibly finding wildlife. The afternoon was spent in the lecture theatre on board, where our Inuit ambassadors Mariah, Nuka and Philip gave presentations about aspects of the Inuktitut language, and about their own personal life in the regions we are now sailing towards.



Baffin Bay

DAY 6 | Wednesday 02 August 2023

Position at 0700 on 02 August 2023

Latitude: 73°14.9'N

Longitude: 067°47.6'W

Course: 325°

Speed: 12.1 knots

Wind Speed: 2 knots S

Barometer: 1015

Air Temp: 4°C

And yet, there is only one great thing, the only thing, to see in huts and on journeys: the great day that dawns, and the light that fills the world.

—Inuit poem

After leaving Greenland last night, today we continued our journey north, and then around lunchtime we headed west in the direction of Pond Inlet, our first scheduled destination in Canada. The *Sylvia Earle* Expeditioners and the Expedition Team, equipped with binoculars and a scope, were up on the bridge on the watch for wildlife for most of the day.

The seas were calm, and we sailed smoothly through fragmented ice, an otherworldly landscape in front of us. We spotted some seals resting on ice and some bird species, such as fulmars and black guillemots. Later in the morning, our geologist Alex lectured on sea ice, and we learnt about different types of sea ice such as brash ice, fast ice, pancakes and so on, and of course the wildlife that depends on it.

After another delicious lunch in the Gentoo restaurant, we carried on with scouting the area and looking for more wildlife until we left the sea ice behind, and kept navigating west in open waters. Later in the afternoon, our Marine Biologist Adam talked about the north waters, a historic dive into the relation between human presence in the area, the climate and wildlife over the last 7,000 years. We then spent the rest of the afternoon at leisure, with tea and cakes being served in the observation lounge. Our daily recap and briefing took place as usual at 6.30pm in the lecture theatre; we were firstly entertained by the resident musician and expedition guide Kevin, with a song on the arctic fox, then our expedition leader Susan gave us the daily update on the ice chart and the navigation plan for the day ahead. It was also a chance for Adam to share some images, taken by our resident photographer Renato, of the marine wildlife collected during the Citizen Science program; we looked at two kinds of pteropods, a predatory sea angel and a black upside-down snail type, the sea raven, and an early-stage medusa jellyfish.



At Sea & Lancaster Sound

DAY 7 | Thursday 03 August 2023

Position at 0700 on 03 August 2023

Latitude: 74°16.7'N

Longitude: 073°15.6'W

Course: 266°

Speed: 14.2 knots

Wind Speed: 8 knots NW

Barometer: 1011

Air Temp: 6°C

The kayak is without comparison the best one-man vessel to be found.

—Fridtjof Nansen

Early in the morning the sun was backlighting the clouds as we approached the Nunavut coast. Late the previous day we had cleared the sea ice floes of central Baffin Bay and made the decision to try and clear into Canada at Resolute due to the concentrations of ice shown off Pond Inlet on the charts. With this distance to cover a day at sea was planned. At 3am we moved from Atlantic Daylight to Eastern Daylight time. This gave many of us a chance for an extra hour of rest and/or relaxation, charging our batteries for the adventures to come in Canada.

At 7:30am we were just under 100 nautical miles from the entrance to Tallurutiup Imanga aka Lancaster Sound. Throughout the morning occasional bergs passed by as we breakfasted. We were then treated to several lectures through the day: Julia gave us an overview of archaeology in the region, looking at migration of different peoples across the Arctic, the tools they used and the shelters they built. As part of an enthusiastic Q&A session afterwards she also shared her experiences of working as an archaeologist in the region with us and, along with Mariah and Nuka, discussed issues such as preservation of Inuit knowledge and involvement in the discipline.

Later in the morning Captain Artem, Chief Engineer Luis and Hotel Manager Singh took us on a virtual tour of the ship, including the lower decks that are only accessible to crew and gave us an insight into the huge amount of work that is going on behind the scenes to make our voyage possible. We also got to hear the story of the commissioning of the *Sylvia Earle* and a movie of her construction prior to launch in October 2022.

Some of us spent a little time on deck looking at clouds for the NASA Globe Citizen Science program after lunch before a great lecture from Nina about the Northwest Passage. Although we did lose track of the number of 'Johns' involved in the European explorations of the region, the 400-year history of trying to find a sea route across the north of the American continent was perfectly timed with our entrance to the region.

Similarly great timing was involved with David's binocular clinic just in time for our sighting of a polar bear feeding on a seal. We were able to approach the edge of the floes to stop and spend some time with it before heading into the recap/briefing. This unsurprisingly featured a lot of polar bear discussion including David's bear presentation. The sea shanty on the other hand may have been a surprise: "We'll be all right if we make it to Resolute".



Resolute & Lancaster Sound

DAY 8 | Friday 04 August 2023

Position at 0700 on 04 August 2023

Latitude: 74°35.1'N

Longitude: 093°20.6'W

Course: Various courses/ice navigation

Speed: 10,1 knots

Wind Speed: 8 knots SE

Barometer: 1010

Air Temp: 3°C

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew, the furrow followed free: we were the first that ever burst into that silent sea.

—Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Through the night we sailed through the calm waters of Lancaster Sound with our ambition set on Resolute. Around 8.30am we anchored just offshore Resolute which meant another morning with a comfortable lie in and views of the dry Arctic tundra that lay before us. This part of our voyage put us about 74° North, the farthest north we will go on this expedition! After chasing down the officials to clear ourselves into Canada we patiently waited allowing customs and Transport Canada to do their job.

