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BAFFIN ISLAND – JEWEL OF THE HIGH ARCTIC

12 Nights / 13 Days

Day By Day Expedition Itinerary

Day 1 – Ottawa to Iqaluit (Nunavut – Baffin Island) - We depart Ottawa this morning on our scheduled flight to Iqaluit, situated on Baffin Island. Upon arrival into Iqaluit we enjoy a walking tour of the town and board our expedition ship, the Akademik Ioffe in the afternoon. After settling in to our cabins and exploring the ship, we meet our expedition team and fellow passengers. Excitement is in the air as we enjoy a welcome cocktail and cast off to explore one of the most remote places on earth – Baffin Island.

Day 2 – Lower Savage Islands - At the mouth of Frobisher Bay on the southeast tip of Baffin Island, the Lower Savage Islands are a geological wonder. A maze of channels criss-cross the islands and provide superb zodiac cruising opportunities. It's possible to navigate from one side of the island to the other where the ship will collect us. The islands are ideally situated between the dynamic flow of the Hudson Strait and this mixing of nutrient-rich waters makes for a diversity of marine life, including polar bear.

Day 3 – Monumental Island - Situated in the Davis Strait, Monumental Island is a well-known location for walrus. We explore by zodiac along the shoreline looking for these fascinating creatures. Watchful eyes may locate smaller pups within the masses. We sometimes encounter polar bears in this vicinity and during their hunting forays; they have been known to chase walrus off their haul out and into the water. Throughout the coming days and rest of the voyage, our onboard experts educate us with a series of presentations about the environment, wildlife and history of Baffin Island and the Canadian Arctic and the locations we plan to visit.

Day 4 – Pangnirtung - Nestled in the heart of Cumberland Sound and the western gateway to Auyuittuq National Park, the village of Pangnirtung is beautifully situated between the mountains and the sea. This remote community is a well-known center for traditional and contemporary arts and crafts – including carvings, prints and textiles. In addition, the Angmarlik Visitor Centre has a wonderful interpretive display featuring the lifestyle and history of the Thule and of the modern Inuit.

Day 5 – Sunshine Fjord - Sunshine Fjord straddles the Arctic Circle at 66⁰ degrees, 33 minutes north of latitude. Depending on the weather, we might cruise across the Circle on the ship, cross it in the zodiac boats or the more active option maybe to cross the circle on foot. Whichever way, it's a thrill to be above the Arctic Circle at last! Sunshine Fjord offers terrific hiking opportunities and we have a number of great routes in mind. You may wish to take the extended hike, gaining elevation and offering wonderful views of our surroundings. Or choose to take the less strenuous option along the shoreline. For the sea kayakers, the sheltered waters of the fjord provide great conditions for paddling.

Day 6 – Auyittuq National Park - On the eastern coast of Baffin Island, lies one of Canada's most spectacular National Parks – Auyittuq. The landscape is dominated by steep and rugged mountain scenery, extensive glacial systems and powerful rivers. In partnership with Parks Canada, we venture into the park with skilled local guides who are able to interpret the flora, fauna, geological and glacial systems which can be found here. It's a fascinating place experienced by only a few fortunate visitors every season. We plan on hiking on shore and cruising the rocky shorelines looking for wildlife. We also plan a visit to Qikiqtarjuaq, a small settlement which is home to several Inuit families. After an inspiring day of exploration we continue north along the coastline of Baffin Island, venturing deeper into the Arctic wilderness.

Day 7 – Isabella Fjord - Isabella Bay (Niginaniq) is an important summer habitat and feeding area for endangered bowhead whales. These remarkable marine mammals are able to break sea ice with the crown of their head. Polar bears, ringed seals, Canada geese, snow geese and narwhal are also commonly sighted in this vicinity.

Day 8 – Gibb Fjord - This morning we enter the spectacular Gibbs Fjord with towering cliffs all around us. Our expedition ship will seem dwarfed by the giant peaks and snowy glaciers as we cruise slowly along the dark waters. One past guest commented that Gibbs Fjord 'was like something out of Lord of the Rings' – and we think you will agree!

