



# Svalbard Circumnavigation and Kvitøya

## In-Depth Arctic Expedition & Polar Bear Safari

03 Aug - 16 Aug 2022

14 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 your trip. 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 dinner at one of Longyearbyen's restaurants or cafes. 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, you will have the morning 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, a cap or gloves. Just remember, you will soon receive your very own parka to keep and waterproof boots to borrow while aboard 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 our expedition vessel Sea Spirit. Get settled in your comfortable suite and explore the ship that will be your home-away-from-home during the extraordinary

adventure to come. Once the ship is underway, a full schedule of events kicks off with informative briefings and introductions from your expedition team. 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 3-13: Arctic wilderness Polar Bear search

During our expedition, we hope to experience the many facets of this incredible High Arctic territory. Our exact schedule and route will be shaped by the weather, sea ice and experience of our expedition leader and captain. At the peak of the summer season, we will almost certainly find the ice conditions to be favorable for a full circumnavigation, so we will make an attempt to go around Spitsbergen, the largest island of the Svalbard archipelago and even to the northeastern most part of the archipelago – Kvitøya. Much of the pristine nature of Spitsbergen is protected by a system of national parks, and we will try to visit some of them during the voyage. Below, please find a brief summary of what we might expect.

Human habitation – rare 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.

Northwest Spitsbergen National Park is the crown jewel of Svalbard's scenic wonders. Here we find deep fjords flanked by serrated mountain ranges and immense tidewater glaciers calving icebergs into turquoise waters. The skies are filled with millions of murre, guillemots and little auks, whose eggs are just now hatching at countless breeding colonies located on small islands, mountainsides and sea cliffs within the park. This is also a great time to encounter marine mammals, including beluga whales and various Arctic seals. Set among this incredible scenery and wildlife activity, we also find evidence of Svalbard's earliest sealers and whalers.

On this departure, we will go to the eastern and northern regions of the Svalbard Archipelago – infrequently visited aboard expedition ships – experiencing the isolation and beautiful remoteness of Svalbard's Arctic wilderness areas.

We will explore Kvitøya (White Island), the most rarely visited and closest island to Franz Josef Land. This island, almost completely covered by ice, became the final resting place of the balloon expedition of the Swedish polar explorer Salomon August Andrée. Kvitøya is not always accessible to expedition ships, but it may provide another opportunity to observe polar bears in their natural habitat. Another site we hope to explore will be Karl XII Öya, which is the northernmost part of Svalbard. Polar explorers Alfred Gabriel Nathorst and Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld visited this remote island in the 19th century, and now we hope to explore it on a Zodiac cruise.

During this voyage, we expect to encounter significant sea ice concentrations in the enormous Northwest Svalbard Nature Reserve. In this remote and isolated region, ice can persist very late into the summer. This reserve covers the rugged northwestern parts of Spitsbergen and the entirety of Nordaustlandet, the second largest island in Svalbard. Here we find the massive Austfonna ice cap, part of which meets the sea along the 45-kilometer ice cliff known as Bråsvellbreen—one of the great wonders of the Arctic world. The polar desert environment supports little in the way of vegetation but hosts prodigious numbers of seabirds at breeding sites such as the spectacular sea cliffs of Alkefjellet. The probability of encountering polar bears and walrus in this icy wilderness is very high.

Southeast Svalbard Nature Reserve is truly a pristine and rarely visited wilderness containing hundreds of uninhabited islands. On the large islands of Edgeøya and Barentsøya, broad tundra valleys support the territory's densest population of endemic Svalbard reindeer. The valleys are also important breeding areas for ground-nesting birds such as geese, eiders and sandpipers. Arctic foxes prowl the vast landscape, seeking to provide food for their young cubs, who are just now emerging from their dens. Shallow, murky seas are ideal feeding grounds for walrus, which can be seen resting in large numbers on gently sloping beaches. Historical sites throughout the islands provide glimpses into the region's bygone era of trapping and hunting.

South Spitsbergen National Park is 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. 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.

Throughout the park, there is always a high probability of wildlife sightings. There are also plenty of opportunities for exhilarating hiking through wild polar landscapes offering fascinating geological stories. Wildflowers will be at their peak during this time.

Because of its extended length, this ambitious and in-depth Svalbard circumnavigation expedition cruise offers a comprehensive view of the Arctic's many faces. 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 14: Disembarkation in Longyearbyen, Svalbard**

After you enjoy 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 realm!