

Seatrade Cruise News

EXPEDITION CRUISING: TO THE POLES AND BEYOND

By Liz Gammon
Independent Cruise Consultant
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It is important to note that this report focuses on the Arctic and Antarctic. This report does not cover any river or exotic expedition cruising activity.

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FOREWORD

The mission of compiling and researching this overview has been much like an expedition in itself. A journey of enlightenment and discovery that has left me with an even deeper sense of awe and wonder about this specialised and environmentally sensitive sector of the cruise industry.

To say that I have enjoyed the challenge, is an understatement, for I have loved every minute of it.

Upon starting out, it became apparent that in order to make any sense of the present, and indeed the future, I first needed to dig into the past.

And so, dig I did, unveiling a vibrant history of passion and adventure, high jinks and determination.

I love the fact that the very first Arctic expedition cruise was an independent charter organised by an art collector and an American artist.

William Bradford (1823-1892) dreamt of painting the Arctic. He had seen pictures and vowed to experience this sight for himself. The light, the landscapes, the icebergs, the silence... Google him, his work is spectacular!

I was also intrigued to learn that Victorian Ladies were great fans of Arctic cruising – so great in fact that independent lady travellers were awarded their own 12 berth cabin onboard the 142 berth St Sunniva for the 1888 season. That's 8.45% of the total capacity. Such was demand!

Every era has been dealt its own set of challenges. The war years, the interwar years, the introduction of the airplane, financial crashes and climate changes. But the pioneering spirit that fuelled expedition cruising in the first place, has burned brightly throughout. Those that craved adventure would find it. And find it they did.

Take Lars-Eric Lindblad, the explorer, entrepreneur and noted environmentalist who pioneered tourism to many remote and exotic parts of the world. Inspiring so many new explorers to follow their dreams and discover this wonderful world for themselves.

And the stories... the barbeque on an ice flow that attracted a curious Polar Bear, who, having taken full advantage of the fine steak on offer and washing it down with a bucket of Coca-Cola, slipped away and continued quietly

with his day. The passengers and crew, having long scarpered back to the vessel to watch the unforgettable, if not slightly bizarre, spectacle unfold.

The great Russian Captain, Petr Gorlikov who delighted in taking his passengers to some of the most remote areas of the Arctic and Antarctic – setting new records in the process and providing his guests with wonderful lifelong memories. He is fondly remembered as a formidable after-dinner host, leading mentor and Ice Master Extraordinaire!

What wonderful legacies these great explorers have bequeathed us. It is now over to today's itinerary planners and expedition leaders to take the batten and set a new course for expedition cruising.

They too will leave a ripple of legacies in their wake and face their own challenges as they sail into the unknown.

New ships, new itineraries, new explorations, new experiences and new responsibilities – matched with the old adage of exploring responsibly and with purpose.

Let the voyage begin!

INTRODUCTION

Expedition cruising is without doubt the fastest growing sector of the cruise industry.

More than 39 new ice-classed, expedition vessels are set to enter the market within the next three years.

A majority of these vessels will carry less than 300 passengers and range in size from 5,590 GRT¹ to an incredible 30,000 GRT².

At the time of writing it is estimated that there are currently around 57 expedition vessels in operation – sailing predominantly in the Arctic and Antarctic regions. If we add on the anticipated orderbook numbers, this brings the total number up to 96.

Not only is this an exciting predication, but there are those that might argue that such unprecedented growth might add a rather unhealthy burden to what some describe as an already crowded arena. (Noting that tourist vessels are but one of several contributing factors.)

Another factor to consider is that climate change has now ensured the Northwest and Northeast Passages are even more open to navigation in the Arctic summer months.

Hence the need for more destinations and ports outside of the Polar regions to become actively involved in showcasing what they have to offer this growing sector.

As an example, page 9. discusses Silversea Cruises' first ever 167-day Expedition World Cruise and the opportunities created as a result of this new worldwide overview of expedition cruising.

An indication that there is every reason to get excited and involved in learning more about this aptly nicknamed 'last frontier of cruise holiday development'.

