Norway and the Antarctic
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Norway and the Antarctic

A Timeline to 2006

• Late 18th century
  Vessels from several nations explore around the unknown continent in the south, and seal hunting began on the islands around the Antarctic.

• 1820
  Probably the first sighting of land in Antarctica. The British Williams exploration party led by Captain William Smith discovered the northwest coast of the Antarctic Peninsula. The Russian Vostok and Mirnyy expedition led by Thaddeus Thadevich Bellingshausen sighted parts of the continental coast (Dronning Maud Land) without recognizing what they had seen. They discovered Peter I Island in January of 1821.

• 1841
  James Clark Ross sailed with the Erebus and the Terror through the ice in the Ross Sea, and mapped 900 kilometres of the coast. He discovered Ross Island and Mount Erebus.

• 1892-93
  Financed by Chr. Christensen from Sandefjord, C. A. Larsen sailed the Jason in search of new whaling grounds. The first fossils in Antarctica were discovered on Seymour Island, and the eastern part of the Antarctic Peninsula was explored to 68° 10’ S. Large stocks of whale were reported in the Antarctic and near South Georgia, and this discovery paved the way for the large-scale whaling industry and activity in the south.

• 1893-94
  C. A. Larsen embarked on a new exploration trip with the Jason, financed by Chr. Christensen.

• 1893-95
  Svend Foyn of Tønsberg sponsored a combined whale-hunting and exploratory expedition to the Ross Sea, during which Henrik Bull, Carsten Borchgrevink, Leonard Kristensen and five others landed on Possession Island near Victoria Land and on Cape Adare on January 24th, 1895. For a long time this was claimed to be the first landing on the Antarctic continent, but it probably was the fourth. The rock and lichen they collected indicated that vegetation could survive in Antarctica.

• 1895
  The Sixth International Geographical Congress meeting in London approved a resolution that scientific societies around the world should try to focus on the exploration of Antarctica.

• 1895-1922
  The so-called ‘heroic age’ which brought forth legendary polar
heroes and their great accomplishments, such as: Robert F. Scott (1901-04 and 1910-13), Ernest Shackleton (1907-09 and 1914-16), Otto Nordenskjöld (1901-04), Erich von Drygalski (1901-03), Jean Charcot (1903-05), Wilhelm Filchner (1911-12), Douglas Mawson (1911-14), William Speirs Bruce (1902-04), and others, in addition to the Norwegians who are mentioned below.

• 1897-99

Roald Amundsen was first mate on the Belgian Antarctic expedition aboard the Belgica, led by Adrien de Gerlache. The ship was originally the Norwegian Patria; the crew included three Belgians and five Norwegians, and among them was 17-year-old Johan Koren. Aside from Amundsen, the officers were Belgian, and the expedition included scientists from Belgium, Poland, Romania, and the U.S.A. This was the first, though unplanned, expedition that wintered in Antarctica.

• 1898-1900

Carsten Borchgrevink’s British Antarctic Expedition with the Colin Archer barque, the Pollux, which was re-christened the Southern Cross. The ship had a crew of 19, of which 18 were Norwegian, and the steward was a Swede. The ten-man wintering group that stayed on Cape Adare was comprised of Borchgrevink, three scientists from Tasmania and England, plus the following Norwegians: zoologist Nicolaj Hanson, medical doctor Herlof Køvstad, scientific assistant Anton Fougner, and assistant Kolbein Ellefsen, as well as two Norwegian Sami: Ole Must and Per Savio. Hanson became ill and died during the winter stay, and became the first man to be buried in Antarctica. This expedition was the first planned wintering in Antarctica, and the first on land. The stay provided a lot of interesting scientific data and observations, not least that it was possible to stay the winter on such an inhospitable continent. En route home, the Bay of Whales (Hvalbukta) in the Ross Ice Shelf was discovered, which Amundsen later remembered. A short ski and dog sled trip inland on the ice shelf provided useful information for later expeditions.

• 1901-04

Nils Otto Gustav Nordenskjöld led the Swedish ‘South Pole expedition’ with Carl Anton Larsen as captain of the ship, the Antarctic. Half of the crew was Norwegian. Nordenskjöld stayed the winter with five others on Snow Hill on the Antarctic Peninsula. Meanwhile, the Antarctic spent the winter near Tierra del Fuego, the Falkland Islands, and South Georgia. The Antarctic did not manage to reach Snow Hill the next winter, and three men were set ashore at Hope Bay in order
to march to Snow Hill. They did not manage the trip, and had to remain for the winter with minimal provisions at Hope Bay. The *Antarctic* was screwed down into the ice, and the crew had to stay the winter in a stone hut on Paulet Island. All three groups were saved by the Argentinean naval vessel *Uruguay* in November 1903.

