

July/August 2023 – Kara Sea Odyssey

26 July - 18 August 2023

A unique chance to explore a very seldom visited region of our planet, we will go where almost no westerner has set foot, in Novaya Zemlya and Severnaya Zemlya, some of the most mysterious and unknown lands on the globe. And to Franz Josef Land, a spectacular archipelago in the Russian high arctic. We will sail along the wild and primordial coasts characterized by huge glaciers and protected bays. We will go in search of the mighty Whales that spend the summer in these rich waters, we will visit sea birds colonies and Walrus colonies, we will encounter the mighty Polar Bear, the curious Arctic Fox, probably the Musk-Ox and the Reindeer, also we will have a small chance for Arctic Wolves in Severnaya Zemlya. We will land in historical places of the polar exploration, Ice Harbor in Novaya Zemlya, where the expedition of Barents wintered, Sedov archipelago in Severnaya Zemlya where wintered Ushakov's expedition, Teplitz Bay in Franz Josef Land where the Duke of Abruzzi placed his base camp and Cape Norway where Nansen spent the winter after trying to reach the north pole on board the legendary Fram. Also, if the conditions will allow us, we will touch two important geographical points, the easternmost and the northernmost point of Europe. All accompanied by an expert guide, Piero Bosco.

PROGRAM

26 July

Flight to Norilsk (not included).

Overnight on the plane.

27 July

Arrival in the morning at Norilsk, transfer to the hotel and free time to refresh and recover from the journey. In the afternoon guided tour of the city, mining capital of Russian Arctic, it is a true Soviet urban reality and is one of the largest cities in the world north of the polar circle, if not the biggest. Home of the infamous Norillag labor camp whose prisoners built the Norilsk Polar Railway, now owned by Norilsk Nickel, a large mining company that extract nickel and other raw materials from the area. The city, that few westerners have visited, still now to enter it we need special permissions, it offers real glimpses of the Soviet era and a unique urban post industrial degradation. The main places of the city are the statue of Lenin, the museum, the drama theater and a little surprise, Nurdi Kamal, the northernmost mosque in the world.

Overnight at the Norilsk hotel *** or similar.

28 July

In the morning transfer to the airport for the flight Norilsk – Dikson (included).

We will reach the local meteorological station where we will spend a few days waiting the arrival of

the legendary vessel RV Mikhail Somov.

The Mikhail Somov, pride of the Soviet fleet, awarded The Order of the Red Banner for the heroic Antarctic expedition of 1985 when she was surprised by winter and trapped in the sea ice of the Ross sea for 133 days. The movie "The Icebreaker" from 2016, was taken from this story. Mikhail Somov can sail in the discontinuous sea ice up to 2 meters thick. Since its construction she has been used for scientific expeditions and to supply the Soviet scientific stations in Arctic and Antarctic. She is part of the fleet of the Department of Hydrometeorology and environmental monitoring of the Russian Federation and will host us on board during its annual voyage to supply materials and men to the Russian weather stations in the Kara sea. The ship measures 133 meters, transports a Mi-8 helicopter that we will use for landings, and can accommodate over 100 passengers, to our group of up to 14 people will be reserved 2 quadruple and 3 double basic cabins, they have sink ensuite while showers and bathrooms are shared. Our fellow travelers will be scientists and researchers, simple workers, pilots, a real full immersion in the Russian polar world, this is a unique and unrepeatability opportunity to participate in a real arctic expedition, to be part of a world that no westerner before have even dreamed about. We will have access to all the weather stations we will visit and use the helicopter for all landings, as well as for some panoramic flights.

Our guide is a Russian biologist/ornithologist who spent his life in Arctic and knows these territories in detail.

Overnight at Dikson meteorological station in sleeping quarters, basic accommodation.

29-31 July

We will know the exact departure date of the ship with minimum notice, departure is scheduled for August 1st, but could also be anticipated a few days. For this reason we must be on site a few days earlier.

