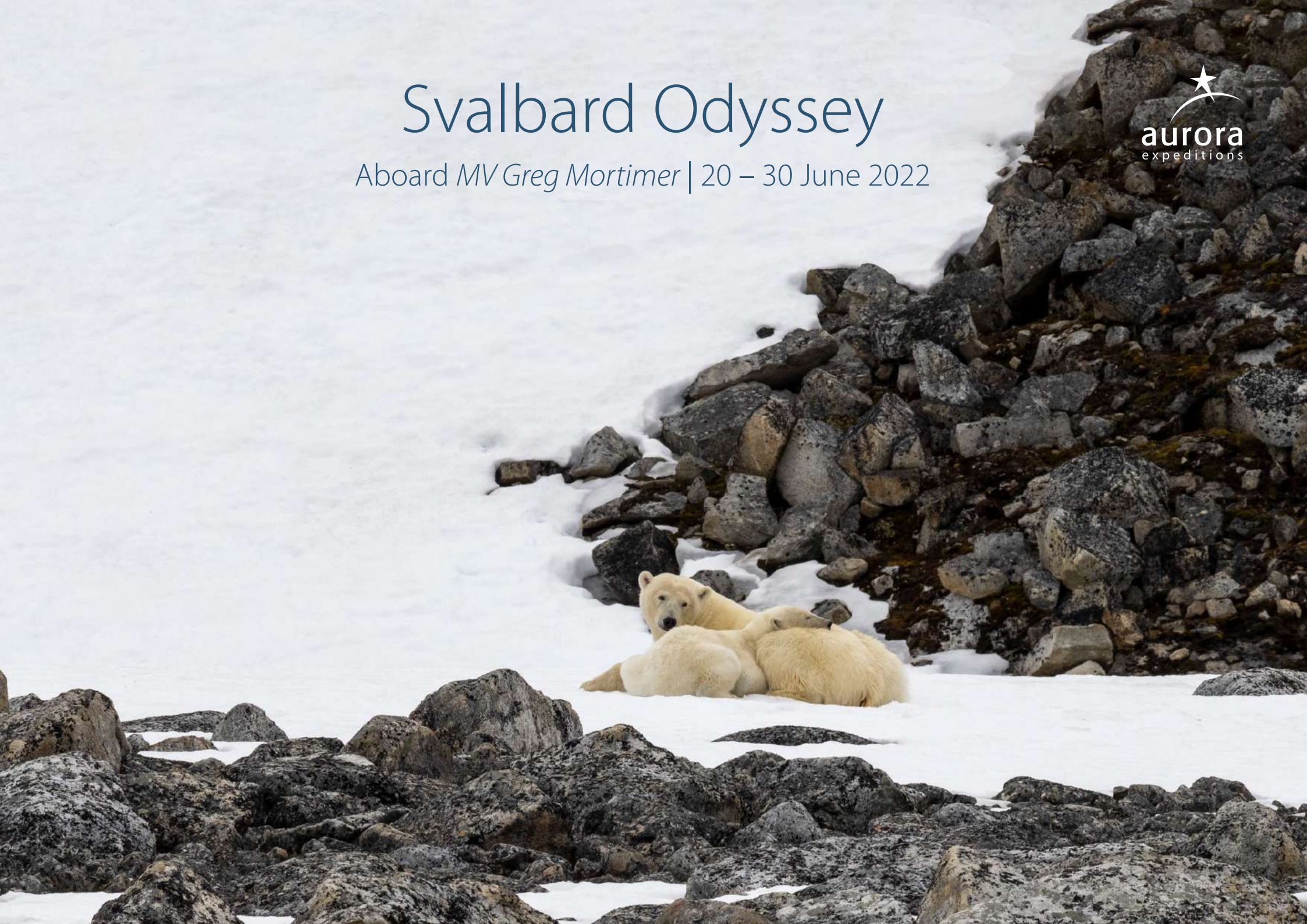


Svalbard Odyssey

Aboard *MV Greg Mortimer* | 20 – 30 June 2022





Longyearbyen

DAY 1 | Monday 20 June 2022

Position at 1600

Latitude: 79°15.593' N

Longitude: 015°29.839' E

Course: Anchored at Longyearbyen

Speed: 0.0 knots

Wind Speed: 20 knots from SE

Barometer: 1020

Air Temp: 1°C

Explore. Dream. Discover.

—Mark Twain

Here we are, inside the Arctic circle, at 79 North, in the small town of Longyearbyen. As we hopped off our buses onto the wharf, we felt the icy winds funnelling down the magnificent mountains, and we realised why we brought our thermal clothing.

We were greeted by the Aurora Expeditions team, who took our photographs and helped us onto the Zodiacs for a shuttle to the ship (getting in and out of the trusty Zodiacs will soon become second nature!) The warm and stable *Greg Mortimer* beckoned us on board, where we had our first experience of the mudroom, and then a welcome buffet prepared by our Food & Beverage Team. The stewards helped us navigate the decks to our cabins and settle into our new our home-away from home.

Drinks and a buffet awaited us in the dining room – much appreciated by the hungry travellers. A quick welcome briefing from our Expedition Leaders followed, and we learnt about the “Zodiac 3-step” and the sailors grip, all things that are designed to keep us safe whilst we explore.

Finally, the all-important safety drill. The sound of the ship’s horn signalled us to don bulky orange lifejackets and muster in the lecture theatre. We followed our crew up to deck 7 where we saw the large polar class life vessels (they can hold 136 people each, for 5 days!). With the safety drill completed, we were cleared to raise anchor and begin our Svalbard Odyssey adventure.

As the *Greg Mortimer* set sail, we made our way to the dining room to enjoy a delicious dinner, prepared by our talented galley team, and served by our smiley and welcoming waiting staff.

Together we total 83 passengers. (27 Americans, 25 Australians, 22 from the UK, 2 Canadians, 2 from India, 2 Chinese, 1 Irish, 1 Polish, and 1 Spanish) along with 83 crew from all around the globe. Our 16 Expedition Team have variety of specialities, including polar exploration, polar bear safety, mountaineering, glaciology, climate science, geology, history, marine and terrestrial biology, photography, medicine, and kayaking.

After the many hours of travel to reach this corner of the world, it’s time to kick back, breathe in the sea air, and enjoy the marvels of this beautiful land.



Lillehöökreen, Signehamna

DAY 2 | Tuesday 21 June 2022

Position at 0700

Latitude: 79°04.856' N

Longitude: 011°26.119' W

Course: 060.5°

Speed: 10 knots

Wind Speed: 18 knots from SE

Barometer: 1008

Air Temp: 5°C

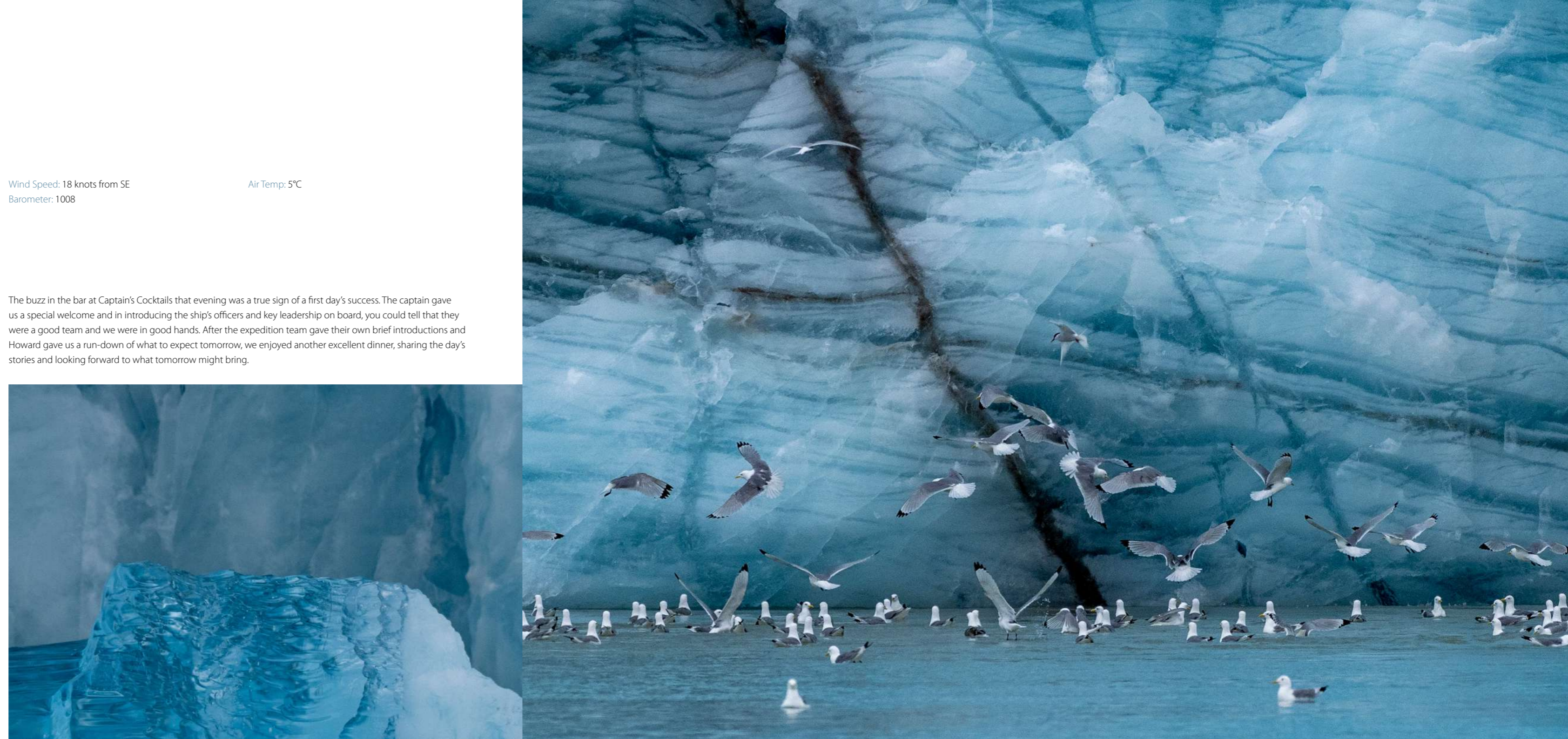
Nature is an infinite sphere of which the center is everywhere, and the circumference nowhere.

