

Svalbard Odyssey

Aboard *MV Greg Mortimer* | 30 June - 10 July 2022





Longyearbyen

DAY 1 | Thursday 30 June 2022

Position at 1600 on 30 June

Latitude: 79°15.593' N

Longitude: 015°29.839' E

Course: Anchored

Speed: 0.0 kts

Wind Speed: 15 kts from NW

Barometer: 1020

Air Temp: 9°C

Explore. Dream. Discover.

—Mark Twain

Here we are inside the Arctic circle, at 79° North. Surrounded by spectacular mountains in the picturesque small coal-mining town of Longyearbyen, we got off our tour buses at the wharf knowing that this will be our last glimpse of civilisation for a while. Over the next 10 days, we are more likely to encounter a fox, reindeer or polar bear than another human.

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 "home away from home".

After a welcome briefing from our Expedition Leader Howard, and speeches from our Hotel Director, Patrice, and Doctor Maria, we had the all-important safety drill. The sound of the ship's horn signaled us to grab our bulky orange lifejackets, our beanies and warm clothing, and muster in the lecture theatre. We followed our crew up to deck 7 where the polar class life vessels sit (they can hold 136 people each, for 5 days!). With the safety drill completed, we were all ready to head to the dining room for a delicious dinner prepared by our talented galley team and served by our smiley and welcoming waiting staff.

Even though we have faced the challenges of covid travel, the threat of airline strikes, and many of us are dealing with lost luggage, there was still a buzz of excitement in the air – or maybe one of relief to finally be able to begin this Arctic adventure!

After dinner, the kayak team met for a briefing with guides Dan, Liz & Eamonn, to start the preparation for the great paddling adventure that lies ahead, whilst others headed to the observation lounge where the expedition team sprang into action reporting luggage details to the airline.

Together we total 79 passengers. (30 from the UK, 24 Australians, 12 Americans, 8 Germans, 2 from the Netherlands, 2 Swiss and 1 Canadian) along with 83 crew from all around the globe.



In addition, we have 16 expedition team with variety of specialities including polar exploration, polar bear safety, mountaineering, glaciology, climate science, geology, botany, history, marine and terrestrial biology, photography, medicine, and kayaking.

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



Longyearbyen, Skansbukta

DAY 2 | Friday 1 July 2022

Position at 0700 1 July

Latitude: 79°15.593' N

Longitude: 015°29.839' E

Course: Anchored

Speed: 0 kts

Wind Speed: 15 kts from NW

Barometer: 1024

Air Temp: 9°C

Life is the essence of a never-ending adventure,

Exciting never boring,

Otherwise

There is no life.

