

# Northwest Passage

Aboard *Sylvia Earle* | 10 -25 August 2023





# Resolute

DAY 1 | Friday 11 August

Position at 1100

Latitude: 74°4.05'N

Longitude: 094°55'W

Course: At anchor

Speed: 0

Wind Speed: 10 knot NE

Barometer: 1005

Air Temp: 4°C

To reach a port we must sail, sometimes with the wind, and sometimes against it.  
But we must not drift or lie at anchor.

—Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.

Today we arrived with our chartered flights from Calgary at the small settlement of Resolute, also known as Qausuittuq in Inuktitut, which means the 'place with no dawn' because of the long winter nights this far north. It is sometimes called Resolute Bay, after its bay, the waterway into Parry Channel on the southern coast of Cornwallis Island, right in the middle of the Northwest Passage. Resolute is home to some of the greatest Inuit hunters in the world. This High Arctic hamlet, with its small airport, often serves as a starting point for international scientific research teams and extreme adventure expeditions to the North Pole. Most of us enjoyed an exciting flight from Canada to this new embarkation point in Resolute instead of Cambridge Bay. So our voyage started already as a real expedition.

The wind picked up late afternoon but relented just as the flight was landing. After a quick transfer to the port, the Expedition Team were ready to ferry us to the ship by Zodiac. We were welcomed with some rain, wind and quite a strong swell. So, we embarked the beautiful *Sylvia Earle* in Expeditioner style with heavy raingear.

The warm and stable *Sylvia Earle* beckoned us on board, where we had a welcome buffet waiting, and smiling stewards who kindly helped us navigate the decks to our cabins and settle into our 'home away from home'.

On board were 91 passengers, 83 crew and 19 Expedition Team with a variety of specialities, including polar exploration, mountaineering, geology, botany, archaeology, history, cetaceans, marine biology, terrestrial biology, photography, medicine, and kayaking and local cultural guides and 23 different nationalities.

Quickly settled, Expedition Leader Susan invited us into the lecture theatre to welcome those who had travelled from afar to discover the beauty and history of the Northwest Passage.

Barbara gave us some handy pointers about how life works on board and Dr Jan and Gino explained the health and safety protocols we will have during our voyage.

Despite the long day of travel, there was a definite buzz of excitement in the air!

Before dinner it was time for the all-important safety drill. Seven long blasts and one short blast of the ship's horn signalled us to grab our bulky orange lifejackets, our beanies and warm clothing, and muster in the lecture

theatre. We followed our crew up to deck 7, where the polar-class life vessels sit (they can hold 136 people each, for five days).

After our briefings finished for the night, we headed to the dining room for a delicious dinner prepared and served by our amazing hotel team.

After the many hours of travel to reach the frozen north of the world, it's finally time to kick back, breathe in the sea air, and get ready for the upcoming adventure.



# Lancaster Sound & Maxwell Bay

DAY 2 | Saturday 12 August

Position at 0700

Latitude: 74°30,6'N

Longitude: 090°42,8'W

Course: 099°

Speed: 6.5 knots

Wind Speed: 30 knots ESE

Barometer: 1021

Air Temp: 4°C

I'm not afraid of storms, for I'm learning how to sail my ship.

—Louisa May Alcott

After yesterday's moderately bouncy transfers from Resolute to the *Sylvia Earle* we spent the small hours working our way east into some weather along Lancaster Sound. The bridge was kept busy with ice navigation throughout the small hours as ice floes moved west to close out access to Resolute. Easterly winds were blowing at Beaufort force 7\* and rough\* seas were on the bow. These conditions abated very rapidly as we headed north into the shelter of Maxwell Bay. After a briefing, biosecurity checks and muck boot fitting, we anchored in glassy waters on the eastern shore of the bay. By then many appetites had improved in time for our first lunch aboard.

A thick band of fog was visible in the strait 15 miles south as the Zodiacs were lowered, but the sun and calm stayed with us all afternoon. Arriving on shore we were greeted by Geela Qaqqasiq, who was very happy to be back after many years away. While the area is described as 'polar desert' there were many signs of life and for many of us this was our first visit to this powerful and expansive landscape.

Patches of tundra were scattered around, with many wildflowers in summer bloom. Flora included suputiit or arctic willow (*salix arctica*), which, unlike its southern willow cousins, typically grows to only 15 cm despite living for hundreds of years, and is the northernmost woody plant in the world. Suputauja (arctic cotton grass, *eriophorum vaginatum*) and malikkat (mountain aven, *dryas octopetala*) were some other species also in flower. Malikkat, has its name because they follow the sun through the day. Malikkat leaves found in sediment cores from lakes are also known to geologists and palaeontologists as an indicator of the eponymous Younger Dryas period of glaciation that ended the Pleistocene around 12,000 years ago.

On the land we broke into several groups to explore the area. Some groups spent time in the tundra, bogs and flowers and enjoying the views of the blue waters and rugged cliffs. One group walked up to the peak of the promontory nearly 200 metres above the bay and had some great views all around the area.

By 6pm we were starting out of the bay, en route to southern Prince Regent Inlet 140 nautical miles south. Captain Artem welcomed us in the lecture theatre and introduced his officers before we all toasted our voyage. As the sun slowly lowered, we finished our dinner and re-entered Lancaster Sound with easing conditions and a gentle roll as we crossed the breeze to morning.



# Prince Regent Inlet

DAY 3 | Sunday 13 August

Position at 0700

Latitude: 76°58.2'N

Longitude: 015°37.7'E

Course: 058°

Speed: 8.1 knots

Wind Speed: 4 knots ESE

Barometer: 1018

Air Temp: 6°C

Travelling opens up avenues to adventure and gives the heart wings

—Ibn Battuta

Sailing south through the night, out of an increasingly windy Parry Channel, we found ourselves, come morning, in much calmer seas in beautiful Prince Regent Inlet. Overcast skies made the scene moody, but the high ceiling allowed for a panoramic view of this historical waterway.

After breakfast we gathered in the lecture theatre where our historian, Nina, presented the first part of her talk on early European exploration of the Northwest Passage. Following Nina's presentation, we were treated to an introduction to Inuit language and culture with Mariah and Geela. While Mariah taught us the Inuktitut names for local plants (and their uses), Geela demonstrated a *Qulliq*, a traditional seal oil lamp, with canola oil standing in for seal fat! Mariah and Geela were gracious enough to answer our many questions about living in Nunavut.