—Blaise Pascal (1623-1662)

Though it was blowing outside the fjord, once we entered protected waters, Zodiac-cruising the icefront suddenly became much more of an enticing prospect. The shelter of Krossfjorden allowed us to take a closer look out the windows while enjoying our first (amazing!) breakfast on board. Steep walls flanked our passage ever deeper along the fjord but our attention had to be transferred for the moment as Howard called us into the lecture room for our second series of mandatory briefings. This one was rather entertaining, an animated video demonstrating how to be responsible visitors to this surprisingly fragile environment. After appreciating the importance of not introducing any non-native seeds or transferring pathogens between landings, we then went through a biosecurity “vacuum party” where we inspected our outer gear and made sure to suck away any suspicious bits and pieces before we could move on to the morning’s main event-- our first excursion into the Arctic!

This was the first time practicing our ship-to-Zodiac boarding ritual, which went without a hitch, and away we cruised along the icefront of the Lillehöökreen glacier. The landscape was a great introduction to this northern land of ice as we saw feeder glaciers, medial moraines, U-shaped valleys, and glacier-carved angular peaks on land. We could trace the history of the glacier’s life in the banded deposits we saw, from summer-time layers of dirt deposits to cracks that had been filled with meltwater and refrozen to become deep blue stripes in the otherwise air-bubble-filled ice. The glacier front was active, and as we enjoyed watching the flocks of kittiwakes and terns dive for prey in the mixing meltwater, we were able to see a few small pieces calve off nearby. Enjoying a few turns around beautiful pieces of blue and green ice, seemingly chaperoned by a few swimming black guillemots, it was finally time to return to the ship to grab a bit of sustenance before heading out again for our afternoon excursion.

After lunch, the team headed out to scout the landing, ensuring the site was polar bear free, and setting up a perimeter scout to ensure a safe landing. Once the site was determined all clear, and an overall site “scout” set up on a high point overlooking the whole area to keep watch, we were shuttled to shore. After a briefing from Howard, we separated out into two groups for our afternoon hike, striking out with the necessary complement of rifle-bearers and guides who not only led us to our scenic destinations and chatted about what we were seeing but were watchful at all times for any bears that might appear over the horizon. There was a ton to look at, between the patterned ground and the virtual forest under our feet— not only the extensive moss and lichen beds but true woody plants in the polar willow, just 1cm tall!



Smeerenberg / Virgohamna, Ytre Norskøya, Moffen

DAY 3 | Wednesday 22 June 2022

Position at 0700

Latitude: 79°43.54'N

Longitude: 010°59.42'E

Course: 060.4°

Speed: 0 knots

Wind Speed: 11 knots from SE

Barometer: 1019

Air Temp: 3°C

For some time, our conversation lingers upon that major predator. Until we have spotted him, his name is taboo, deep respect for the mystery and power of the animal.

—The Land Beyond The Northcape

The *Greg Mortimer* ghosted into position at Amsterdamøyer in glassy conditions, revealing the flat gravel plain of Smeerenburg on one side, and the coast of Virgohamna on the other. Both offered interesting history and wildlife. Several walrus were swimming in the crystal clear water as we Zodiaced into Smeerenburg. On shore we heard about the whaling history of 'Blubbertown', the small Dutch settlement where for 30 years from 1613 blubber from thousands of bowhead whales was processed into high grade industrial oil for sale in Europe. We quietly approached the walrus haul-out, where a dozen of these charismatic animals lazed around on their beach. On the other side of the bay we cruised the coast of Virgohamna, made famous as the point of departure of Sweden's Salomon Auguste Andrée's ill-fated attempt to be the first to balloon across the North Pole in 1897.

Our afternoon plan for a landing on Ytre Norskøya were thrown into disarray when three polar bears were spotted on shore, attracted there by a rotting walrus carcass. A Zodiac parade afforded us good views of our first bears, the mother and cub cooling themselves in the snow while a third ambled through a boulder field, toying with some food. Our day on the water concluded with a pleasant circumnavigation of Ytre Norskøya, poking our noses into the swell coming from out of the horizon of the Greenland Sea, watching the variety of birds on the island's high cliffs, and treated by the occasional appearance of bearded seals.

As we enjoyed another spectacular dinner, the ship continued to head north, ever north, until we arrived at Moffen. Stuck out in the open ocean, this remnant of the glacial history of the region is an enigmatic place – part island, part atoll, part gravel beach. This mid-summer 'evening' it was home to a group of a hundred or so walrus, separated into male and female communities. Our position 350m offshore gave us an excellent platform for viewing these intriguing creatures, hard to believe that they had been nearly wiped out for trade in their tusks, blubber and fur in previous centuries. Leaving them to their solitude, we resume our northward journey, the sun lighting up the furrows and creases of distant mountain ranges, promise of the beauty and adventures that lie ahead of us on our expedition.



Isflakbukta / Phippsøya, Karl XII-øya

DAY 4 | Thursday 23 June

Position at 0700

Latitude: 80°40.455' N

Longitude: 020°45.657' E

Course: 119.0°

Speed: 9.2 knots

Wind Speed: 24.1 knots, from E

Barometer: 1026

Air Temp: 0°C

The great hurrah about wild animals is that they exist at all, and the greater hurrah is the actual moment of seeing them. Because they have a nice dignity, and prefer to have nothing to do with me, not even as the simple objects of my vision. They show me by their wariness what a prize it is simply to open my eyes and behold.

—Annie Dillard, Pilgrim at Tinker Creek

We are all drawn to the Arctic for different reasons. Maybe it is to witness the rapidly deteriorating sea-ice... to observe a calving glacier...to hear the call of an Arctic tern or to revel in the midnight sun. However, one pull that we may all have in common is that of seeing the 'white bear': the majesty of the great polar king.

As we woke to a new day in north-east Svalbard (80°41.5'N 020°54.7'E) we were drawn to a sizeable expanse of sea ice outside – just the terrain for the mighty polar bear, *Ursus maritimus*. Isflakbukta, Norwegian for 'the ice floe bay' is located on Phippsøya, the northernmost group of islands in Svalbard. Nothing lies between here and the top of the world! This location had been our plan A for the morning landing but as lines formed at the breakfast buffet and in the lecture theatre, Howard alerted us to our fourth polar bear sighting up ahead. A creamy spot amidst the vast stretch of ice. We dressed warm and made our way onto the outer decks for this spectacular display of true Arctic life. A fully grown adult male kept us intrigued for an hour or so before meandering closer to the ship for a spectacular closer encounter.

Before long we were out into open water continuing east. New ice charts revealed our trusty ship could explore the eastern side of Nordaustlandet with ease which is typically only accessible later in the season.

After a delicious lunch we had reached Karl XII-øya, a remote island known for its polar bear sightings and the absence of other ships. We loaded Zodiacs and went exploring. As we approached the island, a polar bear was spotted resting on a patch of snow in the middle of the mountain side, Jeff's prediction was correct! A few Zodiacs circumnavigated the island while others remained watching for the bear's next move.

As we idled along, an announcement came over the radio... whales! To Naturalist Dani's delight, a pod of Belugas (derived from the Russian word 'Belukha') swam in front of us. Belugas are born grey and don't achieve their distinctive white colour until they are about six years old. As the Belugas moved on, our curious bear strolled down toward the water's edge and laid down facing us. Another truly unforgettable encounter!