Day 9 – Pond Inlet and Sirmilik National Park - Nearing the far north of Baffin Island, we enter a broad channel which is home to the remote Inuit community of Pond Inlet. A highlight is a visit to the Natinnak Centre, where a fascinating cultural exhibit showcases aspects of daily life, culture and history of the people of the north. Inuit carvings, jewelry and other traditional craft is on display and purchasing such items from the local artisans is a great way to support the community. Pond Inlet is also the main access point to the pristine wilderness of Sirmilik National Park. This jewel in the crown of Canada's Arctic Park system, features spectacular scenery consisting of rugged mountains, ice fields and glaciers, coastal lowlands and sizeable seabird colonies.

Day 10 – Navy Board Inlet and Sirmilik National Park - We venture north into Navy Board Inlet, separating Bylot Island from the northern extremes of Baffin Island. We are completely surrounded now by the National Park. Spotting scopes and binoculars will be trained ashore as we search for polar bear, birds and other wildlife. In the icy waters we keep a look out for Harp seals, walrus, narwhal and the white Beluga whale. Excellent photographic opportunities are all around us and our onboard professional photographer will be on hand to assist you with image composition and provide other tips and advice.

Day 11 – Dundas Harbour and Croker Bay - Leaving the wild landscapes of Baffin Island, we cross Lancaster Sound to Devon Island. This broad channel of water has been likened to the wildlife 'super highway' of the Arctic. Massive volumes of water from the Atlantic to the east and Pacific to the west, and from the archipelago of islands to the north all mix here, combining to make a rich source of nutrients and food for an abundance of Arctic wildlife. We plan on visiting the old Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) outpost at Dundas Harbour. In the afternoon we reposition the ship into Croker Bay, home to a substantial glacial system.

Day 12 – Prince Leopold Island and Beechey Island - Prince Leopold Island is important migratory bird sanctuary, home to thick-billed murre, black guillemots, northern fulmars and black-legged kittiwakes. A population of several hundred thousand birds makes this one of the most significant bird sanctuaries in the entire Arctic ecosystem. Given the abundance of food in this vicinity we often sight beluga, narwhal and bowhead whales here, several species of seal as well as polar bear. Our final shore landing - Beechey Island, is

a place of great historic significance and suitable finale to our expedition. It is here that Sir John Franklin's ill-fated expedition spent its last 'comfortable' winter in 1845 before disappearing into the icy vastness, sparking an incredible series of search expeditions that last almost three decades.

The mystery of what happened to Franklin was partially solved in September 2014, when a joint Parks Canada and Royal Canadian Geographic Society expedition, found the long-lost Franklin shipwreck, HMS Erebus in the Victoria Strait. One Ocean Expeditions played a vital role in the search by carrying underwater search equipment on our ship as well as scientists, historians, researchers, dignitaries and sponsors of this history defining mission. A trip ashore at Beechey Island to visit the grave markers on a remote windswept beach, is a thrilling experience for history buffs and for many today will be a highlight of the expedition. We return to the ship and this evening enjoy a special dinner attended by the Captain. It's a great time to reflect on the wildlife, history and dramatic scenery of the High Arctic.

Day 13 – Resolute, Nunavut to Edmonton, Alberta - Our expedition comes to an end as we arrive into Resolute. The town is named after the British ship HMS Resolute which became trapped in ice and abandoned here in 1850 while searching for the lost Franklin. A weather station and airstrip made Resolute a strategic outpost during the time of the Cold War. After arriving in Resolute we disembark the Akademik Ioffe and bid farewell to our crew and fellow passengers. We transfer to the airport for our flight to Edmonton, in 'southern' Canada.

About our itinerary – Polar exploration can be unpredictable. Specific sites visited will depend on prevailing weather and ice conditions at the time of sailing. The above itinerary should be read as a 'guide only' and may change. The ship's Captain in conjunction with the Expedition Leader continually review the sailing plan throughout the voyage, making adjustments to the itinerary along the way to take advantage of optimal weather and ice conditions or to maximize our encounters with wildlife. Decades of experience spent exploring these waterways mean we have a large number of outstanding landing sites and zodiac cruising locations to consider, even when the weather conditions may not be ideal or when heavy ice may block out planned route. A flexible approach is something we encourage you to bring to the ship. Before you Book – Important Voyage Details