Immediately after lunch, our photographer, Renato, offered a presentation on photography, after which we took advantage of our calm weather and went exploring the sea ice in the dense fog. The captain carefully pushed the *Sylvia Earle* through the ice floes while we gathered on the outer decks, searching for wildlife. The grinding and rocking of the pack created an unearthly sound that was as mesmerizing as the eerie sight of the shifting ice in the fog. A small seal was spotted not ten metres from the ship, frolicking in a pool of water that had formed in a large piece of ice. After dinner, a few of us met in the Tektite Bar for live music with our musician Kevin, who played some of the music he has composed while travelling in the polar regions (plus a few crowd favourites).

Later in the evening, the *Sylvia Earle* rendezvoused with another expedition ship, the *Ultramarine*, and a Zodiac was launched in order to fetch some much-needed yoghurt

We then turned in for a restful night in the peaceful waters of Prince Regent Inlet.



# Crossing Lancaster Sound (reprise)

DAY 4 | Monday 14 August

Position at 0700

Latitude: 73°39.6'N

Longitude: 088°41.4'W

Course: 029°

Speed: 11.2 knots

Wind Speed: 24 knots ENE

Barometer: 1000

Air Temp: 9°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

This voyage, titled The Northwest Passage, recounts centuries of relentless campaigns to cross the top of North America by ship. These efforts still inspire awe, even though Inuit had much earlier traversed the route by the more sensible method of dog sledding across sea ice. The present voyage is a reminder that the forces of nature that confronted the early European sailors are with us still.

Earlier in the trip, ice blocked the pathway west, and now wind is constraining what we do. A prolonged pressure system has brought high winds to a large swathe of eastern Nunavut. In Lancaster Sound, sustained winds have reached storm force, which means they exceed 48 knots (89 km/h). At 70 knots (130 km/h), gusts are even fiercer.

In true expedition fashion, we seized the opportunities that adversity gave us. And so, this morning as we steamed across Lancaster Sound, Expeditioners watched through windows the magnificent rolling whitecaps, with wind-driven spume spraying off their crests. Wave-watching was twice interrupted by calls to the lecture theatre. First, Maria recounted the role that archaeology, conducted in partnership with local Inuit people, is playing in revealing the Arctic past. Alex delivered a second lecture, describing what happens when the sea freezes (you get sea ice) and what happens when chunks of glacier break off and float free in the ocean (you get icebergs).

We crossed Lancaster Sound through rough weather to reach a refuge from the wind. Our destination was once again Maxwell Bay on the south side of Devon Island, where the wind was much lighter and, in some moments, entirely absent.

Taking advantage of the relative calm, Expeditioners Zodiaced to a broad, shale-covered promontory in front of steep cliffs topped by Devon's high plateau. Close to the landing beach stood a lone thick-billed murre (Brünnich's guillemot). The bird, looking slightly storm-battered, was preening its feathers, applying oils that are essential for waterproofing. Windstorms can be hard on seabirds. We hope that this one makes it.

Once fully on land, Expeditioners undertook a broad loop around the promontory. Stepping on the flat, shaley rocks that cover the landscape, they soon noticed ground that was divided into multi-sided geometric forms

(polygons). As Alex later explained at Recap, patches of ground shrink when they undergo freeze-thaw cycles in areas with underlying permafrost. More remarkable were strips and lines of small, flat stones set vertically on their edges, also a manifestation of freeze-thaw cycles.

Along our route Expeditioners noted a large mound, covered with low plants. Sharp-eyed Alex noticed segments of bowhead whale skull protruding from the mound, thus betraying its origin as a whale carcass that beached long ago.



# Maxwell Bay & Crossing Lancaster Sound

DAY 5 | Tuesday 15 August

## Position at 0700

Latitude: 74°42.7'N

Longitude: 088°88.6'W

Course: 175°

Speed: 2.6 knots

Wind Speed: 23 knots SE

Barometer: 999

Air Temp: 10°C

It's strange how hungry for a treat you get on an Arctic journey

—Roald Amundsen

Tuesday morning quietly dawned, and we awoke with a late rise from our cosy overnight shelter in Maxwell Bay. The weather conditions meant we could indulge in a leisurely breakfast while we awaited an update from the bridge regarding our plan for the day.

Our spirits were lifted when around 8.30am, an announcement was made by Expedition Leader Susan of a rumoured polar bear in our immediate vicinity! Within minutes, this was confirmed by the sharp eyes of our assistant Expedition Leader Alex and of our Captain. Excited Expeditioners quickly geared up in their warm coats and moved to the well-appointed observation areas on deck 8 - cameras and binoculars at the ready! Soon, another polar bear was spotted, joined by harp seals, large flocks of feasting sea birds and even a walrus!

The impressive wildlife show continued until approximately 11:00am, when the weather forecast indicated higher wind and waves were coming. Our proactive crew quickly ensured the ship was ready for the potentially rough seas, with confidently actioned safety procedures. We settled into a late morning and afternoon of learning with lectures from three of our specialist experts on board.

Historian Nina discussed the Franklin Expedition and the juxtaposition of Victorian English society with that of the harsh, natural environment realities of the Northwest Passage. After lunch, our naturalist David detailed the evolution of the polar bear and talked of the often-compared landscapes and wildlife in the Arctic and Antarctic regions. In summation, biologist Adam lectured on the science of weather, wind, and waves – a topic particularly apt to the reality ongoing directly outside our windows as the ship ventured forth into Lancaster Sound! (The Inuit name for Lancaster Sound is Tallurutiup Imanga).

An impromptu concert by our musician Kevin rounded out the late afternoon as we enjoyed his music while indulging in a Dark 'n' Stormy cocktail, courtesy of the Tektite Bar.

Shortly before dinner, Susan gave an update as to our plan for the following day, which is to be our first community visit – Arctic Bay. Arctic Bay, also known as Ikpiarjuk 'the pocket' is an Inuit hamlet on Baffin Island, located at the entrance to Sirmilik National Park. We are planning to arrive early afternoon and are hoping to

stay and visit with community members for several hours. This is a rare and privileged opportunity to learn and immerse oneself in this special place, where Inuit oral history and archaeological evidence show an Inuit presence for millennia.



# Arctic Bay - Ikpiarjuk

DAY 6 | Wednesday 16 August

Position at 0700

Latitude: 72°59.7'N

Longitude: 085°22.7'W

Course: 219°

Speed: 219

Wind Speed: 6 knots SE

Barometer: 1002

Air Temp: 9°C

If one doesn't know to which port one is sailing, no wind is favorable.

—Lucius Annaeus Seneca

We woke up to the sound of the waves and went birdwatching with naturalist David before breakfast. But we were almost the only early birds as the weather was arctic and only a small group of feathered friends joined us.

After breakfast we learned how to pronounce Inuktitut words with Mariah, and Geela gave us a very private insight into her childhood in Arctic Bay and at the residential school system in the former times.