- **1903**  
  Adolf Amandus Andresen who had emigrated to Chile, began modern whaling in the south by harpooning a whale in the Magellan Strait. In 1905, he established the Magellan Whaling Society (*Sociedad Ballenera de Magellanes*), which lasted until 1914.

- **1904-05**  
  C. A. Larsen established the Argentinean whaling company, called *Compañía Argentina de Pesca*, and set up a station in South Georgia at Grytviken. He took his family with him to the station. This marked the beginning of the modern Antarctic whaling industry, and the importance of South Georgia as the base for Norwegian whalers.

- **1905-06**  
  A/S *Ornen*, from Sandefjord and owned by Chr. Christensen, utilized the *Admiralen*, the first modern factory ship in the southern hunting grounds. The expedition hunted near the Falkland Islands and the South Shetland Islands.

- **1906-07**  
  Adolf Amandus Andresen used Whalers Bay on Deception Island for the first time, as a base for a factory ship. He took his spouse with him. The company used the bay for ten years, and Whalers Bay became the most important factory ship harbour in the area.

- **1908-09**  
  The French-Norwegian whaling and elephant seal-hunting station was established in Port Jeanne d’Arc on Îles Kerguelen, in the Southern Ocean. The buildings were prefabricated and transported there from Norway. The station was used for only a few years.

- **1910-12**  
  Roald Amundsen’s South Pole expedition. The expedition traveled on the *Fram* and constructed its base, Framheim, on the Ross Ice Shelf at the Bay of Whales. The *Fram* sailed as far south as possible in the bay, and thus became the ship which had sailed farthest north and south of any in the world. Amundsen, Olav Bjaaland, Helmer Hanssen, Sverre Hassel and Oscar Wisting were the first to reach the South Pole, on December 14th, 1911; and they beat Robert Scott’s expedition.
by one month. The Scott expedition members died on their return trip. Kristian Prestrud and Hjalmar Johansen explored King Edward VII’s Land. Under the command of Captain Thorvald Nilsen, the Fram conducted oceanographic studies in the South Atlantic Ocean.

- 1910-13 Twenty-one-year-old Tryggve Gran was a member of Robert Scott’s Antarctic expedition as a skiing expert. He was among the group that discovered the bodies of Scott, Bowers and Wilson in November 1912.

- 1912-13 A/S Hektor from Tønsberg established a land station in Whalers Bay on Deception Island. The buildings were prefabricated and transported from Norway. The station was operative every season until 1931.

- 1913 The Norwegian Church in Grytviken, South Georgia, was consecrated.

- 1922 Petter Sørlie got a Norwegian patent for the slip stern haul, which was used to pull whales aboard factory ships. The equipment was first utilized in the Antarctic aboard Lancing in 1925-26. The system dramatically increased catch and production figures.

- 1926-27 Lars Christensen’s scientific expedition with Odd I, led by Eyvind Tofte, was sent to Peter I Island, but was unable to land.

- 1927-28 Financed by Lars Christensen, the first Norvegia expedition was undertaken. Norway annexed Bouvet Island on December 1st, 1927, which was officially ratified by royal Resolution on January 23rd, 1928. The island was declared to be under Norwegian sovereignty on February 27th 1930. Oceanographer Haakon Mosby was the scientific leader of the expedition, and geologist Olaf Holtedahl was among the participants. The expedition conducted biological, geological, oceanographic and cartographic data collection and research. In cooperation with the whaling fleet, Holtedahl and Ole Olstad were able to conduct geological and zoological observations on the South Shetland Islands and the Palmer Peninsula.

- 1928-29 The second Norvegia expedition led by Captain Nils Larsen and Dr. Ole Olstad visited Bouvet Island and carried out the first landing on Peter I Island on February 2nd, 1929. The
island was annexed by Norway, and this was ratified by Royal Resolution on May 1st.

- **1928-29**
  The third *Norvegia* expedition was led by Hjalmar Riiser-Larsen, with Captain Nils Larsen. The expedition used planes, piloted by Riiser-Larsen and Finn Llitzow-Holm, for reconnaissance and mapping. Bouvet Island was photographed from the air, and the west coast of Enderby Land on the Antarctic continent was mapped from the air. Riiser-Larsen and Llitzow-Holm landed on a small island off Cape Ann, and annexed that part of the continent in the name of Norway. In 1933, that was defined as within the Australian sector claim, and Norway made no official protests.

