

**The Polaris Expedition to
Franz Josef Land
29th July – 8th August 2008
Total Solar Eclipse**





Expeditionteam

Murmansk Shipping Corporation

Captain	Sergey Vasilievitch Pashkov
2nd Maat	Nikolay Shibaev
Chief Maat	Andrey Cherepukhin
3rd Maat	Roman Dubovitskiy
Chief Engineer	Igor Morgun
Radio Officer	Alexander Talanov

Zodiac-Driver Alexander Talanov

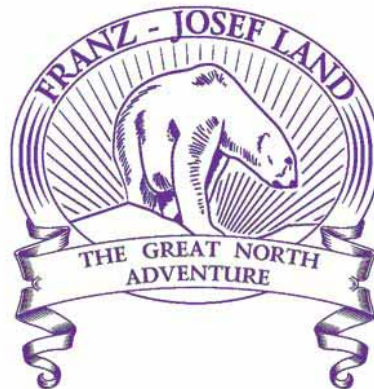
Poseidon Arctic Voyages

Expeditionleader	Andreas Umbreit
Hotel Manager	Max Chernyshev
Administration	Tatiana
Doctor	

Lecturers	
Astronomie	Wolfgang Strickling
Vögel	Yaroslav Nikitin
Biologie, Geologie	Sepp Friedhuber
Historie, Literatur	Birgit Lutz-Temsch

Shop-Assistant	Yana
Bar	Eugene





Tuesday, 29th July 2008: A sunny start

Most of us land at 14 o'clock in Longyearbyen, after a spectacular panoramic flight over the Svalbard archipelago. The bus takes us to Longyearbyen downtown, where we can stroll around in the fantastic shopping world.

Around 17 o'clock we enter the ship – and while we get used to it, we already quit Longyearbyen. We're on the way! Expeditionleader Andreas Umbreit calls us via loudspeaker into the Music Hall on the Promenade Deck, where we will hear all the lectures. Andreas introduces us to himself and his crew and tells his plans.

We will have to hurry in the beginning to come quickly near Franz Josef Land - because nearby there is the main zone of the Solar Eclipse on August 1st. For a lot of the passengers this Eclipse was one main reason to go on this voyage.

During dinner we pass Barentsburg, in bright arctic light. As we leave Adventfjorden and drive into the open Sea, the waves get higher – and almost all passengers go under deck quite quick.

Then asad happening: A passenger has severe medical problems, which make it risky to continue the travel. She decides together with the doctor to turn back to Barentsburg, the last settlement, where we can leave somebody. So we turn around and head back. Some passengers experience, how we reach the Russian settlement at about 1 o'clock in the night. The passenger is brought to land by zodiac. We lose about five hours, but it was the best solution for everybody.

Therefore also this evening ends very late for some passengers and crew members – and the guests have gone through already a complicated journey to Longyearbyen, and the crew a first expedition to Franz Josef Land.

Svalbard

The norwegian archipelago has about 2600 inhabitants who live in a few settlements. Nowadays there are about 70.000 visitors per year. But just 2000 go on tours into the land which take more than a couple of days. Because of the gulf stream touching Svalbard, the climate here is milder than in other areas of this latitude.



Wednesday, 30th July 2008: Open Water

The next morning there are a lot of free places at the breakfast tables - some passengers are not that hungry with the rough sea, others have a too big lack of sleep because of the emergency during the night.

After breakfast Andreas explains his plan for the next days: Because of the ice situation north of Svalbard we take the longer southern route, to be sure to be in time in the main zone of the solar eclipse. Then follows the obligatory emergency drill. Nikolai, the second mate, explains the rules. Back in our cabins we hear the alarm signal and we exercise the emergency. It works quite fine.

Whale

Whales are mammals. The biggest whales eat plancton, therefore whales appear mostly in seas, where warm and cold currents meet, because those contain most plancton – like around Spitzbergen, Iceland or Antarctica. Whales breath with lungs – so they have to come to the water surface regularly which makes them vulnerable.

