



Nearing completion: the *National Geographic Explorer* in Las Palmas.

Mike Hood

Lindblad's latest set for maiden voyage in June

NATIONAL Geographic Explorer, the latest expedition-type cruiseship for specialist operator Lindblad Expeditions, is completing an eight-month conversion at the Astican shipyard in Las Palmas, writes Mike Hood.

Formerly the 1982-built Hurtigruten ferry *Lyngen*, the vessel has been transformed into a state-of-the-art expedition cruiseship, capable of carrying 148 passengers in 81 outside cabins.

National Geographic Explorer sails on her maiden voyage for Lindblad on June 26 from Bergen on a cruise to the Norwegian fjords and Arctic Svalbard. The vessel will then undertake a series of cruises in Arctic waters off Norway, Greenland and Canada.

In October the vessel will undertake two major voyages along the Pacific coast of South America — a 14-day 'From the Panama Canal to the Andes' cruise and a 17-day 'Nazca Lines to Chilean Patagonia' cruise.

During *National Geographic Explorer's*

conversion in Las Palmas its original ice belt around the hull has been replaced with a much thicker one with additional framing. The vessel's hull, in certain places, exceeds its ice class IA rating. The conversion also involved fitting new Rolls-Royce stabilisers and a new galley.

From the expedition point of view the new Lindblad vessel features Zodiac inflatables, kayaks, hydrophones and underwater HD cameras.

Passenger facilities include two restaurants, lounge and bar, wellness spa, fitness centre and sauna, and an observation lounge. The last of these is designed for educational purposes. A 'mud room' with lockers provides storage for passengers' expedition gear.

National Geographic Explorer is the seventh vessel in the Lindblad fleet, with its other fleetmates being *National Geographic Endeavour*, *National Geographic Sea Bird*, *National Geographic Sea Lion*, *National Geographic Polaris* and *Sea Voyager*.