

SKEPTIC
The Skeptics Society

With **JARED DIAMOND**,
Professor of Geography, UCLA

WONDERS OF THE ARCTIC:

Voyage from Greenland to Canada's Nova Scotia



Disko Bay, Greenland

Aboard the New Expedition Cruise Ship *VEGA*
September 23 - October 10, 2024

SKEPTIC

The Skeptics Society

Dear Friends,

This voyage along the shores of Baffin Bay, through the Labrador Sea, and into the Gulf of St. Lawrence combines wild landscapes and seascapes of glaciers, fjords, and icebergs with villages and settlements whose recorded history dates to the arrival of Norsemen from the east in the 10th century followed by migrating Inuit from the west in the 13th.

Five days on Greenland's western coast begin in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Disko Bay, with its magnificent calving glaciers and year-round population of beluga whales. Working our way south, through a world of fjords and ice floes and pausing along the way to visit Inuit communities that dot the shore, we explore a wilderness that remains largely unchanged since the time of Erik the Red, and call at the site of his settlement in Nuuk, now Greenland's capital.

Crossing the Davis Strait, we reach the southern end of Baffin Island in Canadian Nunavut, where the town of Iqaluit invites us to experience the customs, traditions, and crafts of the Inuit who govern the province. Here in Frobisher Bay and on nearby small islands, we will be on the lookout for polar bears, whales, and walrus, as well as for the myriad seabirds who nest along the cliffs. Then, as we sail along the coast of Labrador and Newfoundland, we visit the Torngat Mountains, sacred to the Inuit, and the abandoned missionary community of Hebron, before exploring the UNESCO World Heritage Norse settlement at L'Anse aux Meadows and discovering the wonders of Gros Morne National Park.

Our special guest lecturer throughout the voyage will be Pulitzer-prize-winning author Jared Diamond. In a series of lectures and discussions, Jared will bring his experience and expertise to bear on much that we see and do, with a particular emphasis on why Inuit communities in this part of the world were successful while Viking settlements failed—the subject of a major section of his 2005 award-winning book, *Collapse*.

The vessel for this cruise is the Swan Hellenic *Vega*, a state-of-the-art, new-generation expedition cruise ship built in Finland and launched in 2022. Accommodating only 152 guests in superb staterooms and balcony suites, *Vega* features elegant common areas and the most modern mechanical and environmentally conscious technology, far exceeding the standards set by international regulatory agencies.

Please take a moment to look over the enclosed brochure and then begin making plans to join Professor Jared Diamond and fellow travelers next fall as we set off an expedition to explore the *Wonders of the Arctic*.

Warm regards,



Dr. Michael Shermer
Executive Director
The Skeptics Society

P.S. 7% of your cruise fee will be a tax-deductible donation to The Skeptics Society – a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization.

SPECIAL GUEST LECTURER

JARED DIAMOND
Professor of Geography, UCLA



Jared Diamond is a Pulitzer-prize-winning author of six best-selling books, translated into 38 languages, about human societies and human evolution: *Guns, Germs, and Steel*; *Collapse*; *Why Is Sex Fun?*; *The Third Chimpanzee*; *The World Until Yesterday*, and *Upheaval*. As a professor of geography at UCLA (University of California at Los Angeles), he is known for his breadth of interests, which involves conducting research and teaching in three other fields: the biology of New Guinea birds, digestive physiology, and conservation biology. His prizes and honors include the U.S. National Medal of Science, the Pulitzer Prize for Non-fiction, the Tyler Prize for Environmental Science, and election to the U.S. National Academy of Sciences. He is a director of World Wildlife Fund/U.S. and of Conservation International. As a biological explorer, his most widely publicized finding was his rediscovery, at the top of New Guinea's remote Foja Mountains, of the long-lost Golden-fronted Bowerbird, previously known only from four specimens found in a Paris feather shop in 1895.

