

PHOTOS: Scenes beneath the midnight sun in the Arctic

July 28 2017, by David Goldman



Sunlight is cast over the sea ice at midnight as Master Mariner Jyri Viljanen, captain of the Finnish icebreaker MSV Nordica, sips a cappuccino while overseeing the navigation of the Northwest Passage through the Victoria Strait in the Canadian Arctic Archipelago, early Saturday, July 22, 2017. Viljanen has been going to sea for 39 years and is making his first transit through the Arctic's Northwest Passage. "It's once a lifetime," said Viljanen of the opportunity. (AP Photo/David Goldman)

It's a special privilege for a photographer to get the chance to work in the

soft light of a sun that never sets.

Just when you think you have squeezed every last drop out of the light, it changes. Shadows look different. Reflections become more vibrant. And you can't leave. You lose all sense of [time](#) and sleep easily slips away.

Up in the Arctic this time of year, it's called the midnight sun. Its warm light is comparable to what occurs in photography's "golden hour"—just after sunrise or just before sunset. Instead of lasting an hour, in this case, it lasts all night long. And it's captivating.

Traveling on an icebreaker with two Associated Press colleagues through the Arctic to document [climate change](#)'s impact, I knew immediately that if I chose to make photos in this light, I'd end up with too many beautiful skies and golden suns suspended over endless seas.

I wanted to capture that, but also combine it with scenes of life aboard the icebreaker.

In photojournalism, we are always working with [time constraints](#): events are short, deadlines are tight, and we rush to deliver news in time. I had always been interested in shooting under a different kind of time constraint. One where candid moments had to be found at an exact moment, a specific time for a specific reason.



The sky is lit by the sun at midnight as trainee David Kullualik looks over the sea ice of Peel Sound as the Finnish icebreaker MSV Nordica traverses the Northwest Passage through the Canadian Arctic Archipelago, early Sunday, July 23, 2017. Kullualik, who is part of Canada's indigenous Inuit community, from Iqaluit in the country's northern territories, has spent time with his family hunting on the islands in the area where his grandparents grew up. "I was imagining how my grandpa used to live, what they used to go through" Kullualik said of the remote lands the boat past through. "I felt a connection all the way through." (AP Photo/David Goldman)

I chose midnight; not one minute before, not one minute after. It was important to show in the photos that it was still light out so I knew it had to be taken either outdoors or near a window. Otherwise it would be too easy to follow someone around waiting for the clock to strike twelve to take a picture wherever they are.

I soon found despite the [light](#) in the sky that aside from the two officers

on the bridge overnight, most of the ship was asleep at midnight. Many nights, I returned to my cabin without a picture. The elements just didn't come together.

But on occasion I'd find someone doing something, admiring the beauty of the scenery we were passing or taking a moment for themselves, to read, write or have a cup of coffee.



The sun shines through the window of the mess hall at midnight as first engineer Kari Suni reads a magazine over a cup of coffee before starting his shift in the engine room of the Finnish icebreaker MSV Nordica as it traverses the Northwest Passage through the Canadian Arctic Archipelago, early Monday, July 17, 2017. Suni has worked on icebreakers for 30 years and always starts his shift with a cup of coffee. After all those years, he prefers the overnight shift rather than working during the day. "It's so quiet and not in a hurry all the time," Suni said. "The dark is good for me." (AP Photo/David Goldman)

A quiet moment at a quiet time, under a midnight sun.



Daylight is seen out the window at midnight as trainee David Kullualik smokes a cigarette before turning in for the night aboard the Finnish icebreaker MSV Nordica while traversing the Northwest Passage through Baffin Bay in the Canadian Arctic Archipelago, early Tuesday July 25, 2017. Kullualik is part of Canada's indigenous Inuit community, from Iqaluit in the country's northern territories. Kullualik is currently undergoing a training program to prepare him for work aboard an Inuit-owned factory fishing ship. Part of this involved doing "ship time" aboard the Nordica. "I have three kids and I'm just trying to put food on the table. I think of them all the time," Kullualik said. (AP Photo/David Goldman)



Daylight lingers behind the clouds at midnight as researcher Tiina Jaaskelainen writes in her diary aboard the Finnish icebreaker MSV Nordica while traversing the Northwest Passage through the Canadian Arctic Archipelago, early Monday, July 24, 2017. "Midnight is the best time to write your research diary. Especially when the sea gets a bit rough and the rest of the special personnel have gone to sleep," said Jaaskelainen who is exploring conflicts between local communities and extractive industries. "You start seeing things from a different angle and small things become meaningful." (AP Photo/David Goldman)



The sun shines through the window at midnight as researcher Ilona Mettinen reads in a room overlooking an observation deck on the Finnish icebreaker MSV Nordica as it sails the Bering Sea toward the Canadian Arctic Archipelago to traverse the Northwest Passage, early Friday, July 14, 2017. Mettinen is working on her doctorate in sociology and is exploring how climate change affects Arctic communities. Mettinen grew up in Rovaniemi, Finland, close to the Arctic circle. "When I was a kid I couldn't really sleep when there was daylight in the evening," said Mettinen. "I'm used to it now since my childhood so it's a home thing for me. It feels like home." (AP Photo/David Goldman)



Sunlight lingers in the sky at midnight as researcher Ari Laakso stands on the bridge of the Finnish icebreaker MSV Nordica as it traverses the Northwest Passage through the Canadian Arctic Archipelago, early Friday, July 21, 2017. "It's something special. There's no day or night. Now you can go out anytime and it's daylight. When winter comes, I miss the midnight sun," said Laakso who is from Vuontisjarvi, Finland, north of the Arctic Circle. "It's very quiet in the night. There are no phones ringing, no emails coming in. It's the nicest time." (AP Photo/David Goldman)



The sun dips below the horizon at midnight as trainee Maatusi Manning takes in the view from aboard the Finnish icebreaker MSV Nordica as it sails toward Greenland after traversing the Northwest Passage through the Canadian Arctic Archipelago early Friday, July 28, 2017. Manning is part of Canada's indigenous Inuit community, from Cape Dorset in the country's northern territories. During the summer's midnight sun he stays up late with his kids as he reads to his son and his daughter sews. "It's my first July not with my family," said Manning. "My daughter started crying the other day when I face-timed with her. I told her just a few more sleeps and she started smiling after that." (AP Photo/David Goldman)

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