Back onboard we eventually crossed paths with a tabular iceberg, which most likely came off Nordaustlandet. The east and south of Nordaustlandet is mostly covered by the ice cap Austfonna that, together with the adjacent ice

cap Vegafonna, occupies approximately 8,450 sq.km; combined, they are thus the largest glacial systems outside Greenland and Antarctica.

To end the day, we joined our Expedition Team in the lecture theatre for a recap and briefing. Scott and Rosie kicked it off with details about the end of voyage slideshow and enthusiastic Dani took us back through the day's events explaining in more detail the lives of these extraordinary Arctic animals.



Pack Ice Cruise & Isispyten

DAY 5 | Friday 24 June 2022

Position at 0700

Latitude: 80°09.540' N

Longitude: 028°00.918' E

Course: 156.1°

Speed: 5.1 knots

Wind Speed: 12.8 knots from SE

Barometer: 1028

Air Temp: -3°C

The ice and the long moon-lit polar nights with all their yearning, seemed like a far-off dream from another world; a dream that has come and passed away. But what would life be worth without its dreams?

—Fridtjof Nansen, Farthest North

This morning brought us along the eastern coast of Nordaustlandet, home to Austfonna, a 750m thick ice cap covering 8,100 square kilometers of area. This makes it one of the largest ice caps in Europe! Our first stop was an attempted landing or Zodiac cruise at a nearby small island called Storoya. However, pack ice was thick, no wildlife was to be found and the winds started to pick up along with a sprinkle of snow, so we decided to move on without making a stop. As we got underway and started sailing to our next location, there was a wildlife spotting: three walrus were hauled out on an ice floe, including a youngster just starting to sport some tusks! After taking our fill of pictures, Ulyana started her lecture called 'The Wonderful World of Ice', focused on ice sheets, ice caps, icebergs, and the changes seen in Svalbard in the last 75 years, showing stunning glacial ice retreat around the archipelago. The lecture was interrupted for about a half hour, but for good reason: a polar bear was spotted on the pack ice, along with two adorable cubs!

After some time spent taking photos and finishing up the lecture, it was on to a delicious lunch and then continuing making our way through the pack ice, or frozen ocean water. This ice is annual – meaning that it grows every winter, up to a meter thick, and then melts away as the summer goes on. As we learned in the lecture today, multi-year ice – ice that is in the range of 5 – 7 metres thick, is very important to the Arctic as it acts as a natural reflector of sunlight, year-round. The more this ice thins and disappears, the more water underneath gets revealed. This water, being darker in colour, is able to absorb more of the sunlight, as well as heat, causing the ocean to warm up faster. Svalbard is one of the fastest changing regions on the planet, with most glaciers in retreat or shrinking, as well as becoming 'unglued' from their frozen bases.

Later in the afternoon, we heard an interesting lecture from Snowy on the different seabirds found in the region: between 30 – 40 species. He gave good advice when it came to identifying birds: focus on just getting one right (what are its characteristics?). Then move on to another one, and so on and so forth.

Around 4pm, we were finally able to get off the ship to see some of the ice (and seabirds!) up close as we took a Zodiac cruise along the coast of Nordaustlandet and the nearby island, Isisøyane. It was a spectacular outing



Torellneset, Alkefjellet

DAY 6 | Saturday 25 June 2022

Position at 0700

Latitude: 79°22.335' N

Longitude: 020°36.826' W

Course: 090.5°

Speed: 4.9 knots

Life is the essence of a never-ending adventure,
Exciting never boring,
Otherwise,
There is no life.

—Anonymous

Overnight while we slumbered, the *Greg Mortimer* had glided further south along the eastern coast of Nordaustlandet. This coast is affronted by a seemingly endless ice cliff which stretches for 160km, constituting the longest glacial front in the Northern Hemisphere. We awoke in Torellneset to a beautiful sunny and calm day. Straight after breakfast, Jeff and Howard ventured out to scout for the planned landing. However, a large group of Walrus had 'moved in' on the access beach and progress was barred elsewhere by a dense band of brash ice and bergy bits that hemmed the shore. So, the landing and walk was abandoned in favour of a Zodiac cruise.

The air was still; the water, silky smooth. A gentle swell rolled through the sparkling brash entrancing the mind, punctuated by squadrons of low flying guillemots, and the occasional Arctic tern danced and then dove, plunging through the mirrored sheen. We eased our Zodiacs forward, beckoned by the distant bellow of the walrus. Twenty or so walrus had hauled out onto an ice floe, still others were in the surrounding water, and even more were on a nearby fine gravel beach – our planned embarkation point. We sat idled in the Zodiacs at an appropriate distance and what followed was an extraordinary wildlife encounter.

Small inquisitive gangs of walrus surged forward in a tight churning mass of bobbing heads, loud snorts and moist blows. There were multiple marauding parties approaching again and again right up to the Zodiacs, before diving down and suddenly uprising again in a different location. The experience was both breath taking and thrilling. To see and hear the walrus in their natural marine environment at such close quarters, to be wet by their nostril spray, to glimpse their now fluid body movements through the liquid medium, to meet with them on their own terms was a privilege afforded too few before.

Almost reluctantly after 30 minutes we peeled ourselves away from the inquisitive walrus to explore further round the tip of Torellneset. Here there was more shimmering brash ice with the occasional bluish iceberg. At the far reaches of our exploration, a polar bear was spotted on the distant tundra – the tenth of our voyage so far. We lingered a little to watch it, but escaped just in time as drifting heavy brash ice and bergy bits threatened to entomb the Zodiacs. Then it was back to the ship after a short pit stop with the walrus.

Wind Speed: 3.9 knots from E
Barometer: 1033

Air Temp: -1°C

Back on the ship, Supto the Pastry Chef impressed us by conjuring an exquisite butterfly and swan out of water and glucose. Like all gifted artists, he made it look almost effortless.

The *Greg Mortimer* cruised up Hinlopenstretet bathed in sunlight. We reached Alkefjellet just before 5pm and launched Zodiacs to cruise the famous bird cliffs. These towering steep dolerite cliffs afford tiny ledges for 60,000 Brünnich guillemots to nest. Starting the cruise at a waterfall coming off the Odinjokulen ice cap, we cruised into the heart of the bird colony. All available ledges were crammed, the sky overhead was swarming with bottom heavy guillemots, and rafts of birds bobbed in the water. Predatory glaucous gulls perched menacingly above the nests awaiting an opportunity, others divebombed the colony hoping to benefit from the ensuing chaos. Kittiwakes could be seen and heard in the higher reaches of this bird metropolis. Just prior to returning to the ship, an Arctic fox was spotted by a few Zodiacs on the green slopes just north of the colony.



Faksevågen, Kinnvika

DAY 7 | Sunday 26 June 2022

Position at 0700

Latitude: 79°32.915' N

Longitude: 0017°41.539' E

Course: 064.6°

Speed: 0.1 knots

Wind Speed: 5.4 knots from NE

Barometer: 1036

Air Temp: -1°C

To dine with a glacier on a sunny day is a glorious thing and makes feasts of meat and wine ridiculous. The glacier eats hills and drinks sunbeams.

—John Muir

An Imposing landscape shrouded in mist as we awoke in Faksevågen this morning. The sea was calm and silent, and the atmosphere had a very Arctic feel to it. It was a morning filled with exploration as we split into groups to traverse the nearby terrain. While some opted for the longer walk and the views from above, a small group explored the shoreline, discovering the remains of sea creatures and reindeer antlers, while the photographers surveyed the landscape for the ideal location to depict this desolate place and bring it to life through their eyes.