After an early lunch we arrived to (Ikpiarjuk "the pocket" in Inuktitut) Arctic Bay. As we learned, Arctic Bay is a traditional community heavily reliant on hunting, fishing and tourism. It provides visitors with wide of Arctic experiences-Inuit culture and tradition, rare arctic wildlife, and awe-inspiring scenery.

At the beach, we were greeted by the local people. When all the Expeditioners were unloaded at the dock, we started walking to the community hall, where the cultural gathering was happening.

There were drummers, singers, and a demonstration of one- and two-foot-high kicks. The most fun part was having Nils go on the floor trying to do two-foot-high kick and he landed on his (Tootsie). Thank you for making us laugh, Nils!

And the best part was having Qapik Attagutsiak and her daughter Kigutikarjuk Shappa at the community hall. Qapik was born on 11 June 1920 (103 years old) and she is the last known surviving contributor to the war effort in Inuit communities during World War II, particularly the drive to collect animal bone sand carcasses for the Allied munitions effort.

We had the opportunity to see what Qapik and her daughter were wearing. Qapik was wearing her handmade caribou skin *amauti* (the stitches were so intriguing, and it seems like it was sewn by sewing machine!) Her daughter Kigutikarjuk was also wearing her handmade amauti with beaded designs on it. They were absolutely gorgeous and very special.

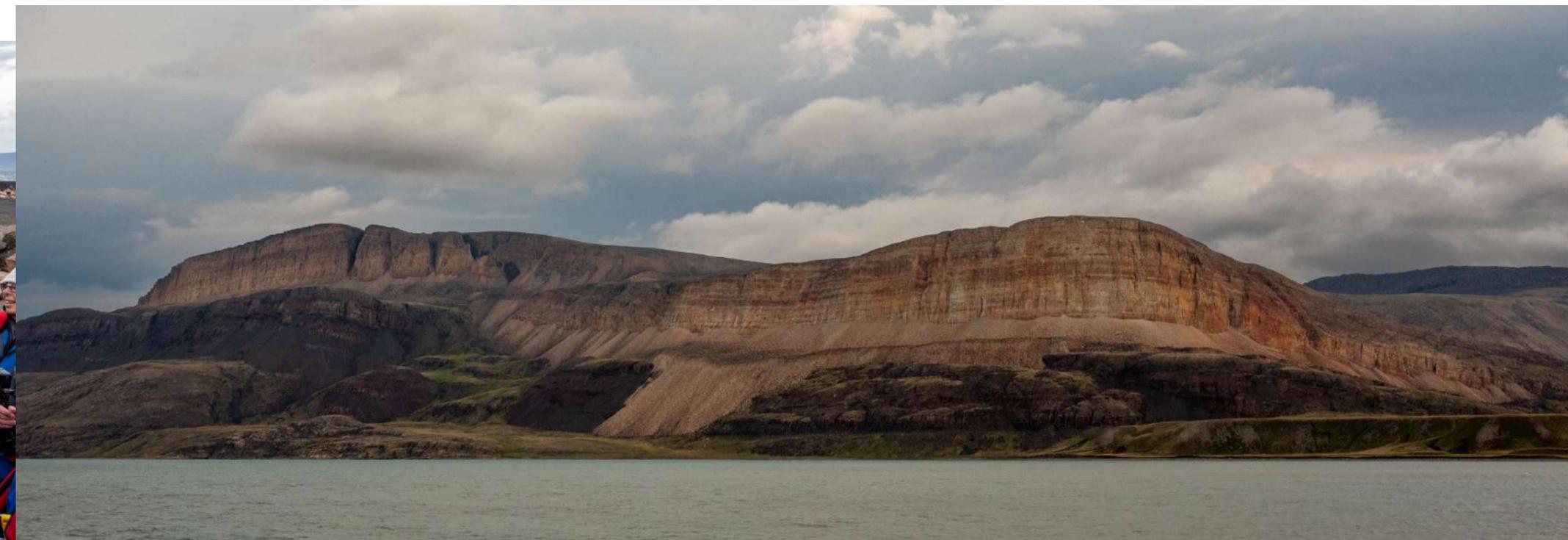
She still lives in her little hut in Arctic Bay. She makes all her clothing by hand even now.

In the meantime, our cultural specialists Mariah and Geela were invited to Geela's sister's place for country food and to meet family and friends. They told us about the traditional food, which was served with *mactaaq* chowder,

fresh whale (*mactaaq* is the skin and blubber of narwhal), arctic char fried Bannock and tea.

It really was an absolute miracle to be in Arctic Bay and spending time with all the lovely locals, and it must be wonderful for Geela to meet with her family and friends that she has not seen in years. When Inuit harvest animals, every part of the animal is used!

*Taimakalauq* (that's all for now), *Qujannamiik* (Thank you) from Geela Qaqqasiq



# Croker Bay

DAY 7 | Thursday 17 August

Position at 0700

Latitude: 74°39.9'N

Longitude: 083°10.9'W

Course: 325°

Speed: x

Wind Speed: 4 knots E

Barometer: 1068

Air Temp: 6°C

No pessimist ever discovered the secret of the stars, or sailed to an uncharted land, or opened a new doorway for the human spirit.

—Helen Keller

After leaving Arctic Bay yesterday afternoon, today we continued our journey, and we headed north in the direction of Croker Bay, on Devon Island. The *Sylvia Earle* Expeditioners and the Expedition Team were up very early to see the magnificent entrance to the bay.

Croker Bay was named by William Edward Parry in 1819 in honour of John Wilson Croker, First Secretary to the Admiralty.

The *Sylvia Earle* held position in front of Croker Bay glacier, which flows into the sea from the Devon icecap. The glacier covers an area of over 12,000 square kilometres (4,600 square miles). The highest point on Devon Island is found at the summit of the icecap, with an elevation of 1,921 metres (6,302 feet). The icecap has a maximum thickness of 880 metres (2,887 feet) and has been steadily shrinking since 1985.

The weather was on our side; it was sunny, the sea was calm, and we were accompanied by a gentle breeze.

We spent around an hour and a half exploring Croker Bay by Zodiac. Also, we were offered two specialist programs: two Citizen Science boats organised by Adam and Nina, and two photo Zodiacs led by Alex and Renato. The kayakers had the opportunity to enjoy a paddle in this sheltered bay. Later in the morning, there was still time for more Citizen Science with Adam: ground-based cloud observations were made from deck 8, timed for the overhead pass of an NOAA satellite. These observations were submitted to the GLOBE Observer Program.

After yet another delicious lunch in the Gentoo restaurant then, in the afternoon we were offered two lectures while we headed to our next destination, Pond Inlet. At 3pm we joined Nina in the lecture room for part two of her talk on the Franklin Expedition. We followed the journey of Jane Franklin, the Admiralty, and the British public, as they launched expedition after expedition in search of the lost Franklin Expedition. In the end it took almost 15 years, over 30 expeditions and the help of local Inuit to piece together the fate of Franklin and his men.