¹ Oceanwide Expeditions - Hondius

² Compagnie du Ponant - Le Commandant Charcot

USHUAIA, ARGENTINA TO TROMSØ, NORWAY



240 PASSENGERS

167 DAYS

30

COUNTRIES

10 ROUTES



EXPEDITION WORLD CRUISE 2021 (correct 1.1.20)

USHUAIA to TROMSØ | 167 days - 110 destinations - 30 countries - 6 continents

GREAT INFLUENCERS | PAST AND PRESENT

The story of Arctic expedition cruising essentially begins in 1869 with American artist, William Bradford's cruise to Greenland in the Newfoundland sealer, Panther. This was followed a few years later by Thomas Cook's North Cape cruise in the President Christie in 1875.

And whilst Antarctica has research stations that date back to 1957, cruise tourism in Antarctica is a relatively new phenomenon.

It wasn't until the arrival of the 2,398 GRT Lindblad Explorer in 1969 that things really changed, and the Lindblad Prototype arrived on the scene, all thanks to the travel visionary, Lars-Eric Lindblad.

Lars-Eric Lindblad is said to have been in Outer Mongolia acting as tour leader for a group of adventurous tourists, when, somewhat under the influence of a potent, fermented local brew, Koumiss, he was asked where his next trip would be... he consulted a Pan America World Airways map to see where they did not go and noted that Antarctica was not even on the map – he decided there and then that this was to be his next destination. Antarctica.

Lindblad chartered the 56 passenger, Argentine supply ship Lapataia for the 1965/66 season. The trip had a strong scientific focus which was to be the trademark of all Lindblad cruises and was a resounding success, however, ongoing charter challenges eventually led to Eric-Lars Lindblad's decision to build his own ship, the Lindblad Explorer.

Alongside sailing Antarctica, the ship also embarked on Arctic cruises and in August 1972 Lindblad Explorer managed to get to 82°N, a record at the time for a cruise ship.

Lars-Eric Lindblad went on to establish Creative Travel and died in 1994, but his son Sven-Olof still continues the family tradition today having founded Lindblad Expeditions Inc. in 1979.

Another of expedition cruising's great influencers is the renowned polar explorer and icebreaker Captain Petr Golikov.

Born in Vladivostok, Russia, Golikov graduated from the Far Eastern Marine Academy in 1970 and began his remarkable career as a junior officer with the Far Eastern Shipping Company (FESCO).

In 1989 he was promoted to Master of the Kapitan Khlebnikov, one of Russia's most powerful diesel-electric icebreakers and shortly thereafter began a 30-year collaboration with Quark Expeditions.

Alongside many other great achievements, Captain Golikov commanded two complete circumnavigations of Antarctica, one of which was the first-ever passenger voyage in 1996 with Quark Expeditions. He also commanded numerous voyages into the uncharted waters of both the Ross and Weddell Seas.

In the Arctic region Golikov frequently transited the Northwest Passage (six times), led the first ever expedition to the geo-magnetic North Pole, and the first ever passenger circumnavigation of the Arctic Ocean. Throughout these passenger voyages he assisted many nations – bringing staff and supplies to remote scientific outposts, and always ready to assist in any way needed.

Captain Golikov passed away April 15th, 2020.

What wonderful legacies these trail blazers leave!

FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

Captain Golikov also features in this next instalment.

For he, along with his fellow FESCO Captain colleagues of the time, suddenly found themselves catapulted into a new working environment – one with a completely new set of responsibilities and duties. Passengers!

It can not be stressed enough how great an impact the political reform in Russia during the 1980s had on expedition cruising.

A short history lesson and timeline reveals why.

Mikhail Gorbachev opened Pandora's Box in 1985 with his policy of Glasnost (loosely translated as transparency).

His reforms, along with growth in Soviet passenger and research shipping in the 1980s,

coincided with the crumbling of the Soviet Union.

Coincidentally, there had been an ongoing surge in the building of research and oceanography ships during the 80s.

Almost all of the ships built in Finland, had facilities for 50-100 scientists and came with varying degrees of comfort.

