Into the Northwest Passage

August 20 - September 5, 2015 aboard the *Ocean Endeavour*

The Northwest Passage is the pinnacle of Arctic exploration; on this tour, we go where the ice allows. We’ll explore the quaint villages, dramatic fjords and calving glaciers of Greenland, working our way north to spectacular Kap York. Crossing Smith Sound we’ll visit Ajuittuq (Grise Fiord), Canada’s northernmost community. The bird cliffs at Coburg Island National Wildlife Area teem with kittiwakes and murres.

At Beechey Island, the Franklin expedition gravestones stand watch. Melville, Banks and Devon Islands offer opportunities for Peary caribou, polar bear, walrus and musk ox— as well as visits to ghostly RCMP and Hudson’s Bay Company posts. Prince of Wales Strait affords a striking, narrow passage to Amundsen Gulf and Kugluktuk (Coppermine), the end to our epic journey above the Arctic Circle.
In remote Arctic waterways, weather, sea and ice conditions, and safety will determine our daily progress. Heavy ice conditions are a possibility throughout this itinerary. An alternate route has been planned.

From $8,995 USD per person  For full pricing details see Page 52
HIGHLIGHTS  Into the Northwest Passage

• Join the select few who have travelled this legendary route
• Photograph birds and wildlife in their remote wilderness habitat
• Learn about Inuit communities, culture and world view, first hand
• See haunting artifacts of the northern explorers, HBC and RCMP

PROPOSED ITINERARY

Day 1:  Kangerlussuaq, Greenland
Day 2:  Sisimiut
Day 3:  Ilulissat
Day 4:  Karrat Fjord
Day 5:  Melville Bay
Day 6:  Kap York
Day 7:  Smith Sound
Day 8:  Ajuittuq (Grise Fiord), Nunavut
Day 9:  Coburg Island
Day 10: Devon Island
Day 11: Beechey Island
Day 12: Bathurst Island
Day 13: Melville Island
Day 14: Banks Island
Day 15: Prince of Wales Strait
Day 16: Ulukhaktok (Holman)
Day 17: Kugluktuk (Coppermine), Nunavut

PROPOSED ITINERARY

ALTERNATE ROUTE ○

Day 14: Prince of Wales Island
Day 15: Queen Maud Gulf
Day 16: Ikaluktutiak (Cambridge Bay)
Day 17: Kugluktuk (Coppermine)

Pre and post hotel nights are available in Toronto and Edmonton on request.

Charter flights are available for this expedition.

Northbound
Toronto, Ontario to
Kangerlussuaq, Greenland
Date: August 20, 2015
Early morning departure

Southbound
Kugluktuk (Coppermine) Nunavut to
Edmonton, Alberta
Date: September 5, 2015
Early evening arrival

Roundtrip: $2,195.00 USD per person inclusive of taxes and fees.
THE GREENLAND ICE CAP cloaks the length of Greenland, it dominates the country. Tantalising glimpses are seen where glaciers crash to the ocean.

Our Kangerlussuaq excursion takes us onto the ice cap. We travel from Kangerlussuaq in specially outfitted 4WD’s through a scenic and breathtaking landscape to walk on the ice cap.

Here we can understand the scale of the ice cap and the desert like environment created by it.

PLEASE NOTE: This is our intended itinerary. Wildlife sightings and some activities depend on favourable conditions. As with all of our adventures, weather, sea and road conditions are a determining factor and will dictate our itinerary.

Prior reservation is essential. Available on voyages completing in Kangerlussuaq

Cost: $176.00 USD per person
2015 Into the Northwest Passage

Day 1: Kangerlussuaq
Kangerlussuaq, the start of our voyage, is appropriately named. The word means ‘The Big Fjord’ in Greenlandic, aptly describing this amazing feature, 168km long!

Lying at the head of the longest fjord in western Greenland, Kangerlussuaq has one of the most stable climates in the region—though temperatures can range from -50C in the winter to as high as 28C in summer.