Later in the afternoon, our photographer in residence Renato offered tips and tricks on how to photograph birds in flight. This was followed by a little surprise, with David sharing his knowledge of the birds of the High Arctic. Some Expeditioners and Expedition Team members dressed up with different outfits to present different birds of the Arctic. The day ended as usual with the daily recap and briefing for the next day.



# Eclipse Sound (Pond Inlet - Mittimatalik)

DAY 8 | Friday 18 August

Position at 0700

Latitude: 72°48.5'N

Longitude: 075°59.3'W

Course: 228°

Speed: 8.1 knots

Wind Speed: 8 knots NNE

Barometer: 1011

Air Temp: 9°C

Traveling—it leaves you speechless, then turns you into a storyteller.

—Ibn Battuta

Our leader Susan was hatching a plan A, but alas, it was not to be.

Morning broke over the glaciated coastline of Bylot Island as we tucked into another delicious breakfast from the galley team. We turned into Eclipse Sound, Baffin Island rising to port, and mist drifting through granite cirques.

After breakfast we joined Mariah in the lecture room to learn more about the language spoken across much of Inuit Nunangat: Inuktitut. Mariah explained that place names often reveal important information about the topography, weather or wildlife commonly found in a location. We also learned how to say 'beautiful scenery today': *kajjaarna ullumi*.

Next up in the morning's educational program was a talk from Mariah and Nina called 'Future History of the Northwest Passage'. Nina outlined some of the environmental, economic, political and legal implications of a more accessible Northwest Passage, while Mariah provided insight into how local communities are adapting to rapid changes in sea ice and responding to increased pressure from commercial shipping.

As we sat down to lunch we arrived at Pond Inlet, Mariah's hometown, where we hoped to drop off Mariah and enjoy a community visit. The Arctic wind, however, had other plans. It was blowing 35 to 40 knots and gusting to 50 knots, far too strong for us to land. Fortunately for Mariah (and somewhat sadly for us), we were able to lower just one Zodiac to ferry her to shore. Many of us watched and waved farewell as she sped off across the wind-whipped seas, fairly floating across crests before making it safely to town.

The wild and woolly weather created cosy conditions for an afternoon cinema. We settled in to watch *The Hand of Franklin: A Rowing Adventure* (complete with popcorn!) which told the story of three hapless paddlers who tried to row from Inuvik to Pond Inlet. Their efforts were continually foiled by the elements. While they did not make it to Pond, they had some amazing adventures along the way.

After a delicious afternoon tea - thanks, galley team! - we headed back to the lecture room to hear from Adam about the North Water. He described the waters between Baffin Island and Greenland, explaining their remarkable productivity due to a unique combination of ocean currents and polynyas.



# Icy Arm Fjord & Buchan Bay

DAY 9 | Saturday 19 August

Position at 0700

Latitude: 71°42.8'N

Longitude: 074°44.9'W

Course: 241°

Speed: 7.1 knots

Wind Speed: 8 knots NE

Barometer: 1001

Air Temp: 4°C

It must be noted that when we are safe and cosy in bed, the night watch on the bridge is always alert and focused. Thank you. As if by magic we awake and are entering another majestic fjord. I was stunned by the sheer grandeur of the cliffs alongside us, and the lofty mountains capped with snow behind them. In the distance as we entered Buchan Bay, grey, angular shapes slowly emerged from the fog to reveal themselves. It is how it should be here, a full, clear panorama would be too much, too overwhelming to take in. The slow reveal of the next steep cliff, the next glacier, the next waterfall was an ongoing exploration.

Our destination this morning was Icy Arm fjord. It winds its way deep into the northeast side of Baffin Island from Buchan Bay. Our plan was a day of outings. As calm as it was entering this morning, the wind began to increase as we went deeper into the fjord. On arrival at a landing site, we had some waves and wind to contend with. Despite this, a landing beach was secured, and we began operations. The whole contingent of kayakers went out this morning and launched from the small beach. They bravely paddled away into the wind, out of sight around rocky corners. They would go on to paddle past waterfalls streaming from up high. On land, a short but steep hike up the moraine would offer some spectacular views into waterfall canyon and back down the fjord. Flowers, mosses, berries, and grasses added colour to an otherwise harsh landscape.

It was a lovely feeling to be back on board and warm for lunch, having faced the elements if only for a couple of hours. The ship repositioned into another arm; a fjord named Quernbiter.

It was equally spectacular. On our way in we passed under 'Executioner's', which sheltered a gorgeous waterfall high up on its walls.

On approach to our afternoon destination, something was spotted swimming past in the calm water. Then more. It was narwhal! Such an elusive animal, almost mythical, and not often sighted. Yet here were many of them cruising past the ship in pods. So special. Also sighted were beluga and seal. We slowed to a stop to observe and not disturb them as they passed by. A Zodiac cruise was planned at the end of this amazing fjord. The small rubber boats were dwarfed by the imposing cliffs. A powerful waterfall thundered down the rockface; in fact, waterfalls of various sizes were seen everywhere. Some kayakers once again headed out and found solitude and serenity at the base of these giants. It was a perfect outing.

Returning to the ship I could see many rewarmed, smiling faces as we regrouped to learn more about what we had experienced. Personally, I was feeling blessed to be here.



# Sam Ford Fjord

DAY 10 | Sunday, 20 August

## Position at 0700

Latitude: 70°15.3'N

Longitude: 074°44.9'W

Course: 193°

Speed: 9.1 knots

What an amazing day! It all began with an early rise to catch the amazing views as we cruised into the tongue-twisting Sam Ford Fiord. Another beautiful, interconnected network of towering cliffs and dramatic landscapes. As we began our ship cruise it became clear it was a rock climber's paradise, with solid rock walls cascading over 1,000 metres above us. The weather remained calm with low winds, which was a welcome change for everyone!

The moody skies set a dramatic tone with the rain clouds looming in the distance; however, this did not stop us Expeditioners from getting out on deck and making the most of the breathtaking sceneries. We ship-cruised deeper into Sam Ford Fiord, up the Walker arm, with our eyes set on the newly named arm called the Bear Claw, thank you, Susan! Exploring the Bear Claw arm was a first for Aurora Expeditions and we completed with ease thanks to the captain and his team. After another delicious lunch served by the amazing crew on board, we anchored next to a magnificent tidal glacier that stretched down from the remnants of a section of the Barnes Ice Cap. It was truly a sight to behold!