During our stay we can observe the work of the scientists and daily excursions to explore the surroundings will be organized. The area is hilly and characterized by the tundra.

We will have a good chance to observe Beluga Whales, often in good number in the surrounding waters, while on the mainland there is a good population of Snowy Owls and Knots.

Good example of urban degradation and abandonment is certainly the village of Dikson, in the past important point along the Northeast Passage, today is just over a ghost town. Its population has dropped from nearly 5000 inhabitants in the 80s to few hundreds.

Overnight at Dikson meteorological station in sleeping quarters, basic accommodation.

01 August

Today we will begin our polar adventure and become acquainted with the crew and the ship. Navigation.

02 August

During the night we will have reached Kolba meteorological station, a few dozens of miles from Dikson, our first stop. Boarded the helicopter we will reach the coast and then the buildings that

are located a few kilometers inland, in an area covered by tundra.

Soon after we will land the supply work will begin and will continue for a few hours. Of course we can assist to it for a while but we will also have the time to visit the station and get to know its inhabitants and to hike around and perhaps reach the coast looking for wildlife. Finished the land activities we will return to the ship and continue our voyage in the Kara sea towards the north east.

03-04 August

Today we will arrive at Sterlegova meteorological station, in the Taymyr peninsula; this station is divided into two sections, one located along the coast and the other inland. We will stop in this area for a couple of days, we will have the opportunity to use the helicopter to land and spend the day on the ground exploring the station and its surroundings. The tundra, here rather flourishing, houses a good population of Reindeer and Musk-oxen. Encounters with Polar Bears and Arctic Foxes are also possible. Brant Geese and Greater White Fronted Geese are now almost ready to migration while along the coast the Beluga Whales are quite common.

In the night he will take sailing in the Kara sea towards the north west.

05 August

In the morning we will reach the lost archipelago Izvesti Tsik where, in the largest of the islands, Troynoy, the scientific station Polyarnaya Stantsiya is located, waiting for the supplies transported by our ship. In 2016 the 5 scientists living in the island were confined to the station due to the presence of as many as 10 polar bears that held them under siege for 2 weeks, for us it would be a real luck to find the same situation during our visit.

However, the true attraction of Troynoy is the colony of iconic Ivory Gulls that unlike other places here are nesting on a flat ground allowing us to approach them rather easily.

At the beginning of August the brief Arctic summer is turning to an end, but the colony should still be on the breeding ground.

06 August

Full day of navigation in the Kara sea. Even in August, it is still partially covered by ice floes that will not only make the navigation more interesting and will allow us to experience the power of Mikhail Somov in the ice, but will offer us opportunities to meet the marine mammals. Ringed Seals and Bearded Seals love to rest on the pack ice, perfect prey for the Polar Bears. These waters are home for the Humpback Whale and the rare Greenland Whale.

If our progress would have been good we may take the chance to sail close to the remote **Uyedinenia** island, for its position Solitude island.

07 August

In the morning we will find ourselves at the mysterious Severnaya Zemlya archipelago, the last land of the globe to be completely mapped only in 1930-32 and discovered in 1913 by the expedition leaded by the famous Russian explorer Ushakov.

These islands, which separates the Kara sea from the Laptev sea, often still surrounded by thick ice

even in August, are for about half of their surface covered by huge dome glaciers and for the remaining part is an arctic desert. Certainly an extreme and hard environment of a lunar beauty. The words used by Ushakov himself, a polar explorer of great experience, to describe Severnaya Zemlya give perhaps an indication of what awaits us: " I have seen God-forsaken forsaken Chukotka peninsula, blizzard-ridden wrangel island, twice visited fog enshrouded Novaya Zemlya, and I have seen Franz Josef Land with its enamel sky and proud cliffs garbed in blue, hardened glacial streams, but nowhere did I witness such grimness or such depressing, lifeless relief..

* This part of our expedition does not plan visits to meteorological stations, it is an extension of the Somov schedule to give us the chance to visit this unique archipelago!

