

Kingdom of the Polar Bear

PB - 9 days/8 nights

Silence, dramatic landscapes and superb wildlife watching in the High Arctic



The dramatic and remote regions of Spitsbergen are best explored by boat and our ship, the MV Polar Star, is one of the most comfortable ice class vessels available for polar expeditions. With her ice-breaking capabilities she can safely explore areas that many others simply cannot reach. This expedition cruise to Svalbard's remote northern and eastern regions takes place throughout the northern summer months, when the sun never sets. With an on board team of experts we have regular excursions to discover isolated bays and fjords, allowing us to experience at close hand the unique wildlife, awesome landscape and overwhelming silence of the Arctic.

Voyage Highlights

- Excellent chances to witness polar bears in their natural habitat (sightings on all voyages in 2004 & 5!)
- Starkly beautiful landscape, glaciers and fjords
- Unparalleled wildlife viewing
- Weather permitting circumnavigation of Spitsbergen

Starting in Longyearbyen, the largest town on the archipelago, we embark and sail through Icefjord to the Russian mining community of Barentsburg and on to the tiny settlement of Ny-Ålesund, home to the world's northernmost post office. Visiting the glacier-fed Magdalenefjord, one of the island's most beautiful fjords, and Smeerenburgfjord – meaning "Blubbertownfjord" – the site of a former whaling station, our specialist guides will ensure we get the most out of the experience, as well as recounting tales of Svalbard's cultural and exciting polar explorative heritage - traces of which can be found on several of excursions when we go ashore. Informal lectures by expert guides will complement shore visits, most of which will be by Zodiac. If conditions permit there will be one or two landings each day.

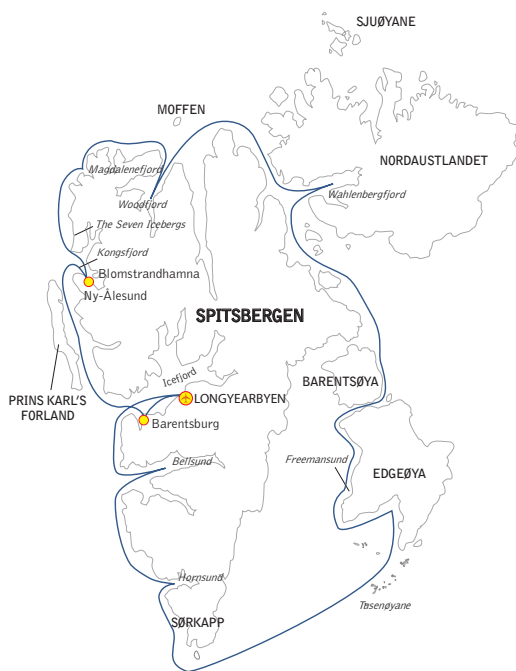
The further north and east that we sail, the more ice we will meet, ice that will gradually build up into large ice floes where seals bask in the Arctic summer sun. On rounding the northwest corner of Spitsbergen, we'll cross

the 80th parallel, just 600 miles from the North Pole. Our aim is to sail to the remote Polar Regions in order to experience the Arctic wilderness, drift ice, flora and fauna. Deep within the Polar Circle, we see lonely Nordaustlandet, the second-largest island in the archipelago, before heading down Hinlopen Strait, lined by fjords and tundra. We may also visit Vibebukta and the 200km-wide ice sheet of the Austfonna Glacier. This is very much the kingdom of the polar bear, a dramatic realm of towering cliffs, hidden fjords, enchanting drift ice and the rugged backdrop of a snow-capped landscape. This really is a voyage to the extremes of the earth.

Itinerary change

Due to refurbishment work at Longyearbyen airport, passengers joining the departures in July will fly out to Oslo and stay overnight before continuing to Longyearbyen.

Departures dates affected by this are:
6, 13, 20 July 2006



Valid from 1 January to 31 December 2006
Amended on: (21 October 2005)

Voyage Itinerary

9 days / 8 nights

Fly to Longyearbyen and stay overnight, join cruise, disembark in Longyearbyen and return flight to UK.