While we were admiring the views of the bay where we anchored, our historic quest continued with another captivating lecture from Nina. We were able to cast ourselves back in time and recall the well provisioned journey of the Franklin expedition and how it came to be. Nina left us well informed with an edge of the seat cliff-hanger making us all want to hear more.

Our attentions were then drawn to Nuka, showcasing her talents of mitt sewing with traditional tools such as the ulu “woman’s knife” with animal skins and fur from seals and arctic fox.

Before we knew it, we were given all clear and we had the official clearance to continue our expedition which we were all very pleased to hear! Anchors up and off we went with Dundas Harbour to the east set as our next destination.

While we sailed, we were lucky enough to hear a fascinating lecture from our naturalist, David, about the origins of polar bears in the Arctic and how they spoiled the great Arctic party. Phill intrigued us with a lesson on animal names in Inuktitut with a personal favourite; nanuk, meaning polar bear.

As the day came to a close 6.30pm rolled around and it was time for the usual recap and briefing where we learnt a very interesting story about some of the communities built, such as Resolute, and how they came to be. This also equipped us with relevant knowledge leading into the next day that would follow on our visit to Dundas Harbour and the historic archaeological sites. In turn, getting us excited about the future of our expedition and exploration of the rich history in the Northwest Passage!



Dundas Harbour, Devon Island (Tallurutit)

DAY 9 | Saturday 05 August 2023

Position at 0700 on 05 August 2023

Latitude: 74°27.5'N

Longitude: 082°41.5'W

Course: 083°

Speed: 11,4 knots

Wind Speed: 18 knots N

Barometer: 1007

Air Temp: 7°C

Civilization began to lose its zest for me. I began to long for the great white desolation... the long, long Arctic day, the silence, the vastness of the great white lonely North. And back I went.

—Robert Peary

Visiting the Morin Point archaeological site in Dundas Harbour was a truly exceptional experience. What made it even more intriguing was the fact that no previous archaeological work had been done there, preserving its natural essence. The place exuded a peaceful atmosphere, accompanied by sightings of musk ox and geese around the historic homes, immersing us in the authentic Arctic wilderness.

One morning, we woke up to a grey drizzle outside, but it couldn't dampen our excitement. It was our first outing off the ship in several days, and the location was stunning—an inlet surrounded by imposing cliffs and the gently sloping Morin Point near Dundas Harbour. The *Sylvia Earle*, our trusty vessel, provided a familiar backdrop against the subdued colours of the Arctic landscape.

After breakfast, we eagerly boarded Zodiacs to go ashore and landed on a pebbled beach. Our main destination was the Thule archaeological site, dating back between 1200 and 1600 AD. We explored a captivating summer encampment, evident from the tent rings scattered around. Walking along the shore, the ground transitioned into grassy terrain, leading us to Julia, who excitedly presented a Thule sod house made from whale bone. She shared insights into its construction and guided us to a cache and an observation point, providing a panoramic view of the site's historical significance.

In the afternoon, Mariah delivered a lecture on the importance of family in Arctic culture, along with an interesting legend about leaving things undisturbed. Nina entertained us with her storytelling about the Franklin expedition, setting the stage for the next day's visit to Beechy Island to pay our respects at the graves of the Franklin men and Northumberland House.

Our evening onboard was enjoyable, featuring the daily recap and a briefing. The galley and dining room teams treated us to another satisfying feast. Later, in the bar, our ship's musician, Kevin, entertained us with delightful tunes, creating a warm and friendly atmosphere.



Beechey Island (Iluvialuit) & Caswell Tower, Radstock Bay

DAY 10 | Sunday 06 August

Position at 0700

Latitude: 74°27.5'N

Longitude: 082°41.5'W

Course: 083°

Speed: 11.4 knots

Wind Speed: 18 knots N

Barometer: 1007

Air Temp: 7°C

On a small piece of paper, too, I wrote a short account of the progress of the expedition so far, packed it carefully in a little tin, and enclosed this in the bread-box which had belonged to our sealing-boat. In my account I wrote that we were quite hopeful of reaching the west coast, if we were only favoured with sufficient frost; as it turned out, we were favoured with a good deal more than enough.

—Fridtjof Nansen, *The First Crossing of Greenland*

Today was always going to be monumental in that we finally made it to one of the most significant historical sites of the Northwest Passage expeditions, Beechey Island.

It had been high on a lot of people's lists, and rightly so. Beechey Island was named after a British artist (William B) who was Father of Lt Frederick Beechey, serving under Cpt Parry. This is the final resting place and grave site of three men from the fated Franklin expedition. They were John Torrington, William Braine and John Hartnell.

Also buried alongside them is Thomas Morgan from the HMS North Star who perished while on a search expedition. Others would follow in the years after.

The backdrop was starkly beautiful as we glided into Terror and Erebus Bay. It is a refuge sheltered from the strong seas and winds by surrounded by high landscape. The site was littered with the remains of tin can provisions, pieces of rusting metal, glass, and wood.

Animal bones, bleached by the sun and aged could be found all along the coastline and beyond. Some bones had started to form lichens and mosses on them. At first glance the environment looked barren, desolate even, but on closer inspection we could see a huge variety of Arctic plant life. Different colours of saxifrage could be seen, and big clumps of buttercups in brilliant yellows. Nodding lychnis and polar willows added to the otherworldliness of this special place.

