Expedition Franz-Josef-Land

Research and touristic expedition
to the highest Arctic of Eurasia

Bird cliff Rubini Rock

Date: August 6th to August 16th 2010 – 11 days
Start/end: Kirkenes (Northern Norway, transfers to/from Murmansk)
Participants: 75-90 researchers and other travellers, main language English

The Franz-Josef-Land archipelago – northernmost outpost of Europe and Eurasia in the high Arctic. In August, when the sea ice has partly retreated, the midnight sun is still up, providing the special arctic freedom of permanent daylight. We are based on the KAPITAN DRANITSYN, a reliable modern Russian icebreaker. Equipped for this expedition with a fleet of zodiacs to go on shore, and 2 helicopters for ice reconnaissance and for landings under difficult ice conditions, where zodiacs cannot be used. But even with the DRANITSYN, we will have to respect arctic nature, have to adapt the program continuously to changing natural conditions.

More than just tourism: Going so far North, spending ressources with this strong vessel on yet poorly explored regions, should be used more creatively than on tourism only. Hence, this voyage will serve a triple purpose:

► **Experiencing** these remote and fascinating regions, to learn about their unique nature and history.

► **International research projects** to be carried out during the voyage and in Franz-Josef-Land, with the DRANITSYN as a base.

► **An international conference**, linked to the United Nations, dealing with possibilities of combining nature conservation and tourism, will participate and use Franz-Josef-Land as a study case.

Apart from increasing the efficiency of the use of ressources, this triple combination promises an unusual multi-faceted and rewarding experience for open-minded participants. The presence of a lot of true experts in their various fields during the whole voyage, giving speeches, communicating and being together for these 11 days, will be a unique possibility for gaining new insights for every participant interested in nature, the Arctic and international politics. **For sure: this is no standard cruise!**

**Expedition leader and staff, participants:** Coordinating these multiple goals will be a challenge for expedition leader Andreas Umbreit (based in Spitsbergen, also author of guide books for the region), for whom this will be already the fourth voyage to Franz-Josef-Land under his leadership: nobody else outside Russia has this experience as expedition leader for this rarely visited archipelago. The task will be facilitated by a staff team increased from normally 15 to here about 20 persons who take care of the program and the kitchen, in addition to the regular ship crew. This will allow for instance running separate parallel excursions with 2 groups. And for better tour quality, the maximal number of participants will be cut down from a normal top capacity of 108 to just 90. Obviously, these improvements add a few percents to the tour price, compared to a normal touristic cruise to Franz-Josef-Land with the DRANISTYN, while the more attractive later departure and the wider range of possible experiences and insights with this concept are free extras.

**Diving:**
Possibility for diving is evaluated, please ask!

**Franz-Josef-Land**

Discovered as late as 1873 by the Austrian-Hungarian TEGETHOFF expedition, which was trapped in a drifting ice field for more than a year, the remote – now Russian – archipelago still preserved most of its virginity, not least because of having been a military off limits area for 60 years in Soviet time. Today, it is a nature reserve. Also since, tourism and other human activities are extremely limited. Franz-Josef-Land is the northernmost land mass of both Europe and Eurasia, reaching up to almost 82ºN. 85 % of its land is covered by glaciers, and its waters are ice-covered most of the year, too. Insity of the icy conditions, some of the few ice-free areas offer a surprising tundra flora and the archi-pelago is great for watching polar bears, wal-russes and some rare high arctic bird species.

Friends of polar history will be amazed about what is still left from the polar pioneers time – an indication for what has been destroyed by all kinds of visitors in more accessible other arctic regions!

Currently, there are only 2 manned stations: the small border troops base Nagurskoe on Alexandra Land, and the small scientific base Krenkel on Hayes in the center.

Opportunities for visiting the archipelago are very scarce: cruises with stays for several days are not offered even every year. In short: Franz-Josef-Land is as remote and high arctic as you possibly can get in Europe.

**Prices**

Per person in shared cabin – first price for bookings incl. Deposit payments before January 10th 2010, other price for later bookings/deposits. **Further advantages for early booking:** see last page.

