

90° North

~ UMBERTO NOBILE ~ The North Pole Flights



Umberto Nobile – 1885 (Lauro, Italy) – 1978 (Rome, Italy)
Italian aeronautical engineer and aeronautical science professor; designer of semi-rigid airships including the *Norge* and *Italia*. Promoted from Colonel to General in the Italian air force following the *Norge* North Pole flight, forced to resign following the *Italia* disaster. Spent five years in the USSR in the 1930s developing Soviet airship program; lived in the US for several years during WW II; returned to Italy in 1944 where he remained until his death in 1978 at age 92.

Italian airship designer and pilot Umberto Nobile took part in two flights over the North Pole, one in 1926 in the airship *Norge* and another in 1928 in the airship *Italia*.

The *Norge* [meaning Norway] flight took place on May 11-14, 1926, and was a joint Norwegian-American-Italian venture. The co-leaders were the great Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen, American adventurer Lincoln Ellsworth, and Italian Umberto Nobile, the airship's designer and pilot. The *Norge* departed Kings Bay [Ny Ålesund], Spitsbergen in the Svalbard Archipelago on May 11, 1926--just five days after American Richard Byrd's claimed (and highly questionable) attainment of the North Pole by airplane--and flew by way of the North Pole to Teller (near Nome), Alaska. The flight, which originated in Rome, had been touted as "Rome to Nome" but bad weather forced them to land at the small settlement of Teller just short of Nome. This was the first undisputed attainment of the North Pole by air and the first crossing of the polar sea from Europe to North America. Additionally it gave Amundsen, who led the first expedition to reach the South Pole (1911), the distinction of being the first person to travel to both poles of the earth.

After a safe landing in Teller in which the *Norge* was undamaged, the airship was deflated and dismantled. Originally plans called for the airship to be sold back to the Italian government after completion of the flight; however the *Norge* unfortunately fell prey to souvenir hunters from Teller and was more or less destroyed.

Source: *tripod.com*