

## Roald Amunden and the Northwest Passage

In 1903, Amundsen led the first expedition to successfully traverse Canada's [Northwest Passage](#) between the [Atlantic](#) and [Pacific Oceans](#) (something explorers had been attempting since the days of [Christopher Columbus](#), [John Cabot](#), [Jacques Cartier](#), and [Henry Hudson](#)), with six others in a 47 ton steel seal hunting vessel, *Gjøa*. Amundsen had the ship outfitted with a small gasoline engine.<sup>[5]</sup> They travelled via [Baffin Bay](#), [Lancaster](#) and [Peel Sounds](#), and [James Ross](#), [Simpson](#) and [Rae Straits](#) and spent two winters near [King William Island](#) in what is today [Gjoa Haven](#), [Nunavut](#), Canada.<sup>[4][5]</sup>

During this time Amundsen learned from the local [Netsilik](#) people about [Arctic](#) survival skills that would later prove useful. For example, he learned to use [sled dogs](#) and to wear animal skins in lieu of heavy, woolen parkas. After a third winter trapped in the ice, Amundsen was able to navigate a passage into the [Beaufort Sea](#) after which he cleared into the [Bering Strait](#), thus having successfully navigated the Northwest Passage.<sup>[3]</sup> Continuing to the south of [Victoria Island](#), the ship cleared the [Canadian Arctic Archipelago](#) on August 17, 1905, but had to stop for the winter before going on to [Nome](#) on the [Alaska Territory](#)'s Pacific coast. Five hundred miles (800 km) away, [Eagle City, Alaska](#), had a [telegraph](#) station; Amundsen travelled there (and back) overland to wire a success message ([collect](#)) on December 5, 1905. Nome was reached in 1906. Due to water as shallow as 3 ft (0.91 m), a larger ship could never have used the route.

It was at this time that Amundsen received news that [Norway had formally become independent of Sweden](#) and had a new king. Amundsen sent the new King [Haakon VII](#) news that it "was a great achievement for Norway." He hoped to do more he said and signed it "Your loyal subject, Roald Amundsen."

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roald\\_Amundsen#Northwest\\_Passage](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roald_Amundsen#Northwest_Passage)