Not just that, but all had at least nominal ice-strengthening, whilst others were true icebreakers.

The Berlin Wall fell on November 9th, 1989 and the accelerating deterioration of the Soviet Bloc was effectively complete by 26th December 1991.

After the collapse of the Bloc, the research ships became available, primarily for charter, but later for outright sale in some cases.

These research, and the small ice-class passenger ships, formed the backbone of the emerging polar expedition fleet.

They came complete with competent crews that understood navigating in ice, had acceptable, if basic, accommodation and charter rates were very reasonable.

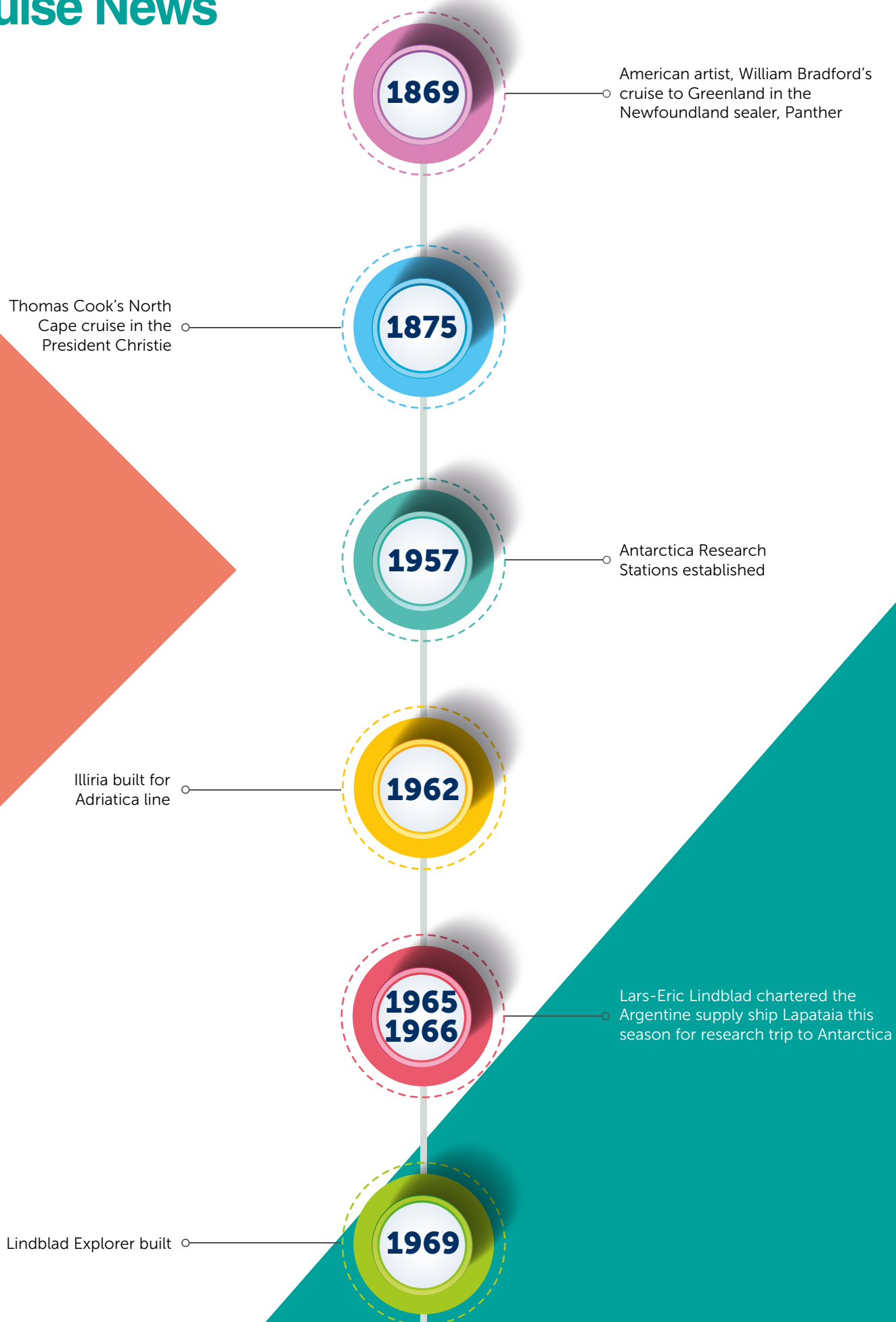
The importance of these Russian ships in the development of expedition cruising can be appreciated from the fact that prior to their availability from about 1991 onwards, there were only three small ships cruising in polar regions; the Illiria, built in 1962; Lindblad Explorer built in 1969; and World Discoverer, built 1975.