And while there are a lot of passengers on deck several mink whales accompany us for a little while. After lunch we hear the first lectures: Andreas talks about his special knowledge: Spitzbergen, Wolfgang explains the phenomenon of Solar Eclipses to let us know what we will see on Friday.

In the evening the sky opens and we can see the sun over the Barents Sea.

Thursday, 31st July 2008: Grey sky and green faces

The sunshine didn't stay for long: The Polaris falls into valleys of waves, and the icy, black northern sea stands up against us angrily, the waves break up to the upper deck. And although its polar day, the sky is grey and dark. Not really good conditions for the eclipse, but most of the passengers don't care at the moment: With green faces they wander around, the doctor has a lot of work.

While we keep direction to the main zone of the eclipse, Sepp talks about glaciers. But the Music Hall is in the bow - the place with the biggest "delta-h", as one of the glaciologists says - the place where it bumps most. Some passengers leave the lecture quite sudden.

That notices also Birgit later at her lecture about the History of Franz Josef Land, which she holds partially with a little pressed voice. Sepp and Andreas show mercy: After the german lecture they cancel the english one, and Sepp shows instead a presentation of the Yamal Expedition to North Pole. Birgit disappears, like many others.

In the evening sea gets calmer, slowly passenger's faces are more colourful again. Wolfgang reads a text of Adalbert Stifter about the solar eclipse of the 19th century. Touching words. Wolfgang is very enthusiastic and tells us again: Open your hearts! We try.

Friday, 1st of August: A short polar night

Still in bed we notice: The waves are lower, the wind also. Andreas announces in his morning call at 7 o'clock: Sunshine!! The eclipse-chasers know that already, they have been checking weather and clouds the whole night.

Wolfgang is totally excited, but has slept better than before other eclipses, he tells us at breakfast. The non-eclipse-chasers are more and more surprised, how enthusiastic one can survey the sun.

The photographers gather on deck, with 1000-mm objectives, statives and some protection shields for the cameras. And then: With the first contact – when the moon comes between earth and sun – we have a wonderful free view to the sun.

We get quiet and astonished. All of us. And then it's night, polar night, for two minutes. Temperature falls from 5,5 degree to 0,7. Cameras click. And as fast as it was night it gets day again.

The astronomers are very happy. Expeditionleader and Captain also - Mission accomplished. At lunch we have an eclipse-Cocktail on it, and Wolfgang is still very touched from the event. And our hearts? Are wide open!!

The Solar Eclipse 2008

A solar eclipse is caused by the moon moving between earth and sun. We observe a total solar eclipse, when the moon stands exactly in front of the sun. During the eclipse it gets so dark that the brightest stars get visible. The total solar eclipse 2008 is visible on a stripe from Northern Canada through the Polar Sea until Siberia and China.

On our observation location (79.47.5N 42.14.2E) the following times are observed:

1. Contact: 10:48:47
2. Contact: 11:49:05
3. Contact: 11:51:22
4. Contact: 12:51:25

The next total solar eclipse can be seen 2009 in India and China.







After the cosmic experiences we soon have to turn to very banal things: During the zodiac drill Alexander explains how we have to behave in the Zodiacs. Meanwhile we take direction to George Land, one of the biggest islands of Franz Josef Land – there we plan a first landing.

Saturday, 2nd August 2008: Sun over Tichaya

Andreas wakes us with the message that the weather is still great and that we soon will reach Tichaya. We already dropped four glaciologists on Koettlitz Island. And even before breakfast we reach Rubini Rock, the biggest bird colony in the archipelago. The best place to watch the birds is the bow deck. The silence, which lies normally above the white islands is here not hearable: The birds are noisy. Here nist glaucous gull, dovekie/little auks, thickbuilt murrelets/commonguillemots and arctic terns.

A wonderful sunshine is lying above Tichaya Buchta which demonstrates why she is called like that: The water is glittering so calm in the bay that we seem more to be on a lake than in the Sea. What a relief for our stomachs!

