



Crossing the Arctic Circle, Jan Mayen & Spitsbergen

From the Highlands to the High Arctic

22 May - 02 Jun 2021

12 days

Embarkation: Edinburgh (Scotland)

Disembarkation: Longyearbyen (Spitsbergen)

M/v Sea Spirit

Activities:



Itinerary



Day 1: Embarkation in Leith (Edinburgh), United Kingdom

Welcome to Edinburgh, the capital of Scotland and starting point of our expedition. The famous Castle rising above the city gives immediate evidence of Edinburgh's rich history. While the Town area boasts medieval architecture, the New Town accommodates newer 18th century buildings. Each corner of Edinburgh's old streets opens beautiful unexpected vistas of green hills or a blue flash of distant sea.

In the afternoon, we welcome you aboard the deluxe expedition ship M/V Sea Spirit. Explore the ship and get comfortable in your home away from home for the extraordinary adventure to come.



Day 2: Kirkwall, Orkney Islands

Kirkwall is a small, quiet town, with a gentle pace of life. The town is the capital of the remote and amazing Orkney archipelago. Kirkwall is first mentioned in Orkneyinga saga in 1046. Such a long history has left a rich heritage that we explore today. The most famous are the sandstone St Magnus Cathedral, considered the finest medieval building in the north of Scotland, the Bishop's Palace and the Earl's Palace.

Included tour "Ancient treasures of Orkney with St Magnus Cathedral." Depart Kirkwall and head into the west of Mainland, Orkney's largest island. This tour passes through the gentle rolling landscape of Orkney and into the Neolithic Heartland of Orkney; an area designated as a World Heritage Site due to its wealth of pre-historic archaeology.

Passing the Standing Stones of Stenness, we will stop at the Ring of Brodgar; a huge ceremonial circle of stones dating back almost 5000 years. We then continue on to the 5000-year-old village of Skara Brae, beautifully interpreted in the visitor centre. See the remarkable dwellings revealed from beneath the sand dunes by storms only 150 years ago. Hear some of the stories from your guide today en route back to Kirkwall. Once back in the island capital we will take a tour of St Magnus Cathedral, built by the Vikings during their 500 year reign over the islands.



Day 3: Fair Isle, Shetland Islands

Fair Isle is a real paradise for birdwatchers. Huge number of birds inhabits the lush grasslands and spectacular cliffs. Over 345 species have been recorded here – more than anywhere else in Britain. During our walk across the island, we hope to see northern fulmars, kittiwakes, northern gannets, puffins, and great and arctic skuas.



Day 4: Torshavn, Faroe Islands, Denmark

National Geographic Traveler had designated Faroe Islands as “authentic, unspoiled and likely to remain so”. It seems that the Nature spares no colours in “painting” the islands. Deep-green hills, bright blue sea, colourful houses and boats, orange-red puffins’ beaks make the sceneries unforgettable. We stop at the capital of the Faroes — Torshavn.

Included tour “Kirkjubøur.” During the Middle Ages, Kirkjubøur was the ecclesiastical and cultural centre of the Faroes. Here was the Bishop’s residence until the Reformation, when the Faroese diocese was abolished. The imposing ruin of Saint Magnus Cathedral still dominates the site. Construction of the Cathedral is thought to have begun in the late-thirteenth century, as the style of the building is from the best period of Gothic architecture, common to West

Norwegian church building of that time. Tradition has it that it was never finished; yet recent research has revealed that it was probably roofed at one time. The Roykstovan, standing on the wide, stone foundation of a portion of the Bishop’s palace, has been the home of the farmers in Kirkjubøur for centuries and occupied by the same Faroese family for 17 generations. Covered with a traditional turf roof, it is a large building made of logs, which are said to have come drifting all the way from Norway some 700 years ago. The farmhouse interior reflects the lifestyle of a large Faroese farm. On our way to and from Kirkjubøur, we have a magnificent view to the west of the islands of Koltur, Hestur, Sandoy, and Vágar.



Day 5: At sea

Presentations and workshops by our expert staff, as well as our range of onboard recreation facilities, ensure that this day at sea is not idly spent. Seabird viewing and whale sightings can be enjoyed from panoramic open decks as well as exterior stateroom windows and balconies.



Day 6: Jan Mayen

Jan Mayen hosts the landscapes of breathtaking beauty and northernmost subaerial active volcano on the planet – the Beerenberg. The island is wild and uninhabited not including members of Norwegian weather station. The signboard at the entrance door says (translated from the Norwegian): “Theory is when you understand everything but nothing works. Practice is when everything works but nobody understands why. On this station, we combine theory and practice in a way that nothing works and nobody understands why”. Northern fulmars, Kittiwakes, and Brünich’s guillemots breeding on steep cliffs and slopes represent the birdlife of Jan Mayen.



Day 7: At sea

The lectures of our invited speakers prepare us for meeting with the unique Arctic wildlife and awesome landscapes of Spitsbergen.



Day 8-11: Exploring Spitsbergen

This is a real expedition in a true High Arctic wilderness. As such, our route and exploration opportunities here are heavily dependent on the weather and sea ice conditions we encounter. Our experienced captain and expedition leader decide the itinerary and continually adjust plans as conditions and opportunities warrant. You can be sure that the best possible advantage will be taken of the circumstances presented to us by Nature in this wild and remote corner of the Arctic. Polar bears and other quintessential Arctic wildlife can be spotted anytime, anywhere in and around Svalbard. We exploit every opportunity to experience excellent wildlife viewing, to discover incredible scenery, and to walk in the footsteps of the historic polar expeditions that came before us. We anticipate

exploring the spectacular fjords, coasts, and islands in the western part of Svalbard. This area contains the archipelago's most impressive scenery and some of the Arctic's best wildlife viewing opportunities. Deep fjords and narrow channels are flanked by jagged snowy mountain peaks. Immense tidewater glaciers calve icebergs into turquoise waters. Fields of flowering tundra are home to grazing reindeer and playful Arctic fox. Bountiful inshore and offshore waters are home to walrus and a wide variety of whales. The whole area is alive with migratory birds, including numerous rare species, taking advantage of summer's fecundity in 24-hour daylight.

To complete the Arctic experience we also explore places rich with history. Our area of exploration contains the historical remnants of whaling camps, coal mining operations, trappers' cabins, staging areas for historic attempts to discover the North Pole, and even an abandoned polar research station. The days are filled with memorable excursions, sumptuous meals, presentations by our experts, and enough stunning scenery and wildlife to fill your camera and overwhelm your emotions.



Day 12: Disembarkation in Longyearbyen, Spitsbergen

After breakfast we say farewell in the town of Longyearbyen, the administrative capital of the Norwegian territory of Svalbard. We provide a transfer to the airport or to the town center if you wish to spend more time here. In this case, be sure to see the excellent Svalbard Museum and take advantage of quality shopping and dining opportunities in this fascinating Arctic settlement.