- **1929**
  Bernt Balchen was first pilot on Richard Byrd’s Antarctic expedition, which on November 29th became the first to fly over the South Pole. Balchen became an American citizen in 1931. (In 1949, he flew the first transpolar flight from Alaska, over the North Pole to Norway. Thus, he became the first person in the world to have flown over both poles.)

- **1930-31**
  The *Norvegia* made its fourth and last expedition to Antarctica. Nils Larsen was again captain, and the first part of the expedition was led by Gunnar Isachsen, the second by Hjalmar Riiser-Larsen. They circumnavigated the continent on the first part of the expedition. Reconnaissance flights were undertaken under Riiser-Larsen’s command. Princess Ragnhild Coast was annexed by Norway on February 17th, 1931, and the area became part of the Dronning Maud Land annexation, which was approved by Parliament in 1939.

- **1930-31**
  This was the best whaling season ever in the Antarctic, in terms of total whale oil production. The Norwegian whaling fleet was responsible for the discovery of many new territories and for mapping activity.

- **1931-32**
  Most of the world whaling fleet was laid up because of overproduction and the Great Depression. The majority of the land stations in and around Antarctica were closed for good, and quota systems were established.

- **1932-33**
  Hjalmar Riiser-Larsen led his own expedition to the Antarctic, which was to have traveled by dogsled along the coast from Enderby Land to the Weddell Sea. Participants were Hallvard DevoId and Olav Kjelbotn. They were landed on the ice near
land, but the ice broke up during the course of the first night; and the men drifted away on one ice floe, while the dogs floated off on another. Riiser-Larsen was able to use the short-wave radio to call the whaling fleet for assistance, and the men and four dogs were rescued.

- **1933-34** Lars Christensen, aboard the *Thorshavn*, with Captain Klarius Mikkelsen, circumnavigated the Antarctic and conducted mapping reconnaissance across the continent by airplane. Christensen sent several research and airplane mapping expeditions to Antarctica in the 1930’s.

- **1935** On February 20th whaling Captain Klarius Mikkelsen aboard *Thorshavn*, landed on Ingrid Christensen Land, which is located in today’s Australian sector claim. Christensen’s wife, Caroline, was on the trip and became the first woman to land on the Antarctic continent itself.

- **1939** On January 14th, Dronning Maud Land was annexed by Norway, just before a German expedition arrived in the area.

- **1947-48** The Norwegian Whaling Companys’ Association sent a scientific expedition to Antarctica with the *Brategg*, to several areas including Peter I Island and Deception Island. Captain Nils Larsen and scientific leader Holger Holgersen led the trip, which conducted oceanographic and geological exploration and zoological studies.

- **1947-48** Finn Rønne, who had become an American citizen, led his own scientific expedition to the Antarctic Peninsula. His wife Edith (Jackie) and Jennie Darlington became the first women to stay the winter in the Antarctic.

- **1949-52** The Norwegian Polar Institute organized the Norwegian-Swedish-British Antarctic expedition, which was led by John Giæver, and which traveled aboard the *Norsel*. The expedition base, *Maudheim*, was established on Dronning Maud Land in February 1950. Fifteen men stayed the winter for the first season, and 17 wintered the next year; but three of these died in an accident at the end of February. The expedition conducted geophysical, geological and mapping work on dogsled forays and by plane.

- **1956-60** The Norwegian expedition *Norway Station* was conducted in connection with The International Geophysical Year (IGY). The
expedition went to Dronning Maud Land, and was organized by the Norwegian Polar Institute and led by geodesist Sigurd Helle. The Polarbjorn and the Polarsirkel transported the participants and equipment south, and the Polarbjorn handled the return trip. For the first two years, 14 men stayed the winter, and the third year nine wintered at the station. Sigurd Helle, geophysicist Torgny Vinje, and John Snuggerud were the only participants to have stayed the entire time. The work was conducted in accordance with the IGY programme, and the team did a lot of mapping, on dog sled trips and by plane.

**1957-58** The International Geophysical Year (IGY) was held from July 1st, 1957 to December 31st, 1958. This was a worldwide cooperative programme in which 66 nations participated. Twelve nations established stations in the Antarctic and on the sub-Antarctic islands. This marked a watershed in Antarctic history because national and international research programs with permanent bases, modern equipment and transportation dominated the arena. International cooperation led to development of the Antarctic Treaty in 1959. The Commonwealth Trans-Antarctic Expedition, led by Vivien Fuchs and Sir Edmund Hillary, crossed the entire continent.

