

Floral Fashion
for Fall

Porthole Cruise

10.2025

and Travel

Maritime Michigan
A Steamship Road Trip

Monsoon Miracle
Oman's Desert Blooms

Gastro Glasgow
Hot Scottish Foodies



+

A VICTORY LAP

NEW SHIP WINS IN
THE GREAT LAKES

5 GARDENS, 1 SYMPHONY

A BOTANICAL VOYAGE
ON CRYSTAL CRUISES

Arctic Inspiration

A northern voyage
of self discovery

HEART OF THE ARCTIC

by Lina Zeldovich

See polar bears, iceberg tsunamis, and (maybe) Margaret Atwood on this Adventure Canada cruise.





CAUGHT IN MID-STROKE

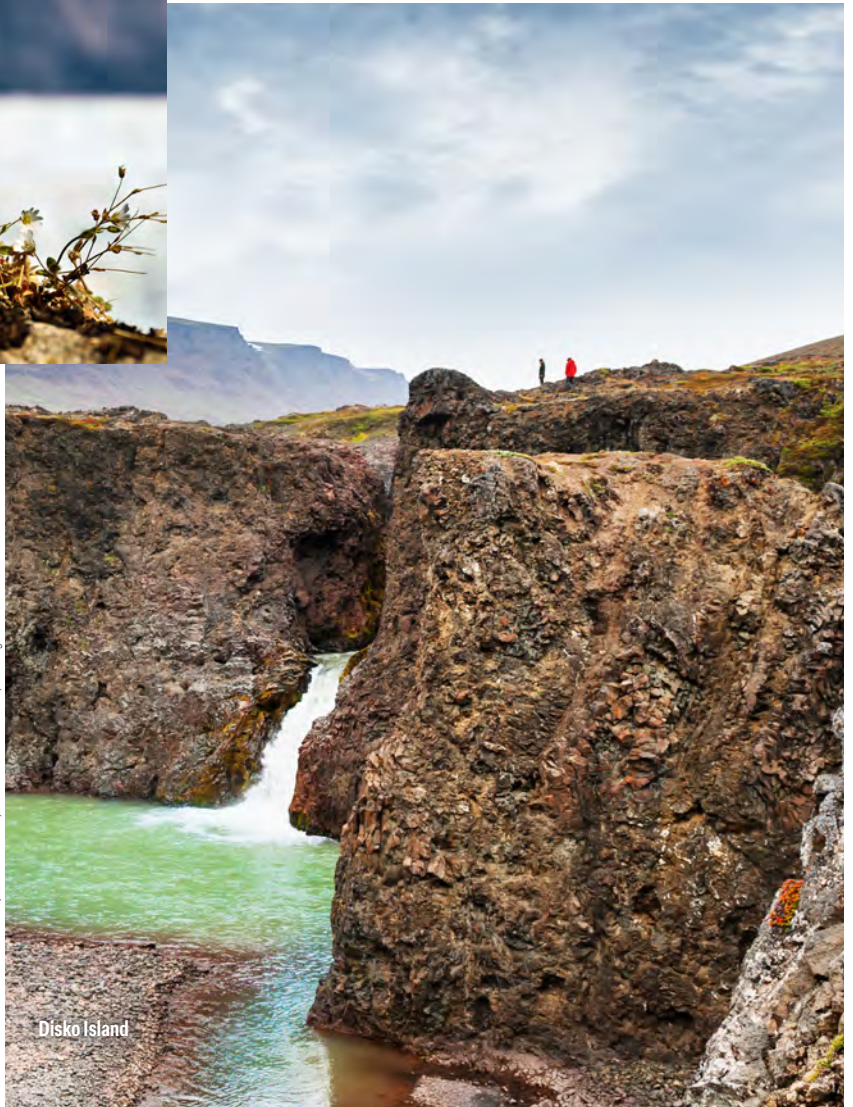
Squinting in the chilling Arctic wind, I climb out of a small inflatable Zodiac and step onto the wet sand of Disko Island off the west coast of Greenland in Baffin Bay. I trudge up the hill where the rest of my group is already listening to our guide about the dos and don'ts of high-Arctic explorations, which can be summed up as "if you don't want to be eaten by a polar bear, stay within the designated perimeter." Everyone agrees that it's reasonable and we proceed further up, intrigued by the promise of seeing flowers blossoming in the permafrost. When we find them, we buzz with kidlike delight. Who would've thought things can bloom here?

