

Expert in adventure expeditions

Director of Expeditions Nicolas Dubreuil, at PONANT, has been guiding trips to the polar regions for 27 years. He has a proven track record in organising skiing, kayaking, and diving trips, as well as all kinds of sportive adventure expeditions. Now he is busy planning the itineraries for the new icebreaking cruise vessel.



Nicolas Dubreuil personally visits all the remote places he intends to include when he is creating an itinerary for expedition cruises.

Photographs N. Dubreuil.



Building a story

Dubreuil personally does the scouting when he is creating an itinerary in order to locate interesting things, such as wildlife, geology, people and settlements.

"It is like creating a movie, I need to find exciting moments and build a story for our passengers. To experience ice for real is fantastic, but there is so much more you can see and do during a two or three-week cruise," Dubreuil adds.

"The new icebreaker will give us completely new possibilities. It is like a brand-new space ship. We can actually bring people to places I have had to ski for one month to see in the past. The passengers can disembark in locations where fewer people have been than have walked on the moon."

Apart from the extraordinary experience, the new vessel is dedicated to educating passengers about the polar regions, the eco-systems that exists there and sustainability. The last pristine places on earth are extremely vulnerable and must be treated carefully to preserve them.

"As an example, we will not break ice to reach all the areas we intend to visit because both settlements and animals need uninterrupted ice cover, but instead we will use other means of transport to reach the most remote places. In Greenland the local residents will meet us with dog-sledges and in Antarctica we will be able to use our two helicopters, snowmobiles, skis or Zodiac boats to disembark and watch emperor penguins, for example, as we don't want to disturb them," Dubreuil says.

The first cruise is intended to depart around mid-2021 and will follow the east coast of Greenland. There will be plenty of activities and Dubreuil is working with the local settlements in the planning.

"Just imagine the scene, the brand-new luxury cruise vessel arriving through the coastal ice to the fast ice where a group of residents with dog-sledges come to meet our passengers. It will be a once in a lifetime experience."



In 2001, Nicolas Dubreuil had a terrible accident in North Greenland when he was leading a ski expedition. He fell through the ice and in freezing temperatures nearly lost his fingers. "Luckily, with my body being used to the cold, I managed to preserve them in the end," Dubreuil says.

"A wise person once said: 'You have two lives and the second only starts when the first one ends'."

At the time Dubreuil was a teacher of computer science at university. "For me, the accident was a wake-up call and changed everything. I wanted to dedicate my life to expeditions and adventures, so I quit my teaching job and bought a house in the most remote settlement in Greenland."

He continued as a guide and started to work with PONANT as an expedition leader.

"This taught me how useful a cruise ship is as a tool to bring people to remote areas, people who would otherwise not have a chance of experiencing them, for instance my parents."

"I also learnt that PONANT is a very special company. At PONANT we care about the passengers, the environment and how we do things. And we are prepared to go to wild places."

Today Dubreuil is the director of all the expedition cruises. His job is not only to plan routes and destinations, but also to recruit and train naturalists who are on board the ship to teach passengers about the polar areas.

"We take this matter very seriously and plan in detail how to minimize the impact on the environment. We also offer space for scientists on board so that they can have the opportunity to perform experiments, measure the ice and find out how to preserve the polar regions," he says.