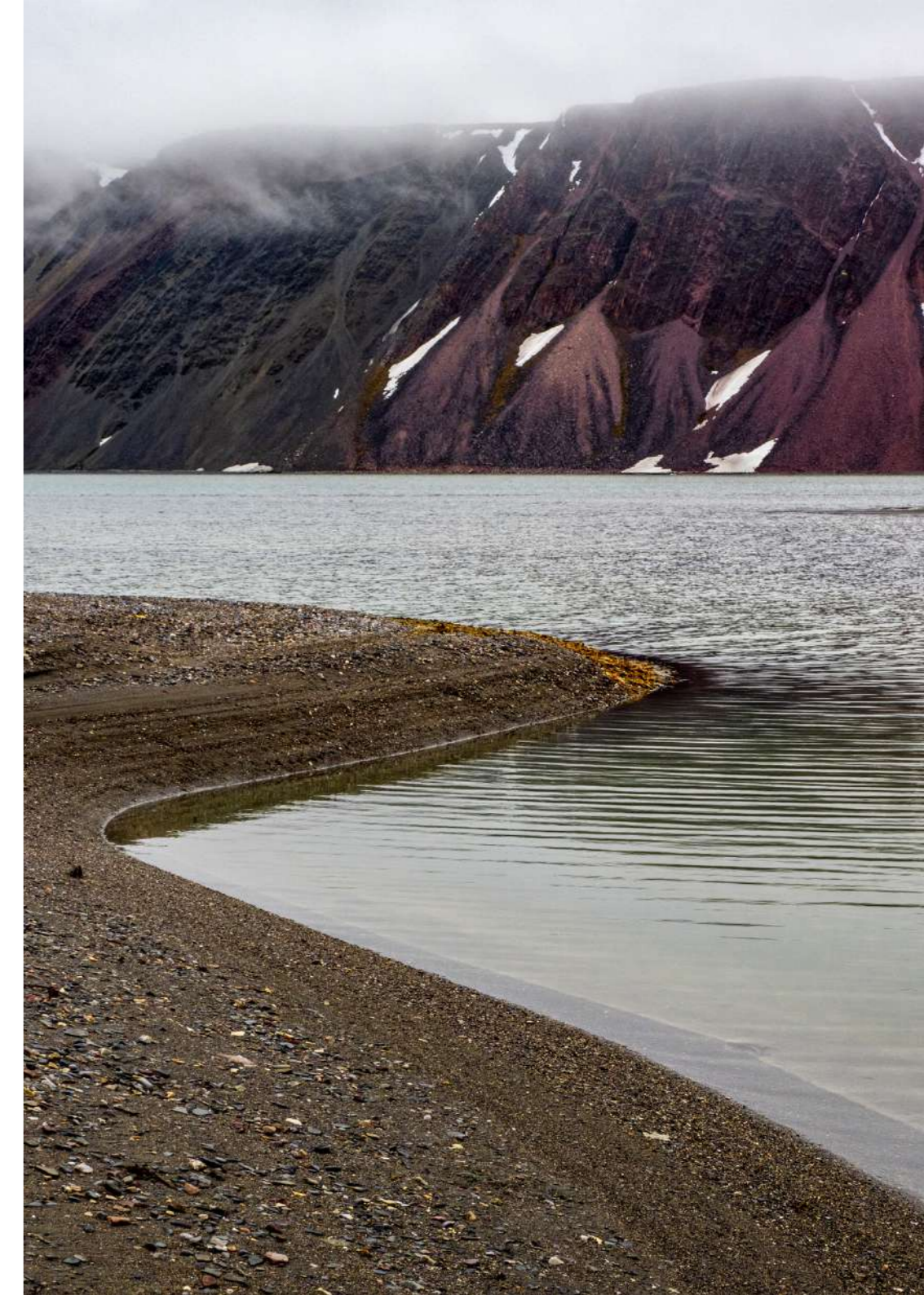
The landscape also revealed the remnants of debris that had travelled on the ocean currents to land on this beach, maybe even thousands of kilometers from where it started its journey. We walked the beach and winding glacial estuaries collecting the flotsam and jetsam to bring back to the ship and dispose of appropriately, as well as logging the data for our citizen science program. Every little bit counts. It was good that we could do our small part to keep this place pristine.

Heading down the Hinlopenstretet, in search of whales and potential polar bears on the way to our next destination, gave us time to soak in the snowcapped ranges, sea ice, rugged landscapes, and vast stretches of ocean. The Arctic is an ever-changing environment and treats us to something new and exciting each day.

Next stop, Kinnvika, and another chance to stretch our legs and see what this Mars-like terrain had in mind for us. A historic site with remains of a settlement established by Finland and Sweden for scientific research, it still has several huts in great condition. And during the International Polar Year in 2007/2008, scientists used the huts to study glaciology of the regional ice caps Vestfonna and Austfonna.

What a way to end another day exploring the vast remote Arctic than with a BBQ on deck. Good food, great wine, people reminiscing about their adventures thus far, and anticipation for what is to come. The icy cold air was nipping at our bones but some of us were determined to enjoy our outdoor extravaganza. Who wouldn't want this as a backdrop for their BBQ.

Thinking back on what we had experienced so far on our journey is overwhelming to say the least, and to be out in nature in this part of the world is simply a privilege. We have had so many amazing experiences, that we can barely remember day one. But we do know one thing, we have shared this together and learned something along the way.



Sundneset, Kapp Lee / Dolerittneset

DAY 8 | Monday 27 June 2022

Position at 0700

Latitude: 78°12.513'N

Longitude: 021°11.432'E

Course: 247.7°

Speed: 11.1 knots

Wind Speed: 18.4 knots from W

Barometer: 1038

Air Temp: 0°C

Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant.

—Robert Louis Stevenson

A spectacular landscape in the Fjords of Sundneset saw us all walking in different directions to experience the wet tundra and the boggy terrain. Over every ridge were even more stunning sights and sounds. Lakes semi covered in ice and lush green plateaus of vegetation along the coast and further inland. Carefully crossing waterways and taking a moment to look at the colourful flora along the way, ever so conscious of this fragile environment.

It wasn't too long before we sighted some reindeer grazing on the rich lush vegetation that reach along the ridge line. We quietly moved closer for a better a look as the reindeer lifted their heads, aware of our presence, but unperturbed. They continued to graze as they came closer towards us before crossing our paths and heading over to greener pastures, if that was at all possible.

The kayakers were confronted with current, swell and wind, testing their kayaking skills as they paddled along the picturesque coastline, keeping a vigilant eye out for wildlife. Despite the initial challenges they took the opportunity to get some expert guiding from Wes McNeil, who was demonstrating the art of rudder paddling.

As we headed towards the misty mountain range and navigated the rolling waves to shore, it became apparent that we were heading to something special. In the distance, heads bobby out of the water. "Walrus!", someone yelled from the Zodiac, as the excitement grew as we got closer to shore. A sandy beach, some old huts and walrus hauled out across the landscape for hundreds of metres. This was certainly the biggest haul out we had seen. Our feet touched the shore and we headed up to a vantage point where reindeer were grazing on the slopes. An Arctic fox crossed their path, scurrying from point to point digging up food stores buried in the tundra.

But the highlight was the high vantage point looking over hundreds of walrus hauled out on the beach below. We sat on high, amazed by this spectacle of nature and captivated by every move, grunt, belch that came from the group below. It was mesmerising and for a moment we knew what it feels like to be in a BBC nature documentary.

Wherever we looked nature was putting on a show, and not to mention the stunning landscape with lush vegetation, vivid colours, rocky terrains, steep rises, shrouded by an Arctic mist that refused to reveal the entirety of this beautiful place. Time passed by so quickly and it wasn't long before we were heading back on board and dreaming of the next adventure.



Samarinbreen, Vestre Burgerbukta

DAY 9 | Tuesday 28 June 2022

Position at 0700

Latitude: 76°58.880' N

Longitude: 016°12.119' E

Course: 029.6°

Speed: 2.5 knots

Wind Speed: 13 knots from N

Barometer: 1035

Air Temp: 2°C

Life is not measured by the breaths we take. But by the moments that take our breath away.

—Author unknown

This morning our wake-up call came 5 minutes earlier than expected when Howard announced that a humpback whale had been sighted quite close to the ship as we were coming into Hornsund. People managed to get some views of it swimming close to the surface and some even got photos of the tail flukes as it dived down.