Eager to explore this new place, with full bellies a Zodiac cruise and kayak were in store for our afternoon. With the full team on board, the exploration of the end of the Bear Claw arm began. The kayakers explored and were thankful for the calm sea state and lack of wind. Everyone was able to get closer to the soaring glacier and marvel at the view (no more than 400 metres closer, of course).

As the cruisers and kayakers returned to the ship, the adventures were not quite over just yet. The infamous polar plunge began straight away once everyone was on board. What a place to do a polar plunge, with the tidal glacier towering above us. Once we were all set and ready to go, 23 brave souls voluntarily jumped into the 2-degree water and were congratulated with a shot of vodka to warm the soul! Well done to all the brave polar plungers!

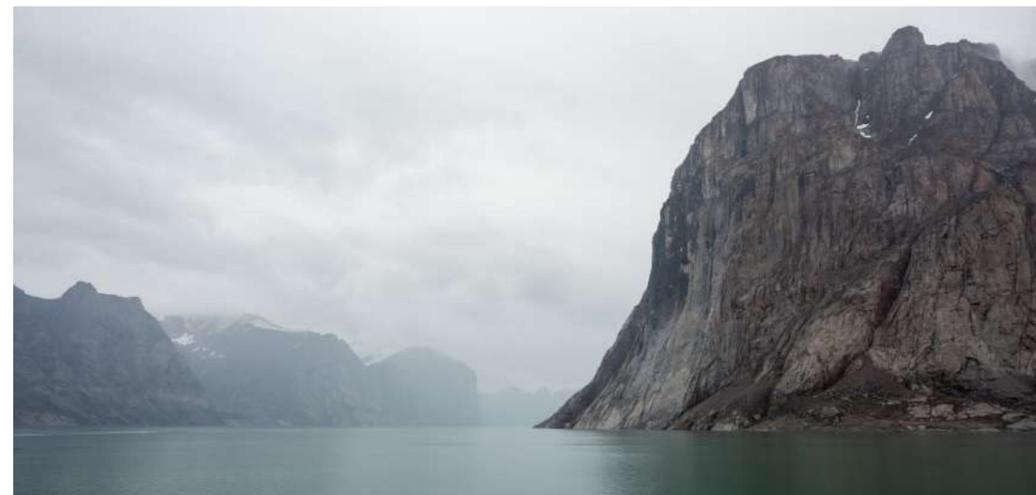
If all of that was not enough to fill your plate with a day's activities, then the BBQ was able to top it off with some more delicious food, as well as some wonderful-looking hats! Thanks to the hospitality team we were well fed once again. Just when you thought the day was winding down, Kevin the DJ master played us some throwbacks up in the Blue Hope Bar and lots of people boogied into the last hours of the day.

Thank you all for the amazing day and one to remember!

Wind Speed: 12 knots SW

Barometer: 1001

Air Temp: 6°C



# Baffin Bay (crossing to Greenland)

DAY 11 | Monday 21 August

## Position at 0700

Latitude: 70°34,6'N

Longitude: 066°15.7'N

Course: 114°

Speed: 8.4 knots

Wind Speed: 18 knots SSE

Barometer: 998

Air Temp: 6°C

Polar night, Longer and darker than any other night

Polar day, Longer and brighter than any other day

Polar landscape, Greater and mightier than any other landscape

A time I shall always carry within me and give expression to.

In reverence to the country, the light and the dark.

—Inger Johanne Qvam Hafsmo Fra 'Arctic light in oil on Canvas'

This was the morning after we had left the wonderful Sam Ford Fiord with all its wonderful, amazing views of cliffs and narrow fiord arms. We woke up out in the Davis Strait on our way from Baffin Island to Greenland. It was quite a bumpy morning, with 4-metre wave height and the wind blowing steadily at 20 to 25 knots with gusts up to 35 knots. This was to be the start of a full sea-day. After a late breakfast (for many of us) we spent the most of our day off the putter decks due to the winds and the pitching and rolling of the ship. There were lots of activities on board, including several lectures, starting at 9.30am, which was fairly early as we all had set our watches one hour ahead in the evening to get into the West Greenland time zone.

First lecture was a seminar on the possible causes of the demise of the Franklin Expedition in its attempt to find a sea route through the northwest passage. Nina, Mariah and Jan did presentations on issues including archaeology, forensic medicine and general medical perspectives on the Franklin tragedy. The amazing videos from the wrecks of the *Erebus* and the *Terror*, made by parks Canada were also shown. After this the captain of *Sylvia Earle*, the chief engineer and the hotel manager gave us a thorough walkthrough of the whole ship, including both bridge and engine, and propulsion systems. We were also invited to do a tour of the bridge tomorrow morning when we hopefully will have less swell and 'rock'n'roll'. The fulmars have been following the ship all along while crossing the Davis Strait.

After lunch there were more lectures, starting with our Inuit expert Geela doing a presentation on transport logistics and price levels on various consumer goods in Nunavut. Many of us were quite astonished and concerned about the very high prices for ordinary consumer goods like food, and even firearms and ammunition, this also being a necessary commodity for people living in Nunavut.

Then followed a presentation by Renato teaching us how to shoot award-winning photos. As always, a lot of tips and tricks to improve our photography skills.

At 6pm we were invited to the lecture theatre for a really well-made pub quiz with quiz master Gabby, accompanied by complimentary cocktails and canapes. The competition was fierce, with the winning team having just a single point more than the two following teams that made a draw at 34 points. The winning team was presented the first prize: a bottle of champagne!

In the recap and briefing, Susan, our expedition leader, focused on the upcoming day, which will be cruising between Disko Island and mainland Greenland, hoping to do a landing if we can find a nice beach, and hopefully also an area where it would be possible to do some hikes and possibly even a strenuous hike up to some viewpoints. So, let's see what will happen tomorrow when we approach Greenland and can do our first landing on this lovely country, which is a part of Denmark but with extensive home rule.

# Polar Plunge

DAY 10 | Sunday, 20 August



# Disko Bay & Luaraa Cove

DAY 12 | Tuesday 22 August

The world cannot live without the Arctic; it affects every living thing on Earth and acts as a virtual thermostat, reflecting sunlight and cooling the planet.

—Philippe Cousteau, Jr.

Yesterday began with a brilliant display of sunshine and clear skies as we entered the northern entrance of Disko Bay, otherwise known as the Vaigat strait. The scene was painted with majestic icebergs and picturesque valleys, creating a stunning backdrop for our day. Despite a somewhat delayed start for some, Captain's bridge tours provided an insightful look into the inner workings of the ship's control centre, showcasing both advanced technology and traditional tools like paper charts and dividers.

