

Arctic

SPITSBERGEN IN-DEPTH POLAR BEAR CRUISE

Why join this Voyage?

- These departures offer the most comprehensive voyages of Spitsbergen available. A full 14 day expedition around Spitsbergen, offering the highest chances of exceptional wildlife encounters
- This extended trip will allow you ample opportunity to experience the wildlife of the region including polar bear, walrus, seals, arctic fox, reindeer and whales, along with a wide variety of migratory birds
- Travel aboard a small ice strengthened ship, renowned for their stability, superb maneuverability, low engine noise, highly qualified expeditionary staff and informal atmosphere.



Trip Summary

This extended expedition will offer passengers the highest chance of seeing the Great White Bear. Zodiacs are used to take expedition members to the numerous landing sights or to cruise along the coastline looking for wildlife & scenery along towering cliffs, with expansive bird colonies, spectacular glaciers, walrus haul-outs & historic whaling stations. With almost 24 hours of sun, time is virtually unlimited & expedition guides are always on hand to inform & enthuse about the wildlife & history of the region. When you are not on shore or in a zodiac they offer informative but informal lectures, covering everything from the flora and fauna of the region, tales of the early explorers through to ice navigation techniques.

Itinerary



Day 1 London / Longyearbyen

Depart from London flying via Oslo. Arrive into Longyearbyen, the administrative capital of the Svalbard archipelago of which West Spitsbergen is the largest island. Overnight in Longyearbyen.

Day 2 Embark ship / Isfjorden

Before embarking your expeditionary ship, there is an opportunity in the morning to explore this former mining town, whose parish church and Polar Museum are well worth visiting. Late afternoon embarkation of the ship. In the early evening the ship will sail out of Isfjorden.



Days 3 - 14 Exploring Spitsbergen

Your route over the next few days will very much depend on weather, ice conditions and the wildlife encountered. Each day we make several landings by Zodiac and the following are a few of the places you can hope to visit:

14th of July Glacier

Located on the west coast of Spitsbergen best explored by zodiac cruising near the spectacular ice cliff face.



Ny Ålesund

One of the northernmost communities in the world. Ny Ålesund serves as a base station for international Arctic research, with a population of approximately 80 scientists and support staff.

Bird-watchers should see Arctic terns, Arctic skuas, long-tailed skuas, purple sandpipers and chicks, common eiders, barnacle geese, long-tailed ducks, kittiwakes, glaucous gulls and snow buntings. Reindeers are often seen on the periphery of the community.



Get a taste of some remarkable Arctic history with the mast used by the famous airships, 'Norge' and 'Italia'. In 1926 the Norwegian, Roald Amundsen, used the 'Norge' to fly over the North Pole from Ny Ålesund to Alaska. In the vicinity there is a small museum and a husky dog compound.

Smeerenburg

At Smeerenburg, visit relics of the whaling industry, blubber ovens and whalebones. A tour of the former whaling station recounts the Dutch and Basque influences on the local community, which relied on the harvesting of bowhead whales for survival.



Monacobreen

Anchor near the Monaco Glacier at the head of Liefdefjorden. Tens of thousands of birds are often found on the water at the base of the glacier.



Phippsøya

An archipelago within an archipelago, Seven Islands comprises the northernmost portion of Svalbard. They lie about 10 degrees from the North Pole. Ice seldom completely disappears from the islands during the Arctic summer. Polar bear and walrus exploit the ice, as did trappers.

Kvitøya

The island of Kvitøya, the easternmost island of Svalbard, is also the easternmost part of the Kingdom of Norway. It earned the name White Island because it is almost completely covered by a dome of white ice. Andreeneset is one of the few places on the island that is ice free. Here Andrée and his men were found 33 years after their unsuccessful attempt to reach the North Pole with





balloon. We visit the monument commemorating these brave men, and admire the huge ice cap, which covers the island. Kraemerpynten is the back of beyond, the habitat of polar bear and walrus.