We had two major sites on Beechey - the graves, and the remains of Northumberland House. This house was built by the crew of HMS North Star expedition in 1852-53; it had a few gravesites next to it of brave seamen who came this far north in search of answers. The large number of historic debris at this site was impressive, as nature was slowly reclaiming it all.



Prince Leopold Island (Appait) & Port Leopold, Somerset Island (Kuuganajuk)

DAY 11 | Monday 07 August

Position at 0700

Latitude: 73°59.9'N

Longitude: 090°14.1'W

Course: 105°

Speed: 2.6 knots

Wind Speed: 04 knots NW

Barometer: 1025

Little do you know your own blessedness; for to travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive, and the true success is to labour.

—Robert Louis Stevenson, *Virginibus Puerisque*, 1881

In the heart of the Arctic expanse, an unforgettable day of exploration and discovery awaited.

Setting off on a Zodiac cruise, the majestic cliffs of Prince Leopold Island beckoned, offering a glimpse into the untamed beauty of this remote realm. As the Zodiac gracefully navigated the coastline, the towering rock formations painted a portrait of eons gone by. Unlike the vast icebergs that sometimes grace these waters, today's journey unveiled a different spectacle—one of rugged beauty, stark against the endless horizon.

Engulfed in invigorating Arctic air, the senses awakened, every breath a reminder of the pristine environment enveloping us. The Zodiac's gentle hum silenced, allowing nature's symphony to take centre stage. The calls of countless birds echoed through the air, their melodic chorus resonating in the vast silence. In this seemingly barren landscape, their voices created an intricate tapestry, underscoring the delicate harmony that exists between life and stillness.

As the day progressed, a breathtaking encounter unfolded—a polar bear and her cub strolling along Port Leopold's coastline. The Arctic desert provided a stark backdrop for their pure white pelts, a symbol of untouched wilderness in its truest form. The mother's protective presence and the cub's curious exploration mirrored the tenacity required to survive in this unforgiving habitat. It was a humbling reminder of nature's grandeur and the delicate balance that sustains life in this remote corner of the world.

But the day held even more marvels. Along the same stretch of coastline, the marine world offered a captivating display. Over a hundred beluga whales graced the waters, a vision of grace and elegance. Among them, the mature white belugas and their younger, grey counterparts created a fluid ballet, a celebration of life beneath the icy depths. Their synchronized movements and playful interactions were a testament to the intricacies of existence in this seemingly hostile environment.

The Arctic had unfurled its secrets, revealing its unyielding beauty and the resilience of its inhabitants. With the sea reflecting the sunlight like a shimmering mirror, gratitude swelled within us—an immense privilege to be a

part of this natural spectacle.

As evening descended, a warm camaraderie enveloped the group. Gathered for a hearty dinner, we shared our stories of the day's encounters—the polar bears, the belugas, the landscapes that had left us spellbound. Amidst laughter and shared wonder, we found a shared connection to the mysteries of this remote world. Under the Arctic's starlit canopy, a sense of fulfillment settled upon us, a testament to the profound impact of nature's wonders on the human spirit. This day transcended mere moments; it was a journey of revelation, connection, and awe. It underscored the need to safeguard these pristine environments and the extraordinary creatures that call them home. We will carry with us the memories of a day that had unveiled the boundless splendours that nature graciously shares with those who dare to explore its embrace.



Bellot Strait & Zenith Point

DAY 12 | Tuesday 08 August

Position at 0700

Latitude: 71°05' N

Longitude: 93°03' W

Course: Various courses

Speed: : 2.5 knots

Wind Speed: 15 knots SW

Barometer: 1020

Air Temp: 7°C

For the animal shall not be measured by man. In a world older and more complete than ours, they move finished and complete, gifted with extensions of the senses we have lost or never attained, living by voices we shall never hear.

—Henry Beston (1888-1968)

What a day! We started out as we always do with the wonderful wake up call from Susan and the best breakfast. Now we can call ourselves true Expeditioners, we did not have any idea of what the day would bring.