The Tichaya Buchta

Tichaya Buchta got its name 1914 from Georgi Sedov who stopped here with his ship, the Foka, on his way to Northpole. 1926 a weather station is erected, in which up to 60 people live and even children are born. During wartime the crew for years isn't changed. 1959 it is closed down, the activity moves on to Krenkel Station on Hayes Island. Today the buildings are under protection. In some of them 1990 was created a new station, but soon the work there failed again. Nowadays there are plans to clean up around the station and to build a museum in one of the

After breakfast we start – Pajachale! Today we don't need scarf and hats but sunglasses. We ride to the station through the shimmering water. We have two hours of time to breath the morbid atmosphere between the rotten buildings. Graves remember the former inhabitants, memorials on former expedition – we even find one of Poseidon Arctic Voyages!

„All doubts faded away, full of wild excitement we climbed and jumped over the walls formed by the pressed ice to the North. Over the young ice we ran to the land, and when we finally had passed the coastline and really stepped on land, we didn't see that it was just snow, rocks and frozen pieces which surrounded us, and that there is no land which is more comfortless than the entered island, for us it was a paradise, and for this reason we gave her the name Wilczek-Island. So immense was our delight to have finally reached the land, that we gave its appearance a bigger attention than it normally would have deserved. We looked into every crack, touched every rock, we were delighted about every form and contour, which every crack shows everywhere, generously we called the icy slopes glaciers!“
“(Julius Payer, 1874)



We return for lunch to Polaris, pass in sunshine Rubini Rock and most of us enjoy the sun on the upper deck. We get to Koettlitz Island to pick up the glaciologists and head then for Cape Flora. In the afternoon Birgit holds her lecture about the history in Franz Josef Land in English which she skipped due to seasickness two days ago.

At Cape Flora it first seems that we can land – we see low surf from the ship. But then we discover a guest who was faster than us: A polarbear stands right between the landing place and the historic sites. A landing is therefore too risky. Instead we start a zodiac cruise into “Yamal Channel”. But the Channel, which the Yamal Expedition two years ago meant to discover, seemingly doesn’t exist. We pass a walrus colony in respectful distance, then we land and get closer to the animals, step by step, slowly.



Long before we can see singular animals in the brown mass on the beach we can smell them: Walruses smell. A lot. The huge animals don't take much notice of us. One moves very slow and curious towards us and seems even to pose for us. The photographers take hundreds of pictures.

Relaxed and happy we return over the pretty sandy beach to the zodiacs and return to Polaris. Which goes with us to Cape Tegetthoff.



Sunday, 3rd August 2008: Polarbear on the Cape, Search for the Grave

We wake up with the message that we already anchor in front of Cape Tegetthoff, and this information is useful, because it is so foggy, that we see neither Hall Island nor the famous pinnacles of the Cape.

Andreas wants to try a landing nevertheless, and starts a reconnaissance trip into the whiteout. The pioneer group has an exciting job this time - in the dense fog the surrounding is hard to overview. We therefore stay close together and watch into the white, in which a bear could surprise us at close hold.

Cape Tegetthoff

The significant Cape with its impressive rocks which rise in the sky was the first land, that Julius Payer saw on his Austro-Hungarian Northpole-Expedition 1872-1874. In dense fog the view to the 491 meter high cliffs opened suddenly, and Payer didn't see that there were yet two other islands lying in front of him, covered behind the fog. The Payer and Weyprecht expedition landed the first time on Wilczek Island. On Cape Tegetthoff the american journalist and explorer Walter Wellmann built his main camp.

During the pioneer group's search the fog gets lighter. In a dramatic light the pinnacles become slowly visible.



The towers of Cape Tegetthoff are the chimneys of a vulcano, out of which in former times magma was getting up and laid a huge basaltic cover over whole Franz Josef Land which builds the plateaus of the tablemountains. The ice age glaciers dwelled channels into the islands.

On the shore arctic poppy is blooming, for the ornitologists fly glaucous gull, dovekie/little auks, thickbuilt murrelets/coomonguillemots, arctic terns around the rocks. A powerful silence

lies over the place. What may Payer and Weyprecht may have thought, when these cliffs appeared suddenly out of the fog, after long months in the ice?

