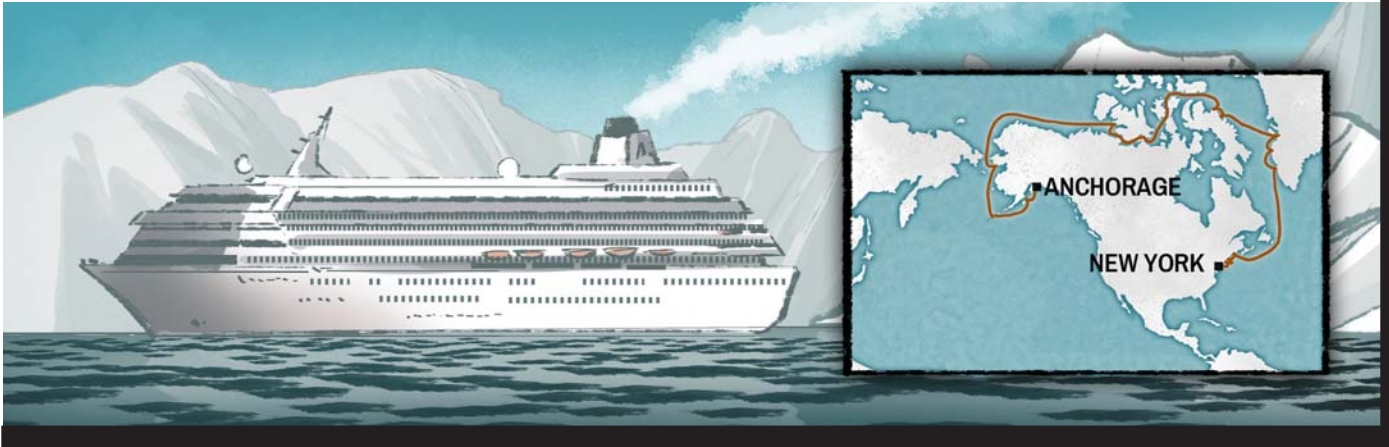




NATIONAL

# CRUISING THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE



This summer, a 252-metre-long, 13-deck luxury cruise ship is steaming through Canada's Arctic waters. The *Crystal Serenity* carries almost 1000 passengers and 700 crew. The ship has a casino, swimming pool, movie theatre, driving range, and wireless internet. Prices start at \$20,000 (US) and rise to about \$160,000 for a deluxe stateroom and options like helicopter tours.

Never before has a ship this size navigated the Northwest Passage. An exciting first, or a bad idea?

## FAMOUS SEA ROUTE

For centuries, European explorers tried to find a route through Canada's ice-choked Arctic waterways. They were hoping for a quicker way to get to Asia from Europe. In 1906, Norwegian Roald Amundsen finally made the journey from

the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. That feat took three years.

The Northwest Passage today isn't what it was in Amundsen's day. Climate change means summer sea conditions have changed dramatically. There is less ice cover and more open water. Last August, the surface area of ice at the Arctic Circle was 30 percent less than it was in 1990. Scientists expect Arctic summers to be almost ice-free within 25 years.

The result is more shipping traffic. That means increased risks of accidents, oil spills and pollution. So far, fewer than 50 small passenger ships have made the trip. But now, here comes the massive *Crystal Serenity*. Her voyage is a test run for the bigger ships officials now expect to come calling more often.

## A MONTH OF LUXURY

*Crystal Serenity's* voyage began in Anchorage, Alaska. She is sailing across the Gulf of Alaska, then through the Bering and Beaufort Seas and the Northwest Passage. Afterwards, she'll head south to New York.

Passengers get 24-hour butler service and shore excursions by zodiac or helicopter. They can attend talks by climatologists, marine biologists and whale photographers. As well, they can interact with **Inuit** locals.

## DISASTER SCENARIO

American and Canadian Coast Guard officials spent months preparing *Crystal Serenity's* crew for the voyage.

The Northwest Passage is one of the most remote and least-mapped regions of the world. Hazards include icebergs and drifting sea ice that can be pushed unpredictably by wind.

## DEFINITIONS

**INUIT:** the indigenous people of northern Canada and parts of Greenland



What if the ship hits something? It could start sinking with nearly 1700 passengers and crew aboard. The area is largely out of reach for search and rescue helicopters. When a smaller ship ran aground in 2010, it took 40 hours to rescue 120 passengers. Making matters worse, communications are patchy in the north. Towns are tiny and lack medical facilities to cope with emergencies.

“I don’t want a repeat of the *Titanic*,” said a United States Coast Guard official.

This specific cruise ship, however, passed safety inspection. Two Canadian ice pilots are on board. An icebreaker is escorting the ship. It has two helicopters that can scope out ice in the ship’s path and provide emergency support. The ship has ice-detecting radar, special search lights and thermal imaging equipment to identify ice and other hazards at night.

