



INTRODUCTION

Follow in the wake of the Arctic explorers to cross the legendary Northwest Passage on this epic 25-day luxury expedition aboard L'Âustral. Discover the incredible landscapes of the Far North as you sail past vast ice floes, clear blue glaciers, fjords, snow capped mountains, a myriad of jagged islands, wild tundra and steep cliffs, past immense icebergs and alongside whales. As you voyage across the "roof of the world" you will encounter not only an amazing array of Arctic wildlife, but also historic villages, remnants of the Thule civilisation, fascinating Inuit culture and even the graves of three of Franklin's men. Setting sail from Greenland, visit Sisimiut with its colourful stilt houses dotting the undulating landscape, marvel at the surreal beauty of Ilulissat Icefjord and the magical beauty of Savissivik's iceberg graveyard. Land at historic Beechey Island and Fury Beach, see polar bears, reindeer and musk oxen, and visit enchanting Edinburgh Island and Herschel Island, a frozen paradise in the Canadian Arctic archipelago. Finally disembark in Nome, at the westernmost point of Alaska, at the end of an incredible journey and one that will leave you with everlasting memories.

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TRIP CODE

ACTSTNP

DURATION

25 Days

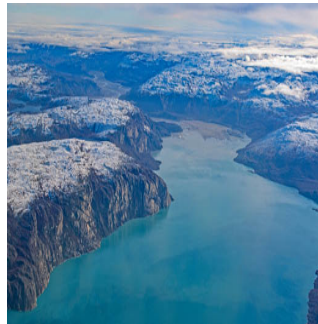
LOCATIONS

Canadian Arctic, Greenland



DAY 1: Paris - Kangerlussuaq

Flight from Paris to Kangerlussuaq is included in your cruise package and it is highly recommended to arrive in Paris the day before this flight. On arrival at Kangerlussuaq, you will be met and transferred to the pier. Embarkation time is between 5.00pm and 6.00pm, at which time cabins and suites will be ready to check in to. The vessel will depart at 10.30pm. From 1941 to 1992, the town of Kangerlussuaq in Greenland was home to an American military base. Nowadays, thanks to its international airport, it has become a transit point for travellers seeking adventure in the Far North. Located to the north of the Arctic Circle, this town is the starting point of magnificent discoveries surrounded by unspoiled nature. Indeed, just a few dozen kilometres from there it is possible to get close to the Greenland ice sheet, the largest body of ice in the Northern Hemisphere. From Kangerlussuaq, admire also the superb landscapes of tundra in autumnal colours, where Arctic hares, musk oxen, Arctic foxes, reindeer, falcons and eagles live.



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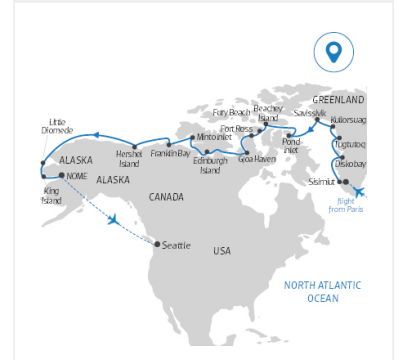
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DAY 2: Sisimiut

During your cruise, we invite you to discover Sisimiut, founded in 1756 and the second largest town in Greenland. This small town is typical of Greenland, boasting bewitching panoramas: here and there, colourful stilt houses dot the undulating landscape, and the small fishing port stands as the gateway to an icy realm. As for the town centre, it is home to a number of historic buildings, a small church and a museum which retraces the history of the Inuit people, as well as many craft shops. When your ship drops anchor here, you will set out to meet the locals in a typically arctic atmosphere.



DAY 3: Ilulissat

At the heart of Disko Bay - a UNESCO World Heritage Site - the Ilulissat Icefjord provides an extraordinary spectacle of almost surreal beauty, with the largest icebergs of the northern hemisphere. The sculptural icebergs continue their timeless journey, shimmering with their eternal light. Vast pieces of ice break off from the bergs and rejoin the inexorable movement of the sea. Close by lies the town of Ilulissat, the region's principal destination. Encircled by icebergs, it has retained a unique mix of traditional Arctic life, with multicoloured wooden houses, huskies and the leather tanners who still work today using the ancient methods of their ancestors.