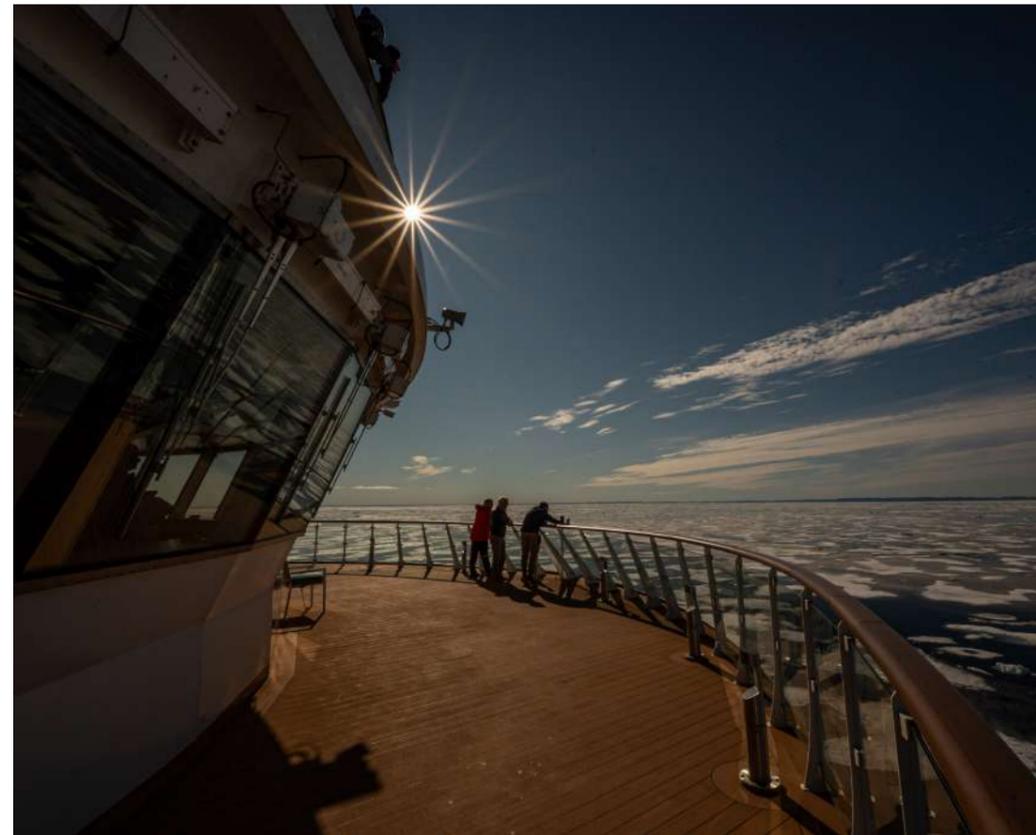
While waiting for the permission from Transport Canada to enter the Bellot Strait, Nuka and Philip shared with us some of their fishing stories from their favourite place in Cambridge Bay. And Nina invited Jan, Julia and Danna for a panel discussion about what really happened to the Franklin expedition.

When we slowly headed to the Bellot Strait, the whole Expedition Team together with many Expeditioners were on Deck 8 with binoculars scouting for wildlife, while enjoying this amazing scenery, glassy water, sun and the most beautiful ice. Such a breathtaking view, the weather was just fantastic. Suddenly, Susan announced, "We did it again, we have spotted polar bears, two of them...no! there are three of them, a mother and two cubs." The highlight of the day.

Our one and only creator of memories Renato took our group photo on Deck 8. At that time most of us were ready to take a few minutes relaxing before dinner when we were called in for a briefing in the lecture theatre. Yet more exciting news – we were doing a landing at Zenith Point at 7pm. Did you know that Zenith means Highest?

On our way back we passed Fort Ross, which was established in 1937 by the Hudson's Bay Company. The post was named after related Arctic explorers John Ross and James Clark Ross.

The day ended perfectly with the most beautiful sunset we have ever seen singing Country Road along with Kevin's magnificent tunes.



Port Leopold, Somerset Island (Kuuganajuk)

DAY 13 | Wednesday 09 August

Position at 0700

Latitude: 72°28.6'N

Longitude: 091°13.8'W

Course: 324°

Speed: 12.4 knots

Wind Speed: 4 knots WN

Barometer: 1072

Air Temp: 10°C

What an amazing journey it had been. We have had many 'firsts' on this trip since joining the voyage.

Nunavut has 25 communities spread between three different regions. The Kitikmeot (western region), the Kivalliq (central region) and the Qikiqtani (the eastern/Baffin region). When we started our voyage from Greenland, we crossed Baffin Bay heading toward the Qikiqtani, home to 13 Nunavut communities including Pond Inlet, Qikiqtarjuaq and Resolute.

During some of our presentations and individual conversations with you all, we have shared that all Nunavut communities are only accessible by air through the only commercial airline called Canadian North. It is expensive to travel by air and as an example, a one-way ticket (as of August 9) costs \$1,780.85 CAD.

That being said, even if you are able to travel around from community to community often, these historical sites we have visited from the Dorset era, Thule era, and European explorers are located in remote areas somewhat far away from local communities, which is why many Inuit and Nunavummiut (people of Nunavut) will never have the chance to see such amazing places.

When we see the land, we see a barren ground and perhaps describe these areas as desolate. But we must also reflect on the wildlife we have so excitingly come across during our journey together. These are the animals, sea life and birds that choose to make this their home. Even if it is a migratory bird who is spending their summer on the high cliffs during the shorter summer season.

We were lucky to come across a small herd of muskox, commonly known in Inuktitut as 'umingmak' which is the singular version opposed to 'umingmait' which is the plural version. I suppose it is grammatically correct to say we saw a nice small herd of umingmait!

When I was growing up in Cambridge Bay there were muskox everywhere. You could see them on the drive to the airport, at the closest lake behind town, they would even meander to the ocean shoreline across the bay on hot summer days to get a cool breeze coming off the water. But unfortunately, there has been a change in the last 10-ish years and there are no longer musk ox so close to town.

- Nuka Olsen-Hakongat



Parry Channel (Tallurutiup Imanga)

DAY 14 | Thursday 10 August

Position at 0700

Latitude: 74°19.4'N

Longitude: 093°08.0'W

Course: 285°

Speed: 8 knots

Wind Speed: 7 knots N

Barometer: 1008

Air Temp: 13°C

As the saying goes “isuqarami, isulippu” or as everything has an end, we have reached the end. As our last full expedition day, the activities were unknown, and we sought what opportunities the nuna (land) would provide despite the fog. Starting with a bold and daring move – an arctic polar plunge! Braving the numbing cold, we and our fellow Expeditioners plunged into the icy waters, greeted by surrounding ice floats, feeling the shock that awakened every cell in our bodies. Challenging our limits and conquering the elements and feeling accomplished – some dared to go for a second plunge!

