

STAMPEDING TO CALGARY

The good folks of ‘Cowtown’ get their cowboy duds out every summer to make the Stampede a must-see event, **T8**



TRAVEL



The Ocean Endeavour can get close to all the scenery, such as this iceberg near Sisimiut, Greenland.

ANDRÉ GALLANT/ADVENTURE CANADA

An Arctic Adventure

Inuit culturalists and guides make Adventure Canada tours a special journey



ANDREW STEWART/ADVENTURE CANADA

People are often drawn to the Arctic because of unique wildlife. A marine biologist and ornithologist are on board.



ANDRÉ GALLANT/ADVENTURE CANADA

Inuit dancers and singers gather outside the Pond Inlet Community Hall after giving a cultural presentation.

EMMA YARDLEY
SPECIAL TO THE STAR
BAFFIN ISLAND, NUNAVUT — As expected, narwhal skin is very chewy. Having just crossed Baffin Bay aboard the Ocean Endeavour, a 137-metre expedition vessel specifically built to explore remote environments, I'm chomping a piece of maktaaq sliced up as a treat by the ship's Inuit staff. The traditional Inuit meal of frozen, uncooked sea mammal skin and blubber is tough, salty, creamy and unlike anything I've ever tasted. It's just one of the highlights of the 12-day journey that's taken me and nearly 200 other adventure-minded guests from Kangerlussuaq, Greenland, to Qausuittuq (Resolute), Nunavut, with Adventure Canada on its Arctic Safari cruise. Adventure Canada, a family-owned Port Credit-based travel company, has spent 30 years building relationships throughout the Arctic and hiring Inuit guides and culturalists, allowing them to take travelers to places not many outsiders have seen — and taste things not usually on the menu. "I think it is very important for Southerners to come up here and be educated," says Lois Suluk, an Adventure Canada culturalist and throat singer who has performed for Queen Elizabeth II and at the 2010 Winter Olympics. "We are still part of Canada, although we live a different type of life. We speak a different type of language, we have a different type of diet, but we still consider ourselves Canadian." Hailing from Arviat, the southernmost community in the Kivalliq Region of Nunavut, Suluk has worked with elders and youth for years, preserving traditional songs and following a way of life passed down from her parents and grandparents. "I like to hunt, harvest . . . after all, I am a descendant of the people from up here. We have been doing these for a very long time and it will continue to be so."

ARCTIC continued on T10

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Fleet of experts help interpret landscape

ARCTIC from T1

On board, she's joined by a fleet of other experts — from ornithologists and archeologists to botanists and historians — all of whom are here to enrich daily experiences and help interpret the Arctic landscape.

“All sorts of experiences can be mundane, and then some weird little observation will happen that suddenly will elevate it to the level of the profound,” says Aaron Spitzer, staff historian and former editor of Up Here magazine.

“That’s what we try to do . . . it’s not just about what you’re thinking or seeing but how it fits into a bigger picture that you may have been vaguely aware of but weren’t able to articulate yourself.”

Every day, we gather in the Nautilus Lounge for panoramic views of skies, icebergs and coastline, as well as scheduled morning and afternoon presentations that give insights and overviews into Arctic topics.

In one lecture, Spitzer teaches that Nunavut holds 21 per cent of Canada’s land mass, has 114,000 kilometres of coastline, and that caribou outnumber residents by a factor of 25. His enthusiasm about the region is contagious.

“Anyone who lives in Toronto can predict pretty well what Toronto is going to look like 20 years from now. But you can’t say the same thing for Nunavut or Alaska or Greenland.”

These experts aren’t limited to lecturing — they’re driving the fleet of Zodiacs through icefields, spotting

pods of narwhals and humpback whales, leading shore excursions through quick-mud to Sir John Franklin’s final resting place, and interpreting the landscape as it shifts and changes in real time.

“It is about having people there to mentor you into seeing in the way that you need to be able to see to truly appreciate the thing,” says cruise host David Newland, a writer, musician and “bumpkin philosopher” from Cobourg, Ont.

The trip’s itinerary is designed to encourage cultural engagement and environmental awareness, with each new day bringing a mix of seminars, shore excursions and socializing.

But life on the ship itself is also a draw: the meals are varied and delicious, the cabins are clean and comfy, the saunas delightful after a cold day exploring onshore, and the outdoor heated saltwater pool healing.

Plus, since it was made to manoeuvre in hard-to-reach places, the Ocean Endeavour can go where other ships can’t — such as right up next to an ice float where a polar bear is sunbathing.

As Spitzer explains, visiting the Arctic by flying in and out of different communities limits you.

“(On the water), you’re actually getting the entire perspective of the lay of the land and the ocean, and it’s a great way to connect it all together . . . you get to see it in this pulled back, holistic kind of way.”

Emma Yardley was hosted by Adventure Canada, which did not review or approve this story.



Pond Inlet, or Mittimatalik in Inuktitut, is a Nunavut community in the eastern Arctic that was the main stop on Day 7 of Adventure Canada’s Arctic Safari.

> WHEN YOU GO

Get there: Chartered flights to and from the ship are included in the Arctic Safari price, but guests need to get to and from the gateway cities, Toronto and Ottawa, on their preferred airline.

Do this trip: Booking in advance is recommended as Adventure Canada (adventurecanada.com) only offers Arctic Safari sailing in 2018 (Aug. 6-17). Prices start at \$5,995

(U.S.), plus a \$250 Discovery Fund Fee, which helps to fund sustainable initiatives in the regions where Adventure Canada travels. Since this trip goes to remote areas, you will also need travel insurance that covers medical evacuation of at least \$75,000.

Do your research: nunavuttourism.com, visitgreenland.com

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