Vibubukta

At Vibubukta, you can hike through a polar desert - a landscape completely different from any you have encountered previously during this voyage. Here there is a skeleton of a whale 1 km (.62 miles) from shore.



Nordautlandet

This island, covered by an enormous ice cap, fascinates naturalists as well as historians. Here you find a huge glacier front intersected by hundreds of melt-waterfalls, an abandoned German weather station from WWII and the well kept scientific station at Kinnvika.

Storöya

This island, situated east of Nordautlandet, is only reachable in very favourable ice conditions. This region is known for its large walrus colonies and many polar bears that thrive here.



Alkefjellet

Thick-billed Murres or Brunich Guillemots nest here in the thousands. Fox and polar bears are often seen patrolling the base of the cliffs, waiting for a meal to drop from the sky - chicks that have fallen from the nest before they are ready to fly.

Sundneset

The landscape will change once again, learn of the life cycle of polar ponds and flowers. With luck, you may encounter walrus. Luck does play a part, because these huge marine mammals are surprisingly shy.

Brepollen

The glacier in the Brepollen area is spectacular and the waters below it are a favorite haunt of beluga- the white Arctic whale.

Alhornet

North and west of Longyearbyen on the opposite shore of Isfjorden is Alkhornet. The summit is 428 meters (1400 feet) above sea level. Murres, also known as guillemots, nest in the mountain's cliff faces. There will be time to hike across the tundra.

Day 15 Longyearbyen / London

Return to Longyearbyen and disembark. Fly back to London via Oslo.

Important: Please bear in mind that while accurate, this onboard itinerary is merely a guide to the route your voyage is likely to undertake, rather than a strict schedule to which you will always adhere, as local weather conditions and wildlife will ultimately influence your exact daily path. A flexible itinerary, making the most of local conditions and opportunities is one of the great advantages of expeditionary cruising and should always be borne in mind.

Adventure Options



The following *optional* adventure activity is available:

SEA KAYAKING

Exploring The Arctic by kayak is an unforgettable experience: plying inlets and waterways, you encounter wildlife and the Arctic silence from water level. Gently pushing your way through the ice you can explore areas that even the zodiacs can't reach. Please contact the office for further details and the additional cost.

The Boat

Akademik Sergey Vavilov
Capacity: 109 passengers



The Akademik Sergey Vavilov, built in Finland for the Russian Academy of Science in 1988-89. As the pride of the Russian scientific fleet, this ship boasts state-of-the-art technology, having been designed to be exceptionally stable, manoeuvrable, fast and quiet. Inside there is little, if any, ambient engine noise or vibration. The ship has a sophisticated stabilisation and trimming system built into her ice-strengthened hulls, making it an ideal choice for a polar voyage. Unmatched stability, coupled with superior speed, maximum cruising speed of 14.5 knots, adds up to more time at your destination, rather than at sea. Expeditionary staff mainly come from the Canada, Australia and the USA so the atmosphere onboard is very informal.



Retaining an authentic expeditionary feel, the cabins range from triples & twins with upper and lower berths & shared bathroom facilities, twins with facilities shared between two cabins, through to the spacious suites. All cabins have either two opening portholes or a picture window, along with a sofa and desk and ample space for equipment and storage. Onboard there is a dining room with unreserved seating where evening meals are served and breakfast and lunch is buffet style, a well stocked library, a small gym, sauna and plunge pool, a bar and lounge, a spacious passenger bridge and map room along with plenty of deck space for wildlife viewing. There are two presentation rooms where the expeditionary staff will give informal lectures on the regions, wildlife and its history. There is also a multi media centre that can be used to download digital images and to burn CD's.



The ship carries a large fleet of zodiacs for landings and exploratory cruising, along with a selection of single and double kayaks. Parka jackets are provided to all expedition members (to keep at the end of the voyage) and wellington boots are available on loan. There is a small infirmary with a ship's Dr on call, ship to shore communications are available.