—Anonymous

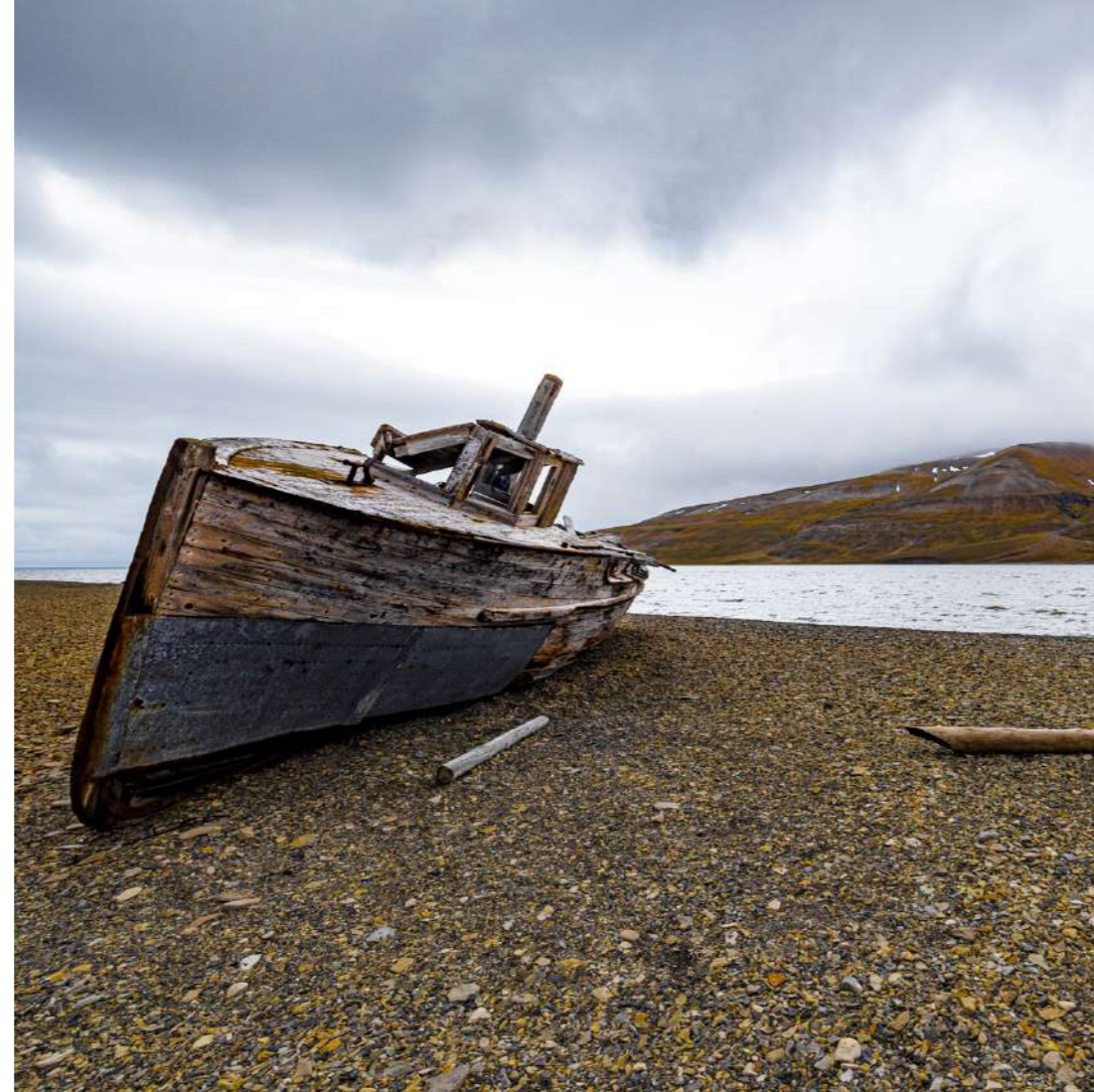
Our first morning on board the mighty *Greg Mortimer* finds us swinging at anchor in Longyearbyen harbour. After a breakfast exploring the delights of the buffet, we assemble in the lecture room for our mandatory activities – last evening's lively embarkation has given us a foretaste of this morning's Zodiac briefing, while the AECO animation engagingly laid out many of the conditions guiding our visit to Svalbard. A biosecurity check and cleanse of our outdoor gear is the final preparation for venturing out to explore the wonders of Svalbard.

Early afternoon saw us Zodiacing into a watery Grand Canyon to make our first landing. This is the amazing landscape at Skansbukta, on the side of Isfjorden, just north of Longyearben. As our Zodiacs crunched up onto the gravelly beach, it took a while to take in all that was happening here.

Myriad of birds swirled around the cliffs, looping around the rock towers and spires, intermittently shrouded in cloud. In contrast to this powerful natural overdrop, there was the remains of the gypsum mine that was established here in 1918. Like many other mining ventures in Svalbard, this endeavour had a short life, being closed in the 1930s. The twisted railway leading from the mine adit towards the loading platform on the shore gave us an idea of how the works operated. An old wooden vessel beached on the shore was perhaps an abandoned remnant from that time.

Two Svalbard reindeer grazed nonchalantly beneath the scree slopes that join the cliffs to the shore. On the way back to the ship we cruised underneath gypsum cliffs where puffins were nesting, a great way to finish our first day on expedition.

Back on board, Captain Oleg Klaptenko introduced his officers and welcomed us to the ship. As we headed out from Isfjord and turned north up the west coast of Spitzbergen, a gentle swell lulled us off to sleep, brimming with anticipation to see what the next day would bring.



Ytre Norskøya, Hamiltonbukta

DAY 3 | Saturday 2 July 2022

Position at 0700 on 2 July

Latitude: 79°52.533'N

Longitude: 011°33.448'E

Course: Anchored

Speed: 0 kts

Wind Speed: 23 kts from SW

Barometer: 1028

Air Temp: 8°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

After leaving Longyearbyen's waters last night, we sailed through the night, along the west coast of Spitsbergen, until we found ourselves at Ytre Norskøya in the early morning hours. After a hot breakfast and getting ourselves outfitted for some hikes on land, a call came through to the team – a bear had been spotted. We changed from landing operations to Zodiac cruising, advising everyone to bring an extra layer, as the wind chill could make things downright...well chilly. As we made our way towards the location where the bear was last spotted, we were also making our way back in time. This region of Svalbard contains some of the archipelago's oldest rock: at least 1 billion-year-old basement rock that has literally stood the test of time. Granite, an intrusive igneous rock, is particularly resistant to erosion due to quartz in its structure and can remain standing, even in the face of glaciation.