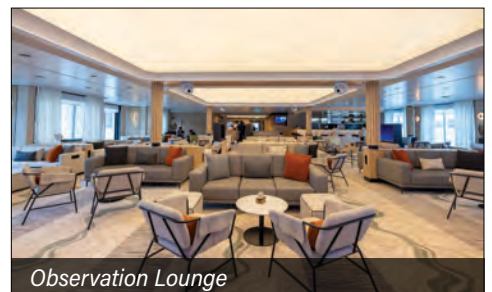
THE NEW 152-GUEST EXPEDITION CRUISE SHIP VEGA



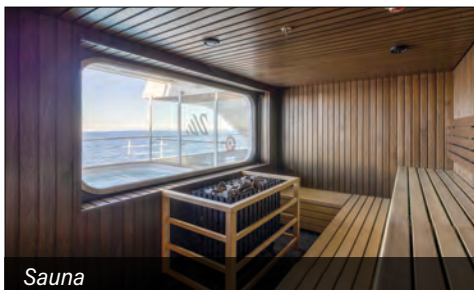
Oceanview Stateroom



Balcony Suite



Observation Lounge



Sauna



Club Lounge



Outdoor Café/Bar with swimming pool

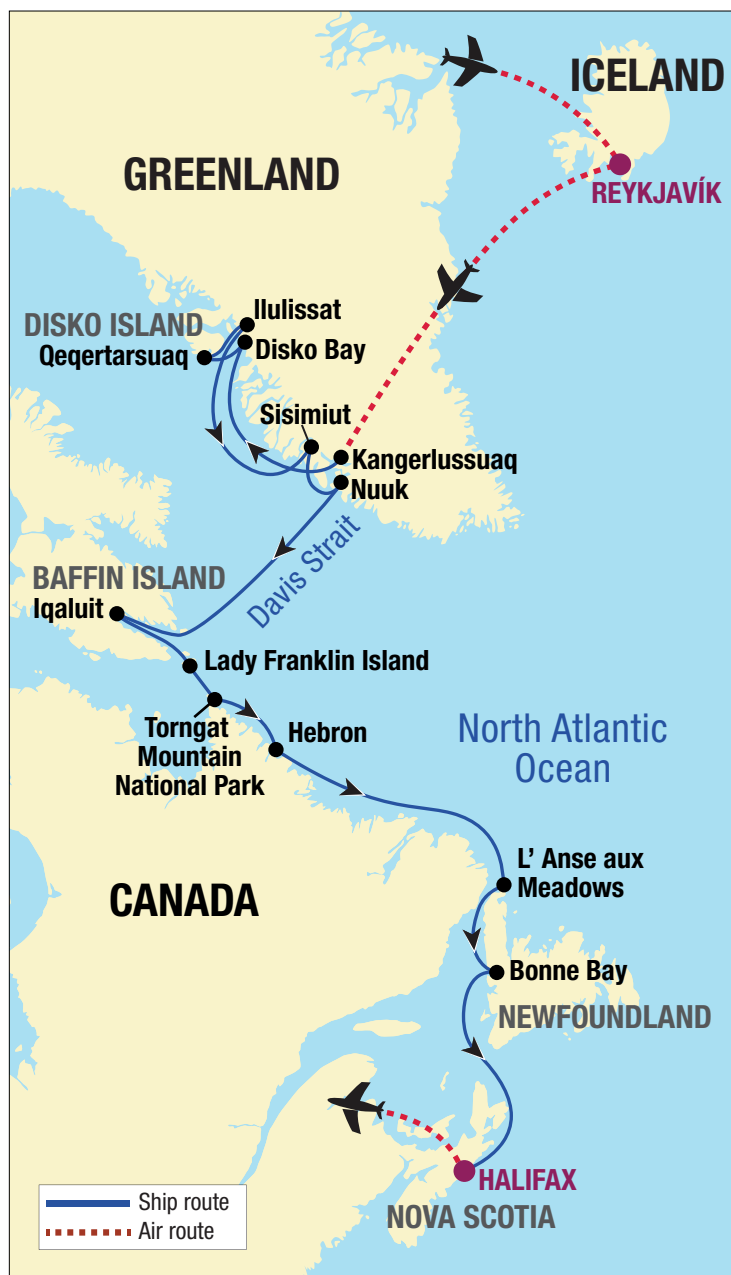
Built in Finland and launched in July 2022, Swan Hellenic's *Vega* is a new-generation expedition cruise ship. Although at 10,250 tons the ship is large enough to accommodate more than 250 passengers, *Vega* will accommodate a maximum of 152 guests in 76 spacious staterooms and balcony suites. The low guest density results in one of the most generous indoor and outdoor space-to-guest ratios among cruise ships.