Trip Extension Ideas



For those travellers wishing to explore the island of Spitsbergen further with an extension of a day or two pre or post cruise, the following optional day activities can be arranged through us from Longyearbyen:

- Cultural & Historical Guided Tour of Longyearbyen
- Dog Sledding (on wheels)
- Fossil hunt to Longyear Glacier with pack dogs
- Guided walking in the hills above Longyearbyen (3-6 hours)
- Explore inside the Longyear Glacier
- Boat trip to Isfjord Radio



Alternatively we can look into extensions within mainland Norway, such as the stunning train from Oslo to Bergen. Or a stopover in Tromso to visit The Polar Museum or the Lofoten Island

We can book any of these excursions for you as part of your trip. Please contact the office for further details

Expedition Date 2012

11th - 23rd July

Guide Prices for 2012

Cabin Type

(from price quoted per person)

Triple cabin with shared bathroom	£3,740
Twin cabin with shared bathroom	£4,870
Twin cabin with semi-private bathroom	£5,490
Superior Twin cabin with private bathroom	£5,870
Superior Plus cabin with private bathroom	£6,120
Peregrine Suite	£6,620
Cook Suite	£7,180

Includes

- 13-day voyage based on full board basis
- All lectures and guide services on board
- On shore and zodiac based excursions
- Photographic DVD, documenting the voyage
- Complimentary parka jacket & wellington boot loan

Excludes

- All flights to and from Longyearbyen
- Accommodation in Longyearbyen pre/ post cruise and any additional arrangements not mentioned in the itinerary
- Travel insurance, vaccinations & visas (if required)
- Gratuities on board, drinks & any personal items

Please note that these prices are a **guide only** and are subject to exchange rate fluctuations and fuel surcharges.

Single Supplement

For those solo travellers wishing to secure their own cabin a multiplier of 1.7 a single berth is typically used to calculate the single supplement. Please contact the office for a quotation.

Flight Information

Please note, these guide prices exclude international flights to and from Longyearbyen on Spitsbergen due to significant price fluctuation. We are however very happy to book flights for you, as well as hotel accommodation in Longyearbyen, as part of your overall Arctic trip. Typically the cost of return flights from London to Longyearbyen between June and August is approx. £500-700 per person, but can vary quite significantly depending on availability. The advantage of booking the whole trip through Steppes Travel is you will then benefit from full ATOL cover.

Longyearbyen Accommodation

Longyearbyen is a small former mining town with limited hotel accommodation, which can get very booked up in the peak months. Overnight accommodation costs around £50 - 100 per person based on a shared twin/ triple room.

Pre/ Post Voyage Excursions

For those travellers wishing to explore the island of Spitsbergen further with an extension of a day or two pre or post voyage, we offer a number of guided activities from Longyearbyen, including walking, fossil hunting & dog sledding (on wheels). Alternatively we can also offer extensions in Norway. Please enquire for further details.

Visa Information

For EU Passport holders, visas will not be required for Spitsbergen. At all times it remains your responsibility to organise visas if required, although we are happy to advise and provide supporting documentation where necessary.

Want to discuss this trip?

Please call Sue on **01285 880981** for more details or to check boat availability



Having spent the best part of 5 years on my “gap year” working in travel seemed the natural progression. I am most at home travelling to remote wilderness areas of the globe. With a life-long passion for wildlife I love to get up close either by kayak or on foot. My travels have taken me to all seven continents. Most recently travelling to the Russian Far East along the Chukotka coast and up to Wrangel & Herald Islands, where I was lucky enough to encounter 105 bears. I have also voyaged to Spitsbergen, Antarctica, the Canadian High Arctic and Baja California’s Sea of Cortez on expedition vessels, along with sailing the Amazon Basin and paddling down the Yukon. I hope to go whale and bear watching in Alaska next.

Sue is Country Director for Steppes Voyages