Spotting polar bears and flowers are good reasons to be excited, but I have more. I am cruising with Adventure Canada, and Margaret Atwood, the famous Canadian writer, poet, and my favorite author, is trekking up the permafrost too. As a friend of the family that owns Adventure Canada, she had joined their northern voyages fairly regularly over the last few decades. She even wrote a fiction story, "Stone Mattress," on one of these expeditions, in which main character Verna, a cruise passenger, runs into a man who got away with sexually assaulting her when she was 14 — and settles the score by killing him on an uninhabited Arctic island.

I've always wanted to see the Arctic's majestic beauty, but I wasn't sure I could brave the elements. Learning that my favorite author, who is in her 80s, would be on the ship sealed the deal. As a writer who occasionally publishes short stories and has a novel in progress, I'd love to talk to Margaret on authorly topics, but I'm too chicken to strike a conversation. I just hope serendipity will intercede as we keep exploring.



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Disko Island



I challenge myself to a kayak adventure in the frigid waters.

THE ARCTIC KALEIDOSCOPE

Every moment of our journey is filled with wonder. As we sail up north, we visit the village of Mittimatalik, where we learn about Inuit culture and history, and enjoy a cultural performance, which includes throat-singing, a traditional form of Inuit vocal art. Another day, we offload at Beechy Island, tracing the ill-fated expedition led by Sir John Franklin in 1845 that perished mysteriously; traversing the Arctic back then was a dangerous endeavor.

As I get accustomed to the weather, I challenge myself to a kayak adventure in the frigid waters. That requires sealing myself inside a dry suit and climbing into a shifting and bobbing kayak from the

Zodiac in the freezing rain. Next, we listen to safety instructions. We're going to paddle along a beautiful glacier, which means we must watch out for ice that occasionally breaks off and falls into the water, generating no small waves. If that happens, we must quickly position our kayaks facing that wave to avoid capsizing. The prep proves useful — on our way back to the ship, a chunk of ice calves off, plummeting into the sea. Luckily, by then we're far enough that the wave peters out when it hits us.

Calving ice can pose danger even on land, as we learn on our visit to a Greenland village of Ilulissat. The village sits next to the Ilulissat Glacier, a large ice sheet that regularly generates enormous icebergs, setting off veritable tsunamis. On our hike to the glacier, we pass by a waterfront where a warning sign directs us to keep away from shore to avoid being swept away by an unexpected mega-wave. We heed the warning, wondering what Arctic tsunamis are like.

Later that afternoon, we get to experience a small one in action, as we traverse the Ilulissat Icefjord. Large cruise ships typically don't navigate the fjord's relatively shallow waters, and Zodiacs are too little to withstand the calving waves, so we board a midsize boat for the trip. As we sail through the majestic labyrinth of floating white mountains glowing in the sun, the pristine silence is suddenly shattered by a roaring sound, a cross between a thunder and an avalanche. A huge ivory mass breaks away from the rest of a massive iceberg and falls into the water, generating a powerful wave. The wave rocks our boat, bounces off another iceberg, and rocks us again, eventually smoothing out, a spectacle that no photos can do justice.