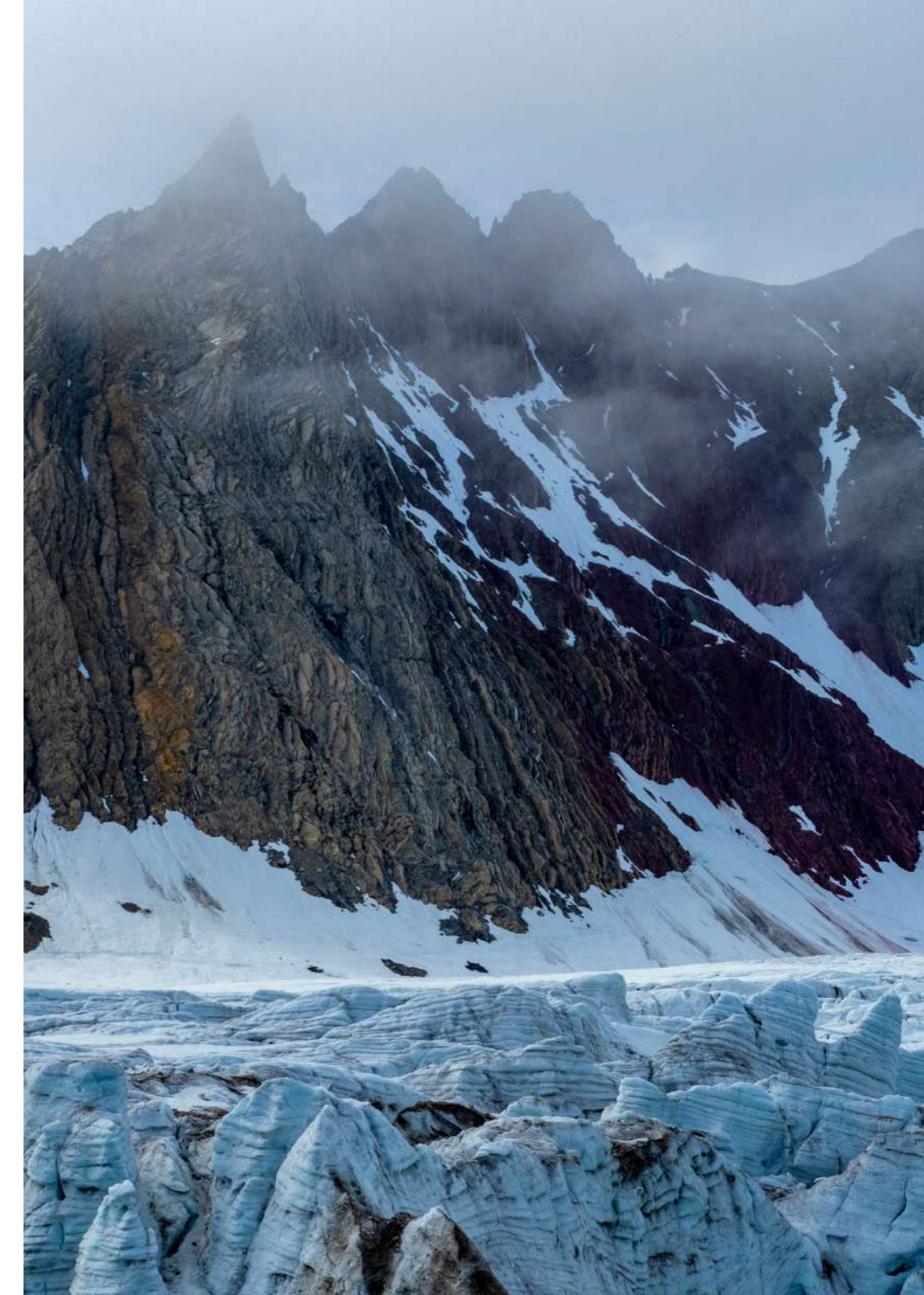
After breakfast we headed out for another Zodiac cruise, this time in front of the glacier at Samarinbreen. It was overcast but very still and the blue of the glacier was at its best. Jeff spotted a group of belugas swimming very close to the glacier front, moving back and forth right at the base of the ice. There were a couple of small groups totalling about 20 individuals. Some were not yet the distinctive white colour but darker grey, an indication that they were younger ones, a sign that it could be an extended family group.

After leaving the belugas, the sun started to show through the clouds and blue sky appeared, revealing the tops of the surrounding mountains. It was perfect conditions to encourage participants in the much anticipated Polar Plunge. The platform was set up on the marina and a total of 17 plungers (including our illustrious Expedition Leader, Howard) dove into the icy waters, cheered on by a crowd of less hardy souls gathered up on deck 6.

After lunch, we'd repositioned the ship to our intended afternoon landing site at Gnalodden, just across Hornsund, when there was a sudden and unexpected change in the weather conditions. The local winds picked up to over 40 knots, causing the ship to drag its anchor, and combined with the swell and choppy waters it was just too difficult to operate our Zodiacs safely.

Instead, we repositioned the ship around the corner into Bergerbukta, where it was much more protected and the winds were calm, and went on another Zodiac cruise. One side of the fjord was lined with numerous waterfalls, fed by meltwater from high on the peaks above, many of them staining the rocks a rusty brown colour due to the iron content. Most boats went all the way to the glacier front in the back of the bay, seemingly not that far away but actually a 6km run each way.

At our Recap & Briefing, the team brought us some additional information about some of the less visible things we've encountered over the past few days, including the news that the whale we saw first thing today was in the HappyWhale catalogue, having been sighted in Svalbard back in mid-2021, just north of our encounter. An interesting end to another full day.



Polar Plunge

DAY 9 | Tuesday 28 June 2022



Bamsebu, Gasbergkilen

DAY 10 | Wednesday 29 June 2022

Position at 0700

Latitude: 78°04.778' N

Longitude: 013°10.225' W

Course: 064.8°

Speed: 13 knots

Wind Speed: 15 knots from NW

Barometer: 1030

Air Temp: 0°C

I must go down to the sea again, to the vagrant gypsy life,

To the gulls way and the whales way where the wind's like a whetted knife...

—John Mansfield

The morning gave us low cloud and what might have been a sombre atmosphere, but we were excited to get our feet on land again and stretch our legs. The visit to Bamsebu hut was atmospheric, with towering sandstone mountains rising behind the piles of beluga bones that remain as history's silent witness.

The recent Hearts in the Ice Expedition has created more positive energy: two women spent two winters there conducting citizen science research and connecting with school children worldwide spreading awareness about climate change.

After listening to Ben relate the sobering account of the beluga oil rendering effort in the 1930s, the groups of walkers made their way across the moss tundra watching for wildlife and snapping shots of the flora and dramatic scenery. Many noticed the abundance of Svalbard poppy flowers along parts of the walk, the more southerly climate as well as the relatively warm Greenland current mean more plant activity here than further north and east.

Two huts, old and new, greeted us on the other side of the bay, as well as a few slowly decaying long boats and even a few grey phalaropes showing off their beautiful ruddy breeding plumage. Picked up by Zodiacs at the end of the walk, we returned to the ship for lunch and a quick brief to hear the plan for the disembarkation process tomorrow. Putting awareness of the end aside for the afternoon however, we prepared for an alternate afternoon excursion, having abandoned the original plan due to the presence of a polar bear at the landing site. For our Zodiac cruise at Gasbergkilen a magnificent mountain wall rose above the ship, with incredible swooping and undulating bands of metamorphic rock showing through the intensely vegetated slopes— even if we hadn't heard the raucous calls of the seabirds it was clear the verdant, fertilised slopes were obviously home to thousands of nesting birds.

The water was still as the clouds descended and we soaked in the whole spectacle of our last outing in Svalbard: rock islands hosted resting kittiwakes, plus one posturing barnacle goose just dying for its portrait to be made; shallow waters thick with seaweed forests and jellyfish at the base of the bird cliffs; the sound of waves shushing along the shore as the ripples pulsed back and forth through the beach gravel. It seems like everywhere we turned



there was something new: a pod of beluga sneaking up on the Zodiacs as they cruised the shore, an Arctic fox coming down to the beach, a solitary puffin on the water holding a few feathers perhaps as a gift for his intended, and then a walrus spy-hopping to see what all the fuss was about. Our last excursion was just one more example of how extraordinary our trip was, with yet one more amazing thing around each corner.

Longyearbyen

DAY 11 | Thursday 30 June 2022

Position at 0700

Latitude: 79°15.593' N

Longitude: 015°29.839' E

Course: Docked at Longyearbyen

Speed: 0.0 knots

Overnight we arrived in Longyearbyen, waking up to our last morning together on board the *Greg Mortimer*, which has been our sturdy and comfortable base for the last ten days. To our delight the captain was able to pull alongside the wharf, making for a relaxed stroll down the gangway and into the buses. Here we made our farewells to the expedition team before heading into town or continuing on with own arrangements.

