

Northwest Passage: Eastern Gateway Cruise Itinerary

[Link: Northwest Passage: Eastern Gateway Cruise](#)

Tour Overview

Experience the High Arctic at the height of summer, when long hours of daylight illuminate immense icebergs, shifting sea ice and some of the Arctic's richest wildlife habitats. Journey across Baffin Bay between Greenland and Nunavut's Qikiqtani region, travelling through spectacular landscapes shaped by ice, ocean and centuries of Inuit life.

Along Greenland's coast, visit the remarkable Ilulissat Icefjord, where enormous icebergs flow from one of the world's most active glaciers into Disko Bay. Crossing into the Canadian Arctic, explore Tallurutiup Imanga at the eastern gateway to the Northwest Passage, a vast and productive marine ecosystem where we hope to see narwhal, beluga and bowhead whales, walrus, seals, polar bears and bustling seabird colonies.

Throughout the journey, Inuit guides and cultural educators share their knowledge and perspectives, bringing a deeper understanding of the land, wildlife and communities of this region. Visits ashore also reveal the fascinating history of Arctic exploration, whaling and the search for the Northwest Passage, including Beechey Island and its connection to the Franklin Expedition.

With opportunities for Zodiac cruising, walks ashore, wildlife watching and community visits, this expedition offers an immersive journey through one of the world's most spectacular Arctic environments.

This itinerary reflects the westbound departure. The eastbound departure reverses this itinerary.

Itinerary

Day 1: Kangerlussuaq, Greenland



Kangerlussuaq lies within a broad glacial valley between the Greenland Ice Sheet and the sea. Its dry climate and unusually stable weather led to the establishment of an American air base here during the Second World War and continue to make it one of Greenland's most important aviation gateways. The surrounding region has a much longer history as a place of Inuit travel and hunting. After arriving by charter flight from Toronto, board the expedition vessel and begin the long passage through Kangerlussuaq Fjord. Mountains, glacial valleys, and pale meltwater mark the transition from Greenland's interior to its western coast. Crossing the Arctic Circle, the route opens towards the long light and expansive waters of High Arctic summer.

Day 2: Sisimiut Coast



Greenland's Sisimiut coast unfolds as a complex meeting of islands, mountains, sheltered waterways, and deep fjords. At the height of summer, white cottongrass, dwarf birch, willow, and Arctic wildflowers spread across the tundra beneath dark rock. Seabirds are active along the coast, while whales may be encountered in the waters offshore. Human history here reaches back more than 4,500 years. Archaeological traces left by successive cultures, including Saqqaq, Dorset, and Thule peoples, speak to generations of movement and adaptation along this coast. Zodiac cruises, hikes, and time ashore offer different ways to encounter a landscape where the sea has long connected hunting grounds, settlements, and travel routes.

Day 3: Ilulissat



Ilulissat means "icebergs," a fitting name for a city beside one of the world's great moving ice systems. At the head of the UNESCO-listed Ilulissat Icefjord, Sermeq Kujalleq ranks among the fastest and most active glaciers on Earth. Its immense icebergs travel slowly through the fjord before entering Disko Bay, continually transforming the seascape. The icefjord has shaped human life here for more than four thousand years. That relationship continues in contemporary Ilulissat, a lively Greenlandic city where fishing boats crowd the harbour and the streets bustle with residents and travellers. Restaurants showcase Greenlandic ingredients, while cafés, shops, and the striking Ilulissat Icefjord Centre reflect the city's growing cultural and creative energy. Here, deep human history, contemporary city life, and constant environmental change come together at the edge of the ice.

Day 4: Western Greenland



Northwest Greenland is a far-reaching world of islands, narrow channels, sheltered bays, and deep fjords enclosed by steep mountains. Glaciers descend from the ice sheet, while summer loosens sea ice and opens passages along the coast. The West Greenland Current carries immense icebergs northward, many beginning their journeys in Disko Bay before joining bergs released by glaciers farther north. Together, they form a moving flotilla of towers, arches, and fractured blue faces. During the nineteenth century, European whaling ships pressed through these ice-laden waters and across Melville Bay towards bowhead grounds in northern Baffin Bay and Tallurutiup Imanga. Small communities occupy rocky islands and natural harbours throughout this intricate seascape. Fishing and hunting remain central to life, while boats connect settlements separated by water and rugged terrain. Explore by ship, Zodiac, and on foot, following shorelines busy with breeding seabirds and walking across tundra brightened by white cottongrass and summer wildflowers. Long hours of daylight illuminate the coast, where every channel offers a different arrangement of rock, water, and drifting ice.