Featuring the latest advances in technology and engineering, *Vega* is among the world's first environmentally responsible ships. Equipped with hybrid engines and a unique water filtration system, *Vega* leaves a minimal footprint. For cruising in Polar regions, the ship meets the stringent requirements of the new Polar Code with its high PC5 Category A ice-strengthened hull and other advanced features. A computer-controlled Dynamic Positioning System allows the ship to maintain position without anchoring. Operated by a complement of 120 experienced European officers and international crew members, *Vega* will

carry a fleet of Zodiacs, versatile landing boats, and kayaks. Powerful stabilizers provide a smooth ride.

Vega's interior spaces exude sophisticated elegance, with most rooms opening to panoramic views of the sea. All staterooms and suites face outside and are equipped with private facilities, climate control, TV, Wi-Fi and USB connections, and other amenities. Of the ship's 76 staterooms, 60 have balconies. Public areas include a spacious observation lounge equipped with state-of-the-art facilities for lectures and presentations; a club lounge; a restaurant that accommodates all guests at one seating; an outdoor café/bar that surrounds the heated swimming pool; a wellness area with gym, spa, and sauna with an adjoining outdoor jacuzzi; library; beauty salon; and an infirmary that is attended by a full-time doctor and nurse. The ship also features expansive open-deck areas. Two elevators connect all decks. Attentive service is provided on a 24-hour basis. The outstanding cuisine is complemented by fine wines at lunch and dinner.

ITINERARY



Monday, September 23, 2024
DEPART THE UNITED STATES

Tuesday, September 24
REYKJAVÍK, Iceland

Arrive in Reykjavík and transfer to *Hotel Hilton Reykjavík Nordica* (or similar). Gather with fellow travelers this evening for a welcome dinner. (D)

Wednesday, September 25

KANGERLUSSUAQ, Greenland/EMBARKATION

After breakfast at the hotel, transfer to the airport for a flight to Kangerlussuaq, Greenland. On arrival, transfer to the pier to embark *Vega* and set sail. (B,D)

Thursday, September 26

AT SEA

During this day at sea, attend informative lectures and briefings from the ship's expert expedition staff, relax and enjoy cruising the open sea, and treat yourself to some of the many amenities aboard ship as *Vega* sails north and crosses the Arctic Circle (B,L,D)

Friday, September 27 and Saturday, September 28

DISKO BAY/QEQERTARSUAQ/ILULISSAT

During these two days, we will explore the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Disko Bay, a land of calving glaciers, Inuit settlements, and whales feeding on the rich krill in the cold waters. We begin on Disko Island, the only volcanic island in Greenland—its rich soil, basalt columns, and hot springs contrasting sharply with the rest of the country. Qeqertarsuaq, a small town at the southern end of the island, affords opportunities for hiking on the black sand beaches and perhaps a visit to Arctic Station, a satellite campus of the University of Copenhagen. We plan to call the following day in the town of Ilulissat to visit the Icefjord for which it is named. Hike the boardwalk along the fjord filled with icebergs of all shapes and sizes that come from Sermeq Kujalleq, the largest glacier in the northern hemisphere. (B,L,D)

Sunday, September 29

SISIMIUT

Today we sail south to Sisimiut, the second largest town in Greenland, boasting a population of just about 6,000. Visit the Sisimiut Museum of Trade & Industry and hike to Tele Island to explore the remains of an Inuit village, turf farm and burial ground. Pause for views of Nasaasaaq Mountain on the return to Sisimiut, and enjoy some time at leisure to explore on your own before reboarding the ship. (B,L,D)

