

Arctic

SPITSBERGEN, EAST GREENLAND & ICELAND

Why join this Voyage?

- Fantastic 14 day expeditionary voyage combining the extraordinary wildlife of Spitsbergen (Svalbard) with the dramatic scenery, gigantic icebergs and Northern Lights of little visited East Greenland
- For any wildlife enthusiast, Spitsbergen is arguably the best place in the whole Arctic to see polar bears in their natural habitat, as well as walrus, seals, reindeer and a plethora of birdlife
- Voyage aboard one the smaller ice strengthened ships, renowned for their excellent guides, informal atmosphere, expeditionary feel and ease of logistics. With the option to kayak on some of these voyages.



Trip Summary

This unique High Arctic expeditionary voyage incorporates the jewels of The Arctic: Spitsbergen, East Greenland and an introduction to Iceland at the end. Spitsbergen, the most wildlife-rich part of the entire Arctic region, with its sheltered fjords, dazzling glaciers and rich history is an extraordinary destination in its own right. Little visited and ice-locked for much of the year, enigmatic East Greenland's great draw is its magnificent scenery, gigantic icebergs and a good chance of seeing The Northern Lights. In between there is a good chance of experiencing large areas of sea ice. There are very few polar voyages available which offer so much variety in terms of wildlife and landscapes, which is what makes this particular trip so compelling.

Itinerary



Day 1 Longyearbyen Embarkation

Arrive into Longyearbyen, deep inside The Arctic Circle and only 600 miles from The North Pole. Longyearbyen is the seat of government for the archipelago of Svalbard, Norway's Arctic islands.

Located on the picturesque island of Spitsbergen, the community has a modest population of just over two thousand. You should have time to explore this remote outpost prior to boarding of the ship in the late afternoon and the beginning of your Arctic odyssey.



Once onboard you will be introduced to your expeditionary staff and have time to settle into your cabin before the ship gets underway. There will be your first briefing by the expeditionary leader followed by dinner.

Days 2 - 4 Exploring Spitsbergen and the islands of Svalbard

Over the course of the next few days the ship will make its way up the western edge of the island of Spitsbergen, exploring as you go with regular daily landings and excursions by zodiac to explore. Where possible there will be opportunity to explore the tundra on foot.



The Expedition team plans all your activities to take advantage of local weather and ice conditions. Anticipate visits to the stunning 14th of July Glacier, a vast wall of ice, the settlement of Ny Alesund, a base station of international Arctic research, and the Monaco Glacier.



Be on the alert at all times for wildlife, in particular polar bears, who hunt along the edges of the pack ice for seals. With a bear population of approximately 3,000 between Spitsbergen and Franz Josef land, there are excellent chances of sightings and your expeditionary staff will be doing their best to ensure a successful sighting.

Sightings of Arctic Terns, Arctic Skuas, Long-tailed Ducks, Kittiwakes, Glaucous Gulls and reindeer are possible. Moffen Island is a renowned walrus sanctuary, and if the conditions are right you may see walrus hauled out on shore or swimming in the protected waters.



Days 5 & 6 Greenland Sea

During the crossing from the west coast of Spitsbergen to north-eastern Greenland, your Expedition Team will deliver illustrated presentations about the wildlife and cultures they anticipate you will encounter in Greenland. You may encounter sea ice that is the favoured habitat of the polar bear.



Days 7 - 10 Eastern Greenland

The coast of eastern Greenland is remote, wild, rugged and ice-bound for much of the year, barring travel to this pristine area for almost all of the year, apart from a narrow window between August and October.

Over the course of the next few days you will travel southwards exploring the inlets and fjords of this rugged and striking coastline. Daily excursions will be undertaken, exploring the land on foot and iceberg choked waterways by zodiac. Please note that every expedition is different in that local weather and ice conditions will directly affect the daily itinerary agreed between the captain and expeditionary leader.



The large glaciers produce the huge, cathedral-like ice-bergs that are abundant in Greenlandic waters. The largest fjord is Scoresby Sund and is more than 300 kilometres (185 miles) long. This really is a little visited area of stunning fjords and serrated mountain ranges, where you are unlikely to meet anyone else.



This area is less prolific in terms of wildlife than Spitsbergen, but with opportunity for sightings of the elusive musk ox, gyrfalcon and arctic hare.

One of the greatest attractions of any trip to Greenland is the chance of seeing the Northern Lights (*aurora borealis*), being further from The North Pole than Spitsbergen with darker nights. Clear skies are required, so hopefully you'll be lucky, as it really is the most incredible phenomenon.

Days 11 & 12 Denmark Strait

While crossing Denmark Strait en route to Iceland, we'll watch for whales, and learn about the extraordinary geology and history of Iceland.



Day 13 Westman Islands (Vestmannaeyjar)

The history of the Westman Islands is as shrouded by the mists of time as a Norse Saga. The name refers to a term used by the Norse to refer to Irishmen, or west men. Like the rest of Iceland, the Westman Islands are volcanically active. As recently as 1963, a new island, Surtsey, was created.