In the evening we will reach the western coasts of Severnaya Zemlya where we will stop at the small archipelago Sedov, where we will land, right in these islands Ushakov's expedition wintered in 1930-32 and founded the local polar station. In addition to its great historical value these islands are important for his large Ivory Gull colony, over 2000 couples. We will continue our helicopter exploration landing in the northern part of the Octiabriskoy Revoliutsiy island.

In the night our ship will sail to the north along the western coast of the archipelago. Passing through the Krasny Army strait we will follow the coastline of the island Octiabriskoy Revoliutsiy and later through the Yuniy strait we can admire the coasts of the island Komsomolets, the northernmost, always keeping the Pioner island to the west.

08 August

In the morning we will arrive along the south western coasts of the island Komsomolets. From here we will board our helicopter for a spectacular excursion over the northern main islands of the archipelago and the majestic glaciers that cover them reaching almost 1000 meters of altitude. We will admire the icebergs adrift from the sky but will also land in the arctic desert and enjoy walks in search of the fauna. Polar Bears, Arctic Foxes, some years locally also Lemmings and Reindeers. Seabirds of the high arctic such as Ivory Gulls, Little Auks, Kittiwakes and Arctic Terns. The environment of Severnaya Zemlya is so extreme that only a few species of animals are able to survive here, among them also the rare Arctic Wolf. The icy waters surrounding the archipelago hosts good populations of Walruses, Bearded Seals, Ringed Seals and also Beluga Whales. A landing is planned in the northwestern part of the Komsomolets island where we can experience the Arctic Desert in its maximum expression. We will try to fly the easternmost part of the Krasny Army strait where huge glaciers from north and from south calve, a world made of ice and icebergs, and also the largest glacier in the archipelago and the whole Russia, Akademii Nauk , a circular dome of 80 kilometers diameter, which covers part of the Komsomolets island. Before returning to the ship we will fly over the western part of the Komsomolets island, a majestic glacier front that extends for over 50 kilometers. This marvel will be our last memory of this unknown and wild land while Mikhail Somov will change course and will turn the bow to the west.

09 August

Left Severnaya Zemlya, bow to the west, we will reach the remote and flat Vize island, where there has been a hydrometeorological station since 1945. As we move north the desolate arctic desert

replace the vegetation of the tundra. The island is a nesting ground of a colony of Ivory Gulls, a species living in the high Arctic only, as well as a colony of Kittiwakes, Peregrine Falcons have been spotted in the past. Often visited by Polar Bears and Arctic Foxes, Bearded and Ringed Seals are present in the surrounding waters.

At the end of the supply operations the helicopter will bring us back on board and we will continue our navigation towards west.

10 August

In the morning we will reach Franz Josef Land. This archipelago is one of the northernmost lands of the planet and holds a unique high arctic fauna composed of Polar Bears, Arctic Foxes, Walruses, Seals, Narvals, Belugas, Whales, Seabirds, the rare Ivory Gulls among them. The territory is characterized by huge glaciers, and mountainous and wild islands surrounded by persistent pack ice.

Between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, many expeditions visited these islands, because of their position far north they represented an ideal starting point for explorers who were trying to reach the North Pole. Among the most important we can mention the Austrians Payer and Weyprecht who in 1873 discovered the archipelago, the Norwegian Nansen, the English Jackson and Luigi Amedeo Duke of Abruzzi.

Our destination for today is Hayes island, where the Ernst Krenkel meteorological station is located. On the island there are numerous buildings that we can explore together with the interesting and surprising surroundings where we will find a small picturesque circular lake perhaps created by a meteorite, a colony of Walruses, a wrecked airplane and numerous volcanic formations.

11 August

Embarked on the helicopter, today again at our exclusive use, we will discover Franz Josef Land from the sky. We will first fly to the extreme north of the archipelago, Rudolph Island is in fact the northernmost island of the archipelago and therefore the most difficult to reach. From the helicopter we will spot cape Fligely, the northernmost point of Europe, one of the important geographical point of this expedition. But our destination, where we will land, is the Teplitz Bay, a small bay where the ship Stella Polare and his crew wintered in 1899/1900. The following spring, Luigi Amedeo Duke of Abruzzi expedition crossed 86°, no man before went so north.