Monday, September 30

NUUK

Situated just 150 miles south of the Arctic Circle, Nuuk (also known by its Danish name, Godthab) is the northernmost capital in the world. It is also the oldest town in Greenland, founded by missionaries in 1728. Visit the Greenland National Museum before enjoying a panoramic tour in and around this town of colorful wooden houses, avant-garde architecture and fjords of clear ice water. (B,L,D)

Tuesday, October 1

AT SEA

Sail across Davis Strait as we leave Greenland for Canada. Attend informative lectures and briefings from Jared Diamond and from the ship's expert expedition staff, relax and enjoy cruising the open sea, and treat yourself to some of the many amenities aboard ship. (B,L,D)

Wednesday, October 2

IQUALUIT, NUNAVUT, Canada

Call today at Iqaluit, the capital of Nunavut. Located at the head of



Inuit woman demonstrates historic tools used by Inuit, Nunavut, Canada

Frobisher Bay on southern Baffin Island, Iqaluit provides one of the best opportunities to learn about the Inuit people—through a visit to the Nunatta Sunakkutaangit Museum and by browsing in the galleries owned by local Inuit artists. Those interested in a more vigorous activity may enjoy a hike in Sylvia Grinnell Territorial Park. (B,L,D)

Thursday, October 3

LADY FRANKLIN ISLAND

Lady Franklin Island, about 25 miles southeast of Baffin Island, is a birder's paradise. The island's steep cliffs rising out of the ocean are a nesting area for thousands of Black Guillemots, Ptarmigans, and gulls. Nearby Monumental Island is a favorite haul out for walrus, as well as a site of polar bear dens. And the icy waters surrounding it are frequented by beluga whales. (B,L,D)

Friday, October 4

TORNGAT MOUNTAINS

As we sail through the Eclipse Channel in the Torngat Mountains National Park, we are in the midst of the historical land of the Labrador Inuit, a place sacred to them and home to the spirits of their ancestors and the keepers of their traditions. This is also an area of dramatic scenery, as where fjords cut through the highest mountains in Canada east of the Rockies. (B,L,D)

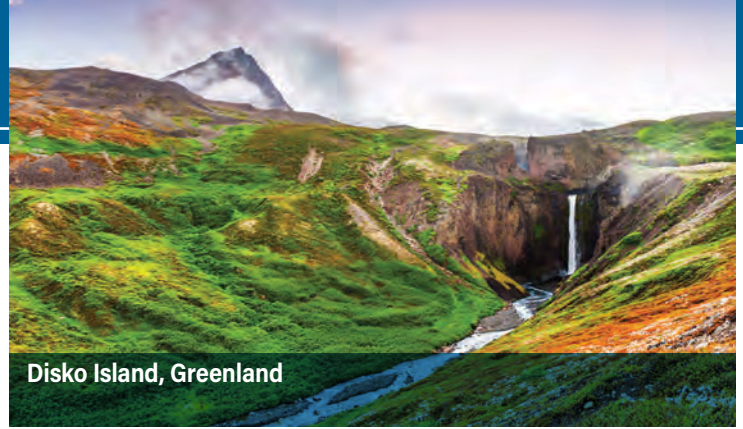
Saturday, October 5

HEBRON

Hebron is the northernmost community founded by the Moravian missionaries in the early 19th century to convert the Inuit to Christianity. Abandoned in 1959 due to poor living conditions, the remaining families were relocated to other communities along the Labrador coast, Hebron was declared a Canadian national monument in 1970. A walking tour visits the remnants of the settlement, including the Moravian Church and Mission and the Old Hudson Bay Company Store. (B,L,D)



L'Anse aux Meadows historic site, Newfoundland



Disko Island, Greenland

Sunday, October 6

AT SEA

During this day at sea, attend informative lectures and briefings from Jared Diamond and the ship's expert expedition staff, relax and enjoy cruising the open sea, and treat yourself to some of the many amenities aboard *Vega*. (B,L,D)

