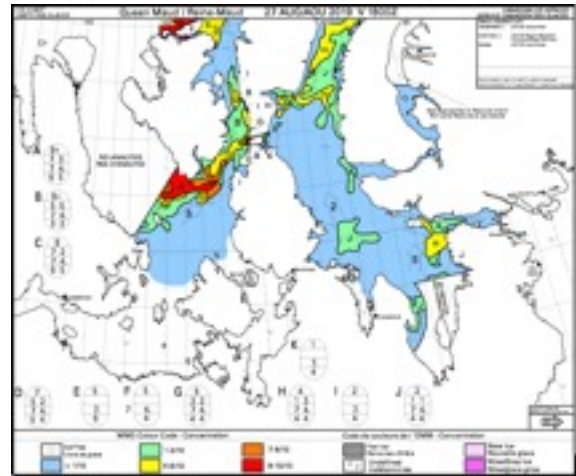


## The Big Event of the Trip Visiting the Wreck of the HMS Erebus and HMS Terror National Historic Site

Its today -- the day I've been waiting for and the event I hoped for on the **Into** the Northwest Passage (NWP) itinerary. But it didn't happen. In fact, in the last six attempts Adventure Canada made to visit the site of John Franklin's sunken ship, the Erebus, none were successful, usually due to high winds and ice conditions.

I suspect MJ (Matthew James), the expedition leader for *Into* the NWP anticipated the problem and began preparing us for disappointment from day one. He taught us how to read ice charts and at each nights briefing, we review the latest chart. Finally one night he tells us that due to packed ice, we will not be able to get thru Queen Maud Channel to visit the historic site. It is not a surprise and a "Plan B" was already in place.



Ice Chart showing the location of pack ice in red - right where we are headed!

We didn't have a clue of how much we missed.

But things are different 10 days later. Four of us continue on the ship doing a back-to-back on the **OUT** of the Northwest Passage itinerary. 195 new people join us, including a complete new expedition team.

The packed ice has broken up, winds have died down so this Adventure Canada group will be the first outside group invited to visit the site.

Traveling with us is Tamara Tarasoff, the director of the HMS Erebus and Terror National Historic Site as well as her assistant, Aaron Skoblenick.

Preparations for the visit start right away on Day 2 of the itinerary with focused programs and speakers:

Day 2:

- *The History of the Franklin Expedition and the Search for the Erebus & Terror* with Parks Canada Staff

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Sir John Franklin was 59 years old when he accepted the commission to find and chart the Northwest Passage.

The Erebus was fully equipped with three years of provisions - including food from Fortnum and Mason. It set sail May 19, 1845 reaching Baffin Bay in August. They were never heard from again. The ship was finally located in September, 2014 - thus solving one of the great mysteries of polar exploration.



\* A Drop-in for a Parks Canada Meet & Greet, including viewing replicas of artifacts



We are allowed to handle all the replicas including a dinner plate, medicine bottle, signature stamp handle and the top to a container.

Day 3:

\* *The Future of the HMS Erebus and Terror National Historic Site* with Parks Canada Staff

- \* *The Nunavut Inuit Treaty* with Laurie Pelly (legal advisor) which helped us understand the legal relationships of Canada and the Inuit community of Nunavit to the historic site
- \* Parks Canada Orientation (how they handle important sites like this)



Day 4: And Finally -- The Big Day!

Visiting both the research ship and the barge over the Erebus

We are divided into six groups with the first group disembarking the Ocean Endeavour at 7:15am and the last group scheduled for 4:00pm. The original plan calls for each group to visit:

- \*First Stop: visit the Guardians of the Erebus and Terror sites at their camp (The Guardians monitor wildlife, shipping and fishing boats in the vicinity of the historic site and report any irregularities to authorities)
- \* Second Stop: Visiting the David Thompson Research Ship
- \* Third Stop: Visiting the barge situated directly over the Erebus and meet with the underwater archaeologists

It did not take long for plans to change. High winds and a too long zodiac ride thru choppy waters to the Guardians camp caused that visit to be scrapped within the first hour. So the six Guardians and an Inuit Elder are invited to come aboard our ship for an informal question and answer program and stay for lunch!

Meanwhile, those waiting our turn to disembark enjoyed additional programming:

- \* *The Search for the Northwest Passage: Part 1 and Part 2* (documentary)
- \*
- \* Visiting with the HMS Terror and Erebus Guardians - who quickly put together an introduction to their work with a question and answer session

And later that evening:

- \* *The latest and greatest HMS Erebus Underwater Archaeology Reveal* with Parks Canada Staff followed by a second opportunity to view and touch the replica artifacts

It is about a 30 min. zodiac ride thru choppy waters to the Underwater Archaeology Team's research vessel and their barge. Maneuvering ourselves from the zodiac onto their boat is not easy. We stand on the tip of the bouncing zodiac and are to hoist ourselves on to the ledge of the barge. Those of us who are too short are unceremoniously pulled onto the barge by our armpits. Once on the barge, we visit the lab to view artifacts recovered in the last few days. Archaeologists tell us about each piece, and where on the Erebus it was found. No photographs are allowed.



Then we move to the monitoring lab that keeps track of the divers and lo and behold a diver is just coming up and we are the very first to see a newly recovered artifact - part of a boot!

Getting off the barge requires a quick jump into the moving zodiac (I was terrified).

Our next stop is the research vessel to see the monitors focused on the Erebus, a model of the sunken ship, and some of the equipment used to explore the site.



We are never allowed to wander around by ourselves, and each visit is strictly timed.

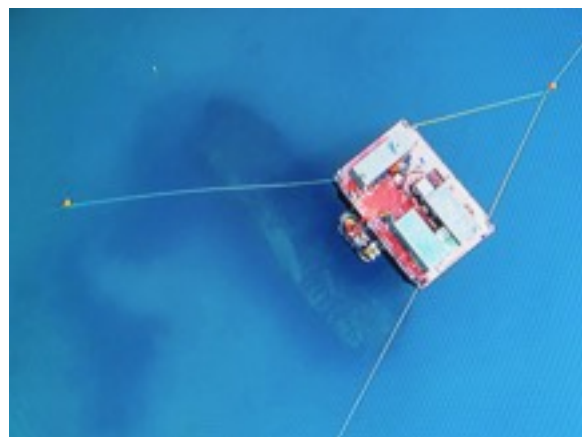
That evening, we have a debriefing with Brandy Lockhart, the lead archaeologist

It is thanks to Adventure Canada's long partnership with Parks Canada that we have the privilege of being the first outside visitors to this important site.

I am forever grateful.

The Research Barge over the Erebus.

The National Historic Site is 8x8 miles and can be entered only with permission from Parks Canada.



September 2019