Day 2: Sisimiut Coast, Greenland
The west Greenland coastline is a rich mixture of fishing communities, myriad islands and complex coastal waterways.

We will be making an expedition stop here to explore the Greenlandic landscape.

Day 3: Ilulissat
Venturing 250km north of the Arctic Circle we find the stunning coastal community of Ilulissat. Ilulissat translates literally into “iceberg”, and there couldn’t be a more fitting name.

Our visit will include time in the colourful town and a chance to hike out to an elevated viewpoint where we can observe the great fields of ice. We will also cruise in our fleet of zodiacs in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Ilulissat Icefjord.

The Icefjord is where we find the Sermeq Kujalleq Glacier, one of the most active and fastest moving in the world at 19m per day and calving more than 35 square kilometers of ice annually. The glacier has been the object of scientific attention for 250 years.

Day 4: Karrat Fjord
In Karrat Fjord we will cruise one of Greenland’s most spectacular fjords. During ice breakup, narwhals and seals use the long leads created by high winds in this region to hunt the rich waters of the fjord.

The cliffs within the fjord should give us good opportunities to see colonies of dovekies.

Time spent on deck today will likely result in some good wildlife sightings, not to mention unbeatable photographic opportunities.

Day 5: Melville Bay
Melville Bay (Greenlandic: Qimusseriarssuak), is a large bay off the coast of northwestern Greenland. Located to the north of the Upernavik Archipelago, it opens to the south-west into Baffin Bay. Its Kalaallisut name, Qimusseriarssuak, means “the great dog sledding place”.

The Sound was named by William Baffin after Sir Thomas Smythe, promoter of voyages to find a Northwest Passage.

Day 6: Kap York
The rugged coastal environment at Kap York is rich in wildlife and is part of an extensive network of traditional hunting grounds.

During the spring and summer months the skies and cliffs are dotted with millions of birds, primarily auks and murres. This district boasts the largest seabird population in northwest Greenland.

Whalers and explorers often entered these waters and later Admiral Robert Peary’s family raised a monument in honour of his achievements on the cape. Sailors’ and ships’ logs record multiple climbs of the cape in order to survey the ice conditions in Qimusseriarssuak.

Day 7: Smith Sound
We will spend a day exploring north into this fabled body of water that served as the main route for explorers and adventurers searching for the North Pole. Adolphus Greely, Sir George Nares and Elisha Kent Kane all travelled these waters with varying degrees of success.

The Sound was named by William Baffin after Sir Thomas Smythe, promoter of voyages to find a Northwest Passage.
Only 48-72km wide and 88km long, Smith Sound is often packed with ice and provides favourable conditions for wildlife viewing.

**Day 8: Aujuittuq (Grise Fiord)**
Aujuittuq means ‘place that never thaws.’ That’s apt for this peaceful hamlet, 1,150km above the Arctic Circle - Canada’s northernmost civilian community. We’ll be welcomed by the population of about 165 souls.

Our activities will centre on the school where we will have a chance to meet members of the community and learn about their way of life.

**Day 9: Coburg Island**
At the entrance to Jones Sound is Coburg Island, whose spectacular seabird cliffs are a designated National Wildlife Area.

30,000 pairs of black-legged kittiwakes and 160,000 pairs of thick-billed murres crowd the rocky ledges on this island almost completely covered by an ice cap.

**Day 10: Devon Island**
The largest uninhabited island in the world supports significant concentrations of wildlife, including 26 species of seabirds and 11 species of marine mammals.

At Dundas Harbour we find the lonely remains of an RCMP station dating from the 1920s. We have also spotted walrus, polar bear, muskox and caribou here.

At nearby Croker Bay, we have a chance to Zodiac cruise though this scenic bay and marvel at icebergs, freshly calved from the glacier at the head of the bay.