**1958** The Special Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) was established, and Norway became a participant.

**1959** The Antarctic Treaty was signed in Washington, D.C., on December 1st, and Norway was one of the twelve signatories. The treaty went into effect on June 23rd, 1961.

**1967-68** This was the last season of operations for Kosmos IV, the largest Norwegian whaling factory.

**1986-87** Monica Kristensen led a dog sled expedition to follow Amundsen’s route to the South Pole. The expedition was transported to and from the Antarctic aboard the Aurora, while provisions and depots were flown in from New Zealand. The four participants, including a British glaciologist and two Danish dog sledders, had to turn around at 85° 59’ S.

**1989-90** The summer base, Troll, was established at Jutulsessen in Dronning Maud Land. Scientific work was conducted in Dronning Maud Land and on South Georgia.

**1990-91** Logistic cooperation with Sweden and Finland initiated in 1990
ensured greater continuity in regular Norwegian Antarctic Research Expeditions (NARE). Each country in turn was responsible for an annual Nordic expedition.

- **1990-91**
  Ralph Høibakk, Herman Mehren, Simen and Sjur Mørdre went by dog sled from Berkner Island in the southern part of the Weddell Sea, to the South Pole. Photographer Hallgrim Ødegaard joined the trip along the way. The Mørdre brothers and Ødegaard continued without dogs to McMurdo.

- **1992-93**
  The Nordic Antarctic expedition, with over 100 participants, coordinated by the Norwegians, traveled on the *Polarbjørn* and the *Lance*, to Dronning Maud Land. The ornithological base, *Tor*, was established at Svarthamaren.

- **1993-94**
  Erling Kagge was the first person to reach the South Pole alone. He started from Berkner Island in the southern part of the Weddell Sea on November 18th and reached the South Pole on January 7th 1994, having completed the journey without outside support.

- **1993-94**
  Monica Kristensen led her third expedition (prior expeditions were in 1986-87 and in 1991-92) in order, among other things, to find Amundsen’s tent from his South Pole expedition. The participants, who were to drive to the South Pole by snow scooter, encountered an expanse of fissures. In a serious accident, two participants fell into cracks in the glaciers. One was rescued six hours later, while Jostein Helgestad could not be saved. The expedition was halted, and the survivors had to be saved by a rescue team sent from New Zealand, the U.S.A., and the company, Adventure Network International.

- **1994**
  Liv Arnesen was the first woman to ski alone to the South Pole. She started at Hercules Inlet at the southern end of the Weddell Sea on November 5th and reached the South Pole on December 24th without having received supplies along the way. She was flown out.

- **1994**
  Cato Zahl Pedersen, skiing together with Harald Hauge and Lars Ebbesen, became the first handicapped person (one entire arm and a lower arm had been amputated) to ski to the South Pole. They left Berkner Island on November 4th and reached the South Pole on December 27th without having had provisions supplied along the way. They were flown out.
Børge Ousland was the first person to cross the entire Antarctic without outside assistance. He skied 2,845 kilometres, leaving from Berkner Island on November 15th and arriving at Scott Base in McMurdo on January 17th.

Rolf Bae and Eirik Sønneland stayed the winter with two others at the Norwegian Troll station, before they started out on the longest, unsupported ski trip to that time. It was 3,800 kilometres long, from the coast of Dronning Maud Land, across the South Pole, to McMurdo; and the journey took 105 days.

The Norwegian research base, Troll, was expanded and converted into a year-round base. It was inaugurated by Queen Sonja on February 12th. A 3,000-meter air strip on the blue ice nearby was officially opened on the same day.

Rune Gjeldnes skied alone and without outside assistance for 4,808 kilometers from Novolazarevskaja to Terra Nova Bay. The trip, from November 6th to February 3rd, took 90 days.

Taken from Into the Ice; The History of Norway and the Polar Regions, edited by Einar Arne Drivenes and Harald Dag Jølle. Gyldendal Norsk Forlag AS, 2006. The timeline was prepared by Susan Barr. Used with permission. Some entries not included.
Some Norwegian Antarciticans

Antarctic explorers & travellers and others associated with the Antarctic born in Norway.


This is a work-in-progress


Søren Andersen (1856-1935) First Mate, Jason Expedition 1827-94; Captain, Admiralen 1905-06. Born: Veierland.

Thorvald Andersen (1866-?) Gunner, whalcatcher Hauken 1908; Captain and gunner, Solstreif 1910 onwards. Born: Tjølling.


August Frederik Christensen (1888-1959) On the Admiralen 1905-06; ed the Christensen fleet for some years. Born: Framnaes.

