Kapitan Dranitsyn is a powerful conventional propelled icebreaker, constructed in 1982. It was intended for working in the conditions of the Northern Sea Route (Northeast Passage) and the Baltic Sea. The vessel was built at Wartsila Shipyard, Helsinki, Finland, and registered under the Russian flag. In 1994 the icebreaker was remodeled in Finland; later she was reequipped for passenger operations. In 1999 she was updated in Norway and got a passenger vessel certificate. Kapitan Dranitsyn has comfortable cabins, lounges, a library, an auditorium, and laboratory and office space for up to 70 scientists and embarked personnel.

The vessel is owned by the Russian Federation and operated by Murmansk Shipping Company. Since 2002 ship has been chartered by the University of Alaska Fairbanks to carry out oceanographic research over the continental slope of the Siberian Arctic shelf, as part of the NABOS project.