### **YOU’VE GOT VISITORS!**

People living along the route also worried about the impact of shore visits. After all, tourists could outnumber residents of three stops on the itinerary!

To address these fears, not all the passengers will go on shore at once. They will also need to respect local sensitivities. For

example, residents want tourists to ask before taking their photos.

It’s a good compromise. Sam Arreak, an official in one of the communities that will see tourists, says most residents recognize there will be benefits, too.

“[Tourism] provides ... employment and short-term work,” he says. “It exposes our culture to more people. They get to hear our language and see our games.”

### **CARBON FOOTPRINTS**

Other concerns focused on the ship’s impact on the environment.

The Arctic food chain depends on plankton and Atlantic cod that live in crevices under the sea ice. As the ice disappears, so do these species and predators like beluga whales and polar bears. The Arctic ecosystem is changing incredibly quickly, and critics say this is no time to be adding extra stresses like big cruise ships.

For their part, *Serenity*’s owners say they’re doing everything they can to minimize the impact. The ship runs on low-sulphur fuels that are less polluting. No garbage will be thrown overboard. Treated human waste won’t be dumped anywhere near the shore. And the escort vessel

has equipment for containing oil spills.

Besides, say supporters, a cruise like this raises awareness about changes to the Arctic. Perhaps some of the passengers might be inspired to do something about climate change when they return home.

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

Climate change is most severe in the Arctic. Warming here is occurring at an alarming rate of almost twice the global average.

### **EXTINCTION TOURISM**

Dr. Michael Byers of the University of British Columbia was very critical of this argument. The cruise produces greenhouse gases that are causing the climate to warm. It doesn’t make sense that the very people who want to see an ecosystem before it is destroyed by climate change are contributing to that change.

Professor Byers calls this cruise an example of “extinction tourism,” when people travel to see a disappearing species while they still can.

Apparently the concept is a hot seller. The 2016 *Serenity* cruise sold out quickly and another is already planned for 2017. ★



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## ON THE LINES

Answer the following in complete sentences:

1. How is climate change affecting the Arctic compared to other parts of the world?

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2. Explain how conditions have changed in Canada's Arctic region in recent decades.

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3. Name the cruise ship that will navigate the Northwest Passage this summer.

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4. How many people are on this ship?

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5. Where will the journey start and finish?

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6. Describe the hazards of this journey.

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7. List at least three safety precautions that the *Crystal Serenity* will have in place.

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NATIONAL

# CRUISING THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE

## BETWEEN THE LINES

An *inference* is a conclusion drawn from evidence. A *plausible inference* is supported by evidence in the article and is consistent with known facts outside of the article.

What inference(s) can you draw from the fact that the 2016 *Crystal Serenity* cruise sold out quickly and that another is already planned for 2017?

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## JUST TALK ABOUT IT

- As you understand it, what concerns surround the *Crystal Serenity*'s voyage through the Northwest Passage this summer? What benefits might come from this voyage?
  - Imagine that you've been given the opportunity to travel the Northwest Passage on the *Crystal Serenity* next summer. Would you accept or decline the invitation? Give reasons to support your response.
- As you see it, what is the importance of this story? Explain.

## ONLINE

*Note:* The links below are listed at [www.lesplan.com/en/links](http://www.lesplan.com/en/links) for easy access.

- Watch a three-minute news clip on YouTube called "Luxury cruise to set sail through the dangerous waters of the Northwest Passage" at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pC8\\_w8wFKpM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pC8_w8wFKpM)
- Take a visually stunning two-minute tour of the Northwest Passage by watching the YouTube video "Adventure Canada's Northwest Passage" at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FMkUJ5NtVXQ>
- Explore the Parks Canada Franklin Expedition website at <http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/culture/franklin/index.aspx>
- Visit the Crystal Cruises website at <http://www.crystalcruises.com/> ★

# MAP ASSIGNMENT

Complete this map assignment to better understand the article *Cruising the Northwest Passage*.

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Obtain the required resources and read all the instructions before starting.
2. Colour your map after all labelling is completed.
3. Print in pencil only first, then go over the printing in black ink.
4. Work carefully and neatly.