Left the mythical place of the Duke of Abruzzi we will visit cape Norway, another legendary place, where Nansen wintered in 1895 with his companion Johansen.

Before returning to the Krenkel base, we may visit cape Trieste, a name that remembers the many Italian sailors who were part of the Austrian expedition that discovered the archipelago. The coasts of the Champ island host some very particular large-sized perfectly circular boulders that are still the subject of debate between scientists to define their original origin.

With us on board the helicopter will travel a representative of the Russian Arctic National Park that we may need to transport to park office located at Thikaia bay. Very protected bay surrounded by glaciers is located along the coast of Hooker island. In this case we will take advantage of the

situation and we will visit the remains of the Soviet meteorological station, in the area are nesting the black and white Little Auks.

12 August

In the night we will have reached the north coasts of Novaya Zemlya. This island has always been one of the most mysterious and unknown lands on the planet, where tourists are a real rarity, it will be a great emotion to see what few have seen! Most of this region is closed to tourists, only the northernmost part, included in the territory of the Russian Arctic National Park, is accessible to visitors.

Cape Zhelania is a very important geographical point as it separates the Barents sea from the Kara sea. It was visited in 1595 by the expedition of Willem Barents who discovered the Svalbard islands. During the Second World War the Soviet polar station was destroyed by the Nazis during a military operation. Today the meteorological station is still running and some abandoned buildings remained, it is also used by the staff of the Russian Arctic National Park. We will be able to visit the station and taken on board the helicopter, today at our exclusive use, a ranger, we will leave for a extensive excursion of a few hours which offers us a spectacular aerial view of the island and, includes a few landings in his most important points. In particular we will stop at **Flissingsky Cape**, the easternmost point of Europe. Characterized by a steep cliff, this cape overlooking the Kara's sea was named by Barents after the Dutch city of Vlissingen. Followed by **Ledianaya Gavan**, one of the mythical places we will visit during this expedition. The members of Barents expedition in 1596 were forced to spend the winter here in simple shelters built with beached timber and then reach the continent the following summer aboard small boats built from parts of their ship. Barents died during that crossing. Finally, depending on the weather conditions, we could land at the Oranskiye Islands, small islands located off the northern coast of Novaya Zemlya, where there are many marine birds and a memorial of the Barents expedition. Alternatively at Heemskerk island, an important haul out for Walruses and a good location for birdwatching with colonies of sea birds where often Arctic Foxes are hunting. Another possibility is represented by cape Konstantin, with the colony of marine birds from which the men of Barents collected eggs in the spring.

An epic day immersed in the history and nature of the Arctic!

In the late evening we will set the bow towards the south.

13-16 August

Sailing in the Barents Sea towards Arkhangelsk.

17 August

Today we will arrive to Arkhangelsk and disembark from Mikhail Somov.

Overnight at Hotel Novotel Arkhangelsk **** or similar.