Day 5: At Sea



Baffin Bay extends between Greenland and the Canadian Arctic, carrying currents, wildlife, sea ice, and immense drifting icebergs between its coasts. Icebergs moving north along Greenland may turn west through these waters before joining the southbound current along Baffin Island. Whales, seals, northern fulmars, kittiwakes, murres, and dovebies also travel and feed across this vast marine ecosystem. A day aboard offers time to experience the scale of the crossing from the decks and observation spaces. Presentations, workshops, and conversations with Inuit cultural educators, naturalists, historians, and other expedition team members explore the wildlife, geography, cultures, and exploration history connecting both sides of the bay. Ahead lie Tallurutiup Imanga and the eastern gateway to the Northwest Passage.

Day 6-10: Tallurutiup Imanga (Lancaster Sound) and Devon Island, NU



Between northern Baffin Island and Devon Island, Tallurutiup Imanga opens westward from Baffin Bay into the waterways of the Northwest Passage. Known on many maps as Lancaster Sound, it is the great eastern gateway through which wildlife, people, ice, and ships have moved for generations. Its name means the waters surrounding Tallurut, the Inuktitut name for Devon Island, whose markings are said to resemble the lines of traditional chin tattoos. Powerful tides and currents mix nutrients through these waters, sustaining one of the Arctic's greatest concentrations of marine life. Narwhal, beluga, and bowhead whales, walrus, seals, and polar bears move through the region, while immense colonies of seabirds gather along its cliffs and islands. In High Arctic summer, long daylight offers time to watch for wildlife from ship, Zodiac, and shore as sea ice continues to shift through the channels. Tallurutiup Imanga is also an artery connecting Inuit communities and an important place for travel, harvesting, and cultural practice. Its protection as one of Canada's largest National Marine Conservation Areas recognizes both its extraordinary ecological value and generations of Inuit knowledge and stewardship. Inuit expedition team members and naturalists interpret how currents, ice, wildlife, and human life interact across this complex marine environment. Tallurut rises from these waters in broad plateaus, glacial valleys, gravel plains, and polar desert. Known in English as Devon Island, it is the world's largest island without a permanent population, although archaeological sites attest to a long history of Paleo-Inuit and Inuit presence. Walks and Zodiac explorations bring its immense geological scale and delicate summer tundra into closer view. Across water and land, Tallurutiup Imanga gathers the defining elements of the eastern gateway into one remarkable High Arctic region.

Day 11: Ikpiarjuk (Arctic Bay)



Ikpiarjuk sits within a natural amphitheatre of tall hills at the head of Adams Sound, where cliffs and sculpted rock formations rise above a sheltered harbour. Its Inuktitut name means "the pocket," a fitting description for a community held between mountains and sea on the northern coast of Baffin Island. The surrounding waters and lands have drawn people here for generations. Fishing and the harvesting of seal, narwhal, and other wildlife remain important to food, travel, and community life. Inuktitut is widely spoken, carrying knowledge particular to this coast, while carving, sewing, education, local businesses, and other forms of contemporary work reflect a community continually defining its own future. Ikpiarjuk is one of the communities most closely connected with Tallurutiup Imanga. Its waters provide travel routes and harvesting areas while linking the community with the wider Qikiqtani region. Time shared with residents offers an experience of Tallurutiup Imanga from the shore, expressed through language, creativity, daily life, and the welcome of those who know these waters as home.

Day 12: Beechey Island



Beechey Island holds one of the most tangible chapters in the history of Northwest Passage exploration. Franklin's expedition spent the winter of 1845–46 here before sailing onward and disappearing. Three graves, remains of the camp, and stone structures left by later search expeditions still mark its stark shoreline. Beechey became a gathering point for those who came north in search of Franklin, leaving supplies, messages, and traces of their own journeys. A fourth grave belongs to Thomas Morgan of HMS Investigator, who died during one of these searches. In the decades following Franklin's disappearance, dozens of expeditions entered the Arctic, charting extensive areas and extending European scientific and imperial attention across Inuit Nunangat. Inuit testimony proved essential to tracing the expedition's final movements and, generations later, locating its lost ships. Beechey Island connects Franklin's failed voyage with its wider legacy, including expanded geographical knowledge, growing colonial ambitions, and an increasingly sustained southern presence in Inuit homelands.