As soon as all passengers are on land, a polarbear appears right under the rocks. The bear doesn't seem to be interested in us – at least he starts to eat some grass very relaxed. Andreas doesn't stop the landing, but makes the landing area a little smaller and prohibits climbing the rock. The bear stays during the whole landing beyond the cliff, and just at the end he comes closer to the guards and Andreas. The photographers take exciting pictures.



Not enough, while returning to the ship we pass in the bright sunshine a walrus which lies on a small icefloe in front of the pinnacles. A wonderful picture!



Returned to Polaris we search after lunch for Otto Krisch's grave on the coast of Wilczek Island. Krisch was the only member of the Tegetthoff Expedition who died 1873. Andreas and Sepp have been there already – but by helicopter. Therefore they don't know exactly how the place looks like from the sea. And so we don't find the grave, even though we look concentrated with our binoculars along the coast.

Birgit and Sepp invite then to a short briefing in which Birgit explains the Wellmann-Expedition on Cape Tegetthoff and the story of Krisch's grave, and Sepp explains the geologic conditions on the Cape which led to the bizarre rock formations and how the bowls on Champs Islands were created.

In the evening we drop again the glaciologists, who want to explore a glacier on McClintock Island, and we start a next trip: We pass the glacier edges in the narrow channel between McClintock and Hall Island. Some passengers take the chance and break ice from some little icebergs for the evening drinks. The ice then melts not longer between the islands of Franz Josef Land but in Whiskey and Bailey, while we move on to Champs Island.



Monday, 4th August 2008: Rafting in the Northern Sea

During the night a storm blew around the Polaris, of which fortunately almost nobody took notice. Andreas was called to the bridge at half past three by the Captain, because it was impossible to get closer to Champs Island.

He decided therefore to move on to Alger Island, where the remains of the main camp of the Baldwin-Ziegler-Expedition can be seen.

The photographers enjoy the camp as well as the variety of flowers all around.

The Ziegler-Expeditions

American businessman William Ziegler equipped two expeditions, a first under the leadership of Evelyn Briggs Baldwin, which brings a lot of material (400 dogs, 15 ponys and food for three years), but results very ineffective. The main camp is built on Alger Island. The second under Anthony Fiala is maybe the one to move most around in the archipelago. Their main camp was in Teplitz Bay on Rudolf Island. Fialas attempt to the pole fails as well, but he does a lot of mapping of FJL.



The weather today changes very quickly: After the stormy night still a hard wind is blowing, and shortly the sun comes out. On the way to Champs we drive again through fog.

The pioneer boat finds an ideal landing situation on Champs Island: The sea is rather calm and there is almost no surf at the beach. In the short time between our checking and the start of passenger's cruise the situation changes: The waves get considerably higher and the zodiac drivers have a hard time with the boats. Nevertheless all passengers come to the shore – first just for a quick stay, then, as weather changes to better again, for a longer one.

We make a little hike up the hill, where the famous spheres can be seen.

The flat beach invites some crew members and passengers for a dip into the sea, while in the sky there is again a beautiful arctic light.

Dramatic clouds move in front of the sun and create almost a solar eclipse, fragments of a rainbow appear and the cliffs of Champs Island shimmer red and green in the sunlight – how lucky we are to have this fantastic atmosphere after all the fog of the former days right during our landing!

Champs Island

The famous bowls on Champs Island were created about 150 million years ago in a smooth and regular sediment. Caused by the decaying process of cadavers without oxygen a chemical process started, during which Iron-Ionics moved to the organic heart and unified to sulphur-iron. This caused a petrification of the sandstone. Because the unification was very regular, a round form was created, with the growing speed of 1 mm per thousand years. The rising of the continental plate stopped this process and the erosion caused by glacier rivers made the bowls come to the surface.





As dessert at dinner Andreas makes an announcement, that we should come to the upper deck with binocular and cameras: Polarbears on ice!