Two companies, Quark and Marine Expeditions, were early adopters of the Russian research ships for polar cruising.

Quark Expeditions is applauded for pioneering North Pole cruises with Russian icebreakers.



EARLY HISTORY OF EXPEDITION CRUISE



1970

Captain Petr Golikov graduates from Far Eastern Marine Academy and joins Far Eastern Shipping Company (FESCO) as junior officer

1972

Lindblad Explorer sets record of 82°N

1975

World Discoverer built

1979

Lindblad Expeditions Inc. founded

1985

Mikhail Gorbachev introduced policy of Glasnost

1989

Captain Petr Golikov is promoted to Master of the Kapitan Khlebnikov

1996

Captain Petr Golikov commands first ever passenger voyage circumnavigating the Antarctica with Quark Expeditions

FUTURE FOCUS | THE UNCHARTERED WORLD TOUR

Silversea's 2021 uncharted World Tour marks the beginning of worldwide expedition cruising.

A wonderful first. A new adventure and a new way of thinking. Dispelling, in one swoop, the rumour that expedition cruising only applies to polar regions – namely the Arctic and Antarctic.

Silver Cloud will sail with 240 passengers from Ushuaia, Argentina to Tromsø, Norway on a voyage that will take 167 days, navigate 10 routes and visit 30 countries.

One day visiting a landmark port, the next snaking up a river in search of rare birdlife.

It is not in the expedition cruise operators' interest to overcrowd the destinations that they visit, and there

is a genuine concern that the tried and tested polar routes will become congested.

As will some of the river routes favoured by expeditions cruises such as the Amazon and Mekong. Sustainability is key in managing this growth effectively, which explains why itinerary planners are actively seeking new ideas and mapping out new routes the world over. This is exactly why destinations and tour operators are encouraged to rethink the typical cruise product and create new experiences with the expedition market in mind.

Expedition cruises are known for their focus on nature, geology, history, wildlife, birdlife and marine mammals. Cultural experiences that reflect a region or destination's cultural and

historical roots. Tastes and stories. Authenticity and originality.

Traditionally, most expedition cruise lines operate rather differently to the more mainstream cruise lines in that they tend to run the majority of their excursions independently and via their own expedition teams.

Preferring to come ashore and explore via their own landing craft. Often not even a pier or harbour is required for landing.

This obviously changes from region to region and from line to line and it is worth noting that there are still good opportunities to be found in the form of pre and post cruise options.





Ships' expedition leaders and teams are responsible for the running of expeditions and zodiac landings ashore. These teams are typically made up of historians, geologists, scientists, experts in marine mammals, local cultures etc.

Almost all expedition vessels carry large inflatable landing craft (zodiacs) used for exploring and remote landings – along with kayaks. This

really is the basic kit for all expedition cruise ships.

Some of the new luxury builds also boast helicopters, submarines, remotely operated vehicles (ROVs) and aqua bikes.

Worth noting is that, whilst almost all companies include zodiac landings and touring in the ticket price, not all do and some of the high-end experiences such

as helicopter and submarine touring, come at an additional price. Some companies also charge an additional fee for zodiacs and kayaking so it's always good to check the small print!

The expedition sector is destined to see enormous growth over the next few years with an impressive number of new builds expected to join the existing fleet by the end of 2023-39 at the time of writing (3 May 2020).



FACTS AND FIGURES | SHIPS AND OPERATORS

If anyone reading this has already tried to make sense of the expedition market, it is hardly any wonder that they might have come away scratching their heads!

