BAFFIN ISLAND – JEWEL OF THE HIGH ARCTIC

24 JULY TO 05 AUGUST 2017

12 NIGHTS / 13 DAYS

Overview

Baffin Island is one of the last great wilderness regions on the planet and the focus of this outstanding expedition. From Iqaluit, on Frobisher Bay, we explore up the wild east coast of Baffin Island discovering the deep fjords, soaring mountains and immense glacial systems. We are constantly on the lookout for variety of birdlife and marine wildlife - including polar bears - the icon of the north. Visits to remote Inuit provide a fascinating glimpse into the daily life of the people who call this remote wilderness their home. The history of early exploration is ever present and we visit former Hudson’s Bay Company locations and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) outposts. A highlight will be a visit to Beechey Island, the final resting place for some of the men of the ill-fated Franklin Expedition in 1845-46. This remote and desolate place is home to several small grave markers, which we see on our shore excursion. We eventually reach the remote town of Resolute where our adventure comes to an end. This is remote, small ship expedition cruising at its best.

As with all our expeditions, safety is our top priority. For that reason, weather, ice or other conditions may require us to change our itinerary and shore excursions as we go but that is half the fun of Polar exploring. Predictability is a word that has no relevance in this environment.

Day By Day Expedition Itinerary

July 24, 2017 – Ottawa (Ontario)

Arrive in Ottawa today, transfer to your hotel for included pre-cruise accomodation.

July 25, 2017 – Ottawa (Ontario) to Iqaluit (Nunavut)

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 Sergey Vavilov in the afternoon. After settling into 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.
July 26, 2017 – 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.

July 27, 2017 – Pangniqtuuq (Pangnirtung)

Nestled in the heart of Cumberland Sound and the western gateway to Auyuittuq National Park, the village of Pangniqtuuq is beautifully situated between the mountains and the sea. This remote community is a well-known centre 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.

July 28, 2017 – Sunshine Fjord

Sunshine Fjord straddles the Arctic Circle at 66° 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.

July 29, 2017 – Auyuittuq National Park and Qikiqtarjuaq

On the eastern coast of Baffin Island, lies one of Canada’s most spectacular National Parks – Auyuittuq. 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 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.

July 30, 2017 – Isabella Bay – Niginganiq National Wildlife Area

Isabella Bay (Niginganiq) 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.
July 31, 2017 – Gibb Fjord

This morning we enter the spectacular Gibb 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 Gibb Fjord ‘was like something out of Lord of the Rings’ – and we think you’ll agree!

August 01, 2017 – Mittimatalik (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 Mittimatalik. 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, jewellery and other traditional craft is on display and purchasing such items from the local artisans is a great way to support the community. Mittimatalik 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. Even your widest angle camera lens will seem inadequate to capture the vast scenery.

August 02, 2017 – 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 Crocker Bay, home to a substantial glacial system.

August 03, 2017 – Prince Leopold Island

Prince Leopold Island is important migratory bird sanctuary, home to thick-billed murres, 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 found in the nutrient-rich waters here, we often sight beluga, narwhal and bowhead whales, several species of seal as well as polar bears.

August 04, 2017 - Beechey Island

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, it 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.

**August 05, 2017 – 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 expedition. A weather station and airstrip made Resolute a strategic outpost during the time of the Cold War. After arriving in Resolute we disembark the ship and bid farewell to our crew and fellow passengers. We transfer to the airport for our flight south, to Edmonton. A transfer is also provided from the airport into a central downtown location.

**About our itinerary** – Small ship expedition cruising can sometimes be unpredictable. Specific sites visited will depend on prevailing weather and sea 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 sea conditions or to maximise our encounters with wildlife. Years of experience spent exploring these waterways mean we have plenty of outstanding landing sites and zodiac cruising locations to consider, even when the weather conditions may not be ideal. A flexible approach is something we encourage you to bring to the ship.

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**Before you Book – Important Voyage Details**

**Proof of our Polar Commitment** - When travelling with One Ocean Expeditions, you will discover how much we care about the places and people we visit. We demonstrate this by finding ways to give back as well as taking away so many incredible memories. For more information on our commitment to responsible tourism, please review our document entitled, “Our Environmental Commitment”.

**Medical Documentation** – Once you have booked your voyage to the Polar Regions, you will be required to complete a Medical Information Form. This form must be completed, signed and returned to One Ocean Expeditions no later than 90 days prior to departure.

