

TO THE NORTH POLE!

While the majority of the planet had been explored by the nineteenth century, the Arctic remained a large, mysterious, and very white blank spot on the world map.

Fridtjof Nansen

Due to the extreme cold and long, dark winters in the Arctic, early expeditions to the north pole were very dangerous. Fridtjof Nansen was from Norway and therefore at least accustomed to the cold. In Greenland he became friendly with the local Inuit peoples, who equipped him with suitable clothing and their primary means of transportation, the dogsled. Thus, Nansen learned the best way to reach the north pole.

1893–1896

The Inuit were the first to explore the Arctic. They had already been surveying the region for thousands of years before the first Europeans reached the north pole. One legendary Inuit explorer was Nukapinguaq. He accompanied several European expeditions and helped researchers survive the extreme conditions.

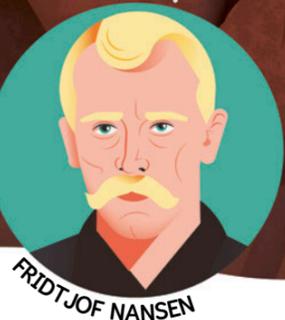


NUKAPINGUAQ

Finally there's some snow!

A Near Miss

Nansen set off from Norway in his ship, the Fram (which means "forward" in Norwegian). He hoped to be carried to the north pole by the natural movements of the ice floes. Unfortunately, this didn't work, and the ship and its crew remained stuck in the ice. Eighteen months later, Nansen finally set off on skis and dogsleds and reached a point very far north, but not quite the north pole.



FRIDTJOF NANSEN

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

RUSSIA

The First at the North Pole

Many failed attempts preceded the journey taken by Americans Robert Peary and Matthew Henson with the assistance of four Inuits—Ooqeah, Ootah, Egingwah, and Seeglo—during which they supposedly reached the north pole. Many researchers are skeptical that the expedition actually did make it as far as that, as the duration of their journey appears too short for it to have been possible. Peary's Arctic-research findings are considered to be of significant value, however.

1908–1909

Amundsen's route

1926

Polar researcher Roald Amundsen flew over the north pole in a zeppelin.

The Arctic is huge from above.

Nansen's route

North pole

Peary and Henson's route

GREENLAND

ROBERT PEARY

1924–1955

A Heroine of the High Seas

American Louise Arner Boyd came from a wealthy family, which meant she could finance a number of sea expeditions to the north pole and Greenland. She helped document Greenland's fjords and glaciers by photographing them and, in 1955, was the first woman to fly over the north pole.



MATTHEW HENSON