



## West Svalbard & Polar Ice Edge

### Arctic Wildlife Safari

29 May - 07 Jun 2022

10 days

Embarkation: Longyearbyen (Svalbard)

Disembarkation: Longyearbyen (Svalbard)

M/v Sea Spirit

Activities:



# Itinerary



Svalbard!

## Day 1: Arrive 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 program. Since guests will be arriving on various flights during the day, we ask you to stop by our Poseidon Welcome Desk at the hotel where you will receive some preliminary information and suggestions for dining (on your own today).

Depending on your flight's arrival, you may have time to visit some of the town's cafes, restaurants, shops and post office. If you notice that daytime has stretched well into the evening, get used to it! The sun won't set for the entire duration our time in



## Day 2: Visit to Barentsburg and Coal Mine №3

Following an early breakfast at the hotel, you will be transferred to the pier to embark a high-speed catamaran for our tour to Barentsburg, a little piece of Russian in the Svalbard Archipelago. With about 450 inhabitants, it's the second-largest settlement on Svalbard. Along the way, guides will share their knowledge and stories about bird cliffs, abandoned settlements and other sights, with arrival expected mid-morning.

While Norway has sovereignty over Svalbard, an international treaty gives some countries the right to mine on the archipelago. This has resulted in a functional Russian community – including schools, a hospital, cultural and sports buildings – all with a Norwegian postal code and phone numbers! A walking tour with local guide will take approximately one hour, with some time for yourself and a coffee or beer at the café. Back on board the catamaran at noon, we head out of Grønfjord back to Longyearbyen. You will be transferred to the hotel, where an included lunch will be served.

This afternoon, we'll learn why Longyearbyen was settled in 1906, the idea of an American mining industrialist, John Munro Longyear. While he sold his stake before WWI to a Norwegian company, mining remained the primary economic force here through the end of the 20th century. Just one mine remains functional, but we can visit a closed mine, Number 3. Support buildings, equipment and the mine itself – mostly intact from the final production days 25 years ago – will give you a true sense of the operation. Following a guided tour, enjoy a festive underground dinner with your fellow travelers before transferring back to the hotel.



## Day 3: Tour of Surrounding Area, Svalbard Museum and Welcome Aboard

There's time for a leisurely breakfast this morning and getting luggage ready for the ship. At 11:00, local guides will accompany you on a motorcoach tour of the area followed by the excellent Svalbard Museum. Return to the hotel for an included lunch and briefing. Later this afternoon, you'll be transferred to the pier and your home-away-from-home, the expedition vessel Sea Spirit.

Get settled in your spacious suite and explore the ship; enjoy some coffee, tea and snacks in the lounge. After getting underway, a full schedule of activities kicks off with informative briefings and introductions from your expedition staff. After the first

of many enjoyable dinners aboard, 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 4-9: 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 murrelets, 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 Isfjorden 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 10: 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!