As we Zodiaced past some old huts, we kept a lookout for the bear along the shoreline, with no luck. But, unbeknownst to us, it had made its way from land to water when Liz, one of our kayak guides, spotted the bear swimming! It can be much harder to spot a bear in the water due to its low profile, so it was a lucky break. We watched as the bear swam, came ashore briefly on a small rocky island, got back in the water, and eventually made landfall on another spit of land, where we were able to view the bear in more detail in a round-robin Zodiac dance. We soon made our way back to the ship for hot drinks, hot soup, and a delicious lunch.

After a few hours of rest, we headed out again, this time for a Zodiac cruise in Hamiltonbukta. Ancient billion-year-old granite formations greeted us again, this time outfitted with thousands of breeding pairs of kittiwakes and guillemots. As we cruised along the shoreline of the cliffs, we eventually spotted some Arctic fox! They are quick and agile little creatures, blending in well with the dark rock, and it was a real treat to see them. Onwards then we cruised to see the calving fronts of glaciers, the beautiful blue colours standing out against the overcast skies. We were also able to explore rock formations that recent glacial retreat had revealed: more granite, this time well-polished and smoothed due to the glacial activity, as well as some metamorphosed limestone, called marble.



Pack Ice North of Svalbard

DAY 4 | Sunday 3 July

Position at 0700 on 3 July

Latitude: 80°58.356' N

Longitude: 014°41.902' E

Course: 050.1°

Speed: 13 kts

The ice was here, the ice was there, the ice was all around;
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound!

—Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Rime of the Ancient Mariner

Hi ho hi ho, it's north to the ice we go!

Overnight we stayed on course to the north, searching for whales and seeing how far nature itself would allow us. Early morning fog welcomed our arrival as we reached above 80 degrees north, making today the northmost distance that the *Greg Mortimer* has ever travelled. Now that's cool!

It was a treat for us all to watch how the ship moves in the ice while listening to the sounds being made as the ice hugged every corner of the ship.

When the fog lifted, the pack ice took centre stage. A few of us rugged up to endure a balmy -3°C on the outer deck. This ice we were seeing is annual – meaning that it grows every winter, up to a metre thick, and then melts away as the summer goes on.

As we probed our way further north, 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. 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 color, absorbs more of the sunlight, as well as heat, causing the ocean to warm 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.

After the lecture, we were greeted by a single bearded seal on the pack ice, displaying an abundance of long curly whiskers as he enjoyed his morning break. Bearded seals are circumpolar in distribution and are permanent residents of the Arctic. We spent some time taking photos and then it was on to a delicious lunch as we continued punching our way through the pack ice, or frozen ocean water.

Wind Speed: 9kts, from NW

Barometer: 1022

Air Temp: -2°C

After lunch the captain deemed it was safe to lower the hydraulic viewing platforms, giving us an even closer perspective on the Arctic world around us. For our citizen-science enthusiasts, it was up to deck 8 to learn more from Dan about the cloud project with Nasa and how we can participate. A group of 18 joined him on the back of deck 7 where they collectively made observations and sent that data off to Nasa.

Mid-afternoon we met back in the lecture theatre for Ben's lecture on “Whales & the history of Svalbard”. Fascinating illustrations accompanied the many stories of what life was like back in the day when whaling was at its zenith.

As we left the lecture theatre, we were treated to a wonderful display of afternoon tea in the Elephant Island Bar. Cookies, cakes, sandwiches, lollies to name a few. A big thank you to our hotel team for the delicious spread.

With one or two bites left on the plate, an announcement came over the PA system, it was Rosie's voice, and she was ready to get us plunging. A brave 28, including 10 expedition team and crew, took a quick dip into the icy waters of the high arctic. Cheer squads formed on outer decks as Scott's camera captured the optimal last facial expression of each of our plungers.

We finished the day with a recap and briefing followed by another delightful meal sharing stories with new friends. If one quote made today possible, it was this one below...

“We're going to head for the ice and just see where we end up”

– Howard Whelan, 02 July 2022



Polar Plunge

DAY 4 | Sunday 3 July





Karl XII-øya & Foynøya

DAY 5 | Monday 4 July 2022

Position at 0700 on 4 July

Latitude: 80°39'16 N

Longitude: 024°58'17 E

Course: 068.2°

Speed: 3.3kts

Wind Speed: 7.4 kts from NW

Barometer: 1024

Air Temp: -3°C

In familiar environments, it is easy to go blind in the sense that the initial excitement disappears with the passage of time. This is true for any environment—including the Arctic... The views are just as magnificent and the arctic wildlife remains just as exotic and exciting as before. The silence is still balm to the soul and the serenity is present all the time. But the first-time experience is a once and for all experience that cannot be repeated.