Monday, October 7

L'ANSE AUX MEADOWS, Newfoundland

Following in the footsteps of Leif Ericson, we land today at the 1,000-year-old Norse settlement at L'Anse aux Meadows on the northernmost tip of Newfoundland. Explore the archaeological site and view the ruins of sod dwellings that have been identified as the "Vinland" referred to in Norse sagas. The recreated village here is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. (B,L,D)

Tuesday, October 8

BONNE BAY/WOODY POINT/GROS MORNE

Call this morning in Woody Point, a small community in the middle of Gros Morne National Park, known for its unusual geology and spectacular scenery. Hike along the Tablelands, a mesa of rock pushed to the surface from the Earth's mantle about 400 million years ago. And spend some free time in the town getting to know the locals through their shops and cafés. (B,L,D)

Wednesday, October 9

AT SEA

During this day at sea, attend informative lectures and briefings from Jared Diamond and the ship's expert expedition staff, relax and enjoy cruising the open sea, and treat yourself to some of the many amenities aboard *Vega*. (B,L,D)

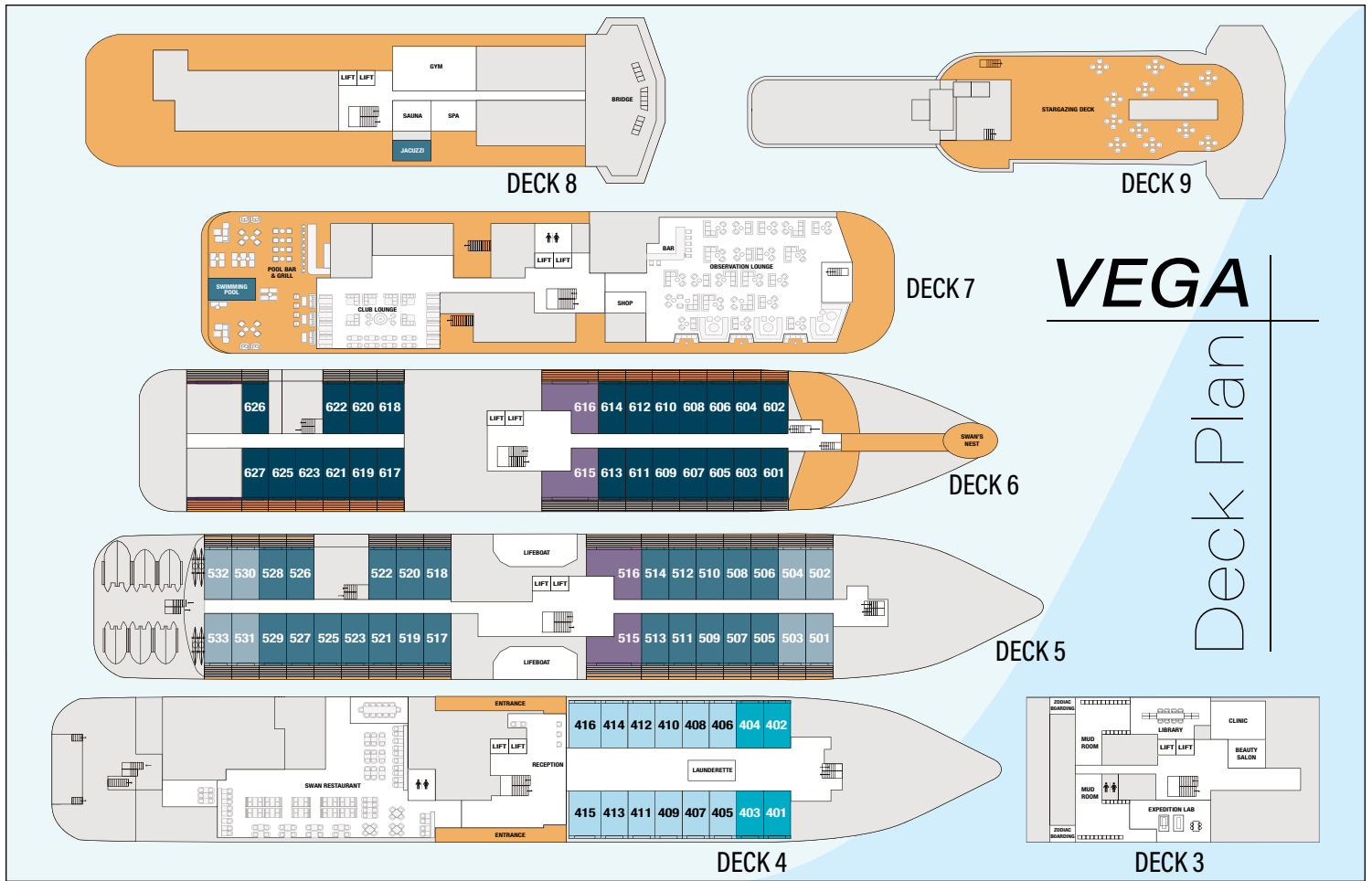
Thursday, October 10

HALIFAX, Nova Scotia/DISEMBARKATION

After breakfast aboard, transfer to the airport for flights homeward. (B)



Reykjavik, Iceland



VEGA

Deck Plan

All accommodations aboard *Vega* are spacious staterooms and balcony suites. They are elegantly decorated, face outside, affording sea views, and include a queen-size bed that can be arranged as two twin beds, a spacious bathroom, mini-refrigerator, safe, ample closet space, climate control, telephone, TV, Wi-Fi, and USB connections, as well as other amenities.

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	RATES PER PERSON / DOUBLE OCCUPANCY
E	Oceanview staterooms with two large oval windows. 206 sq. ft. Deck 4. Staterooms 401-404.	\$11,990
D	Oceanview staterooms with two large oval windows. 206 sq. ft. Deck 4. Staterooms 405-416.	\$12,490
C	Suites with balcony & living room area. 300 sq. ft. Deck 5. Suites 501-504, 530-533.	\$13,790
B	Suites with balcony & living room area. 300 sq. ft. Deck 5. Suites 505-514, 517-523, 525-529.	\$14,290
A	Suites with balcony and living room area. 300 sq. ft. Deck 6. Suites 601-614, 617-623, 625-627.	\$15,190