In the afternoon for one last Zodiac experience we Expeditioners went into the fog – into the unknown. Cruising the sea for about an hour there was a moment we shared to allow life to pass by. The engines were turned off, we could hear the water splash against the ice and nearby we could hear the gulls sing. The fog played tricks on your senses, creating an otherworldly atmosphere. As the day ended a sense of bittersweet nostalgia settled in. For a moment of reflection, the voyage had been a journey of discovery, not just for the Arctic landscape and wildlife but also of the bonds formed among us Expeditioners.

One last gathering in the theatre lounge to watch the slideshow of photos complimented with live music – reflecting on our voyage. The room was filled with a warm glow that contrasted with the cold world outside. A toast raised to the Captain and everyone. He shared his journey on becoming a captain and said our farewells. Following dinner, Kevin sang some tunes- a great way to end the night. As the clock ticked, marking the end of the voyage, we gazed out at the Arctic waters one last time under the midnight sun. With a heart full of gratitude and a mind filled with memories, we retired to our cabins, ready to dream of the Arctic's icy embrace. Each day brought surprises that stirred a mix of emotions – from the thrill of spotting wildlife among the icebergs to the quiet contemplation as the fog enveloped your surroundings. The lack of a concrete plan meant we were open to whatever nature and the Arctic had to offer, allowing us to fully immerse ourselves in the present moment right to the end.



Polar Plunge

DAY 14 | Thursday 10 August



Resolute

DAY 15 | Thursday 10 August

Aurora Expeditions sends out a big thank you to you all for your great humour, infectious enthusiasm and smiling faces. It was a pleasure having you all on board and being able to share some of the pleasures that Northwest Passage and Greenland had to offer. May your memories live long and bright.



Citizen Science



Kayaking Log

Kayak Masters: Vanja, Gabby, & Eamon

Number of Paddlers: 11

Total Distance Paddled: 17.37Nm = ~ 32.17Km

Sunday 30th July AM: Illuulisat. Distance: 3.3 Nm = 6.1Km

On our first outing we were blessed with perfect conditions on the Sea. After fitting out the kayaks and finding partners we drifted out from the Ship. It was not long before we heard and then saw a Minke whale not far from the ship. We then aimed for some large icebergs a few kms away, and so did the Minke. We stopped as we thought we were getting closer to it, only to discover it was now behind us. This random pattern continued, and we assumed it was toying with us or just ignoring us completely. The berg loomed up ahead, we paused a good distance away as this berg was visually melting. There was a lot of ice litter around it so we gave it a wide berth. We spotted more whales, and it turned out to be a group of three. A beautiful spectacular.

Monday 31st January AM: Disco Island Sth. Distance: 3.35 Nm = 6.2 Km

The cliffs to our Port side steadily climbed up into the mist above. The scene was calm but eerie. Only a couple of kms to reach the base of the cliffs and then a decision whether to head left or right. The basalt rock formations in front of us was truly amazing. Columns of basalt twisted and warped in all directions. It was covered in lichens and mosses which gave it even more definition and beauty. A waterfall to our left made the decision for us so left it was, towards the settlement of Qeqertarsuaq.

The coastline continued to impress us. It seemed around every corner was another channel between rocks or an archway to paddle through. Then as we rounded into a bay we had a spectacular sight in front of us, a series of about 6 or 7 waterfalls lined the bay falling gently into the aqua coloured water. The rocky shoreline was covered in green mosses and grasses. Greenland was living up to its name. The ship getting smaller behind us as we explored the coastline, we decided to tow the kayaks back so we could paddle further. A fantastic kayak location.

Tuesday 1st Aug AM: Uummanaq. Distance: 3.32 Nm = 6.1 Km

It was easy to decide to paddle today, the Sea was flat, calm and the Sun was high in the blue sky. The community of Uuminaqq was on an island. Some kayakers chose to walk across the island today and get great views from above. The rest were happy to glide below the towering rock mountain that dominates the island. The formation and colours of the rock walls were amazing. Phil spotted a fox watching us from a gully in the rocks. It was very camouflaged and darted easily up the steep terrain. It had it's summer coat on so was dark brown. It was confirmed as a Blu fox later and in winter has a blueish grey coat. At first it was cautious, but it stopped and observed us, and became more relaxed once it realised we were there only to admire.

In the shelter of the island the surface became even calmer, like a mirror. It felt like we could paddle on for hours. Large icebergs beckoned us but were too far away. Almost rounding the tip of the island, we decided to stay in range and made our return to the ship. Ryan arrived to give us a lift. Another great outing.

Tuesday 1st Aug PM: Radstock Bay, Caswell Tower. Distance: 1.7 Nm = 3.2km

The big bay of Radstock not far from Beechey Island did not offer any protection from the wind this afternoon. However, this did not dissuade us from having a quick paddle. We towed our kayaks up the coast against the wind. Today it was more a matter of keeping the kayaks straight and drifting downwind as we enjoyed the view of the imposing Caswell Tower. There was a patch of calm water just below

the base of the tall tower, the water was a beautiful green. We had time to land and walk a short way on land. At the landing site we encountered remains of Inuit houses from 1200 and 600 years old. Wildflowers were growing over the flatlands below Caswell Tower. We saw prints in the mud of Musk Ox, birds, fox, and even Polar Bear. It was thrilling to think we were just one of many visitors to this area. A quick Zodiac Uber and we were back to the warmth of the Ship.