Our final itinerary is dependant on weather and ice conditions, which have to be assessed during the voyage, but we aim to explore the remote northern and eastern regions of Spitsbergen - perhaps even circumnavigating the island. Some years it is possible to sail through the Hinlopen Strait early in the season, while other years the amount of ice makes it hard negotiate. We recommend the early tours for those who are keen to see large ice floes and the richest bird life, while for those who would rather travel further east and perhaps sail around Spitsbergen, a tour later in the season is more advisable.

Day 1 *Fly to Longyearbyen*

Arriving in Longyearbyen, we transfer to our hotel for an overnight stay.

1 night hotel, full board.

Day 2 *Embark MV Polar Star, sail north*

After breakfast we join an information and familiarisation meeting to prepare for the adventure ahead. Lunch is followed by a sightseeing tour of Longyearbyen. The largest settlement in the Svalbard Peninsula, Longyearbyen was named after James Munro Longyear, an American who founded a mining company here and built the first house on the site in 1906. With a population of just 1,400 the community was founded on coal mining, as were many of the other settlements in Spitsbergen, but today its major focus is upon polar research. Joining the MV Polar Star we embark on our voyage, gliding out into the Icefjord and on to the Russian (although named after a Dutch explorer) settlement of Barentsburg, the last mining town still operating in this region. Following the stunning north-western coastline we pass towering ice fields and hidden fjords and a landscape rich in wildlife, where isolated settlements still struggle to survive in this most remote and harsh of lands.

7 nights on ship, full board.

Day 3 *Visit Ny-Ålesund, continue north*

Ny-Ålesund, was once the base for polar expeditions, is now a centre for scientific research. This tiny coastal village has the proud boast of being the most northerly permanently inhabited settlement on earth, and we can send postcards home from here, the world's most northerly post office. After a brief stop we shall continue north, heading for Magdalenefjord and Smeerenburgfjord, the poetically named 'Blubber town', doubtless on account of the whaling station set beneath the barren mountains. Passing breathtaking fjords and majestic glaciers we continue to glide through the icy dark waters, hopefully catching a glimpse of one of these ice giants calving great chunks of ice into the pristine waters below.

Day 4 *The northern reaches*

Passing the northwest corner of Spitsbergen we continue to bask in the glory of the magnificent setting around us. Our on board experts will be able to answer any questions you might have about the wildlife we meet, or the landscape we pass. The beautiful Svalbard Archipelago is host to over 170 species of plant, 110 types of migratory birds, and a mammal population that includes reindeer, walrus, seal, arctic fox, whale and the majestic polar bear. The Gulf Stream has allowed the island's 400 km long western coastline to become incredibly rich in animal and plant life. If



conditions permit, we may cross the 80° parallel and sail into the Woodfjord, where we will hopefully get a glimpse of Nordaustlandet in the distance.

Day 5 *Straits and glaciers*

The journey continues through the tranquil Hinlopen Strait, hemmed in by the impressive fjord landscape on either side. We hope to visit Vibebukta today, near the Austfonna Glacier with its massive ice sheet some 200 kilometres wide. This is the birthplace of some of Spitsbergen's largest icebergs. We will continue to make regular excursions off the boat in our versatile Zodiacs, exploring more closely the incredible landscape and learning a little more about the incredibly diverse flora and fauna of the area. It is believed that this area was once part of a more tropical region, and that through geological movements in time, made its way north to its present position, and we may be lucky enough to find fossils that give some indication of life here 50 million years ago.

Days 6-7 *The remote east*

Now entering 'the Realm of the Polar Bear' everyone on board will be alert to the possibility of a sighting. With an estimated 2,500 polar bears in Svalbard, Spitsbergen is the only place in Europe where these formidable and magnificent beasts can be seen in their natural habitat. After years of falling victim to hunters, the species is now protected, and the solitary figures can be seen as they roam the pack ice in search of food

and mates, covering vast distances of this frozen wilderness. There is a very good chance we shall see large males, as well as mothers and their cubs, either on the hillsides or on the many spits and fjords that lie round the islands. A truly memorable sight and one that will live with you long after you return home. Given that our final routing is very much dependent upon the weather and ice conditions, our itinerary will be determined by our experienced crew. In the early part of the season the proposed route is north along Nordaustlandet, via Wahlenburgfjord or Murchisonfjord and in the direction of Sjuøyane. Later in the year the sailing may be via Sørport, Edgeøya, Storfjord and around Sørkapp (Southern Cape).