We are passing a huge icefield, on which a male bear and a mother with her cub jump from floe to floe. The Captain makes several rounds and we change from deck to deck to see the bears again and again. Due to the strong wind and waves we cannot stop because of the danger of being blown into the field. The bears want to know what strange thing is swimming there in the ocean and therefore come closer to the ice edge – without any fear.

Polar bear

The polar bear is the biggest predator on earth, but his future is melting with the floes on which he stands. Due to climate change the space for polarbears is constantly decreasing. The frozen area diminished to three million square kilometres in 2007 – a whole million less than in the former record years 2005 and 2006. The polarbear cannot survive without ice, because he adapted perfectly to the inhospitable region: He has small ears and a up to ten centimeters thick fat layer. The hair of his skin leads the warmth of the sun perfectly to his black skin. His disadvantage is the strong fixation on one prey: He lives almost completely of seals – and those he hunts best on the ice. Since a couple of years more and more drowned polar bears are found – even though they can swim further than 100 kilometers.



Because of the polarbear watching it is too late for a further landing. Cape Dillon, where another Ziegler Camp would have been seen, is skipped, but nobody is sad about it. Polarbears are better than historic stuff again! Again there is strong fog around us anyway, so a landing wasn't sure at all.



And with this happy meeting so we say good-bye to Franz Josef Land and start our way to Spitzbergen – in waves which get higher and higher.

Tuesday, 5th August: Wind at 8

What was already announced yesterday, when we left the secluded area of the islands becomes true and hits us with all its force: The Barents Sea is angry and fights with huge walls of waves against us. Breakfast is already not good visited, and at lunch one has to adore the waitresses for their art of serving during a storm. But still fewer passengers come to eat something.

The wind raises to a storm: Waves get 5-7 meters high, wind is blowing at force 8. The Captain asks the passengers to stay inside and for no reason go on an outer deck, furthermore to secure all belongings in the cabins. The doctor's seasickness medicine is very requested - and helps fortunately.



Nevertheless the brave lecturers continue their speeches: Sepp in the morning about plants and flowers in the Arctic in german and english, Birgit in the afternoon about the Tegetthoff Expedition in german and italian.

In the evening the storm gets at least a little slower and it's possible again to make some steps without bumping against the walls.

Sepp tries to show a movie about the Tegetthoff but technic is seasick as well. In the bar it is rather quiet today, we are too exhausted from the stormy day – and there is yet another announced.

Wednesday, 6th August 2008: Barbecue on Open Water

What a relief! The Barents Sea today seems more like Starnberger See than the cruel, angry northern Sea from yesterday. Therefore lectures are visited pretty good today.

Sepp tells about climate and climate history, the glaciologists introduce their project which made them come to Franz Josef Land, and Yaroslav explains the activity of icebreakers in the Northeastpassage.

In between the Captain invites to his cocktail, and several whales are seen.

In the evening: the barbecue on the Zodiac-Deck.

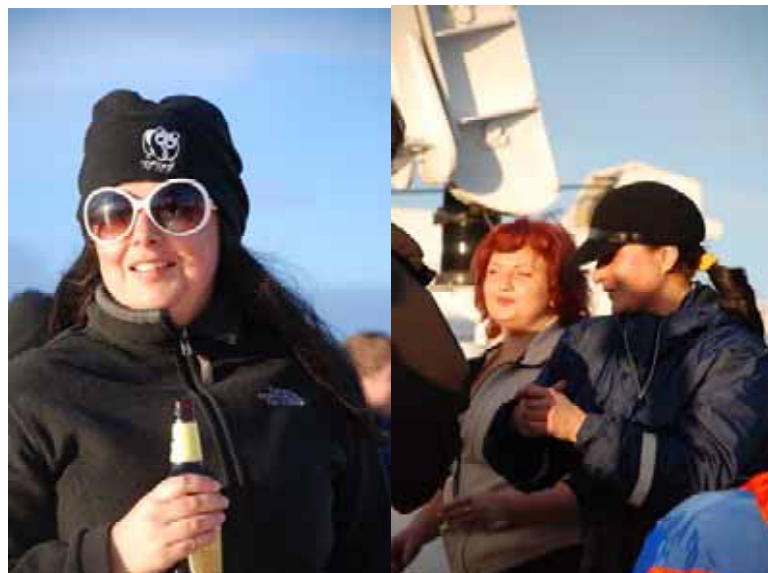
„Where should illness come from? With the best food, which is so varying, that even the most delicate doesn't get tired of, with good housing, good clothing, action in fresh air, with work that is more a pleasure than an effort... From my point of view, what turns out to have a really good effect on us, is, that we live altogether in one salon and everything is owned by everybody. As far as I know this is the first time that such an experiment is made, it's very recommendable.“ (Fridtjof Nansen 1897)