Christen Fredrik Christensen (1845-1923) Naval architect, ship owner and whaling
fleet manager. Sent the first factory whaling ship (Admiralen) to the South Shetlands 1905. **Born:** Østre Moland.

**Ingrid Christensen** (1884-?) Second woman to step on the Antarctic continent. Married to Lars. **Born:** Sandefjord.

**Lars Christensen** (1891-1965) Whaling entrepreneur and shipowner. **Born:** Framnaes.

**Hallvard Ophus Devold** (1898-1957) Riiser-Larsen Expedition, dog sled journey along Princess Ragnhild Coast 1932-33. **Born:** Tysfjord.

**Lars Ebbesen** (1954- ) Organized and joined Cato Zahl Pedersen and Odd Harald Hauge for an unsupported expedition from Berkner Island to the South Pole 1994. **Born:** ?

**Kolbein Ellefsen** (1875-19??) Cook, Southern Cross Expedition 1898-1900. **Born:** Tønsberg.

**Svend Foyn** (1809-94) Whaling and Shipping Magnate; introduced the harpoon cannon. Funded Bull Whaling Expedition 1894-95. **Born:** Tønsberg.

**Anton Simonsen Fougner** (1870-1932) Scientific Assistant, Southern Cross Expedition 1898-1900. **Born:** Ringebu.

**Aleksander Gamme** (1976- ) Traveled Hercules Inlet route from the coast of Antarctica to the South Pole and back alone 2011. **Born:**

**John Schjelderup Giæver** (1901-70) Leader of the wintering party Norwegian British Swedish Antarctic Expedition 1949-52. **Born:** Tromsø.

**Rune Gjeldnes** (1971- ) Skied unsupported from Troll Station to Mario Zucchelli Station via the South Pole 2005-06. **Born:** Surnadal.

**Fredrik Hjalmar Gjertsen** (1885-1915) First Mate, Fram Expedition 1910-12; Byrd Antarctic Expedition 1933-35. **Born:** Porsgrund.


**Hans Hansen** (1877-?) Second mate, Southern Cross Expedition 1898-1900. **Born:** ?

**Hans E. Hansen** (?) Captain, Lars Christensen Expedition 1936-37. **Born:** ?

**Ludvig Anton Hansen** (1871-1955) Seaman and Ice Pilot, Fram Expedition 1910-12. **Born:** Tromsø.

**Nikolai Hanson** (1870-99) Naturalist, Southern Cross Expedition 1898-1900. **Born:** Kristiansund.

**Helmer Julius Hanssen** (1870-1956) Deputy Leader, Fram Expedition 1910-12. **Born:** Bjørnskin.

Jostein Helgestad (1957-1993) Member of Monica Kristensen Solås Antarctic Expedition, 1993-94. Born: ?


Ralph Høibakk (1937- ) Traveled by dog sled from Berkner Island in the southern part of the Weddell Sea to the South Pole 1990-91. Born: Rjukan.


Erling Kagge (1963- ) First unsupported solo expedition to the South Pole 1992-93 Born: ?


Carl Anton Larsen (1860-1924) Captain, Jason Expeditions 1892-93 & 1893-94; Captain, Antarctic, Nordenskjöld Expedition 1901-04; established the Compañía de Pesca
Argentina and developed whaling in South Georgia. Born: Østre Halsen.

Johan Magnus Larsen (1863-1929). Brother of Carl A. Larsen and Lauritz E. Larsen, manager of Grytviken (1909-1911) and owner of A/S Antarctic, one of the first factory ship whaling companies.


Herman Mehren (?) Traveled by dog sled from Berkner Island in the southern part of the Weddell Sea to the South Pole 1990-91. Born: ?


Klarius Mikkelsen (1887-?) Whaling captain, Commander of the Thorshavn 1930s; Discovered the Ingrid Christensen Coast 1935. Born: Sandar.


Ole Must (1878-1934) Dog Handler and Ski Specialist, Southern Cross Expedition 1898-1900. Born: ?

Oscar Nilsen (1887-19??) Captain of the Sir James Clark Ross, C. A. Larsen. Born: ?


Jacob Nødtvedt (?) Fram Expedition 1910-12. Born: ?


Eirik Sønneland (?) Undertook with Rolf Bae longest, unsupported ski trip to that time from the coast of Dronning Maud Land, across the South Pole to McMurdo. 2000-01. *Born:* ?


Adam Tollefsen (1866-?) Sailor, *Belgica* Expedition 1897-99. *Born:* ?