Day 8 *Return to Icefjord*

Returning to the Icefjord this afternoon we hope to make landings, conditions permitting, in the Billefjord and Skansebukta, before continuing our final day's sailing. This evening we will enjoy a farewell dinner on board, with a chance to review the incredible experiences of the past week.

Day 9 *Disembark in Longyearbyen, fly UK*

We arrive back in Longyearbyen sometime during the early hours of this morning (note that if departure is particularly early, breakfast will not be provided). Later we will disembark the boat and return to the airport for the international flight via Oslo to the UK.

Call Blue Water Holidays on 01756 706510

General Information

Joining the tour:

All above details are based on flights from/to London Heathrow with Scandinavian Airlines, flights are also available from a range of UK regional airports, please contact us for details.

Transfers.

Flying into Longyearbyen you will be transferred to Spitsbergen Hotel for an overnight stay. The following day you'll be transferred to the ship for embarkation after a sightseeing tour of Longyearbyen. The cruise ends in Longyearbyen, from where you will fly back to the UK via Oslo.

Tipping

You will receive tipping guidelines on board ship.

Money

Norwegian Kroner, Euro and US Dollars are accepted on board. Visa, American Express and Master Card are all accepted as means of payment.

On Board Prices

The voyage includes breakfast, lunch and dinner, with coffee/tea after lunch and dinner. Beverages and other refreshments during the day are not included. Below you'll find a list of sample prices of some items available. Please note that the prices shown are approximate only and based on the latest information available to us.

Climate

Spitsbergen has a somewhat windy and changeable climate and you should be prepared for cold and wet weather at all times. Spitsbergen's temperatures can range from minus 40°C right up to a balmy 21°C. Heading north the temperatures become noticeably cooler, especially at night and in the polar regions the average is 0°C. There will be daylight for 24 hours during our voyage and a cold wind can be expected.

Café

Tea:	£1.60
Coffee:	£1.80
Bottled Water:	£1.50 - £2.20
Fruit juice:	£2.00

Bar/Dining room

Draught beer (0,4liters):	£4.50
Bottled beer (0,33liters):	£3.50
Glass of wine:	£5.50
Bottle of wine	£ 22.00 - £45.00
1/2 bottle of wine	£ 20.00 - £22.00

Visas

British citizens do not require visas to enter Norway. The majority of other visitors can enter without a visa if their stay is for less than three months, but you should check with your local embassy or consulate to confirm this. Above information is correct at the time of going to print, it is however the responsibility of passengers to ensure that they comply with the passport and visa requirements applicable at the time of travel

Luggage

The luggage allowance is 44lbs/20kgs per person. In addition you may take one piece of hand luggage weighing less than 5kg. It is advisable to bring a small waterproof rucksack for excursions.

Clothing

A good wind and water-proof jacket and trousers are essential as are long/thermal underwear, a warm hat and woollen socks. We also recommend that you bring warm gloves, several fleeces or woollen sweaters and comfortable sturdy hiking boots for excursions. Life on board ship is a fairly relaxed affair, so there is no need to pack anything formal. Comfortable clothing is more important for relaxing in, although you may wish to pack a smart set of clothes for the final meal (note



that this is in no way compulsory). During the day, and for our on-shore excursions, clothing which can be layered is best.

Equipment

A good set of binoculars is essential, as is sufficient film for your camera and spare batteries (as a general rule of thumb, bring double what you think you will need). Don't forget sun-cream and good quality sunglasses, as even in the cooler northern climates the sun can still be a major factor in your trip. An alarm clock may also be useful, as will be waterproof bags to protect your camera equipment and binoculars.

Do not forget adequate supplies of any prescription medicine you may need. Should you feel it necessary you may also want to bring something for seasickness.