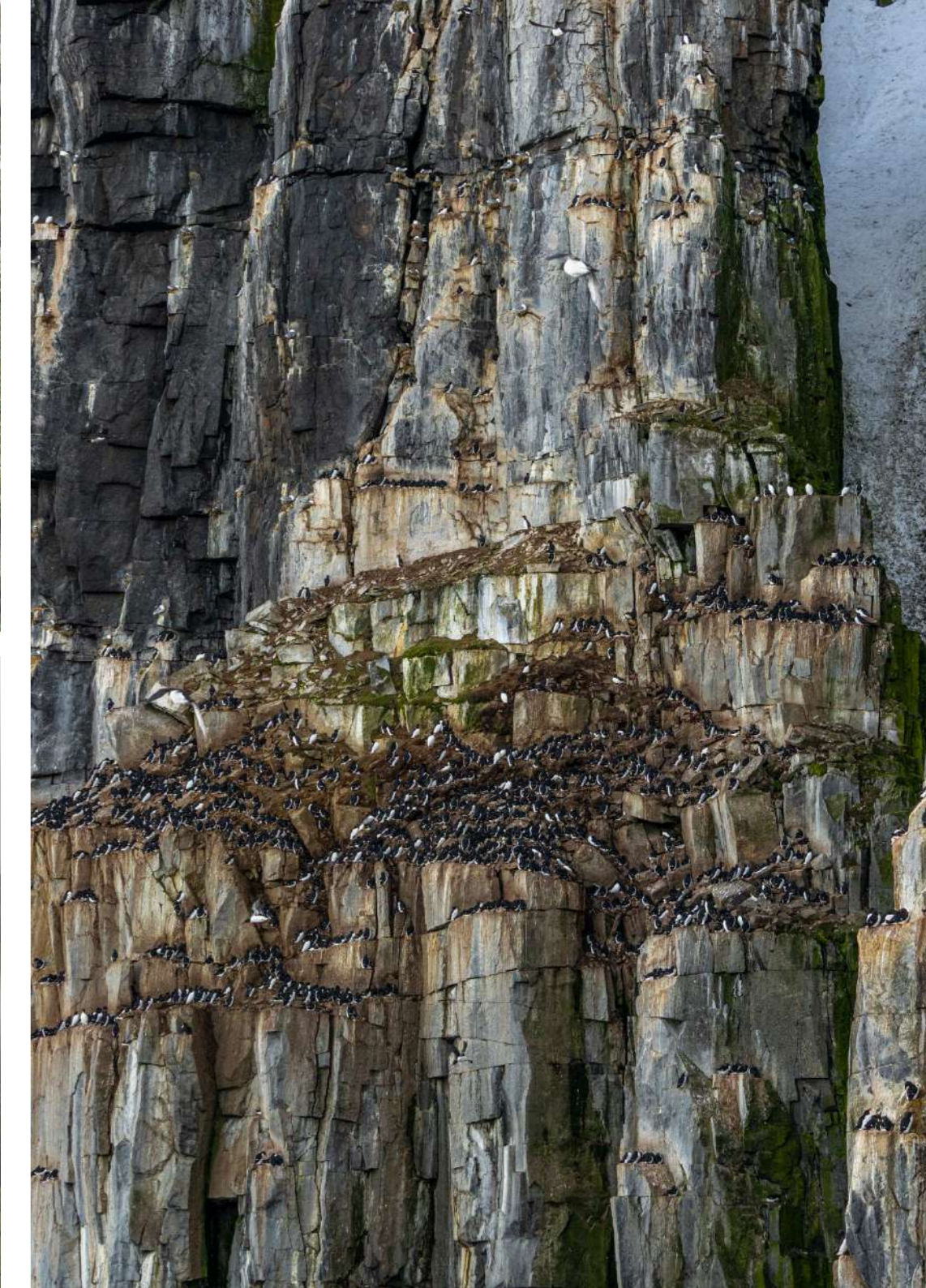
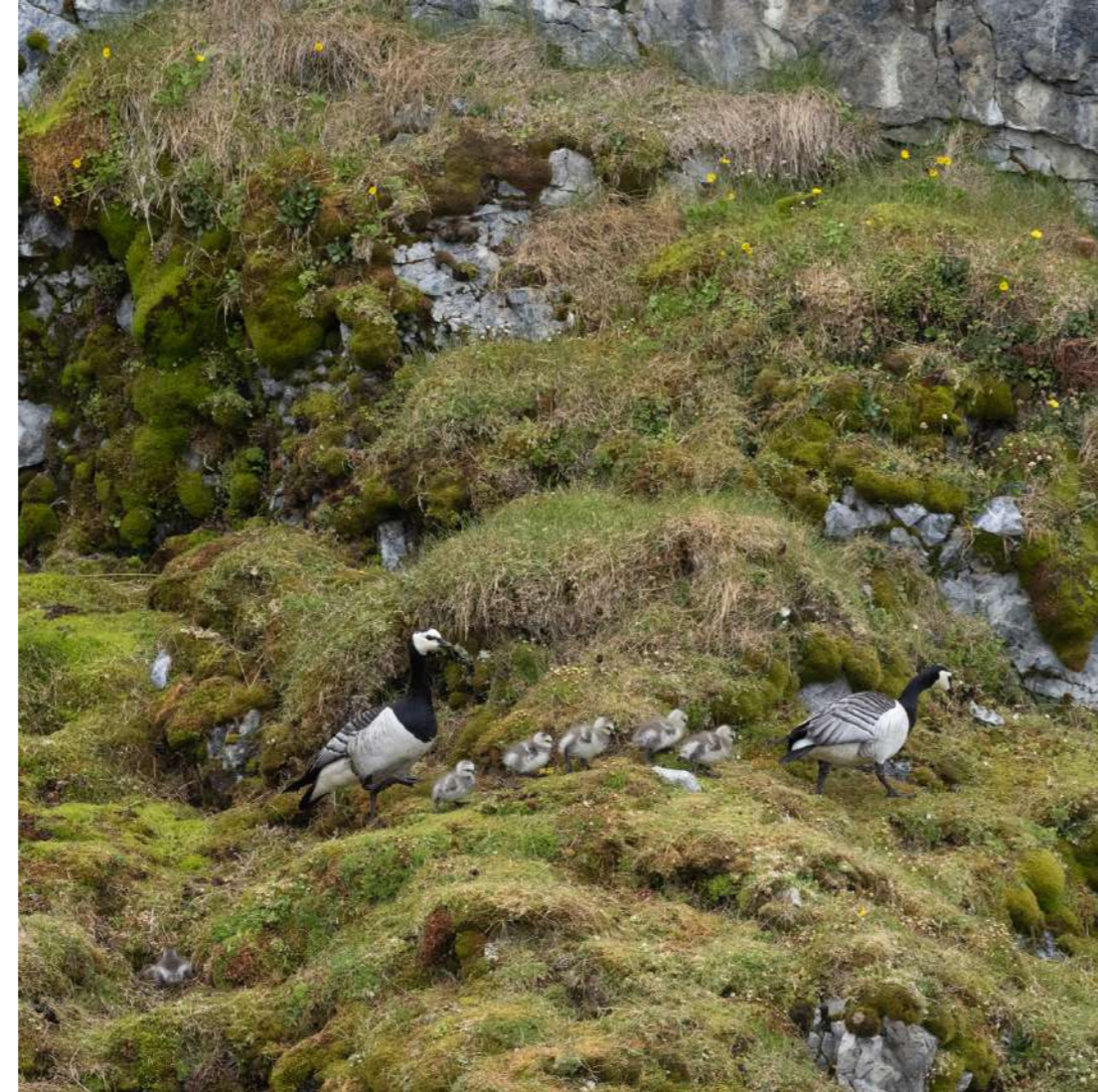
And what a voyage it has been, a complete circumnavigation of Svalbard, from the surreal marine world of the sea ice far in the north, to the lush tundra of the southern fjords, the historic sites of the west coast to the high polar desert of eastern Svalbard.

The wildlife has amazed us: polar bears with cubs; countless walrus; Svalbard reindeer with mighty antlers placidly grazing, Arctic fox. We have seen birds of all descriptions flying in all directions. The ever-present backdrop of the ice featured throughout our voyage, whether cruising in front of a glacier or being lost in the enchantment of the sea ice. There were walks, hikes, paddles, plunges, and great companionship from a delightful bunch of fellow travellers.

Aurora Expeditions thanks you for joining us aboard MV *Greg Mortimer* to Svalbard. We hope to see you on the high seas again someday!

Wind Speed: 7.4 knots from NW
Barometer: 1020

Air Temp: 8°C



Kayaking Log

By Daniel Stavert

Kayak Masters: Daniel Stavert & Wesley McNeil

Number of Paddlers: 11

Total Paddle Outings: 9

Total Distance Paddled: 49.2 km

Paddlers:	Ann Kirkhope	Sean Maguire	Rodney Stead
Mac Farnsworth Jr	David Laabs	Jean Maguire	Graham Trout
Richard Flook	Susan Laabs	Pamela McGarry	Amie Wilson

21st June 2022: Signehamna, 4 km

It was the longest day of the year as the kayakers learnt how to size their drysuits and equipment, fit their kayaks and finally step off the ship into their vessels.

A stiff breeze was blowing but with a quick run downwind, the team was tucked in a cove and could learn to move their kayaks. A ringed seal was soon investigating them and the team soon learnt about the second world war significance of the site. Paddling up into the gusting wind they found another sheltered cove and pushed up under the towering bird cliffs. The highlight of the bird cliffs was not the birds though. A number of reindeer feeding on the slopes were joined by an Arctic fox in its summer morph. This little and fearless creature ran around on the sheer slopes oblivious to the extreme angle of the cliff.

With strong gusts of wind pushing around the cliffs, each kayak team set their nose for home and slipped across the bay and into the welcome shelter of the *Greg Mortimer*.

22nd June 2022: Smeerenberg, 4.2 km

What glorious conditions greeted us this morning –glassy waters and little breeze, we even had little peeps of sunshine. We paddled from the ship out towards Hollendarneset point and reviewed a number of the reasons why paddling in a close group equals safety in the Arctic environment. We took a wide berth of the walrus haul-out, which was our objective to see later in the morning.

Mostly this was just a nice peaceful paddle with nice light and calm easy paddling. Across the way to the east, we could see Kennedybreen glacier its tumbling frozen walls at the ocean's edge, surrounded by Vasahalvøya's high peaks that peered through the suspended cloud banks, and bathed by the morning sun.