- All cabins with own facilities and porthole(s)/window(s):
  - sharing triple cabin: € 7900/8600
  - sharing double cabin: € 9500/9900
  - sharing suite: € 11500/12500
  - sharing corner suite: € 13500/15000

**Fuel surcharge:** a fuel surcharge will be charged in addition, if the standard oil price rises above 80 US$/barrel.

- Single cabin: 80% add-on on shared price (not possible for triple).
- Not included especially:
  - Further travel to and from Kirkenes and accommodation Kirkenes (ask for offer), travel insurances including compulsory insurance for emergency rescue costs (ask for offer), extra beverages and food on board, extra excursions/flights.
**Date and itinerary:** With good reason, this voyage is scheduled for August, where sea ice is usually less, then allowing better access even to remoter parts, and snow cover on land is minimal, facilitating hikes and studies of geology, flora or historic sites, which at earlier are often still partly hidden under snow. At the same time, we still have full midnight sun (clear sky provided), meaning 24 hours of daylight. As expedition leader Andreas Umbreit puts it: „Who knows whether you will ever come here again: so let us try to do as many landings as possible – sleeping, eating lecturing can be done also in between, on sea days or at home.“ Therefore, this is going to be a voyage for flexible travellers, not minding about irregular days and spontaneous excursion announcement possibly even at night via the intercom system, if conditions are fitting.

**Itinerary example**

Example – this means that the actual routing most likely will differ, adapted to the actual circumstances, so this is just to give an idea of how the voyage could look like under good, but still not perfect conditions:

**Day 1 (5. August):** Individual travel to Kirkenes (northern Norway, near Russian border) and overnight stay there (good connections from Oslo, not included in basic price).

**Day 2 (6. August):** In the morning: bus transfer across the border (individual visum needed) to Murmansk, boarding of KAPITAN DRANITSYN in early afternoon. Start of cruise, sailing northward out of the Murmansk Fjord. Welcome and introductory speech by expedition leader, presentation of crew and staff, ship safety drill.

**Day 3 and 4 (7./8. August):** We cross the Barents Sea towards Franz-Josef-Land. Patient (or lucky) spotters may discover various whales. Varied indoor program with lecturing, conference contributions and presentation of the research projects of the voyage, but also outdoor: zodiac and helicopter drills as preparations for the landings. According to plans, we will reach Franz Josef Land in the evening of day 4, preferably (depending on ice) its most lonesome, small island: Victoria. Situated closer to Spitsbergen than to the remaining Franz-Josef-Land archipelago, this island is almost completely covered by an impressive ice cap. Only on the northern side is a narrow beach strip – and the remains of a former small military station, now abandoned and often „populated“ by walrusses, possibly also a few polar bears and birds, including usually a number of ivory gulls. If advisable, we will try our first landing here.

**Day 5 (9. August):** During night, the DRANITSYN has reached the southwest of Prince George Land with its steep cape cliffs pointing out of the inland ice domes, and approaches Bell Island for a short morning landing at EIRA Lodge, the oldest building of the archipelago from 1881 – and still standing in as lonesome a position as one can imagine. After a short crossing eastwards, we will reach Cape Flora – a small flat tundra promontory under an impressive plateau mountain, where breeding birds take

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**KAPITAN DRANITSYN**

Modern diesel-electric icebreaker, built in Finland in 1980 for the then Soviet Murmansk Shipping Company (MSCO)

- **Length:** 131,0 m
- **Width:** 26,5 m
- **Draft:** 8,5 m
- **Displacement:** 10471 t
- **Engines:** 6
- **Power:** up to 24000 hp
- **max. speed:** 15 kn
- **cruise speed:** 12 kn
- **ship crew:** 60 persons
- **passenger cabins:** 49
- **passenger berths:** 108
- **Flag:** Russia
- **Ice class:** KM LL3 A2
- **Ice thickness:** up to 1.5 m continuously, up to 7 m ramming
- **helicopters:** on demand up to 2
- **zodiacs:** none, provided by charterer.
- **Voltage on board:** 220 V AC/DC

**Cabins:**

All passenger cabins with window, shower/toilet/washing basin, small writing desk, wardrobe, speakers, climatisation.

**Public facilities:**

Dining room in front, library, bar, lecture hall (theatre), indoor swimming pool, sauna.

The bridge is almost always accessible.
Small ship hospital with ship doctor

IRIDIUM satellite telephone for calls and text e-mails against payment during radio room hours.
care for good fertilisation of the vegetation below – hence the name. Cape Flora is connected to most pioneer expeditions in the area due to its useful location in the south, but landings are not guaranteed: the beach is very exposed to possible breaking swell, while helicopter use is restricted by the birds. If we get on shore, the focus is both on the flora and on the remains from the pioneer days. Afterwards, if we are in good time, we will head for Tikhaya (Calm) Bay at Hooker Island – with two close-by attractions: Rubini Rock with its nice basalt formations and its huge bird colony (mainly guillemots and kittywakes), and the abandoned first Russian permanent station in the archipelago (1929-1959). Though the buildings are partly rotten and partly snow-filled, a stroll through the tiny village gives an idea about how life might have been here in the old days.