AA	Suites with large balcony, separate bedroom & living room. 440 sq. ft. Decks 5 & 6. Suites 515, 516, 615 & 616.	\$17,890

LOYALTY REWARD PROGRAM

Travel on this cruise program and enjoy savings of **\$400 to \$900** per person on your next voyage with **SKEPTICS and THALASSA JOURNEYS** aboard a Swan Hellenic ship. Savings are determined by the stateroom category booked and is applicable when you reserve your trip within 30 days of the completion date of **WONDERS OF THE ARCTIC**

This saving cannot be combined with other offers and is subject to change.

FOR SOLO TRAVELERS

A limited number of cabins are available for single occupancy in categories D to B at no additional charge. Additional single cabins are available at a supplement of 50% of the per person double occupancy rate, instead of the normal 70% supplement.

PROGRAM INCLUSIONS

The rates are all-inclusive. There are no hidden costs and no additional charges such as shore excursions or embarkation and port charges. Other than the international airfare and expenses of a personal nature, all else is included. Specifically, the rates include:

- One night pre-cruise at the *Hotel Hilton Reykjavik Nordica* (or similar) in Reykjavik.
- Welcome dinner in Reykjavik.
- Charter flight between Reykjavik, Iceland and Kangerlussuaq, Greenland.
- Cruise aboard the Swan Hellenic *Vega*, as described in the itinerary.
- Airport/hotel/pier transfers and handling of luggage on arrival and departure dates.
- Program of lectures and discussions with Jared Diamond.
- Comprehensive program of lectures and discussions with the onboard expedition team of naturalists.
- Complete program of shore landings and activities ashore, led by onboard experts.
- All meals aboard the ship, with a selection of wines, beer and soft drinks during lunch and dinner.
- Welcome and farewell cocktail receptions aboard the ship hosted by the captain.
- Open bar with select alcoholic beverages.
- Coffee, including espresso and cappuccino, tea and soft drinks throughout the day and night.
- 24-hour room service.
- Gratuities to the ship's crew, guides, porters and drivers.
- Basic Wi-Fi aboard the ship.
- The services of an experienced Thalassa Journeys Trip Director.
- All local taxes and service charges, including port and embarkation taxes.
- Complete pre-departure material.

