



## West Svalbard & Polar Ice Edge

### Arctic Wildlife Safari

14 Jun - 22 Jun 2022

9 days

Embarkation: Longyearbyen (Svalbard)

Disembarkation: Longyearbyen (Svalbard)

M/v Sea Spirit

Activities:



# Itinerary



## Day 1: Arrival in Longyearbyen, Svalbard (hotel night)

Welcome to Longyearbyen, the administrative center of Svalbard and starting point of our Arctic expedition! At the Longyearbyen airport, you will be greeted by our staff and transferred to a quality hotel, which has been arranged by us and is included in the price of the itinerary. You will then be free to explore the charming, walkable town center.

We recommend starting your discovery of this fascinating Norwegian High Arctic territory at the excellent Svalbard Museum, where you can also purchase hard-to-find polar books and maps. Afterward, you can enjoy an excellent dinner at one of Longyearbyen's many delightful restaurants. If you are still awake at midnight, you will notice the sun has not set. In fact, the sun will not set for the entire duration of our time in Svalbard.



## Day 2: Welcome Aboard!

After breakfast at your hotel, the morning is yours to enjoy Longyearbyen. Take in the views of icy fjords and glaciated mountains surrounding this historic former coal-mining town. Take advantage of shopping for souvenirs or some last-minute necessities such as cold-weather gear. Just remember, you will soon receive your very own parka to keep and waterproof boots to borrow on board the ship. For lunch, Longyearbyen offers quick and easy meal options including the most northerly pizzas and kebabs in the world.

In the afternoon, you will be transferred to the pier where we will warmly welcome you aboard the deluxe expedition vessel M/V Sea Spirit. Get settled in your spacious suite and explore the

ship that will be your comfortable home during the extraordinary adventure to come. After getting underway, a full schedule of events kicks off with informative briefings and introductions from your expedition staff. After the first of many delicious dinners on board, step out onto the open decks to admire the gorgeous scenery in 24-hour daylight as we pass through the wildlife-rich waters of Isfjorden.



## Day 3-8: West Svalbard and Polar Ice Edge

The itinerary for this voyage focuses on the spectacular fjords, coasts and islands of western Spitsbergen, the main island of the Svalbard archipelago. This area contains Svalbard's most impressive scenery and some of the Arctic's best wildlife viewing opportunities. Our exact schedule and route will be shaped by the weather and ice conditions we encounter. Polar bears and other iconic Arctic animals can be spotted at anytime, anywhere in our area of exploration.

One of the pristine natural areas on this itinerary is South Spitsbergen National Park, a vast region of varied landscapes including polar deserts and impassible mountain ranges. The centerpiece of this park is Hornsund, a picture-perfect fjord where countless mighty glaciers cascade from soaring mountaintops into icy inlets. At this time of year, we are sure to encounter fast ice—

that is, sea ice that is fastened to the shore. This situation offers an excellent chance of observing polar bears on the hunt for ringed seals. The park also includes the southern shores of Bellsund, a picturesque bay where we find the remains of historical whaling operations, including wooden boats, cabins and thousands of whale bones—a scene from the distant past, literally frozen in time. This area also offers great hiking opportunities through landscapes rich with Arctic flora and birdlife, as well as fascinating geology.

Also on our route is Northwest Spitsbergen National Park, the crown jewel of Svalbard's scenic wonders. Here we find deep fjords flanked by serrated mountain peaks and immense tidewater glaciers calving icebergs into

turquoise waters. The whole area is alive with migratory Arctic seabirds. On this voyage, we are just in time to witness the return of millions of murres, guillemots and little auks to the small islands, mountainsides and sea cliffs where they breed within the park. This is also a great area to encounter marine mammals, including various kinds of whales and Arctic seals. Set among this incredible scenery and wildlife activity, we also find evidence of Svalbard's earliest sealers and whalers.

Our area of exploration also includes gorgeous Forlandet National Park. Here we find Prins Karls Forland, one of the best places in Svalbard to observe herds of walrus hauled out on land. Also along the route is North Isforden National Park, where we have the chance to observe endemic Svalbard reindeer grazing and Arctic fox romping in lush tundra meadows.

Human habitation along our route can be found at Ny Ålesund, a former mining town and airship base that is now home to an international community of Arctic researchers. This is one of the world's most northerly settlements where we find a museum, gift shop and post office.

In addition to exploring the terrestrial environment and inshore waterways of western Spitsbergen, we make a special effort to reach the edge of the polar pack ice. At this dynamic boundary between solid sea ice and open ocean, we have an unparalleled opportunity to witness the dramatic interplay between polar bears and seals. We will take the ship as close as safely possible to the jumbled and constantly shifting ice floes in the hope of observing polar bears hunting in their preferred habitat. At this time of year, the ice edge is not far from mainland Spitsbergen and our sailing time in open seas will be relatively short.

The West Svalbard and Polar Ice Edge route offers a stunning variety of Arctic landscapes and animals with minimal sailing time between excursions. Every day offers something new and exciting. We will not miss a single opportunity to encounter amazing Arctic wildlife, to witness incredible polar scenery, and to walk in the footsteps of historic expeditions that came before.



### **Day 9: Disembarkation in Longyearbyen, Svalbard**

After filling up with one last buffet breakfast on board, we bid you farewell in Longyearbyen. We provide transfers to the airport or to the town center in case you plan to stay longer in Svalbard. By this time, you may already be making plans for your next amazing trip with us into the polar worlds!

## Special guest



### **Rick Sammon**

Award-winning photographer

Rick started his professional photography career as an underwater photographer. He easily transitioned into travel, landscape, wildlife, cultural and nature photography. Rick's images, from his travels to more than 100 countries, have been published in numerous newspapers and magazines, and have been featured in his 39 books. Rick will provide a photo workshop and be available for tips and advice – all with the objective of helping you capture the mood and feeling of the expedition. His wife Susan will also offer instructions on better smart phone photography.

Rick also teaches image processing on the ship, helping transform snapshots into great, memorable shots. In recognition of his talent and influence, Rick has been named a Canon Explorer of Light. Rick is also a Westcott Top Pro Elite. You might also catch Rick at the piano or with his guitar in the lounge!



### **Erin Curry, PhD**

Polar Bear Reproductive Physiologist

Erin is a staff scientist at the Lindner Center for Conservation and Research of Endangered Wildlife (CREW) at the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden, where her research centers on polar bears. She earned a degree in animal science from the University of Delaware and after working as a veterinary technician for a few years she pursued graduate studies at Clemson University in South Carolina, earning her Ph.D. in 2010 in animal physiology, with concentrations in reproductive physiology and molecular biology.

She joined CREW as a post-doctoral fellow in January 2011, and began working with polar bears, an iconic species for climate change due to their dependence on sea ice for survival and reproduction. In addition to developing novel methods for non-invasively monitoring reproductive activity in polar bears, in 2012 Erin led a CREW team in performing the first-ever artificial insemination procedure in a polar bear. She looks forward to sharing her knowledge about the role of zoos in polar bear conservation.