Day 14 Disembarkation in Iceland / Reykjavik / UK

This expedition disembarks in the Akureyri, you will be transferred to capital of Iceland, Reykjavik, from where you can fly home from either Reykjavik or nearby Keflavik.



Important Note: All itineraries are for guidance only. Programmes may vary depending on local ice and weather conditions and, in order to take advantage of opportunities to see wildlife, flexibility is paramount for expedition cruises. Some departures are offered in reverse from Reykjavik to Longyearbyen

Proposed Routing



The Boats

As your base and home for the duration of your Arctic expedition, the decision on which boat to choose is an important one. Both of these smaller ice-strengthened ships are ideal for this type of polar expedition:



Polar Pioneer Capacity: 56 passengers

Polar Pioneer was built in Finland in 1985, as an ice-strengthened research ship, and for many years she plied the treacherous waters of the USSR's northern coast. In 2000 she was fully refurbished and has since undergone further cosmetic upgrades to provide comfortable accommodation for expeditionary cruising. This vessel has a fine reputation for polar expedition cruising, due to her strength, manoeuvrability and small number of cabins. The onboard expeditionary staff are renowned for their enthusiasm which will shine through during their informal but informative lectures



Antarctic Dream Capacity: 80 passengers

M/V Antarctic Dream was built in Holland in 1957, originally serving under the Chilean Navy as the Piloto Pardo as an ice-strengthened vessel to service their polar bases. She was named after Piloto Pardo, the Chilean captain who managed on the third attempt to rescue Shackleton's men from Elephant Island aboard the Yelcho. Extensively refurbished to a high standard in 2005, she is an excellent option for those clients demanding a higher level of comfort and emphasis on food.



Akademik Sergey Vavilov Capacity: 109 passengers

The Akademik Sergey Vavilov, was built in Finland for the Russian Academy of Science in 1988-89. As the pride of the Russian scientific fleet she 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.



Plancius Capacity: 114 passengers

Built in 1976 as an oceanographic research vessel for the Royal Dutch Navy, Plancius sailed for the Royal Dutch Navy until June 2004. In 2009 she was fully rebuilt as a very comfortable, but not luxury, 110 passenger expedition vessel. The ship is fully ice strengthened with a cruising speed of 10-12 knots.

To discuss any of the boats below or to check availability, please call Sue on 01285 880981 or email voyages@steppestravel.co.uk.

Expedition Dates for 2012



Sergey Vavilov (14 nights)

9th - 22nd August
21st August - 4th September *

Polar Pioneer (14 nights)

8th - 21st August
21st August - 3rd September

Plancius (12 nights)

26th August - 7th September

Antarctic Dream (12 nights)

15th - 27th August
27th August - 8th September*
8th - 17th September (9 nights)

*(reverse itinerary Iceland to Spitsbergen)

Guide Prices for 2012

Cabin Type (from guide price quoted per person)	<i>Polar Pioneer</i>	<i>Antarctic Dream</i>	<i>Plancius</i>	<i>Sergey Vavilov</i>
Quad cabin with private facilities	N/a	N/a	£4,825	N/a
Triple cabin with shared facilities	£4,995	N/a	N/a	£3,990
Twin cabin with shared bathroom	£5,975	N/a	N/a	£4,990
Twin cabin with semi shared facilities	N/a	N/a	N/a	£5,490
Twin cabin with private bathroom	£7,150	£5,500	£5,500	£5,810
Superior	£8,015	£6,175	£6,850	£6,240
Suite	£8,675	£6,850	N/a	£6,870

Includes

- 13, or 15 day voyage based on full board
- All lectures and guide services on board
- On shore and zodiac based excursions
- Wellington boot loan except on the *Antarctic Dream*
- Complimentary expedition parka on the *Sergey Vavilov*

Excludes

- All flights
- Pre/ post voyage accommodation and any additional arrangements not mentioned in the itinerary
- Travel insurance, vaccinations and visas
- Gratuities on board & any items of a personal nature
- Additional fuel surcharge if levied by the boat's operators

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

Flight Information

These costs exclude international flights to and from the points of embarkation and disembarkation in Longyearbyen on Spitsbergen and Reykjavik on Iceland, however we can help book these for you if you would like. *Scandinavian Airlines* is the only airline that operates flights into Longyearbyen via Oslo, while for flights back home from Iceland, either *Icelandair* or *Icelandexpress* operate direct flights. The advantage of booking the whole trip through Steppes Travel is you will then benefit from full ATOL cover.

Single Supplement

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

Pre/ Post Voyage Excursions

For those travellers wishing to extend their stays on either Spitsbergen or Iceland to explore further, we can suggest a number of guided activities and excursions from either Longyearbyen or Reykjavik. Please enquire for further details.

Visa Information

For EU Passport holders, visas are not be required for either Spitsbergen (Norway), Greenland (Denmark) or Iceland. All other nationalities should check with their local embassy. At all times it remains your responsibility to organise visas, although we are more than happy to advise and provide the relevant 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 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. 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.