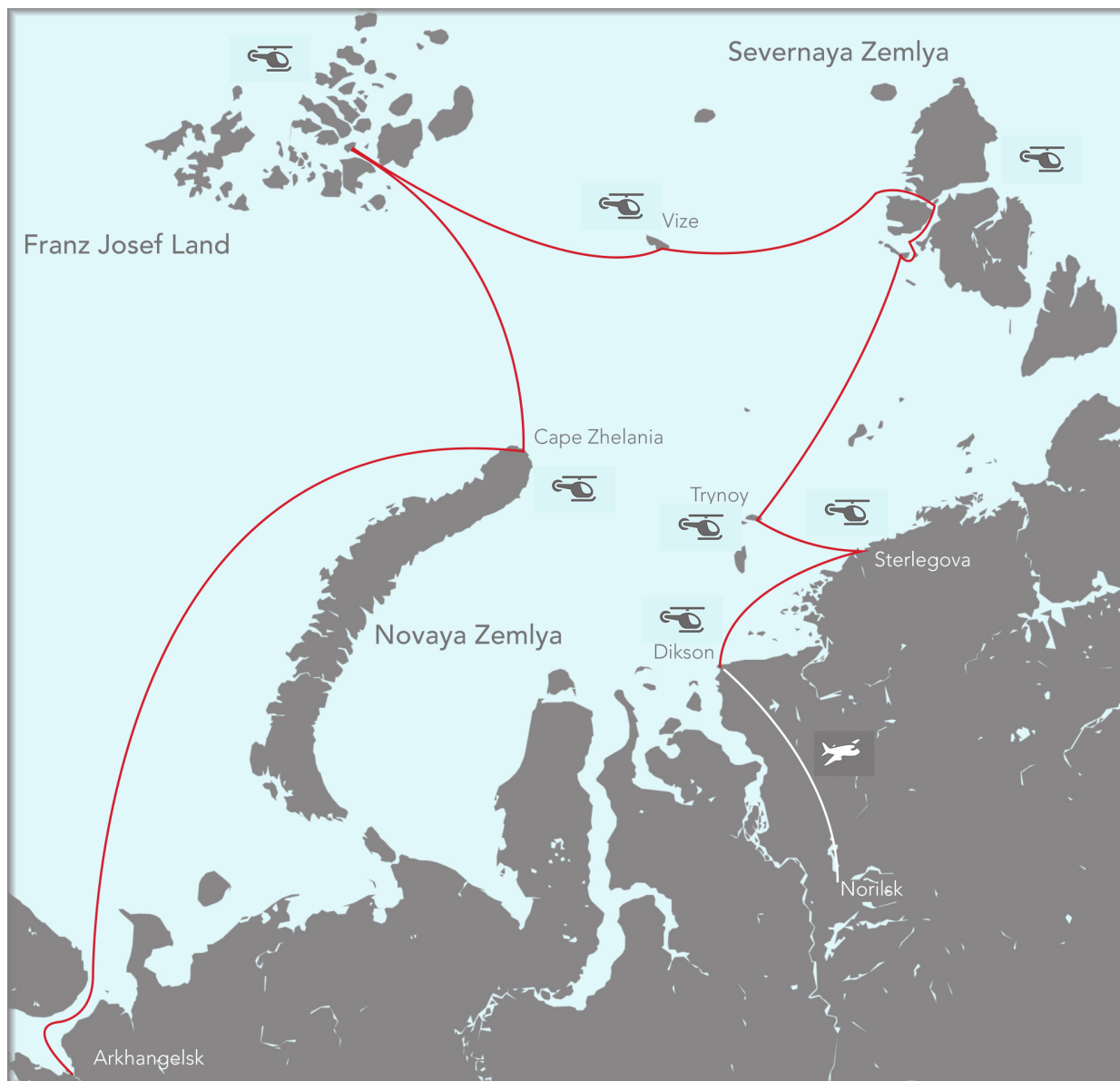
18 August

Transfer to the airport (for passengers traveling on group flights).

Flight home (not included).

** This is a real expedition in seldom explored areas and the program could be changed due to ice and weather conditions; it is essential to be flexible.*

VOYAGE MAP



Included in the price:

- All overnight stays: at hotel in double room, breakfast included, in the cabin of your choice

onboard and in the sleeping quarters in Dikson.

- Airport transfers (for passengers traveling on group flights).
- Voyage aboard the ship as indicated in the itinerary.
- All excursions and activities throughout the voyage including the helicopter flights.
- Three meals a day during the cruise (excluded 26/27 July and 17/18 August).
- Visa support letter and voucher.
- English speaking guides.
- Flight Norilsk – Dikson.

Not included:

- Intercontinental flights.
- Visa expenses.
- Not indicated meals.

PRICE PER PERSON Euro

Quadruple Cabin Shared Services	13900
Double Cabin Shared Services	15400