On our return paddle, we again took a wide berth around the point to not disturb the walrus, and landed on a beach the next small bay over. First we stopped to hear about the history of this 1630's whaling station site from Ben. We then walked slowly and in a controlled line, abreast, to slowly cross over the horizon line to see the walrus all hauled out and resting on the beach.

Our original intention was to paddle longer, but we easily got distracted by the walrus, as we were fortunate enough to visit the walruses at a really active time, and it was just too good an opportunity not to stay and soak it all in. A few walruses came from the water and wallowed in the shallows right at 30 metres to us.

Eventually it was time to return to the ship. We concluded with a nice calm and short paddle back.

24th June 2022: Isispynten, 6km

A choppy sea of 12-15kn greeted the padders as they looked out at the immense glacier wall of eastern Nordaustland. However, the shelter behind the small island off the coast beckoned and into the water the kayak team went.

A wonderful push through some solid brash ice and the pod was near to shore, looking across at Arctic terns feeding on the shoreline and eider ducks cruising amongst the wallowing icebergs. Moving south, they looked to the skyline, the huge footprints in the snow an indicator of large animals only recently vacating the space. Rounding the corner, the rolling swell lifted and dropped under the kayak hulls. Soon the group was gathered together and Daniel remind them of how to behave around big animals. All just in time for the paddlers to see, up on the horizon, a deeply relaxed bear, eyes looking down on the sea, observing the colourful plastic animals floating beneath it.

With walrus and bears all in the day's experience, it was time to turn for home and enjoy the rolling swell and thick ice on another amazing arctic afternoon.

June 25th: Torellneset, 4 km

This was another amazing glassy morning with no wind. How could we ask for better. Our aim here was again to see walrus, and though we thought we had an amazing experience at Smeerenburg, well we were in for quite a surprise.

We had a quiet serene paddle out towards the southeastern point of Torellneset. We also practiced forming a tight group quickly by coming to the center of the group, in the case that we were approached by potentially aggressive walrus.

As we would soon find out, the walrus that made up this group were mostly female and were more curious than aggressive. As we the kayakers - who are more vulnerable - kept a safe distance, the Zodiacs were in much closer.

Thankfully, Daniel found a lead into the ice where he could tow the kayaks into, so we could get a closer, and safer view of the walrus. And happy we were. We had an experience few people who come to the Arctic get. The walrus would swim in really close and were spy hopping all around us. It was so hard to tell who the tourists were and who was the attraction. Both human and marine creatures were equally curious.

We finally tore ourselves away to give the walrus their space, and had a nice paddle back along the edge of an ice edge. Sean, Jean, Aimee and Richard chose our meandering course home to the ship.

26th June 2022: Faksevågen, 10.1 km

Waking in the sheltered waters of Faksevågen, the kayakers were a core unit of four as they prepared in the kayak room. Launching from the ship the team moved quickly towards the broad plain of the valley and silt beach. All around the mountains loomed above, the wild colourful geology of the pre-Caledonian uplift, and strange stratification of schists, sandstones and iron. The kayakers quickly turned their noses out of the bay and out in Lomfjorden. There the glass calm waters, incredible layers of rock, and the glowing light of glaciers made for a paddling paradise. With still seas and good company, the kilometres dropped away and before the group knew it, almost three hours had passed and 10 kilometres had flowed under their hulls. A quick takeup into the safety Zodiac and they were soon zooming home, marvelling at the continuing beauty of another stunning part of Svalbard.

June 27th 2022: Sundneset, 4.5 km

This morning looked a bit more like the typical Arctic conditions we had been expecting. At the ship we had a 1-knot current pushing against a swell and a 14-knot wind. We managed to hitch a ride east, to calmer waters, via the Uber, driven by Daniel. This allowed us a nice paddle along the shore, ducking into the lee of the land, so the head wind was minimised.

Along the way we snaked around the edges of the ice, catching a glimpse of the small stream that came out of the mostly frozen lake that we would see a bit later on a short hike. We could not paddle too close to shore, nor get into the ice too deep, as we had to be on alert for polar bears. After a short while paralleling the shore, we chose to beat directly into the wind and cross the rest of the bay, aiming the noses of our kayaks to the trapper's hut and a small landing beach nearby.

The majority of the kayak group went ashore to see the hut, and take a small hike on the squishy tundra to see the small ice-covered lake. Graham commented on how pretty it was.

Ann and Wes went out for a longer paddle and a little instruction on boat edging, turning and ruddering in following seas.

Conditions calmed down a bit during the course of our paddle, and we were able to paddle back to the ship, with a little extra power from the following seas and the wind at our backs.

28th June 2022, AM: Samarinbreen, 4 km

The morning looked a little windy as the *Greg Mortimer* rounded the southern edge of Spitsbergen, a fresh breeze pushing ice and a low cloud rendering the mountains into mere foothills, their peaks lost in the haze. Undeterred, the kayak team launched from the ship into the fjord to explore Samarinbreen. The shelter of the unseen hills blocking out the wind, the kayakers were able to explore in suddenly glassy conditions. The brash ice bands and gentle swell all drew the team closer into the beautiful glacier at the end of the fjord. There, hidden beneath a deep ice cave, the white backs and steaming exhalations gave away the presence of beluga, another amazing wildlife encounter on a trip filled with such. Paddling on, the kayakers heard numerous cracks and rumbles before pausing at the far end. There the cloud began to lift, the craggy peaks lifting, and the massive hills showing themselves as mere foothills to the looming giants behind. A moment to reflect was had, before turning towards home and preparing for the polar plunge.

28th June 2022, PM: Vestre Burgerbukta, 5.5 km

The original intent was that we would paddle at Gnålodden, but when we arrived, we found a 40-knot wind hammering in the worst direction, and no sheltered pockets for paddling were to be found. It was disappointing at first, but Howard's plan-B turned out to be spectacular. We instead took the ship into a nearby arm of the fjord, named Vestre Burgerbukta. This turned out to be a stunning backdrop for an afternoon paddle.

The wind was negligible compared to where we had just come from. The air temperature was also mild. Had conditions been nasty, we might not have noticed anyway, as we were surrounded by jagged steep peaks of 1,500 plus metres. Many of them were enshrouded by thin clouds with patches of blue sky trying to break out. The cliffs surrounding us were highlighted by numerous waterfalls, some clear and some turned rust-red from the iron oxide leeching from one of the sedimentary layers of strata. This little arm was more emblematic of the Fjords seen in Norway – quite different from the more glacially scoured and morainal landscapes we observed further North.

As we paddled along, we marvelled at the occasional and uniquely formed icebergs. We also started paddling a little further from the shore, as we noticed the cliffs getting even taller and large snowfields formed above the cliffs... and soon, a big hanging glacier loomed above us. This glacier was intimidating as it looked like it could fall right off. We skirted this one with a large margin. A little further onward, we came back closer to the cliffs where they more sloped and formed a small cove-like area. Suddenly we heard a small rock fall above and a few bowling ball-sized pieces fell into the water some 20 metres in front of us. We backed out quickly in case it increased. Apparently, a few pieces fell from further up and bounced on the ledges above, tossing them deceptively further out than thought possible. A reminder that even though it takes eons to form all these big geologic features, the process is happening now, and every second.

We paddled closer to the glacier, did a lap around a cool iceberg, and eventually it was time to return to the ship. Daniel brought the Z-Uber over to us, and we just floated and talked for a bit in our kayaks. We just were not ready for the paddle to be over.

29th June 2022: Bamsebu, 7 km

A calm sea at Bamsebu welcomed the paddlers as they left the ship for their last excursion of the trip. Still waters and soaring cliffs created a beautiful backdrop to another amazing kayak in Svalbard. A gentle paddle towards the shoreline found them on the beach exploring the trappers hut, still in use. The beach, strewn with beluga skulls in industrial proportions and organisation was a thought provoking moment amidst the serenity of the landscape.

Back in the vessels, the paddle team cruised up the coast, enjoying the coal and sedimentary stone shoreline, and the occasional human walker on the ridgeline. A strong headwind had them all grateful for the raised beaches that allowed a lea of wind to paddle in, and before long the team had reached to north headland. There, more whale boats lay on the beach, and calm waters kept them lingering one last moment before turning and allowing the tailwind to sweep them all home. One last leap up into the Zodiac and the team was removing drysuits and hanging gear one last time. Another wonderful paddle in the Arctic complete, and a wonderful conclusion to a beautiful trip.