NOT INCLUDED: International airfare; travel insurance; expenses of a personal nature; any items not mentioned in the itinerary or the above inclusions.



Woody Point, Bonne Bay, Newfoundland



Gros Morne National Park, Newfoundland

GENERAL INFORMATION

SKEP 24V-0923

PAYMENT SCHEDULE: A deposit of \$1,500 per person is required to reserve your space on the tour. Final payment is due 90 days prior to departure. Payment can be made by personal check or charged to a credit card.

CANCELLATIONS & REFUNDS: All cancellations are subject to a \$300 per person administrative fee. Cancellations received 71-90 days prior to departure will be assessed a penalty equal to 50% of the total program cost per person. Cancellations received within 70 days of departure are subject to 100% cancellation penalties. Requests for cancellations must be made in writing. No refunds will be made for any part of this program in which you choose not to participate.

INSURANCE: We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance, which is available for coverage of expenses in conjunction with cancellation due to illness or accident. Baggage insurance is also recommended. In the event that you must cancel your participation in a travel program, trip cancellation insurance may be the only source of reimbursement.

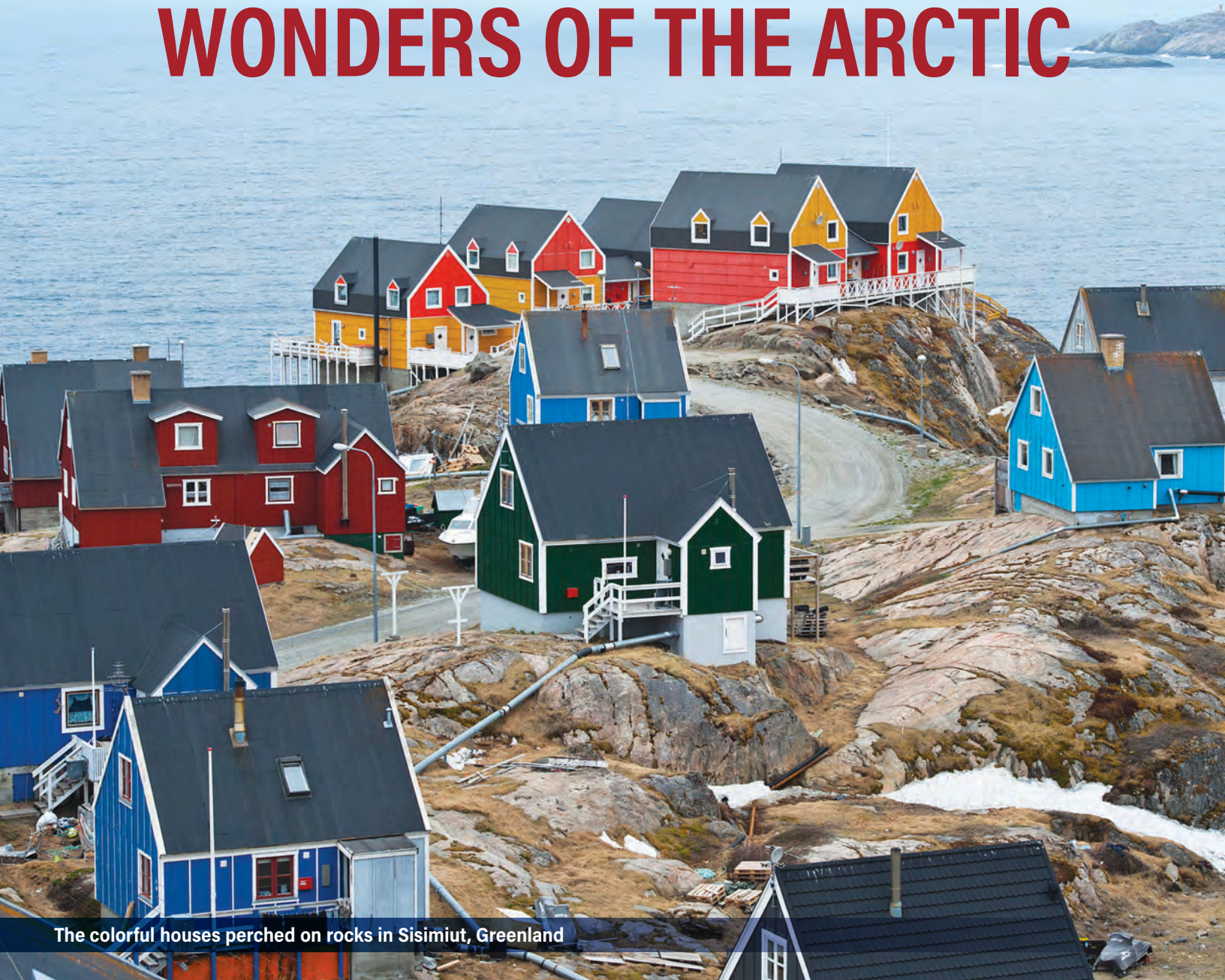
ITINERARY: The itinerary, accommodations and arrangements are subject to change at the discretion of Thalassa Journeys.