Because no matter how it is set up, it is complicated.

Today's expedition operators are made up of several groups and, on occasion, these groups overlap – which is why ships might be mentioned twice.

Group A those that own and operate their own ships.

Group B those that charter the ship (paying the owner for the ship and the operating crew but using their own guides and staff.)

Group C those that charter, and part own the ships.

Group D those that advertise expedition cruises and sell groups onto

selected ships (quite often the name of the ship is not mentioned.) These are not included in the tables below.

There are also quite a number of operators who offer mega yacht and yacht style cruises to regions favoured by expedition cruise operators.

These are typically 25 passengers or less and are not included in the following tables.

ARCTIC 2020/21 SEASON Correct 1/1/2020	
Company Operator	Ship(s) newbuilds included
Abercrombie and Kent	Le Boreal
Adventure Canada	Ocean Endeavour
Albatros Travel	Ocean Atlantic Ocean Victory (2021) Ocean Albatros (2022)
Aurora Expeditions	Polar Pioneer Greg Mortimer Sylvia Earl (2021)
G Adventures	Expedition
Hapag Lloyd	Bremen Hanseatic Nature Hanseatic Nature Hanseatic Spirit (2021)
Hurtigruten	Fram Spitzbergen Roald Amundsen Fridjof Nansen (2020)
Lindblad Expeditions	National Geographic Explorer National Geographic Endurance National Geographic Resolution (2021)
Noble Caledonia	Hebridean Sky Island Sky Caledonia Sky
Oceanwide Expeditions	Hondius Plancius Ortelius Nordlicht
Plantours Kreutfarhten	Hamburg
Polar Quest	Quest
Ponant	Le Boreal Le Soleal Le Commandant Charcot (2021) Le Jacques Cartier (2020) Le Bellot (2020) Le Dumont D'urville L'Austral Le Champlain
Poseidon Expeditions	Sea Spirit 50 Let Pobedy
Quark (North Pole Cruises)	50 let Pobedy
Quark	Ocean Adventure Ocean Nova
Seabourn	Seabourn Quest Seabourn Venture (2021)
Silversea Cruises	Silver Cloud Silver Explorer

Bibliography: With special thanks to Christopher Wright, Of Penguins and Polar Bears, A history of cold-water cruising.

ANTARCTIC 2020/21 SEASON Correct 1/1/2020

Company Operator	Ship(s) newbuilds included
Abercrombie and Kent	Le Lyrial
Albatros Travel	Ocean Atlantic Ocean Victory (2021) Ocean Albatros (2022)
Antarpply Expeditions	Ushuaia
Antarctica XXI SA	Ocean Nova
Aurora Expeditions	Polar Pioneer Greg Mortimer Sylvia Earl (2021)
Bark Europa	Europa
G Adventures	Expedition
Grand Circle Corporation	Corinthian
Hapag Lloyd	Bremen Hanseatic Nature Hanseatic Spirit (2021)
Heritage Expeditions	Akademik Sholalskiy Spirit of Enderby
Hurtigruten	Fram Spitzbergen Roald Amundsen Fridtjof Nansen (2020)
Lindblad Expeditions	National Geographic Explorer National Geographic Orion National Geographic Endurance National Geographic Resolution (2021)
Noble Caledonia	Island Sky Caledonia Sky Hebridean Sky
Oceanwide Expeditions	Ortelius, Plancius
Plantours Kreuzfahrten	Hamburg
Ponant	Le Boreal Le Soleal L'Austral Le Bellot (2020) Le Commandant Charcot (2021) Le Lyrial
Polar Latitudes	Hebridean Sky Island Sky
Quark Expeditions	Island Sky Ocean Diamond Ocean Endeavour Ocean Adventurer
Poseidon Expeditions	Sea Spirit
Seabourn	Seabourn Quest Seabourn Venture (2021)
Silversea Cruises	Silver Cloud Silver Explorer
Zegrahm Expeditions	Island Sky Caledonia Sky

Bibliography: With special thanks to Christopher Wright, Of Penguins and Polar Bears, A history of cold-water cruising.