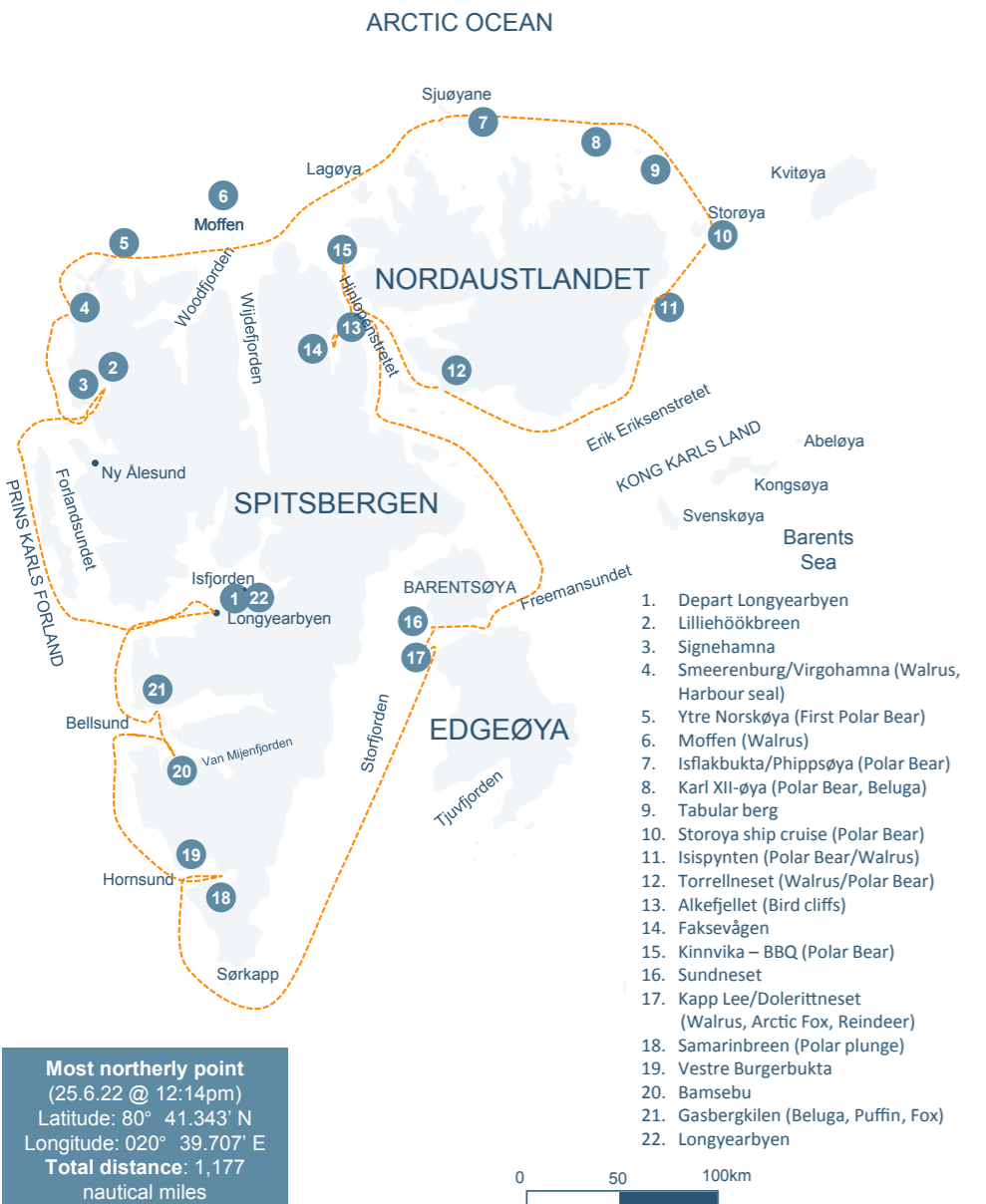
Bird and Mammal Sightings

Bird Species	20 – 30 June 2022										
	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Red-throated Diver			•		•	•					
Northern Fulmar	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Pink-footed Goose								•	•		•
Barnacle Goose	•	•	•						•		•
Brent Goose											
Common Eider	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
King Eider									•	•	
Long-tailed Duck										•	
Svalbard Ptarmigan										•	
Purple Sandpiper		•	•							•	•
Ruddy Turnstone											
Grey Phalarope										•	•
Pomarine Skua										•	•
Arctic Skua		•	•	•						•	•
Long-tailed Skua											•
Great Skua			•	•		•					
Glaucous Gull		•	•		•	•			•	•	•
Great Black-backed Gull					•						
Black-legged Kittiwake	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Ivory Gull				•	•						
Arctic Tern		•	•		•	•			•	•	•
Brunich's Guillemot			•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Black Guillemot		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Razorbill											
Little Auk	•	•	•	•	•						
Atlantic Puffin			•						•		•
Snow Bunting	•	•	•					•	•		•



Mammal Species	20 – 30 June 2022										
	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Arctic Fox		•				•		•		•	
Svalbard Reindeer		•						•		•	
Polar Bear			•	•	•	•					
Ringed Seal		•			•		•				
Bearded Seal		•	•								
Harp Seal											
Hooded Seal											
Harbour/Common Seal			•								
Walrus			•	•	•	•		•		•	
Common Minke Whale							•				
Humpback Whale									•		
Beluga				•					•	•	







Expeditioners:

Dharmal Agarwal
 Urmila Agarwal
 Ava Benjamin
 Danny Benjamin
 Alan Benjamin
 Nicole Benjamin
 Peter Black
 Sheilah Bryan
 Patricia Buescher
 Paul Buescher
 Tony Burslem
 Ken Chapel
 Chor Hing Cheng
 Devin Cole
 Dylan Cole
 Gretchen Cole
 Ronan Cole

Lynne Crawford
 Luke Dalton
 Peter Eastway
 Powell Ettinger
 Steve Everett
 Reece Farmilo
 Mac Farnsworth Jr
 Eddie Fazal
 Carol Fazal
 Stuart Fletcher
 Trish Fletcher
 Richard Flook
 Mary Ford
 Clay Frederick
 Nannette Frederick
 Rob Gramzay
 Steve Hancock

Joan Hancock
 Arthur Hellman
 Isabella Hutchison
 John Hutchison
 Janine Hutchison
 Scott Kariya
 Maggie Kay
 Nigel Kay
 Rob Kershaw
 Elizabeth Killien
 Denise Kingwill
 Ann Kirkhope
 Joanna Krzyzanowska
 David Laabs
 Susan Laabs
 Michael Lam
 Belinda Lam

Ken Lawrie
 Jane Li
 Jean Maguire
 Sean Maguire
 Jenny Marron
 Henry Marron
 Mark Mazur
 Teresa Mazur
 Pamela Mc Garry
 Lynne Morley
 Lai Wo Ng
 Tony O'Halloran
 Peter O'Brien
 Susan Paul
 Sergi Reboredo Manzanares
 Belinda Shand
 Minnie Sinclair

Rodney Stead
 John Stegmayer
 Samuel Sullivan
 Rose Toohey
 Graham Trout
 Masooma Trout
 Andrew Tyson
 Gaby Tyson
 Andrew Von Dyk
 John Walker
 Julie Wickens
 Barry Williams
 Amie Wilson
 Caroline Worle
 David Young
 Johnny Yu

Expedition Team:

Expedition Leader: Howard Whelan

Assistant Expedition Leader: Isabelle Howells

Onboard Expedition Manager: Rosie Leaney

Marine Biologist & Citizen Science: Dani Abras

Glaciologist: Ulyana Horodsky Peña

Biologist: Joselyn Fenstermacher

Historian: Ben Maddison

Firearms Manager: Jeff Nagel

Expedition Guide/Naturalist: Graeme Snow

Expedition Guide: Justine Bornholdt

Lead Kayaking Guide: Daniel Stavert

Kayaking Guide: Wes McNeil

Photography Guide: Scott Portelli

Special Guest Photographer: Peter Eastway

Medic/Expedition Guide: John Barry (JB)

Zodiac Master: Sergei Hincu

Mudroom/Shopkeeper: Reza Rusooly

Mudroom Support/Wellness Therapist: Dasha Vasiljeva

Senior Officers & Heads of Department:

Master: Oleg Klaptenko

Chief Officer: Oleg Kapko

Safety Officer: Andrey Zakalashnyuk

Second Officer: Sergii Voina

Bosun: Oscar Antonio Castejon Torres

Deck Cadet: Vlad Nicolescu

Ship Doctor: Maria Suarez

Chief Engineer: Dimitar Vasilev

First Engineer: Ion Toma

Hotel Director: Patrice Degron

F&B Manager: Uysal Berrak

Chief Purser: Liza Merilo

Executive Chef: Christiand Carlos Mini Pineda

Head Waiter: Diogenes Encinares

Hotel Controller: Richard Cayeta

IT Officer: Nataniel Vibares

Receptionist: Jelyn Merilo

Receptionist: Marie Annecy Reynoird

Head Stateroom: Florante Jr. Jimenez Lusong

Able Seaman: Muhammad Karier

Able Seaman: Bobby Penuliar Payumo

Able Seaman: Hardik Rao

Able Seaman: Ajay Fnu

Able Seaman: Joel Valdevieso Noble

Able Seaman: Giovanni Dela Torre