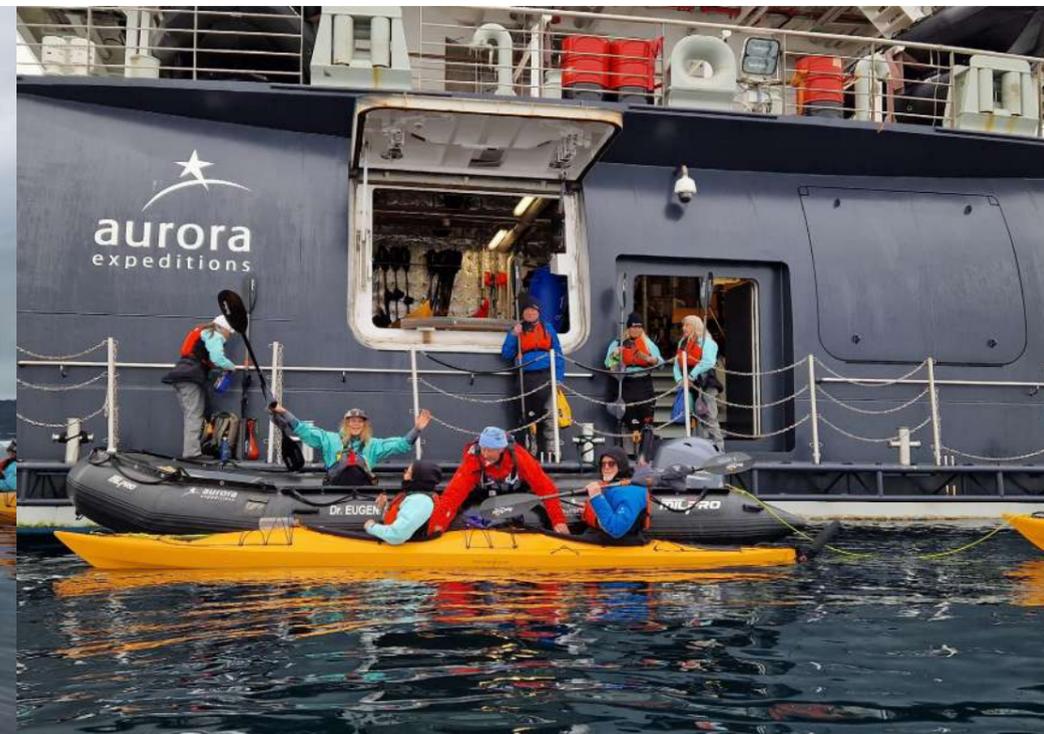
Monday 7th Aug AM: Leopold Cliffs. Distance 2.3 Nm = 4.2 km

This outing was truly spectacular. We anchor a couple of kms from the tall and steep wall of cliffs. As we paddle closer the sound increases. The sound of birds, thousands of pairs of nesting birds. The sky above is littered with the flight of so many birds, it's hard to imagine. Many pairs of Kittywakes, Gullimots and Thick billed Murres. The birds liked to nest in the cracks and crevices of the cliffs. Thin gentle waterfalls streamed down at intervals along the cliff line. It was a slow paddle as much of the time we were looking up to the lofty heights. The ship had repositioned and was now much further away, so we towed our boats back. A short but scenic paddle.

Wed 9th Aug AM: Port Leopold: Distance: 3.4 Nm = 6.2 Km

On arrival into Port Leopold, we had many eyes on deck looking at the ice and the shoreline. We had been here before. A few days before we had planned to land at the Hudson Bay house, however the sighting of a Polar Bear and her cub changed our plans. We all wondered if it had moved on or moved into the hut. Also, on that first visit we saw Beluga in the water near the shore. Today the Belugas were replaced by lots of stranded ice. Good hiding spots for any wildlife. The wind at the ship was reasonable, but not too strong to launch and go with the flow. We breezed into the bay and weaved our way amongst some bergy bits that had grounded in the shallows. The small Hudson Bay hut was behind a barrier of ice. We could not land there today. Instead, we cruised around the edge of the ice floes until we found a gap big enough to get between them into the still calm water. It was crystal clear all the way to the bottom. A curious seal popped up occasionally to watch us drift by. Near the shore a large flat piece of ice was grounded in the shallower water. It was the perfect spot for a group photo. Carefully we stepped on from our kayaks. We did not know it at the time, but it would be our last paddle together and the ice landing was a perfect finale. This kayak group was so much fun, it was sad to realise it was coming to end.