The day continued with a captivating presentation by David, who took us on a journey through the life of an iceberg from Ilulissat to its potential involvement in the sinking of the *Titanic*. The merging of science and history left us intrigued and amazed. Following this, a sumptuous lunch was enjoyed before we set out for an excursion to Luaraa Cove, marked at 70°03.9 N- 052°21.6W, where we were greeted by unspoiled sunshine and a beach that resembled something out of the tropics. Greenland's warm welcome was evident as we explored the area, with some adventurers opting for hikes that led to captivating geology, breathtaking vistas, and even the discovery of intriguing skeletal remains of a small whale.

As the day's activities wound down, we gathered back on board just in time for cocktails and canapés. The camaraderie flowed as we shared stories and experiences from our explorations. The evening continued with a recap and briefing of the day's events, ensuring everyone was on the same page for what lay ahead. With dinner served, we were treated to another round of Kevin's captivating live music. His arctic fox song, in particular, struck a chord and became an instant hit among the attendees.

The tale of the day was a testament to the wonders of Greenland's natural beauty and the captivating experiences it offered. From the educational insights provided by the Captain's bridge tours and David's iceberg presentation, to the awe-inspiring landscapes during the landing at Luaraa Cove, every moment was a reminder of the uniqueness of this journey. The blend of adventure, knowledge, and shared moments created memories that would undoubtedly be cherished by all who were fortunate enough to be a part of this extraordinary day.

As the sun finally dipped below the horizon, casting hues of orange and pink across the icy landscape, the sense of contentment and fulfilment was palpable among the Expeditioners. With the anticipation of tomorrow's adventures, we retired to our quarters, grateful for the opportunity to experience Greenland's splendour in such an immersive and unforgettable way.



# Ilulissat

DAY 13 | Wednesday 23 August

Position at 0700

Latitude: 69°13,6'N

Longitude: 051°07.2'W

Course: At anchor

Speed: At anchor

We have striven, we have sought and we have found. Of course our little expedition is not in the same realm as those of the great polar explorers of the past but it is a little taste and sets us apart from 99% of the people we meet every day. Perhaps we can retain some of the beauty, serenity and timelessness of the far northern world we have travelled in. Better still that we can take it back to our everyday lives.

—Ian Collier, Aurora passenger, Arctic season 2005

Yesterday marked a chapter of extraordinary experiences as we embarked on a journey that unfolded against the stunning Arctic backdrop. The day commenced with the *Sylvia Earle* vessel, gently anchored off Ilulissat in Greenland, setting the stage for a series of captivating encounters that would linger in our memory. As the sun cast its gentle rays across the icy expanse, the *Sylvia Earle* stood as a steadfast guardian of exploration. A part of the adventure began as fellow passengers disembarked for a two-hour cruise through the pristine waters of Disko Bay. The panorama that greeted us was nothing short of enchanting—towering icebergs sculpted by nature's hand majestically floated on the still waters, a testament to the intricate artistry of time and water. Our eyes danced across this frozen landscape, each iceberg an intricate masterpiece that beckoned us to marvel at its transient beauty.

A visit to the Ice Fjord Museum offered another dimension to our day, as we delved into the history of the region and its profound connection to ice. Ilulissat, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, unfolded its tale through exhibits that mirrored the essence of life amidst the frozen wonderland. Each artifact and story told of the harmony and challenges that have shaped the lives of those who call this Arctic haven home.

As the day gracefully transitioned, the *Sylvia Earle* charted her course towards Sisimiut, continuing our voyage through the Arctic seas. The journey between these two remote settlements was a bridge between cultures, a connecting thread that wove stories of resilience and human connection across the vast expanse of ice and water.

The crescendo of the day was an ethereal sunset that painted the Arctic sky in hues of red and gold. As the sun dipped below the horizon, the sky transformed into a canvas where shades of crimson blended with the softening blue. This celestial spectacle was a reminder of the transient nature of time, a breathtaking reminder of the beauty that nature orchestrates daily in the skies above.

Wind Speed: 8 knots S

Barometer: 1010

Air Temp: 11°C

With each moment that passed, yesterday's experiences etched themselves into the mosaic of our life's journey. The *Sylvia Earle* anchored off Ilulissat gifted us the privilege to witness Arctic wonders—icebergs that spoke of time's passage, a museum that whispered tales of heritage, and a sunset that painted the heavens with an otherworldly palette.

As we reflected on the day's adventures, we were reminded of the delicate interplay between nature and human history, and the role we play in safeguarding these treasures for generations to come. Yesterday was more than a series of events; it was a day that allowed us to be a part of the tapestry that threads through time and space, connecting us to the Arctic's secrets and its timeless beauty.



# Sisimiut

DAY 14 | Thursday 24 August

Position at 0700

Latitude: 66°57.4'N

Longitude: 050°57.2'W

Course: At anchor

Speed: At anchor

Wind Speed: 1 knots S

Barometer: 1010

Air Temp: 7°C

It is not that life ashore is distasteful to me. But life at sea is better.

—Sir Francis Drake, English Explorer

We had a smooth transit from Ilulissat and arrived in Sisimiut early morning. Sisimiut is Greenland's second largest town and northernmost year-round ice-free port in the country. Did you know there are almost as many Greenlandic dogs as people in Sisimiut? These beautiful creatures are working dogs descendent from wolves.

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. Did you know the colours had a meaning back in the day? There were no house numbers or street names, so all buildings were on a five base colour system. Red, black, yellow, green and blue. Each colour had a specific meaning. Red buildings signified churches, schools or teachers' or ministers' houses. Yellow colours were assigned to hospitals, doctors, and healthcare personnel. Green was at first the symbol for radio communication and later became the colour of telecommunications. The colour blue was often reserved for fish factories, and the police stations were black. Today, owners are free to paint their property in any colour they choose. 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.

After a tasty lunch we headed for Kangerlussuaq. As evening approached, we met our Captain, Artem Kolmykov, and crew for the farewell cocktail. He shared a few words about his inspiration for being a captain and we all raised our glasses to a successful voyage. Cheers! A delicious Farewell Dinner was accompanied by happy chatter filling the dining room as we shared our experiences from the day with our fellow Expeditioners. Some enjoyed a night cap and a dance in the Tektite Bar, with lively music and song from our talented Expedition Team member, Kevin. What a brilliant end to a brilliant day/voyage. Thank you, all, for the best voyage ever.

A special thanks to all the kayakers for joining the kayak team – you were awesome! (from your kayak Guides: Eamon, Vanja and Gabby).