**Day 6 (10. August):** During night, the DRANITSYN continued through the sounds of the archipelago into its interior, quite likely first contacts with ice fields. Under suitable circumstances, we hope to have 3 landings today: Cape Triest on Champ Island with its unique natural stone balls (geodes) of up to 3 m diameter in a spectacular setting. Then a bit further south on Alger Island the extensive remains of Camp Ziegler – a pioneer wintering base from 1902-05 for the Ziegler expeditions. It is amazing, how much survived the 100 years since then, compared for instance with similar sites in Spitsbergen. This is at the same time a good reason to show maximal consideration in order to avoid a similarly rapid deterioration of cultural heritage sites by tourism here! Finally, we hope to get permission in connection with our international conference to pay a visit also to the Krenkel station as the only active civil station of the archipelago. And of course this will be another day with lots of scenic and nature impressions.

**Day 7 (11. August):** In the night, the DRANITSYN moved southwards, possibly even through the narrow Negri Channel, which may be open now in mid-August, and reaches the small Wilczek Island. Somewhere out here, the TEGETTHOFF was trapped in the ice 1873/74. From here, all the sledge exploration tours under the leadership of Payer explored the newly found archipelago, and here, on the spectacular, though not very high cliffs of Wilczek Island, Otto Krisch was buried, the only dead during the 3 years expedition. We intend to pay a visit to his grave. Afterwards, the DRANITSYN sails on to Cape Tegetthoff. This is one of the scenerywise most spectacular sites in the archipelago, with its range of towers and pinnacles of magmatic rocks, which eroded out of the surrounding softer sediments. A colourful tundra coastal zone and the remains of the 1898/99 wintering base of Wellman are further aspects, making this an interesting landing site. In the evening, the DRANITSYN then sails northwards, possibly around Wilczek Land.

**Day 8 (12. August):** The morning sees us probably off Cape Heller: low dark rock formations against the white of the glaciers and probably at least some sea ice. Cape Heller became famous for the unbelievable wintering of Bentsen and Bjørøv in 1898/99, who were placed here as guards against polar bears for an expedition cache. Their primitive shelter, which could not even be heated, was simply made of walls of rocks found here, covered with a roof of walrus hides. Bentsen died during the winter and Bjørøv lived with the frozen dead body next to him until spring, when he was picked up by the expedition team for their attempt to reach the pole – which failed after just a few days. The remains of the shelter (probably dubbed „Ft. McKinley“) and the rearranged grave of Bentsen are still to be seen during a landing. Right across the Austria Strait is the Wiener Neustadt Island with the impressive Cape

**Character of Voyage**

Inspite of having a comfortable vessel, this tour is not focussing on leisure and dining. Our main objective is to do as much as possible in Franz-Josef-Land, possibly even at „night“: we have the freedom of 24 hours of daylight. Definitely, flexibility is required from participants regarding irregular day rhythms, possible night activities (or at least their pub-lic announcement – nobody has to join all activities) and sudden changes of plans in adaption to conditions. Patience is also need-ed, especially if natural conditions are less favourable. Inspite of having zodiacs and helicopters, there can be situations where no landings are possible. And compromises will be needed to combine tourism and research.

**Requirements**

See also the separate booking conditions for more details. A major point is: we are quite far away from any source of more advanced help. This means that risks have to be mini-mized. Only persons should book this voyage, who do not have some known health risks, which may lead to logistically difficult rescue operations. A medical questionnaire has to be filled in in connection with the booking and will be passed also to the ship doctor. If you want to participate in land excursions, always in pathless terrain, you need some physical fitness and especially a good balance, also for boarding and leaving the zodiacs. For participation in helicopter operations, a form has to be signed which limits the responsibility of the helicopter company. Travel insurance is mandatory, which covers also an eventual enormously expensive rescue and evacuation: a rescue helicopter would usually have to come all the way from Spitsbergen, which can easily cost € 100,000 and much more. If you have no own insurance for this, ask for an offer. Obviously, a key issue is avoiding accidents. Therefore, reasonable behaviour and restrictions and rules for the excursions are inevitable.

**Equipment**

No advanced clothes for social events are needed. Instead, you should bring along suitable outdoor gear, which will allow you to fully enjoy all activities instead of getting soaking wet and freezing. Main aspects are protection against possible chilly wind, precipitation, spray water and footwear, which allows you some steps through breakers in case of a more rough landing. This means: at least knee-high rubber boots with sturdy pro-file, waterproof rain trousers, a truly water-proof jacket with good hood, warm mittens, warm cap, possibly goggles, warm extra clothes layers, a daypack, waterproof protection for camera equipment.
Tirol – and in the interior Peak Parnass, highest mountain of the archipelago (620 m). At midday, the DRANITSYN will continue northwards, passing some places for eventual walrus observation, and then hopefully even reaching Rudolf Island, the northernmost land mass of Eurasia. At Teplitz Bay, there are the abandoned buildings of the once northernmost permanently manned station of the world, given up in 1995 and now wet and decaying from intruding drift snow. Nearby is Cape Säulen (Cape Pillar), which was reached already by the TEGGETTHOFF expedition – in their case by sledge. The bay and the island were used also by earlier expeditions since 1900, and some of our scientists are interested in documenting all kinds of remains. If ice conditions hinder an advance to Rudolf Island, we may visit for instance Jackson Island instead, with the wintering site of Nansen and Johansen in 1995/96.

