The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Arctic Shipper Shows Off Historic Icebreaking Voyage

By The Barents Observer

February 24, 2021



The LNG tanker Christophe de Margerie and nuclear icebreaker 50 Let Pobedy sailed the route together. **Alexander Ryumin / TASS**

The voyage of the Christophe de Margerie from Jiangsu in China to the remote Arctic terminal of Sabetta was made in the Arctic winter dark and through thick sea-ice, marking the first time that a commercial vessel has sailed the Northern Sea Route in February.

Glimpses of the voyage have now been put on display by shipping company Sovcomflot and its partner Rosatom.

As previously reported by the Barents Observer, the 299-meter-long LNG carrier operated by Sovcomflot set out from the Chinese port on Jan. 27 and a few days later sailed through the Bering Strait where it soon teamed up with nuclear icebreaker 50 Let Pobedy.

The two ships subsequently sailed together across the vast Arctic route to the Yamal

Peninsula. On Feb. 19 the powerful LNG carrier entered the port of Sabetta, two days after originally scheduled.

Embed:

According to shipping company Sovcomflot, the voyage shows that navigation across the eastern sector of the Russian Arctic can be significantly extended.

"The current voyage of Christophe de Margerie significantly expands the navigation window in the eastern sector of the Russian Arctic and confirms that year-round safe navigation is possible along the entire length of the Northern Sea Route," says company President and CEO Igor Tonkovidov.

The voyage proceeded through thick ice. The straits between the mainland and archipelagos Severnaya Zemlya and New Siberian Islands are covered by thick fast ice, while the remaining part of the area has one-year-old sea ice.

However, there is no multi-year-old ice in the area.

According to Sergey Gen, the captain of the Christophe de Margerie, the ice conditions were the toughest in the Chukchi Sea and the East Siberian Sea, where the vessel faced severe ice pressure and ice hummocks.

Through this area, the carrier had to sail astern, Captain Gen said in a comment. According to Sovcomflot, the Christophe de Margerie has sailed astern for about 10% of the time sailed on the Northern Sea Route so far.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2021/02/24/arctic-shipper-shows-off-historic-icebreaking-voyage-a73047