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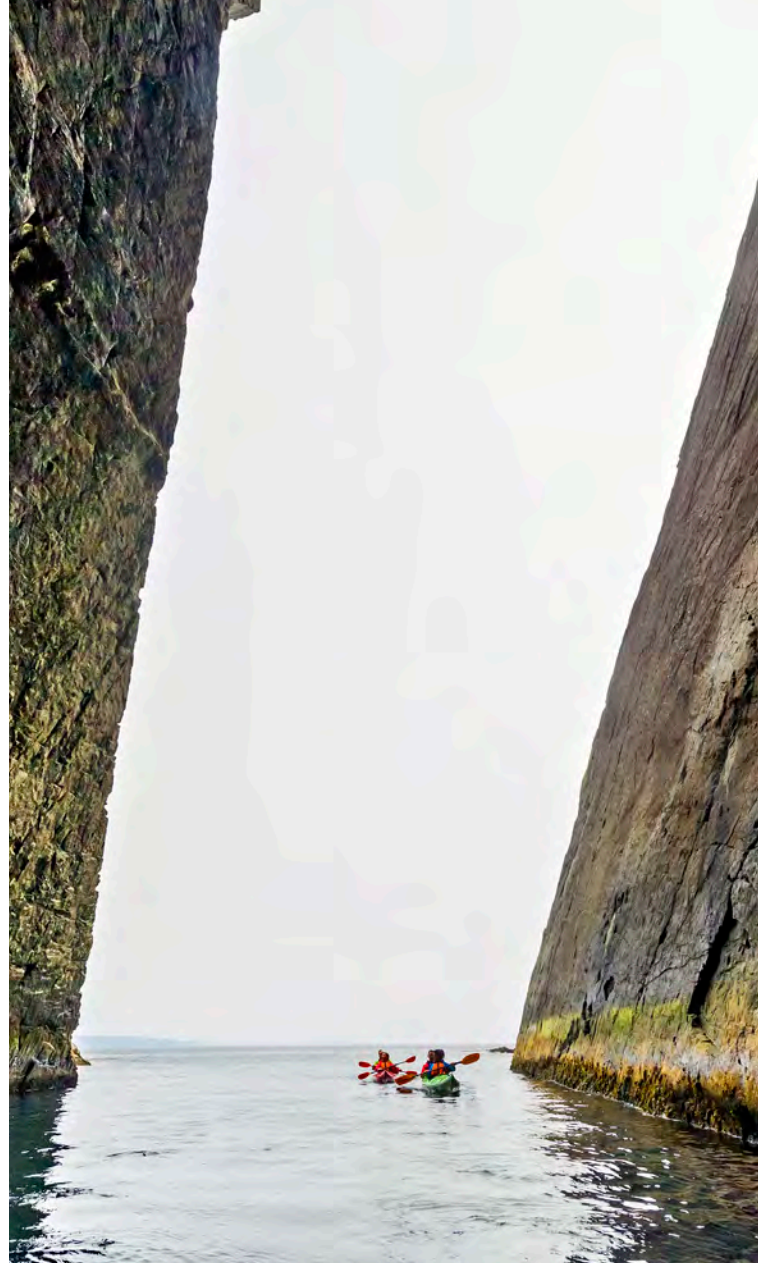


SERENDIPITY STRIKES

Back to land, as we wait for our Zodiacs to go back to the ship, we're sharing our impressions of the natural phenomenon we witnessed. Margaret is there too. "The Arctic is an awe-inspiring place," she comments — and just like that the distance, whether imaginary or real, melts away like ice in the water. Now we are all humans, awestruck and humbled by Mother Nature's might. "I can see how it can inspire amazing stories," I say, adding that as a writer, I'm already musing over a few ideas. She nods slightly in response.

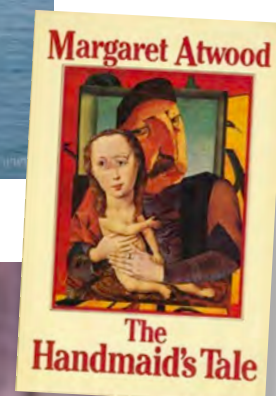
In the evening, as we gather in the ship's lounge, Margaret reads a chapter from her current book-in-progress — and then offers to sign books for those who want her autograph. As I pass the original edition of *The Handmaid's Tale* to her, she asks what I am writing at the moment. "I have a novel in progress set in a dystopian future where only genetically fit people are allowed to have families," I answer. "But I don't

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know if it will ever be published because my agent only sells nonfiction.” Margaret takes a few seconds as she autographs the book, and then writes something on a piece of paper which she hands to me. “When you finish, email my agent.”

Later that night, as I lie in bed in my cabin half-asleep, I think of all the marvels I was fortunate to experience on this trip. Between riding tsunamis, listening to Inuit throat-singing, and holding the small piece of paper with Margaret’s handwriting, it’s hard to pick a favorite. The Arctic is a wild and wondrous place. One just never knows what may happen. I’m happy I mustered enough courage to explore it — in more ways than one.●