

Press Release, 12 august 2025

***Tara Polar Station*, the Tara Ocean Foundation's drifting observatory and laboratory, has completed its very first test drift in the Far North.**



Tara Polar Station left its home port of Lorient on 1 June, bound for the Far North to be tested in drift conditions in the extreme environment for which it was designed. The drift lasted four weeks and was marked by encounters with polar bears, the first witnesses of a region where the effects of climate change are three to four times faster than elsewhere, unpredictable weather (alternating between sun, rain and fog) and unstable, shifting ice.



Credits : Maeva Bardy - Tara Ocean Foundation

After stopping in Tromsø and then Longyearbyen, Svalbard, the drifting station set off on 4 July to rejoin the *Polarstern*, a German oceanographic research vessel belonging to the Alfred Wegener Institute. The station took advantage of the CONTRASTS scientific campaign conducted by the *Polarstern* to enter the ice pack.

On 7 July, *Tara Polar Station* deliberately allowed itself to be trapped by the ice. It was an emotional moment for the crew. Eleven people embarked on this incredible adventure: the captain, a first mate, a chief engineer, a ship's cook, a deck officer, a ship's journalist, artist Nicolas Floc'h, a polar guide, a doctor, an oceanographic engineer and the ship's architect, Olivier Petit. Together, they observed this changing region, the ice rubbing against the hull of the ship. They learned to live in this extraordinary polar base carried by the currents of the Central Arctic Ocean.

As the drift progressed, the crew gradually discovered how the ship reacted in this unique environment, what life was like in an isolated group, and the splendor of the Central Arctic Ocean. This drift was essential for establishing the overall functioning of the station in operation, assessing the adjustments to be made, and testing the scientific equipment before the first major Tara Polaris I drift planned for 2026. The series of real-life tests included, for example, installation on the ice floe, mooring, disembarkation; opening the moon pool and submerging scientific equipment; energy production and waste management; safety procedures; group life on board; and inspection dives under the hull.

‘Overall, these tests have been very positive. There are still some optimisations to be made and a few issues to be rethought, which is normal for a prototype, but the feedback on its ability to do what it was built for is very good, with some excellent surprises such as its performance when sailing in general, but particularly in ice,’ says Martin Hertau, first captain of *Tara Polar Station*.

The ship is now continuing its tests south of Shannon Island, east of Greenland. It will then set sail for Iceland to attend the Arctic Circle, the largest network for international dialogue and cooperation on the future of the Arctic. A second test campaign will be conducted at the end of the year in Finland, this time to test the ship in winter conditions.



Tara Polar Station is a real human, technical, scientific and financial challenge. The foundation is seeking additional sources of funding to ensure its operational deployment.

Royalty-free photos and videos. Please indicate copyrights.

Photos : 📷 Dérive test juillet-août et Videos : 📺 Dérive test juillet août 2025

Follow the drift on the foundation's YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/@TaraOceanFoundation>

Press Contacts : Agence F

florence.bardin@agencef.com - 06 77 05 06 17 ; solene.roux@agencef.com - 07 63 32 26 67

About

The Tara Ocean Foundation is the first public interest foundation in France dedicated to the Ocean. For over 20 years, it has been striving for a revolution to preserve Life, convinced that the Ocean is essential to the equilibrium of our planet. Exploring the Ocean and sharing scientific discoveries to raise collective awareness is at the heart of the foundation's mission.

It leads scientific expeditions, in partnership with leading international research laboratories, to study marine biodiversity and understand the impacts of climate change and pollution. It raises public awareness, from the younger generation to political decision-makers. Thanks to its UN Special Observer Status, the foundation plays an active role in international Ocean governance.

Exploring, sharing and protecting this living Ocean is more vital than ever. Together, let's defend Life. Let's protect the Ocean. Discover the foundation at <https://fondationtaraocean.org/> and on video.