DAY 4: Tugtutoq

The small uninhabited island of Tugtutoq, a former Inuit encampment, is located in the Upernavik region. The power of this place lies in its soft landscapes, which conceal many archaeological treasures nestling in the wild tundra. After a stop on a beautiful beach, you will have the opportunity to walk around ancient peat houses from the Thule civilisation, built according to a traditional method. The graves of a cemetery, dotted here and there between the rocks, seem to remind visitors of the presence of ancestors in these places marked by the Thulean culture.

DAY 5: Kullorsuaq

Well beyond the Arctic Circle, in the majestic landscapes of Greenland's Northwest, you will find the village of Kullorsuaq, the last bastion of Greenland's traditional hunters. Here is where you will find Greenland's true character... Vast mineral expanses, sumptuous mountains, impressive glaciers and, above all, the local population which still lives off fishing and seal or bear hunting. Hospitality and respect for nature are essential elements in the daily lives of these men, who live an austere life. When we drop anchor in this remote part of the world, set off to discover these friendly people who are also talented craftsmen, deftly sewing the furs and skins of marine mammals. This will be a unique and authentic experience.

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DAY 6: Savissivik

Some places in this world are so magical that their beauty cannot be described in words... Savissivik, a small Inuit village with less than a hundred inhabitants, is one such place. Rightly considered to be the biggest iceberg graveyard in Greenland, it is a stunning sight to behold. During your Zodiac® outing, you will sail between these icy giants. Once on land, you can hike to a viewpoint from which to enjoy breathtaking views over these icebergs, which come in an incredibly diverse range of shapes and colours. Photographers will love it. Savissivik Bay attracts many bears and is also known for having been the home of one of the world's biggest meteorites, but the latter has now been moved to a museum in New York.



DAY 7: Pond Inlet

On Baffin Island, located in northern Canada at the mouth of the famous NorthWest Passage, there is a small Inuit settlement at the very bounds of infinity. To get there, cross the Arctic Circle, the imaginary line that separates man from lands of mystery and wonder. It's not so much the way of life that sets Pond Inlet's inhabitants apart, so much as the setting. Snow-capped mountains, fjords and glaciers combine in a dazzling natural environment that fills space and expands time. Some discoveries change you forever: this is one of them.



DAY 8: Beechey Island

Beechey Island, at the eastern end of Resolute Bay, will call to mind some of the most important moments of Franklin's expedition. Sir John set off in 1845 in search of the mythical Northwest Passage and was forced to take shelter in Erebus Harbour for two long years, while he waited for the ice floes to recede and allow him a way through. It is a spectacular location; seeing the three wooden grave markers, bleached by the sun (indicating the burial places of at least three of Captain Franklin's men) and visiting the memorial that has been erected in memory of Franklin and his men can only reinforce the hushed sense of reverence. If the surrounding wilderness impresses us, the ochre and yellows of the rocky desert soften the landscape.



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DAY 9: Fury Beach

The ice floe gradually appears as you approach Somerset Island, in the heart of the North West Passage. In a Zodiac dinghy, you will land on Fury Beach, a place with a rich history where the English explorer William Edward Parry ran aground in 1825. He left materials and supplies here in order to help the next expeditions that would pass by this site. During your hike around the majestic canyon of Fury Beach, you'll be dazzled by the surprising landscape: the turquoise green water and sheer cliffs are reminiscent of the Grand Canyon or the High Atlas in Morocco. If fortune smiles on you, you will perhaps come across a family of polar bears roaming the enormous ice floes. A sublime hike; a sense of wonder is guaranteed.



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THE ARCTIC - PONANT: THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE