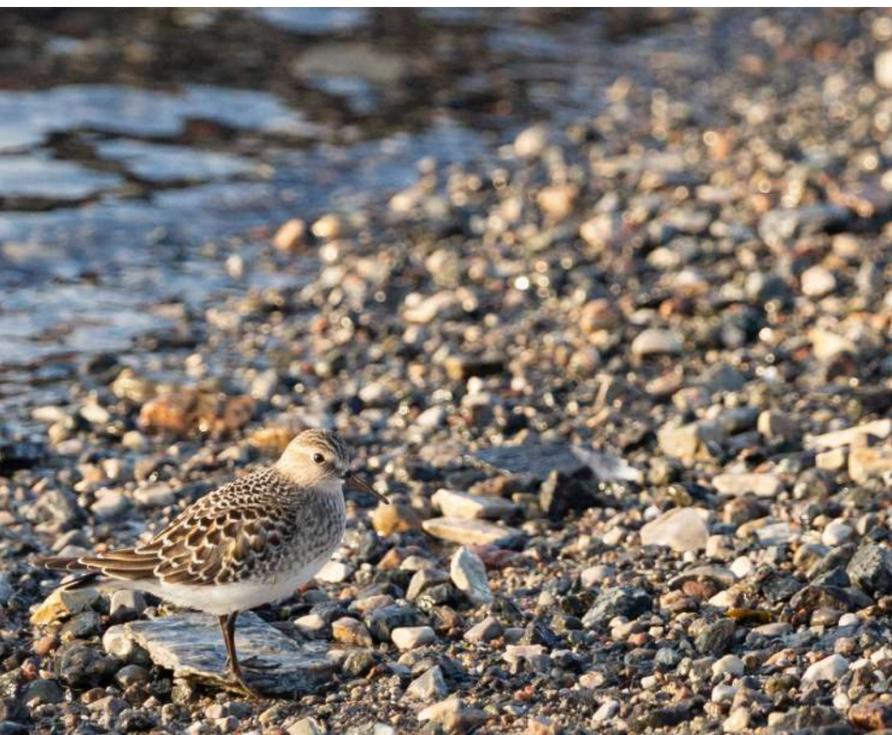






Bird and Mammal Sightings

Bird Species	July - August														
	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Red-throated Diver		•							•						
Northern Fulmar	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
Pink-footed Goose			•						•						
Common Eider				•						•					
Sanderling		•													
European Cormorant			•	•											
Arctic Skua											•		•		
Iceland Gull			•						•						
Glaucous Gull		•	•	•					•	•	•	•			
Kittiwake			•	•							•		•	•	
Ivory Gull							•	•							
Brunich's Guillemot						•	•	•			•		•		
Black Guillemot			•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•				
Little Auk					•										
White Tailed Eagle		•													
Wheatear (ib)		•													
Common Red Poll					•										
Snow Bunting		•	•						•			•			
Raven		•	•	•				•							
Red-necked Phalarope		•	•												
Lesser Black-backed Gull		•													
Mallard		•													
Bairds Sandpiper														•	
Purple Sandpiper					•										
Red-throated Loon		•													

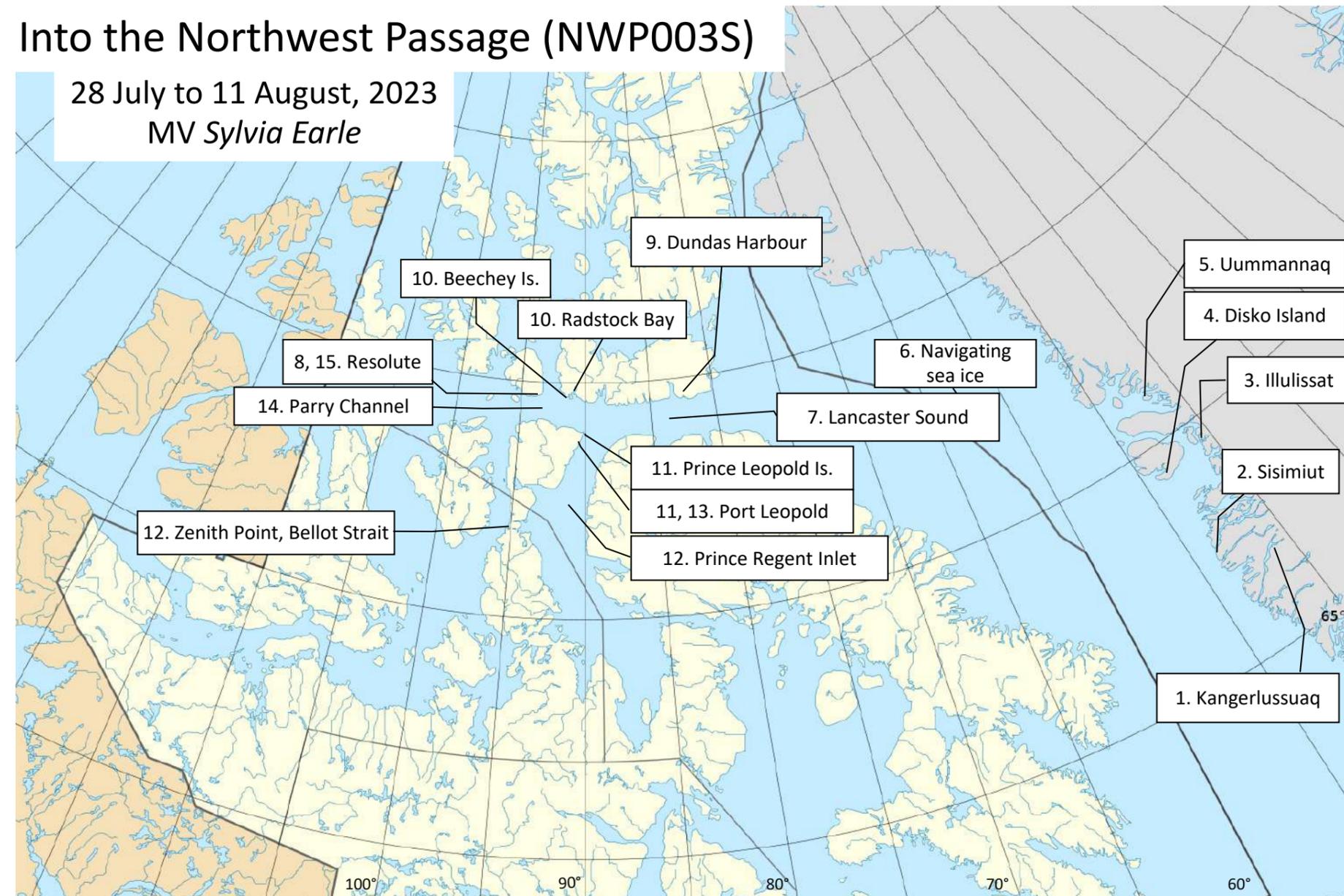


Mammal Species	July - August														
	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Arctic Fox					•										
Musk ox													•		
Polar Bear							•					•	•	•	
Ringed Seal												•		•	
Bearded Seal								•		•		•			
UNID Seal					•	•	•	•		•	•	•			
Minke Whale					•										
Humpback Whales			•	•											
Beluga										•	•				
Fin Whale		•													