**Day 11: Beechey Island**
In 1845 Sir John Franklin took his expedition of 129 men in two ships into the Wellington Channel. Not a soul returned from the fateful expedition. It was two years before search parties were launched.

Aside from the bodies of three souls buried here, only relics were found as clues to the disappearance. Until recently, the three graves had left no indication as to the fate of the rest of the British party.

Such is the interest in this story, the Canadian government recently announced a new initiative to locate the missing Franklin vessels.

**Day 12: Bathurst Island**
Good soil conditions and a rare wetland environment produce abundant vegetation
here, making Bathurst a major calving area for the endangered Peary Caribou.

Here we also find Polar Bear Pass National Wildlife Area, a migratory route for polar bears from March to November. The north half of the island is the proposed Tuktusiuqviaq National Park.

There is a long human history on the island, with evidence of Dorset and Thule habitation as early as 2,000 BC.

**Day 13: Melville Island**

Melville Island was first visited by British explorer Sir William Parry in 1819. Not only did he discover the island; ice forced him to spend the winter in 1820 at what is now called ‘Winter Harbour’.

The island is named for Robert Dundas, 2nd Viscount Melville, who was First Sea Lord at the time.

Melville Island is one of two major breeding grounds for a small sea goose, the Western High Arctic Brant. DNA analysis and field observations suggest that these birds may be distinct from other Brant stocks. Numbering only 4,000-8,000 birds, this is one of the rarest goose stocks in the world.

**Day 14: Banks Island**

Home to two thirds of the world’s population of Lesser Snow Geese, two federal Migratory Bird Sanctuaries were founded in 1961. The island is home to Barren-ground caribou, polar bears, muskoxen, and birds such as robins and swallows.

The first grizzly-polar bear hybrid found in the wild, was sighted on Banks Island in April 2006, near Sachs Harbour.

Muskoxen, with a population of about 40,000, are the most striking of the abundant wildlife on the island. It was named Banks Island in 1820 by Sir William Parry in honour of British naturalist and botanist Sir Joseph Banks.

**Day 15: Prince of Wales Strait**

Prince of Wales Strait is part of the Arctic Ocean, extending northeastward for 275 km from the Amundsen Gulf to Viscount Melville Sound and separating Banks and Victoria Islands. It was discovered in 1850 by Robert McClure, the Irish explorer, who came within sight of the Viscount Melville Sound before heavy ice forced him to turn back.

Named after Albert Edward, then the Prince of Wales, it was not navigated until the RCMP patrol of Sgt Larsen in 1944. It has since become the preferred route of large vessels making the passage.

**Day 16: Ulukhaktok (Holman)**

Found on the west side of Victoria Island, The Hudson’s Bay Company post at Prince Albert Sound was opened in 1923, moved to Walker Bay in 1928 and finally to Ulukhaktok (Holman) in 1939.

The large bluff that overlooks Ulukhaktok was the source that provided the slate and copper used to make ulu’s and give the community its name.

Ulukhaktok is also the location of the most northern golf course in the Americas and hosts the “Billy Joss Open Celebrity Golf Tournament” every summer. Over the years they have managed to attract players from the Edmonton Oilers and the Edmonton Eskimos, as well as golfers from other countries.

**Day 17: Kugluktuk (Coppermine)**

Located at the mouth of the Coppermine River, southwest of Victoria Island on the Coronation Gulf, Kugluktuk is the western most community in Nunavut. Originally named Coppermine, it was renamed Kugluktuk according to its Inuinnaqtun name meaning “place of moving waters”, on January 1st, 1996.

The Coppermine River itself is designated a Canadian Heritage River for the important role it played as an exploration and fur trade route. Copper deposits along the river attracted the first explorers to the area.

Because the tundra is close to the tree line, a variety of wildlife can be viewed in the area, including grizzly bears, wolverines and moose, as well as tundra wildlife, such as muskoxen, caribou, foxes and wolves.