**Day 9 (13. August):** During night, we sailed westwards along the northern side of the archipelago. If we get permission in connection with our international conference, we may visit today Alexandra Island with one of the biggest low tundra areas of the archipelago, from which its ice caps gently rise, and perhaps also the small border forces base, close to it the last scantly remains of a German WWII military weather station. Otherwise, we will head for some other places like Cape Norwegia on Jackson Island or a minor tundra area in the northwest of Ziegler Island. The night sees us heading southwards.

**Day 10 and 11 (14./15. August):** If conditions are good, we may make a final early morning landing somewhere in the southwest of the archipelago. Latest then, it is farewell to Franz-Josef-Land, time to steam southwards again across the Barents Sea. After the last long and full days in the archipelago, two days on the ship can also be a kind of rest, at least physically. Mentally, there will be enough activities, because now we have good time again for lots of lecturing, conference activities and the presentations of our research teams about their work in Franz-Josef-Land during the last days. And in between it can be relaxing just to look over the sea from one of the decks in the wind or sheltered on the bridge, maybe spotting some whales. Our kitchen can finally again dare to create a more advanced menu for a farewell dinner, not risking their timing to be ruined by a sudden change of schedule for an additional landing.

**Day 12 (16. August):** In the morning, we sail again into the Murmansk fjord. Then, it is time to say good-bye to our reliable KAPITAN DRANITSYN, its crew and the staff team. Bus transfer across the border back to Kirkenes, where the regular tour is finished.

**Day 13 (17. August):** Some will travel on after a night in Kirkenes, the conference group will continue their program in northern Norway.

**Tour operator:** Special Travel Club, Moscow, in cooperation with Beluga Expeditions, Netherlands.

**Itinerary, expedition leader:** Andreas Umbreit

**Questions, Bookings:**

Please do not hesitate to contact us with further questions about the tour and this project. You can also talk here to the designated expedition leader, Andreas Umbreit, via the Information Office of:

![terra polaris](https://example.com/terra.png)

Agency for polar travel – owned by expedition leader Andreas Umbreit

Seat: Postboks 6, N-9171 Longyearbyen, Spitsbergen/Norway

e-mail: info@terrapolaris.com

Information office Germany: Tel. 0049-3622-901633

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**Use of fossil ressources, helicopter**

Definitely, a voyage with an icebreaker spends quite a volume of ship fuel, especially when actually breaking ice, which in addition also costs time. One reason for having helicopters on board is in fact to save fuel and ship time by doing ice reconnaissance flights and by carrying passengers for landings over ice fields instead of breaking them: in heavy ice, the ship can spend more than 2 tons of fuel per hour, in worst cases even with little progress. Here, the helicopter can clearly help to limit such massive use. To save time and fuel, breaking of heavy ice will be held at a minimum by adapting the route accordingly based on ice charts and helicopter information, but in such regions, it is useful to be able to do it, if necessary.

In addition, our multiple use concept for this voyage tries to make sure that the fuel spent is used with maximal results.

Finally, we encourage all participants to purchase climate gas compensation certificates for this voyage (see separate information).

**Research projects**

Currently, we are still in the application phase for the research projects to be carried through in connection with the voyage. We would like to have several different project teams on board, in total about 10-12 scientists. Due to the character of the tour (limited duration, uncertain route), this cruise is suitable for projects, where field work can be done on each location within a few hours and which are to some extent flexible regarding locations. Sea-based projects are especially possible, if they can be done either under normal speed on the regular route, or while the ship drifts/anchors in connection with a landing. Each project will be responsible itself for possibly needed bureaucratic procedures with Russian authorities.

For more details, please take contact with us.

**Early booking benefits:**

For the further planning of this project, it is highly important to have a sufficient number of regular bookings already by early January 2010. In return for helping us with this, we give early bookers not only the shown favourable prices. In addition, we will give early regular bookers also a preference for gratis cabin up-grades in the order of their booking dates, in case some places in higher standard cabins are still available on departure date.

**Visum:**

All non-Russian participants need to bring along a valid passport with Russian visum for this tour, which should be organised in good time. Necessary confirmation of booking and tour for the visum application will be provided by the tour operator.