Day 13: Qausuittuq (Resolute), NU, Canada



Set among the gravel plains and raised beaches of Cornwallis Island, Qausuittuq occupies a strategic place within the waterways of the Canadian High Arctic. Its Inuktitut name means "place with no dawn," a reference to the long polar night, while the summer season brings light that lingers around the clock. The modern community began with the Canadian government's High Arctic Relocation of 1953. The Qausuitturmiut who call it home have built a distinct community that now serves as an important centre for northern research, transportation, and expedition travel. Disembark in Qausuittuq and transfer to the airport for the charter flight to Ottawa. Here, at a historic crossroads of Inuit travel, Arctic exploration, and contemporary northern life, the sea journey ends and the route turns south.

What to Expect

Our small ship cruising programs allow you to experience the best of the natural world, while enjoying the comforts of our friendly floating hotel. The ship generally makes crossing between islands at night, so every morning you awake to new vistas and discoveries. Every day we offer a combination of interesting shore excursions and fun shipboard activities. You can choose which elements of the program you want to participate in.

This is a general natural history and cultural expedition rather than a dedicated birding tour. Travellers can look forward to a mix of wildlife viewing, cultural experiences, and time to appreciate the region's incredible scenery — with opportunities for birding included along the way.

This expedition cruise necessitates passengers to be in reasonably good health. Zodiac cruises and transfer times can be lengthy. You must be able to climb stairs between decks on the ship, as well as the external gangway stairs to transfer between the zodiac and ship.

Some of our shore landings will be 'wet', requiring waterproof boots. Once you have left the zodiac, you'll find our shore excursions accommodate both those who wish to enjoy a gentle stroll and those who prefer more active hikes. The excursion may involve walking over uneven or sandy terrain in variable weather conditions. Our onboard specialists will join us on these shore excursions to provide interpretation and narration to these wonderful landscapes and experiences.

Each evening we will gather in the lounge to recount the day's events and share memorable stories. Our onboard musician will provide some lively entertainment during happy hour and the expedition leader will outline the following day's schedule. Our resource staff of naturalists, historians, and other guest speakers will give informative talks at various times throughout the voyage.

Meals in the ship's dining room are a great opportunity to meet new friends and recount the day's adventures. Special diets can be accommodated with advance notice. Safety is also a top priority with Eagle-Eye Tours - our team has extensive experience in the field, and all of our Voyages are run in conjunction with operators with the highest safety standards.

When the ship is underway, it is a wonderful time to join a naturalist on deck, take photos of the stunning scenery, or get caught up on some reading in the library.

Weather, ice, government regulations, and community requests may necessitate changes to the planned itineraries and/or the cancellation of certain shore excursions and enhancements. Published itineraries are examples only and we reserve the right to change or modify the itinerary and landing sites at any time prior or during an expedition. Changes will be communicated at your expedition orientation or during your onboard expedition briefings.

We know that everyone travels for different reasons. Over the years, however, we have found one common element among the guest who choose to travel with us - a thirst of knowledge and authentic experience. Knowing this drives us to ensure the highest quality learning experience on our trips, by taking time to carefully design each trip we offer.

What's Included

Tour Price Includes

- Passage aboard the Ocean Victory
- Applicable taxes and credit card fees
- Special access permits, entry, and park fees
- Complimentary expedition jacket
- Expert expedition team
- Guided activities
- Sightseeing and community visits
- All Zodiac excursions
- Port fees
- Pre-departure materials
- Educational program
- Interactive workshops
- Evening entertainment
- All shipboard meals
- Complimentary wine, beer, and soft drinks are served with dinner
- 1 GB complimentary internet access

Tour Price Does Not Include

- Commercial and charter flights
- Program enhancements/optional excursions
- Gratuities
- Personal expenses
- Mandatory medical evacuation insurance
- Additional expenses in the event of delays or itinerary changes
- Possible fuel surcharges and administrative fees
- Pre- and post-trip hotel accommodation
- Kayak program (\$1345 USD pp 2028)
- Premium Wi-Fi access