RESPONSIBILITY: Please read carefully the following terms and conditions, which constitute the sole, legally enforceable agreements between the traveler and Thalassa Journeys. Thalassa Journeys acts solely as agents for the traveler with respect to all transportation, hotel and other tour arrangements. In that capacity, we exercise all reasonable care possible to ensure the traveler's safety and satisfaction, but, we neither assume nor bear any responsibility or liability for any injury, death, damage, loss, accident, delay or irregularity arising in connection with the services of any ship, airplane, train, automobile, motor coach, carriage or other conveyance, or the actions of any third-party, involved in carrying the traveler or in affecting these tours. We are not responsible for damages, additional expenses, or any other losses due to cancellation, delay or other changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, civil disturbances, acts or threats of terrorism, travel warnings or bans, termination or suspension of war risks or other carrier insurance, quarantine, acts of God or other causes beyond our control. All such losses must be borne by the traveler, and tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. In the event of cancellation, delay or rescheduling mandated by any of the aforesaid causes beyond our control, the traveler shall have the option of accepting in lieu of the original tour such rescheduled tour or other substituted tour(s) as may be offered by us, or else, receiving a refund of as much of such advance tour expenditures as we are able to recover on the traveler's behalf from carriers, third-party tour vendors, etc., but, we shall not have any obligation or liability to the traveler beyond the foregoing. We reserve the right to make alterations to the tour's itinerary and to substitute hotels, transportation methods, or lecturers if this is required. We reserve the right to cancel, delay, or reschedule any tour prior to departure, and, so long as this is not due to any of the aforesaid causes beyond our control, the traveler shall be entitled to a full refund of all monies paid to that point if he/she so desires. No refund shall be made for any unused portion of any tour. By forwarding their deposit(s), the traveler certifies that he/she and/or their dependents, minors or others covered thereby do not have any mental, physical or other condition of disability that could create a hazard for them or other travelers. We reserve the right to decline to accept or to decline to retain any person as a member of any tour should such person's health, condition or actions adversely affect or threaten the welfare or safety of other travelers or impede the tour. Baggage or valuables brought on the tour shall be transported, handled or stored at the traveler's risk entirely, and, we shall bear no liability or responsibility for any damage or other loss thereto. Resolution of any disputes arising hereunder shall be affected exclusively in the state or federal courts presiding in Florida, pursuant to applicable Florida law.

RATES: Tour costs are based upon current airfares, tariffs, and currency values. While we do everything possible to maintain the listed prices, they are subject to change.

**CST 2138603-50
ST 42048**

Join **JARED DIAMOND**, Professor of Geography, UCLA on
WONDERS OF THE ARCTIC



The colorful houses perched on rocks in Sisimiut, Greenland

FOR RESERVATIONS AND INFORMATION

PLEASE CALL

THALASSA JOURNEYS AT

866-633-3611

or email

reservations@thalassajourneys.com