Into the Northwest Passage (NWP003S)

28 July to 11 August, 2023
MV *Sylvia Earle*





Expeditioners:

Peter Allen

Lorraine Allen

Thomas Barth

Gwendolyn Barth

George Blenkhorn

Susan Blenkhorn

Nigel Bolt

Alan Bowes

Gillian Bowley

Richard Bowley

Terence Bowring

Susanne Bowring

Philippe Boyer

Gemma Bradley

Margaret Broadley

Broadley Ronald

Graham Brown

Mark Bulle

Linda Chaletzky

Kenneth Chaletzky

Ping Chen

Sara Christie

Wendy Christie

Gordon Clements

Samuel Crane

Roy Dean

Jishan Dean

Cornelie den Hartog

Cailey Dyer

Kristin Erz

Robert Ewing

Pauline Fasoli

George Firth

Nancy Frentzel

Belinda Grieve

Jens Hansen

Jytte Hansen

Carolyn Hart

Lesley Hume

Lu Jiao

Lyne Lazure

Jianyi Li

Elena Lobl

Georgiana-Elena Lungu

Robert McKay

Troy Meller

Judy Miller

Anthony Miller

Kelli Mills

Amy Moen

Linda Mofford

Keith Moger

Janice Moger

Leagh Mogg

Jann Mumford

Clarence Mumford

Richard Neilson

Doris Neilson

Susan Noble

Chanchai Panchasarp

Robert Panet-Raymond

Leigh Parry

Huw Parry

Judith Perry

Paul Pinsker

Joyce Pinsker

Kanoktarn Pinyochotiwong

Nancy Pope

Julie Rae

Alan Richer

Ann Richer

Shirley Semaka

Jeremy Simons

Robert Smith

Catherine Smith

Helen Spencer

Helge Stapel

Sally Stapel

Anne Strathie

Setsue Sugita

Tina Surridge

Stephanie Tattersall

Stephen Tattersall

Lesley Vascotto

Guido Vascotto

Julie Venamore

John Verschaeren

Thomas Waite

Danna Walker

Peter Waltz

Renee Waronoff

Samuel Waronoff

Joelle Wartosky

Harvey Wartosky

Alan Waters

Helen Wilson

Iris Winter

Zhiling Xiong

John Zola

Jaye Zola

Expedition Team:

Expedition Leader: Susan Adie
Assistant Expedition Leader: Alex Cowan
Onboard Expedition Manager: Barbara Ostwalt
Biologist & CS Coordinator: Adam Pope
Local Guide/ Cultural Specialist: Mariah Erkloo
Naturalist: David Cairns
Historian: Nina Gallo
Permitting Archaeologist: Julia Brenan
Firearms Manager: Nils Egeland
Firearms Assistant Manager: Stefan Gunnbjørnsson Joensen
Photography Guide: Renato Granieri
Expedition Medic: Jan Emil Kristoffersen
Senior Lead Kayak Guide: Eamon Larkin
Kayak Guide: Vanja Davidsen
Kayak Guide: Gabby Bruce
Onboard Expedition Assistant: Flor Torti
Zodiac Master: Ryan Kaempfe
Musician: Kevin Closs
Aurora Operations Manager: Liz Pope
Community Ambassador: Nuka Olsen-Hakongak
Community Ambassador: Phillip Verreault

Photography thanks to:

Renato Granieri Anthony Miller Mark Bulle
Eamon Larkin Judy Miller

Senior Officers & Heads of Department:

Master: Artem Kolmykov
Chief Officer: Konstantinos Giannopoulos
Second Officer: Matko Zagorac
Safety Officer: Sergio Saldana Hernandez
Ship Doctor: Gino Tiraboschi
Chief Engineer: Luis Gil
First Engineer: Warlito Versoza
IT Officer: Nathaniel Vibares
Hotel Director: Balvant Singh
Head Bartender: Restlie Dimasaka Baldemor
Head Waiter: Roswald Esguerra
Chief Purser: Mark Walsh
Executive Chef: Suresh Pai Karkala

Sous Chef: I Gusti Ketut Purnawirawan
Hotel Controller: Rey Satuito Nolasco
Receptionist: Jonalyn Rivera Ecija
Receptionist: Kateryna Tauzhnianska
Head Steward: Anil Kumar Kashyap
Bosun: Leo Francis Magnaye Marzan
Able Seaman: Anthony John Narvaez Brosas
Able Seaman: Eduardo Caranoo Aloyan
Able Seaman: Bahar Buhari
Able Seaman: Rajiv Mahajan Rauniyar
Able Seaman: Luis Fernando Alvarez Santos
Able Seaman: Ferdy Noel Diaz Roque