**Resources Required:** pencil, black pen, pencil crayons, ruler, eraser and an atlas.

**Part A** Locate and label the following territories in CAPITAL letters and shade each as indicated:

Yukon (brown)                      Northwest Territories (pink)                      Nunavut (orange)

**Part B** Locate and label the following provinces in CAPITAL letters and shade each as indicated:

British Columbia (purple)                      Alberta (yellow)                      Saskatchewan (green)  
 Manitoba (brown)                      Ontario (purple)                      Quebec (yellow)  
 New Brunswick (red)                      Nova Scotia (green)                      Prince Edward Island (orange)  
 Newfoundland and Labrador (pink)

**Part C** Locate and label the following in CAPITAL letters and shade each as indicated:

United States (grey)                      Russia (red)                      Greenland (green)  
 Iceland (red)

**Part D** Locate and label the following lakes and shade them light blue:

Great Slave Lake                      Great Bear Lake

**Part E** Locate and label the Great Lakes and shade them light blue.

**Part F** Locate and label the following bodies of salt water and shade all ocean water dark blue:

Pacific Ocean                      Gulf of Alaska                      Bering Sea  
 Bering Strait                      Beaufort Sea                      Arctic Ocean  
 Hudson Bay                      Baffin Bay                      Atlantic Ocean

**Part G** Locate and label the following lines of latitude:

60° N                      Arctic Circle 66° N

**Part H** Locate and label the Northwest Passage.

**Part I** Complete your map with a frame, title and compass. ★



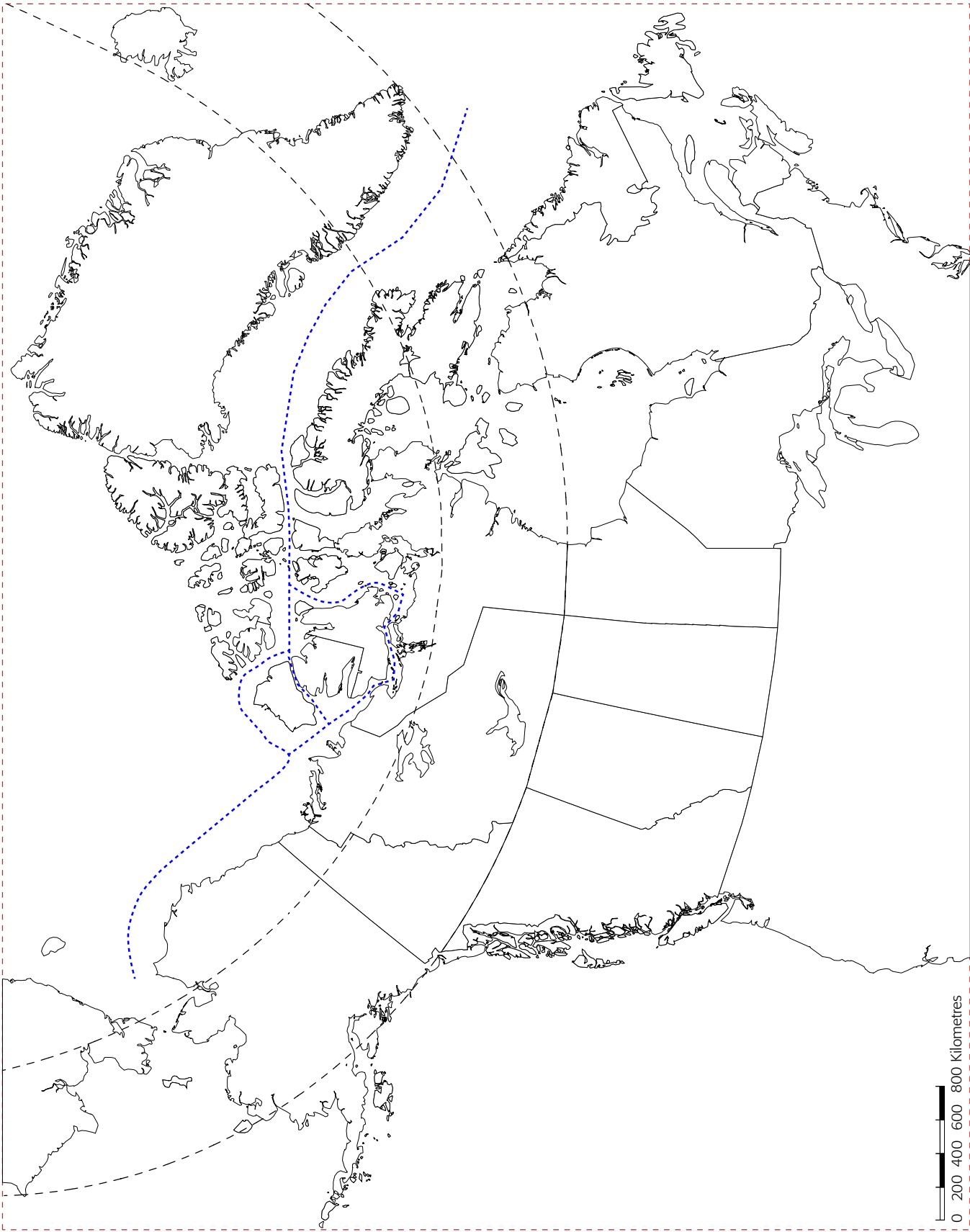
Yukon



Northwest Territories



Nunavut



0 200 400 600 800 Kilometres