The Polaris slides in a calm Sea, in a wonderful arctic sunset, which won't end for a long time. But instead of behind the horizon, the sun disappears behind a thick wall of clouds, and with the sun the calm Sea disappears. Again chairs are sliding through the bar, again the ship rolls slowly in the valleys of waves. The first passengers start to hide in their cabins, others take the last seasickness pills. And others again just continue drinking. Important is, what helps.

„Sometimes I fear it will be impossible to save this group of undisciplined and lawless men. I don't know, how the story will end, but if nothing changes, than I am afraid we will end in a disaster.“ (George Tyson, Hall-Expedition)







Thursday, 7th August 2008:

During the night the waves throw the Polaris again up and down – Barents Sea doesn't give up that easily. Again a storm is blowing around us, again the water splashes up to the highest decks. In the morning Andreas wakes us with the message, that we lost several hours due to the rough sea and will reach Hornsund therefore about noon.

Spitzbergen doesn't want to show her beauty to us in the beginning. Driving into Hornsund at about 11 o'clock a dense fog lies around the sharp rock cliffs. Slowly sun is shining through the clouds more and more. The landscape looks different every minute due to the changing light and fog conditions. We can enjoy the mystic atmosphere in peace and tranquillity, because Andreas wants to start a zodiac cruise after lunch – maybe even weather will be better then.

Indeed – after lunch the sea in Hornsund lies flat and calm. The surrounding mountains are shimmering in the sun, turquoise icebergs drift from the bays to the open sea. Slowly we drive into the Sund, take pictures of the icebergs and drift along the glacier edges.

In Burgerbuchta we land besides a glacier and hike up the mountain up to the first glacier step. A peaceful silence lies over the bay. We step back to the zodiacs through the snow. What a beautiful ending of this voyage!





In the evening Poseidon invites to a russian dinner and Sepp shows a presentation with pictures of beautiful landscapes and happy faces one gets almost melancholic, that our trip is over now.

Friday, 8th August 2008: The Return to Civilisation

A very last time Andreas wakes us in the morning – and then it's time to say good-bye – to the Arctic, to Franz Josef Land, to the light, the air and new found friends. We have made a wonderful voyage.

This Logbook was written in german and english by Birgit Lutz-Temsch and coloured with pictures and informations by Sepp Friedhuber, Yaroslav Nikitin and Wolfgang Strickling.



Polaris, August 2008

*Arctic is my home.
I love her, her storms, her winds, her glaciers, her icebergs.
Whenever I am there, I feel as if I am in heaven on earth,
or in a terrestrial heaven (Charles F. Hall, 1870)*

Due to many requests here the (german) titles of some books used for the historic lectures:

History in general:

Susan Barr: Franz Josef Land (Norsk Polarinstitut, available there or in Svalbard Museum, just English)

Andreas Umbreit: Spitzbergen mit Franz Joseph Land und Jan Mayen

Robert E. Peary: Die Entdeckung des Nordpols

Payer-Weyprecht-Tegetthoff:

Christoph Ransmayer: Die Schrecken des Eises und der Finsternis

Julius Payer: Die Entdeckung von Kaiser Franz-Joseph-Land

Christoph Höbenreich: Expedition Franz Josef Land

Nansen-Johansen-Fram:

Führer des Frammuseum, Oslo

Fridtjof Nansen: In Nacht und Eis

Ragnar Kvam: Im Schatten