# Kayaking Log

Kayak Masters: Vanja, Gabby and Eamon

Number of Paddlers: 15

Total Paddle Outings: 6

Total Distance Paddled: 31.4 km

Paddlers:	Paul Argyle	Bruce Flexman	Janine Judge
Les Brooks	Susan Drury	Jesse Uhlson	Peter Judge
Nicky Haynes	Dennis Perry	Charis Uhlson	Robert Anderson
Dixie Muir	Dale Flexman	Helen Deluga	Daniella Zitta

## Saturday 12th August PM: Maxwell Bay | Distance 4.8 km

Glassy, calm seas and blue skies for our first outing. We launched from the marina easily. There was a lonely iceberg resting beneath a very tall cliff. The contrast in the colours today was significant. The bright white berg against the dry yellow landscape and the aqua colour of the bay. We hugged the coast and soon the bay became very shallow. Many kittiwake and fulmar were resting and feeding on the surface, the shallow water teeming with small prey. As we went deeper into the bay, we started to see kelp flowing beneath us. Beautiful. The inner bay became deeper but still clear. A curious bearded seal popped up to investigate us. I think it was unanimous that kayaking was the right choice. Most of the group paddled back to the ship and a few landed for a stretch of the legs.

## Thursday 17th August AM: Croker Bay | Distance 4.3 km

Towards the end of Croker Bay on Devon Island is an impressive glacier flowing down from the Devon ice cap. This was the site of our outing today. There was a bit of wind at the aft of the ship, so we decided to tow the kayaks to the sheltered northern end and drift south along the front of the glacier. This allowed us to admire the shapes and colours as we glided by. At the end the water was scattered with brash ice, and it was easy to paddle amongst it. We took a few moments to stop and listen to the ice popping and melting around us. We wanted to paddle longer and explore around the corner, but the ship and lunch were calling us.

## Saturday 19th August AM: Icy Arm | Distance 2.7 km

Today we had two paddle outings, which was a surprise to some after days at sea. The fjords we had entered offered good protection from the swell we had experienced for the last few days. However, the fjords also funnelled the wind as they got narrower. We had a small landing site beach at Icy Arm and started our paddle from there. We could not land anywhere downwind so we were limited to battling against the wind initially and finding shelter where we could below the high cliffs. The effort was rewarded by waterfalls streaming beside us and little bays of calm water. This was our coldest paddle yet, so we did not stay out too long. When it was clear that we were fighting a losing battle with the wind we turned and joined it, cruising, surfing back to the landing site in a fraction of the time. Cold and soggy, we returned to the *Sylvia Earle* via Zodiac.

## Saturday 19th August PM: Quernbiter Fjord | Distance 4.8 km = 2.6 Nm

The ship cruise into this fjord was spectacular. The morning wind had abated, leaving a glassy, calm stretch of water. It was in this calm fjord we spotted narwhal and beluga from the ship. We could see movement in the distance and then closer as they passed the ship. It delayed our paddle but was not an issue. Maybe because of the cold conditions this morning we had only several paddlers join us. It was, however, exceptional paddling. Misty, glassy and almost eerie, with the cliff walls rising into the clouds. We hoped to encounter marine mammals but alas, saw none. The waterfalls were very impressive, though, pouring down from lofty heights. The small group glided quite a long way from the ship and other Zodiacs to find a very tranquil, still section to kayak on. A beautiful paddle.

## Sunday 20th August PM: Sam Ford Fiord | Distance 5.2 km

Heading deeper into the fjords of Baffin Island we found a lovely, sheltered arm called the Bear Claw. The ship anchored near a glacier that was spilling into the fjord. Next to the glacier was also a turgid river. We paddled off the ship and cruised down beside the damp, steep cliffs. At the end of this boxy fjord was a green flat that looked like a glacier had been active here not too long ago. The walls here and there had small melt waterfalls trickling down them. It provided life to the many mosses and lichens clinging to the steep sides.

We stopped to admire the glacier for a while before gliding back to the ship. Baffin Island full of surprises.

## Tuesday 22nd August: Disko Bay | Distance 5.1 km

After getting familiar with the steep rocky cliffs of Baffin Island, we arrived on the shores of Greenland, in Disko Bay on the mainland side. Our first kayak in Greenland: the home and possible birthplace of the kayak. The rocky headland in front of us was our initial destination. We took some shelter there and decided we needed to explore around the corner. A good choice. There was amazing geology in our private bay. Basalt columns met sandstone caverns, looking like chocolate fudge resting on a vanilla base. Beautiful shapes and formations greeted us as we explored along the coast. Cormorant flew above us, and we spotted a few raven, the bird of Norse mythology. It was clear the birds liked to roost on these rocky cliffs, as they were painted with white streaks. From the bay we turned with the wind and headed out to a large, stunning iceberg. I was an easy drift out with the wind; the return would take some effort. But we were all keen to see this beauty a little closer. It was magnificent and worth the effort. As we made it back to the land, we felt we had actually exerted ourselves today. Welcome to Greenland, a beautiful (quite green) place.

## Tuesday 23rd August: Ilulissat | Distance 4.3 km

We had a big day ahead of us. There were three separate activities in different locations. To get to both planned excursions and kayak in the afternoon would take some planning and good timing. It was well worth it. The wind had dropped off in the afternoon and we set out on the water for what would be our last kayak. We hugged the rocky coastline of Ilulissat, below some dwellings and past a couple of yachts anchored there. We had to be mindful of the local boats zooming around points towards the harbour. A few icebergs scattered in the bay gave us a destination to paddle along. One small berg threatened to roll around as a boat gave it some wake. From here we headed back to the coast, with its lovely patterns and colours in the rocks. We found an inlet and explored inside. A strange little pontoon was floating at the end; it was a hot tub on the water with a diving board, all on a wooden platform. Very scenic. From here we returned to the ship, happy we got the most out of the day.





# Bird and Mammal Sightings

## Bird Species

August

	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Red-throated Diver					•				•					
Northern Fulmar	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Common Eider		•												
Long-tailed Skua (ib)			•											
Glaucous Gull					•		•						•	•
Kittiwake			•		•		•	•		•				
Arctic Tern	•		•											
Brünnich's Guillemot			•		•			•		•				
Black Guillemot				•	•					•				
Snow Bunting							•					•	•	
Raven	•						•	•		•			•	
Snow Goose									•					

