



## Danish Owned Ship – "Nordic Barents" – Will Transit The Northern Sea Route



"Nordic Barents" (previous livery)

It is a well-known fact that it has always been in the human nature to explore and seek new frontiers – both out of curiosity and in order to gain wealth. If our ancestors could reach new land more quickly, either to trade or to conquer – they would go through fire and water – and certainly also ice – to find a shortcut. Even though man has been aware for a long time that The Arctic Sea is a considerable shortcut between the (North) Atlantic and the Pacific oceans it has always been an outpost that proved difficult to conquer.

Global warming, however, has – for better and for worse – made it possible to navigate the Arctic during the summer months. Until recently Russian authorities would only allow transit through the Northern Sea Route with an escort of Russian icebreakers – at exorbitant prices – but recently they have granted permission for ice-strengthened ships to transit it on their own, at the same time offering icebreaker assistance on more reasonable terms. The Route was open in 2005-2006. In 2007 there was an increased amount of pack ice, but this only lasted until 2008 when it receded again.

**Denmark is a small country, but its maritime importance far exceeds the size of the land.** Therefore, it is obvious that this "last frontier" must also be plotted into the charts of Danish ship owners. So it is quite in accordance with Danish maritime tradition and pioneer spirit that the bulk carrier "Nordic Barents" at the beginning of September embarks on a voyage from Kirkenes in Norway to China with a cargo of iron ore. The ship is one of the very few in Lloyd's highest ice class (A1). It is owned by Investeringsgruppen Danmark and on long term charter to **Nordic Bulk Carriers** in Hellerup/Copenhagen – a relatively new company, owned by Christian Bonfils and Mads Boye Petersen. Nordic Bulk Carriers specializes in operation of dry cargo ships in the handysize and handymax segments. The company also operates the sister ship, "Nordic Bothnia".

The charterer on this pioneer voyage is the Norwegian shipping and mining concern, Tschudi Shipping Company. The voyage is expected to take approximately 25 days and will be executed with some assistance from Russian icebreakers. **The Northern Sea Route Administration**, a department under the Russian Ministry of Transport, has thus given its **first permission for a foreign-flagged vessel to transit from one foreign port to another**. The Arctic Route means – in this instance – a reduction of sailed distance by one third, which entails savings on time and bunkers (approximately USD 180.000), and, not least, a much **reduced emission of CO<sub>2</sub>**. The latter is in perfect concordance with **Danish owners' current endeavours to be a leading contributor to tangible improvements of the global environment**.



### **Short Historical Background**

For as long as man has inhabited the Arctic there has undoubtedly been local traffic in the tough regions of sea and ice, situated between the 70<sup>th</sup> and the 80<sup>th</sup> latitudes as – what appears on the map - a blue band of sea between the North Pole and, respectively, the American and the Euro-Asiatic continents. In practice it is more white than blue.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century traders had established a route between Arkhangelsk and Yamal peninsula, from where they would portage their boats to the estuary of river Ob. This became known as the Mangazeya Passage. But east of Yamal the further route north of Taimyr peninsula – coming close to the 80<sup>th</sup> latitude – proved to difficult to conquer. East of this peninsula the Russians traded on a route between rivers Lena and Kolyma. At the same time there was an increasing traffic of explorers from Denmark, England and Norway, as well as other countries, on the western part of the Northern Sea Route. But it remained separated in two on account of the difficulties in going around Taimyr.

In 1648 a Russian expedition succeeded in getting through on an eastbound voyage from Kolyma to the Pacific Ocean, thereby finally proving that no land connection between Alaska and Asia exists. 80 years later the Russian – but Danish born – Vitus Bering made a voyage in the opposite direction, starting at Kamchatka, to the strait that now carries his name. Bering continued with expeditions between 1725 and 1730 as part of a greater exploration scheme conceived by Peter the Great. It was only in 1878, however, that the Finland-Swedish explorer, Nordenskiöld, on the so-called Vega-expedition succeeded in performing a total west-east passage of the Northern Sea Route. The captain on the ship was Louis Palander of the Swedish Navy. In 1915 a Russian expedition made an east-west transit.

In this connection it is worth mentioning that there had also been many attempts to navigate the North West Passage – along the coast of North America – but this route is even more difficult because of greater amounts of pack ice. The well-known polar explorer Roald Amundsen did succeed in passing through from 1903 to 1906.

After the Russian revolution the Soviet Union felt an increasing need to be able to navigate the Northern Sea Route, so as to become independent of the western powers. In 1932 a Soviet expedition sailed all the way from Arkhangelsk to the Bering Strait without wintering en route. But organized and regular navigation with merchant ships never materialized – until now.



See also Nordic Bulk Carriers' homepage:

[http://www.nordicbulkcarriers.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/NSR\\_Newsletter\\_UK.pdf](http://www.nordicbulkcarriers.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/NSR_Newsletter_UK.pdf)

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