DAY 10: Qariaraqyuk

Located at Hazard Inlet (Somerset Island), the abandoned village of Qariaraqyuk is home to the ruins of one of the largest Thule archaeological sites in the High Arctic. The foundations of several constructions as well as many whale bones found on the site bear witness to the village's past activity and its inhabitants' incredible capacity to adapt to such isolated lands. Qariaraqyuk had a population of 300 people who subsequently left the village for reasons that remain unknown. The Thule civilisation is the last Paleo-Eskimo civilisation from which all the Inuits we know today are descended. Discover Fort Ross, the last trading post established by the Hudson's Bay Company. Constructed in 1937, it was used as a fur and whaling trading post at the same time. Fort Ross, located on a small island at the entrance to the Bellot Strait, is still home to this former store as well as the house for the manager and staff. The interior of these two buildings has been damaged over time and by the presence of polar bears. After a short walk towards the summits of the island, you will be able to enjoy a breathtaking panoramic view over the Bellot Strait and surrounding area. A key stage in the North-West Passage, the Bellot Strait, crossed by strong currents, promises you an unforgettable sailing experience. The entrance to the strait is dominated by the Ross Cairn. The buildings of Fort Ross also stand not far from here. Separating Somerset Island from the Boothia Peninsula, this 2-km-wide strait was discovered in 1852 by Captain William Kennedy of the Royal Navy, and the Frenchman Joseph-René Bellot, during an expedition in search of Sir John Franklin. Discover a magnificent décor covered in snow, fragmented by large ice floes. As you sail between them, your ship will perhaps be accompanied by an icebreaker... and a few polar bears.



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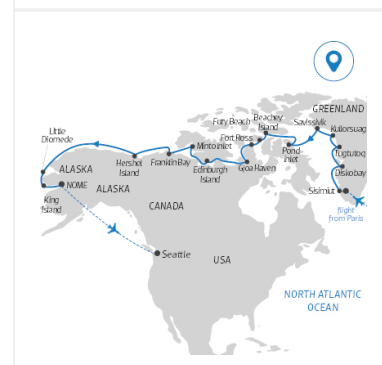
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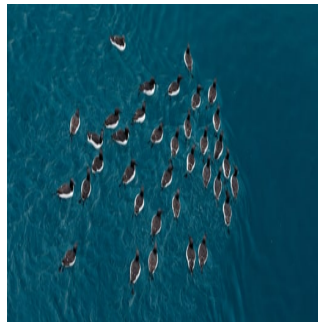
DAY 11: Gjoa Haven, King William Island

During your day at sea, make the most of the many services and activities on board. Treat yourself to a moment of relaxation in the spa or stay in shape in the fitness centre. Depending on the season, let yourself be tempted by the swimming pool or a spot of sunbathing. This day without a port of call will also be an opportunity to enjoy the conferences or shows proposed on board, to do some shopping in the boutique or to meet the PONANT photographers in their dedicated space. As for lovers of the open sea, they will be able to visit the ship's upper deck to admire the spectacle of the waves and perhaps be lucky enough to observe marine species. A truly enchanted interlude, combining comfort, rest, and entertainment.



DAY 12: At Sea

During your day at sea, make the most of the many services and activities on board. Treat yourself to a moment of relaxation in the spa or stay in shape in the fitness centre. Depending on the season, let yourself be tempted by the swimming pool or a spot of sunbathing. This day without a port of call will also be an opportunity to enjoy the conferences or shows proposed on board, to do some shopping in the boutique or to meet the PONANT photographers in their dedicated space. As for lovers of the open sea, they will be able to visit the ship's upper deck to admire the spectacle of the waves and perhaps be lucky enough to observe marine species. A truly enchanted interlude, combining comfort, rest and entertainment.



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DAY 13: Edinburgh Island

Fall under the charm of small and uninhabited Edinburgh Island. Blueberries, crowberries, arctic willow, cranberries: vegetation rules the roost here, with no fewer than 19 types of dwarf shrubs, berries and flowers identified. In autumn, these species are adorned with shimmering colours that produce a magnificent picture. The tundra, dotted with red and yellow touches, competes in its beauty with the superb ochres of the sandy beaches and the dark tones of the surrounding cliffs. At the end of a walk towards the heights of the island, enjoy a superb panorama with a view over lakes, sea and basalt mountains. An enchanting place, frequented by caribous, peregrine falcons, reindeer, Arctic foxes, and hares.

DAY 14: Holman (Ulukhaktok)

Set off to meet the inhabitants of Holman for an unforgettable moment in the midst of a welcoming community. With some 500 inhabitants, this hamlet located on the west of Victoria Island has learned how best to adapt to an at-times harsh environment and a difficult climate. As you visit this village in the Canadian Far North, admire the prints and other objects created by the very rich local craftsmanship. Traditional singing and dancing are also part of the daily life of this commune, to the great delight of fans of Inuit culture. The village of Holman, also called Ulukhaktok, is one of those places in which you can share an authentic experience in a remote land.