## Mammal Species

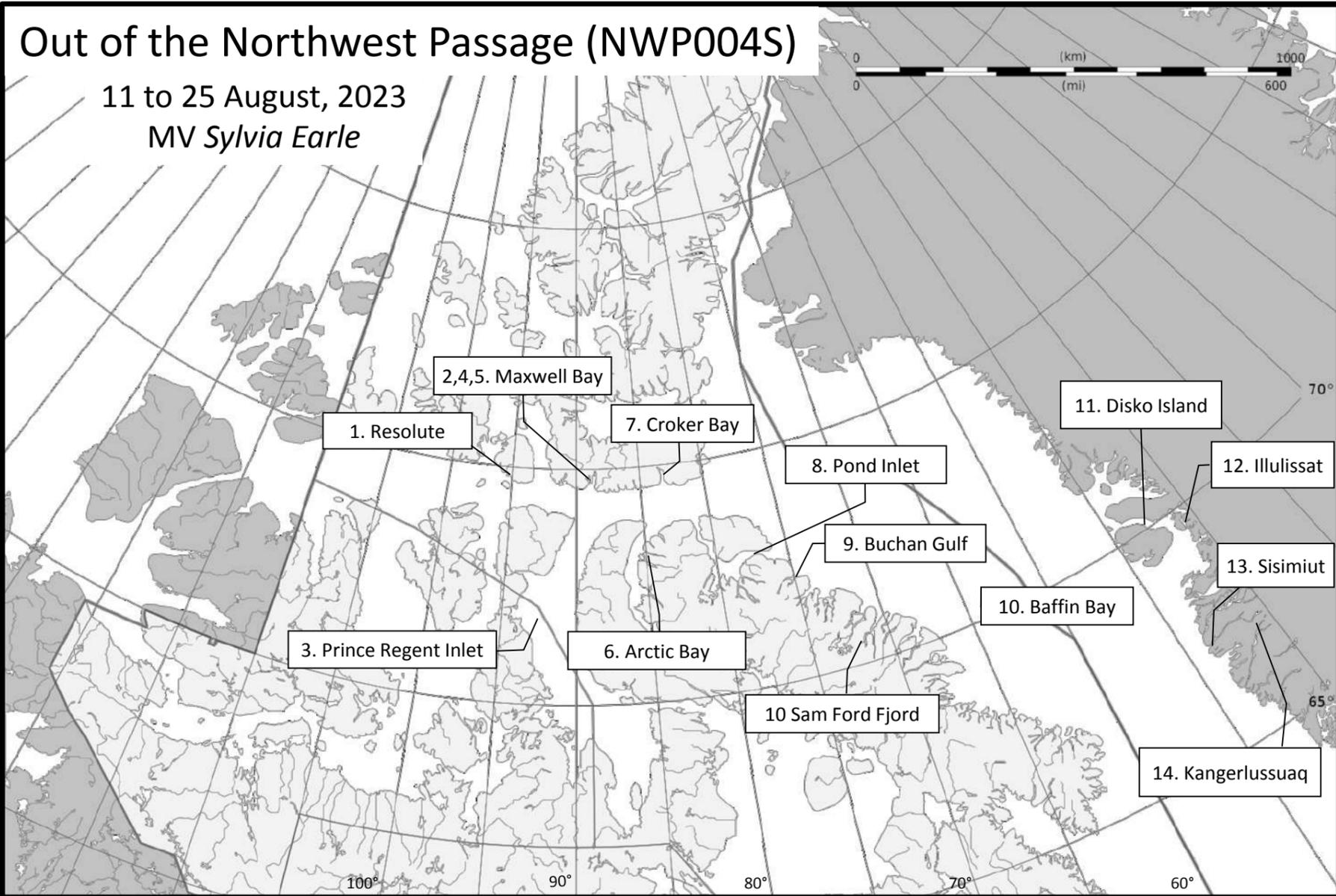
August

	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Polar Bear					•									
Ringed Seal			•											
Bearded Seal		•		•		•		•						
Harp Seal		•			•	•	•			•				
Walrus					•									
UNID Seal				•						•	•	•		
Narwhal					•				•					
Humpback Whales													•	
Beluga				•				•						



# Out of the Northwest Passage (NWP004S)

11 to 25 August, 2023  
MV Sylvia Earle





## Expeditioners:

Anderson Robert

Anderson Patricia

Archuleta Audrey

Argyle Paul

Argyle Elaine

Arlidge Burnham

Bessen Mark

Bessen Janine

Black Cynthia

Bloustien Geraldine

Bloustien Mark

Bower Bonnie

Brisbin Leanne

Broadbent Frank

Brooks Leslie

Camilleri Darryl

Camilleri Gillian

Cogbill Stephen

Craig Jacqueline

Craig Peter

Cundy Maria

Cundy James

Deddo Jennifer

Deddo Jr. Michael

Deluga Helen

Dockley Carol

Drury Susan

Flexman Bruce

Flexman Dale

Franklin Renate

Franklin Paul

Freeman William

Freeman Daphne

Glanville Allan

Glanville Ann

Goode Matthew

Goode Katherine

Greville Anne

Guymer Janine

Hatfield Edward

Hatfield Catherine

Hatten Annette

Haynes Nicole

Heath Susan

Heath Colin

Hicks Patricia

Hosley Sarah

Ikenberry Donna

Jack Robyn

Judge Janine

Judge Peter

Kington Randi

Kington Jr Ellery

La Duke Barbara

La Duke John

Lafferty Jamie

Leaman Angela

Lejins Janet

Lombardi Marc

Matthews David

Matthews Beverley

May Sally-Ann

May David

McCreery Barbara

McCreery Alan

McEachern Beverly

Melnitzer Rudy

Melnitzer Helaine

Muir Dixie

O'Leary Lauren

Patel Ameeta

Patrick Jane

Patrick Miles

Pedersen Keith

Perry Dennis

Rempal Brydon

Sharp Isobel

Shaw James

Shipp Jennifer

Spata Elise

Steward Claire

Stirzaker Darian

Stirzaker Robyn

Stokes Ian

Stokes Judith

Sutton Julie

Taylor Richard

Uhlson Charis

Uhlson Jesse

Vining Mike

Walker Rebecca

Zitta Daniela

## Expedition Team:

Expedition Leader: Susan Adie  
Assistant Expedition Leader: Alex Cowan  
Onboard Expedition Manager: Barbara Ostwalt  
Naturalist & CS Coordinator: David Cairns  
Biologist: Adam Pope  
Local Guide (Cultural Specialist): Mariah Erkloo  
Local Guide (Cultural Specialist): Geela Qaqqasiq  
Historian: Nina Gallo  
Permitting Archaeologist: Maria Lear  
Firearms Manager: Nils Egeland  
Photography Guide: Renato Graniere  
Expedition Medic: Jan Emil Kristoffersen  
Lead Kayak Guide: Eamon Larkin  
Kayak Guide: Vanja Davidson  
Kayak Guide: Gabby Bruce  
Zodiac Master: Ryan Kaempfe  
Zodiac Driver: Stefan Joenson Gunnbjornsson  
Expedition Musician: Kevin Closs  
Onboard Expedition Assistant: Flor Torti

## Photography thanks to:

Renato Graniere      Eamon Larkin

## 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: Eka Saptia  
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