**Passport** – Well before traveling, please ensure you have a current passport with an accurate photo, valid for at least six months after your scheduled return flight home. Also check that your airline tickets are in exactly the same name as your passport. Some countries may require you to have a return air ticket or sufficient funds to purchase such a ticket.

**Budgeting** – It is a good idea to bring along some $US cash. There are some onboard expenses such as those incurred at the bar, in our gift shop and for satellite communication via email or phone. There are also several souvenir shopping opportunities throughout the voyage including at some of the Inuit communities. $CA is the preferred currency in such locations.
Clothes – We do not need to tell you it is cold in the Arctic. So make sure you come prepared with clothes that will adequately protect you from the weather and wet conditions (sea spray is common onboard zodiacs). Expensive specialty gear is not required, but you should have warm, waterproof clothing available upon your arrival at your embarkation point. Please read the One Ocean Expeditions Pre-departure Information for more details about what to bring on the journey. Windproof and waterproof outer weather gear as well as expedition gumboots are included in the price of your voyage. This saves you from having to bring heavy clothing and boots from home. Details of this gear can be found in your pre-departure information.

Onboard – Like the weather, sea conditions can also be unpredictable. Rough waters are not uncommon in this part of the world. You will be safe and comfortable aboard with your experienced crew in control of our ship, but you may suffer the effects of motion sickness, unless you have taken precautions. We recommend visiting your doctor prior to departure for medication that can help you avoid this easily treated condition.

Gratuities – We suggest you allow the equivalent of $US10 - $US15 a day for gratuities for the crew and expedition staff. This is usually collected just prior to the end of the cruise. Gratuities are at your discretion.

Sea Kayaking – If you have some experience sea kayaking and are interested in doing this activity during the expedition, you will need to book this option prior to departure from home. We cannot book this activity once onboard. There is a separate document for sea kayakers that you will need to review beforehand. It’s important you have some prior paddling experience. If you are unsure, speak to your booking agent or contact us to discuss.

Embarkation Protocol – Guests arrive with the rest of the group accompanied by the One Ocean Expeditions’ Representative. Full details of embarkation/disembarkation procedures will be supplied with your final documentation. Once onboard, you will be participating in an obligatory lifeboat drill. We will also conduct important briefings on landing procedures and zodiac operations.

Travel Insurance – On all One Ocean Expeditions’ voyages, you must have comprehensive travel insurance. Your own domestic government medical insurance and private health care plans will not cover you in most overseas countries. Your travel agent can recommend a policy designed to cover participants on these cruises. Your policy must provide coverage for your medical costs in case of hospitalization, emergency travel and repatriation. We require that you obtain adequate insurance before joining the voyage. Cancellation insurance is also recommended.

Please check the terms of your policy carefully, particularly with regard to limits of cover (i.e. replacement of photographic equipment, baggage loss, claims procedure, costs due to airline delays etc). Also ensure you are familiar with the procedure for making claims (for example, most policies stipulate that claims must be made within a certain time after completion of your journey). Once you have paid your deposit or full payment, certain fees will apply if you have to cancel your holiday (see the cancellation provisions in our terms and conditions). For this reason you should take out insurance at the time of paying your deposit, which should then protect you in such a situation.

Visas – Commencing in March 2016, Canada will be introducing and Electronic Travel Authorization.
(eTA) program. Under this program citizens from countries other than the United States (who do not need a visa to enter Canada) will need to obtain an online authorization before flying to Canada. A fee of $CA7 is payable for processing an application for an electronic travel authorization. An application must be made online with the Department (Citizenship and Immigration Canada) for that purpose. An electronic travel authorization is valid for a period of five years from the day on which it is issued. If you plan any side trips to other countries you will need to investigate visa requirements as it is your responsibility to ensure you have all required visas for your trip. Rules and regulations governing the issuance of visas are constantly changing and vary for different nationalities. You should check visa requirements with your travel agent or relevant consular authority well before traveling.

The information provided here is given in good faith and has been compiled with all reasonable care. However, some of the information may become out of date. Please keep this in mind and check with us if you want to be sure about anything. The document was correct at time of printing but you can check online for the most up to date version. If you have any queries, please contact your travel agent or our staff. We are here to help you!

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