inmarsat
The mobile satellite company

Fleet Xpress – Key benefits

1 FX global coverage provides reliable connectivity to remote destinations where Ku services do not reach

2 User experience of 95% plus in the Antarctic, limited only when vessels enter deep fjords

3 Enables stable remote access to the IT environment of the vessel in order to keep key ship systems up-to-date

4 Facilitates always-on communication between head office and vessels in the most extreme environments

5 Allows passengers to share their experience with family and friends back home

Expedition Cruise Case Study
Oceanwide Expeditions shares its new Arctic connectivity experience

Pioneering Arctic operator Oceanwide Expeditions offers to share as flagship Hondius returns from maiden voyage fully connected by new dual Fleet Xpress solution for cruise

Reliable pole-to-pole connectivity

Dual high-speed Fleet Xpress solution powers Hondius on its maiden voyage to the Arctic circle

Beyond simply 'being there' one of the greatest pleasures of expedition cruising is sharing experiences and impressions with others. For Polar cruise ship operators today, the ability to deliver that enjoyment in real time via high-speed internet has moved beyond competitive offer to become part of guest expectations. Despite remote locations, guests will also expect low-cost calls via satellite by right, rather than by request.

In inaccessible places, reliable connectivity is also key to running of the ship, including the remote monitoring and support of systems on board, while the crews who

routinely work such voyages have their own needs to stay connected with family, friends, and the online and real worlds.

In June, the newly-built Oceanwide Expeditions vessel Hondius undertook her maiden Arctic voyage, culminating in a call at Longyearbyen on the island of Spitsbergen before returning to her home port in Vlissingen.

Fully meeting expectations, according to the shipowner, was a new dual Fleet Xpress solution from connectivity partners Inmarsat Maritime and Alphatron Marine, installed to meet performance requirements in Polar waters that only the Ka-band/L-band hybrid solution can achieve.

Hondius is the new five-deck flagship for a company which is one of the pioneers of expedition cruising. Using a fleet of

OCEANWIDE
EXPEDITIONS

ALPHATRON
Marine

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>
> **Mark Van der Hulst, COO, Oceanwide Expeditions**

existing ice-strengthened passenger ships, Oceanwide developed the 'Basecamp Antarctica' brand and became the first cruise company to connect travellers with Spitsbergen in Norway's Svalbard archipelago.

Hondius, its first purpose-built ship, which was delivered by Croatia's Brodosplit yard earlier in 2019, meets Polar Class 6 requirements. With accommodation for 174 passengers, the ship has been finished in 'mid-century modern' décor, in line with the distinctive cozy and informal atmosphere on which Oceanwide Expeditions built its reputation. However, far from 'retro' is the connectivity package on board.

Oceanwide has longstanding relations with Alphatron and Inmarsat as solutions providers for its shipboard connectivity needs. "Because of our operations in Polar regions we include various systems and providers but Inmarsat and the Infinity solution have always been the basis," says Van der Hulst. Loyalty to the solution has been a consequence of systems and solutions reliability over time, as well as service levels, he adds. Meanwhile, some alternatives – such as connectivity offered via Ku-band VSAT – simply cannot reach the remote destinations served by Oceanwide's ships, says Van der Hulst.

As the cruise ship owner's fleet and cruise experience capabilities have evolved, so have its connectivity needs, the COO

explains. "Communication needs are changing continuously in today's world. It's good to have a partner such as Inmarsat who is joining us on that journey. Because of our remote operating areas the standard solution is not always possible. Inmarsat and Alphatron have worked together with us to find the optimal package."

Today, Oceanwide's three-mast passenger sailing schooner and Arctic expedition ship SV Rembrandt van Rijn operates the FB500 FleetBroadband service, allowing its 33 passengers and crew of 12 to take advantage of a 5GB data allowance.

The owner has also already installed the Fleet Xpress high-speed maritime

broadband service onboard the Ice Class 1A vessel Ortelius and the Ice Class 1D Plancius, achieving what Van der Hulst describes as "a good and direct contact", with the package including the Infinity smartbox. The Infinity solution allows guests to control costs through prepaid email, internet- and telephone access, while also generating an additional revenue-stream for the owner, he says.

"Fleet Xpress was the perfect solution for us with high-speed Global Xpress (GX) network availability in our Antarctic sailing region," says Van der Hulst. "We know that in the high Arctic satellite comms are challenging but our experience in the Antarctic with the other vessels is of 95% uptime at least. Sometimes we sail inside

fjords and then we know a connection is not always available, but that is an accepted consequence of the areas we operate in.

"Additionally, we require stable remote access to the IT environment of the vessel in order to keep this up-to-date and in good shape." Online monitoring possibilities have been an especially attractive capability, he says. However, the refurbished vessels Ortelius and Plancius base their connectivity requirements on having capacity for 108 passengers apiece. Hondius needs extended capability to match demand not only for 174 passengers, but for the 74-strong crew serving them.

"Since the introduction of GX we have worked together with Inmarsat and Alphatron to achieve the best solution for our onboard needs," Van der Hulst comments. "Because of the number of passengers on board Hondius and the quality we want to provide, we chose the dual Fleet Xpress solution offered by Alphatron Marine, where the aggregate bandwidth available over the GX network is 16Mbps on the downlink and 4Mbps on the uplink over the GX network."

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