DAY 15: Minto Inlet

Located to the east of the Amundsen Gulf, in the eastern part of Victoria Island, Minto Inlet is an integral part of the history of the Copper Inuits. The representatives of this people, also called the Kitlinermiut, are the descendants of the old Thule. Hunter-gatherer nomads during more than three millennia, they knew how to flawlessly exploit the copper deposits in the regions where they set up camp, which is what earned them their name. Arrows, knives, spears, ulus (blades) and harpoons: all these objects made with a deft hand and used day-to-day by this small community. During your visit, you will have the opportunity to visit their territory, in a landscape of tundra frequented by many caribou.

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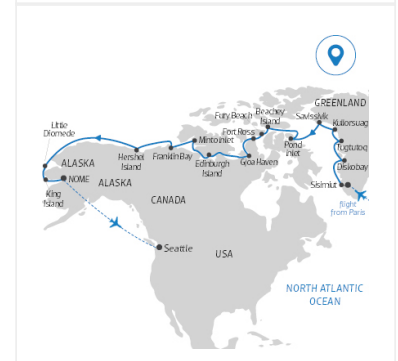
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DAY 19: At Sea - Day 19 & 20

During your day at sea, make the most of the many services and activities on board. Treat yourself to a moment of relaxation in the spa or stay in shape in the fitness centre. Depending on the season, let yourself be tempted by the swimming pool or a spot of sunbathing. This day without a port of call will also be an opportunity to enjoy the conferences or shows proposed on board, to do some shopping in the boutique or to meet the PONANT photographers in their dedicated space. As for lovers of the open sea, they will be able to visit the ship's upper deck to admire the spectacle of the waves and perhaps be lucky enough to observe marine species. A truly enchanted interlude, combining comfort, rest and entertainment.

DAY 21: Inalik, Little Diomedede & Fairway Rock

The isolated and austere Diomedede islands are situated in the middle of the Bering Strait, between Russia and Alaska, and between Asia and the Americas. In 1867, when Russia sold Alaska to the United States, the two islands were separated by a geographical border. They now also find themselves in different time zones, since the International Date Line runs between Little and Big Diomedede, which are separated by barely 3 km of waves, fog and crosscurrents. As your ship crosses the Bering Strait, she will reach the International Date Line, the imaginary line that roughly follows the 170th meridian, hustling the calendar. Your ship moves slowly towards Fairway Rock, a small rocky island lost in the middle of the Bering Strait. This little piece of pebble, located off the Russian coastline and the Diomededes Islands, rises a hundred meters above the water. It is home to many species of marine birds that the naturalist-guides will help you to identify: Tridactyl gulls, thick-billed murrets, Atlantic puffins and cormorants have set up home on the cliffs of Fairway Rock. Spotted seals and walrus have also found their place here and make a warm welcome committee. If you're lucky, you will perhaps spot the blow of a humpback whale from the deck of your ship. A magical encounter with the local fauna.

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DAY 22: At Sea

During your day at sea, make the most of the many services and activities on board. Treat yourself to a moment of relaxation in the spa or stay in shape in the fitness centre. Depending on the season, let yourself be tempted by the swimming pool or a spot of sunbathing. This day without a port of call will also be an opportunity to enjoy the conferences or shows proposed on board, to do some shopping in the boutique or to meet the PONANT photographers in their dedicated space. As for lovers of the open sea, they will be able to visit the ship's upper deck to admire the spectacle of the waves and perhaps be lucky enough to observe marine species. A truly enchanted interlude, combining comfort, rest and entertainment.

DAY 23: Nome to Seattle

Located along the Bering Strait at the westernmost point of Alaska, Nome offers the rustic charm of a former gold-mining town, set in the middle of magnificent wilderness. As you weave in and out of the brightly coloured houses, you will discover the pioneering legacy that still marks local traditions. Fishing, reindeer rearing, sledge-racing people here live from their manual labour. The surrounding plains provide stunning vantage points for observing Arctic fauna. Disembarkation is scheduled for 8.00am. You will be transferred to the airport for your onward flight to Seattle which is included in your cruise package. It is highly recommended that you schedule your departure from Seattle for the next day.

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INCLUSIONS & DETAILS

Accommodation

Cabin on board ship