Life on board/ Lectures

Is relaxed and casual with the aim of getting close to nature and enjoying the convivial company of fellow passengers. On board lectures that are designed to maximise your enjoyment and add to your knowledge about the areas visited and the local fauna and flora. The ship's 'open bridge' policy allows access to the spacious command centre throughout the cruise, allowing you to chart our course along with the crew as we voyage through the spectacular polar regions.

Dress code

Comfortable clothes suitable to the area you are travelling in are recommended for excursions and landings. We recommend that you bring casual clothes and comfortable shoes to wear on board and although some passengers may chose to wear smart/casual at dinner you are by no means obliged to do so.

Entertainment on board / Lectures on board

The emphasis is on relaxation and on getting close to the nature and wildlife of the areas visited. That being the case there is little or no entertainment on board. Depending on your chosen itinerary our experienced expedition teams/guides/lecturers will organise entertaining talks, lectures and information briefings on subjects such as wildlife, geology, local history and environmental aspects of the areas visited.

Excursions by Zodiac

These sturdy inflatable boats enable both water based exploration and safe landings in otherwise inaccessible areas. You will need to be fairly agile to board these but there is otherwise no need to worry about travelling in them. The crew will show you what to do and as long as you follow their instructions, after a few days it will become second nature.

Safety.

The ship is fitted with the necessary safety equipment and passengers are required to take part in safety briefings when scheduled. In order to comply with maritime security requirements that apply to all ships and ports worldwide, passengers, crew and visitors to the ship may be subject to security screening. We appreciate your patience and understanding whenever such screenings are required.

Medical staff on board

MV Polar Star has a doctor on board throughout the voyage.

Smoking

The anti-smoking law introduced in Norway in 2004, which bans smoking in public places, also affects ships. Smoking is therefore prohibited at all times when the ships are in port. However, because of a special dispensation, at other times

smoking is permitted in designated areas on board. Smoking in the cabins is not permitted. This information is correct at the time of going to print and may be subject to change without notice.

Valuables:

The ship is not equipped with safety deposit boxes. We recommend that you leave jewellery and other valuables at home. Accordingly we cannot accept custody of or responsibility for guests' money or other valuables while onboard.

Recommended Reading.

Franz Josef Land & Jan Mayen
Spitsbergen: Svalbard

Andreas Umbreit: *Bradt guide to Spitsbergen*

Bjorn Gulliksen & Erling Svensen:
Svalbard and life in the Polar Oceans

Rough Guide: *Rough Guide to Norway*

Environmental Matters

We are proud to announce that for every booking made from the 2006 Natural Horizons Voyages brochure, we will make a monetary contribution towards the UK's national charity dedicated to the protection of the marine environment and its wildlife – the Marine Conservation Society (www.mcsuk.org). Founded in 1977, the organisation aims to highlight threats to marine wildlife and the wider marine environment, bringing them to the attention of the public, media, politicians and Government agencies alike.



2006 PRICES

Dates	15 Jun – 13 Jul & 3 – 10 Aug 06		20 & 27 July 06	
	Twin	Supp*	Twin	Supp*
K2	3480	1315	3595	1315
K3	3560	1315	3665	1315
K5	3645	1460	3765	1460
K6	4085	1610	4195	1610
K7	4595	1815	4790	1815

* Single supplement

Prices are per person in £s based on two people travelling together sharing a twin cabin/room

Your holiday price includes: Return economy class flights from London Heathrow to Longyearbyen incl. applicable taxes and surcharges, voyage in cabin grade of your choice incl. full board, 1 night incl. breakfast at Spitsbergen Hotel, transfers as applicable, dinner at an Oslo airport hotel.

Not included: travel insurance, luggage handling, optional excursions, gratuities.

Departures & Flight information

Departures: Every Thursday 15 June to 10 August 2006.

Daytime/evening flights with Scandinavian Airlines between London Heathrow and Longyearbyen via Oslo (incl. stop for dinner at Oslo on the outbound flight).

Departures & supplements from other UK airports and Business Class supplements are available on request.