—Magnus Elander, Quiet days in the Arctic

Overnight we headed out of the pack ice towards Svalbard's polar desert and Nordaustlandet. Over here in Svalbard's barren northeast, the geography is characterised by the lack of precipitation that instead falls over Svalbard's northwest. Svalbard's annual pack ice recedes last in the East leaving behind intricately shaped growlers and icebergs that are drawn by currents into the shallows.

Our morning's outing was at Karl XII-øya - the archipelago's northernmost island, visited by Swedish explorer Dr Otto Nordensjöld in 1861, who named the island in honour of the Swedish king. We headed out for a Zodiac cruise, weaving our way along the coastline and enjoying the summer sunshine we had missed since leaving Longyearbyen. We saw potential polar bear tracks along the north side of the island but alas, the bear remained hidden from our binoculars. Our birders were enthusiastic about the common eider ducks that we could see alongside the shoreline around the far side of the island and the kittiwake nests perched high on the cliffs far above. Male eiders are distinguishable by their black crown, belly and tail while the rest of their plumage is white; while females are mottled brown. Eiders will typically nest and incubate their eggs on the shores of these isolated islands once the annual sea ice has receded away from any potential predators that can cross the ice such as the Arctic fox. We saw various red algae growing underneath the bird cliffs as well, resilient to the minimal sunlight these islands typically have throughout the year.

A delicious lunch prepared by our dining team was interrupted by a call from the Bridge, confirmed by Howard. A blue whale, the largest animal ever to have lived, and was sighted ahead. We rushed to the outdoor viewing platforms, taking some incredible photos of its enormous blow – up to 12m high, straight and bushy. Dani and Joselyn were there to answer all our marine mammal questions, while the blue whale entertained us on both our port and starboard sides. These enormous animals can grow up to 28m long and weigh up to 90 tonnes. They produce possibly the loudest noise in the animal kingdom with low frequency sounds travelling hundreds of miles underwater. With only 3 to 12 thousand of these incredible mammals on earth; what an incredible sighting!

The afternoon saw us head to Foynøya, in Svalbard's far east, named after a Norwegian entrepreneur who invented the exploding harpoon which revolutionised whaling technology. In May 1928, Nobile's second overflight of the North Pole on the *Italia* crash-landed just north of Karl XII-øya. Nobile and his surviving crew managed to erect a 'red tent' using materials from the crash site and floated on ice floes to Foynøya. Successive rescue attempts using seaplanes also crashed on the island while all remaining survivors were not picked up until a Soviet icebreaker passed on the 12 July. Nowadays, Foynøya is resident only to kittiwakes and polar bears in the summer, trapped by the receding sea ice in late spring. We took to the Zodiacs for a cruise around the island, while some Zodiacs spotted promising tracks and 'bear slides', and even an abandoned den, any potential bears eluded our keen spotters. Some Zodiacs were fortunate to be joined in their exploration by some shy walrus who swam between and beneath us; while others checked out the impressive 'dry-dock' iceberg near the *Greg Mortimer*.

We climbed back aboard for steaming cups of hot drink and cocktails; while Ben entertained us with a thrilling tale of André's failed hot-air balloon attempt to cross the North Pole as we set sail for Kvitøya, where the survivors, including André, perished – likely from one of those elusive white marine mammals!



Kvitøya, Andréeneset & Kræmerpynten

DAY 6 | Tuesday 5 July 2022

Position at 0700 5 July

Latitude: 80°07.539' N

Longitude: 033°34.378' E

Course: 181.6°

Speed: 11.9 kts

Wind Speed: 6.4 kts from W

Barometer: 1022

Air Temp: 1°C

When seen at a distance, the front part of the head of the young walrus, without tusks, is not unlike the human face. As this animal is in the habit of rearing its head above water, to look at ships, it is not at all improbable but that it may have afforded foundation for some of the stories of mermaids.

—An Account of the Arctic Regions by William Scoresby, 1826

Kvitøya, otherwise known as the 'White Island' is the real 'Wild East' of Svalbard: a polar desert, rugged, cold, desolate – you get a true sense of what surviving in the arctic is like upon visiting this island. It is difficult to imagine the conditions of Solomon Andree's last few days attempting to survive on Kvitøya. After surviving the crash of his balloon, the *Örnen* and drifting over 300 km on an ice flow, Andree and his companions only lasted a few days at their camp near present day Andréeneset in 1897.

The island was enveloped in a dense fog as the *Greg Mortimer* approached the coastline this morning, however as breakfast wrapped up, the fog lifted and one of our guests spotted a polar bear on the snow! The Expedition Team confirmed the sighting from the Zodiacs and our fleet of boats went out to observe the bear, who was dozing in the snow upon the massive Ice cap of Kvitøya.

Walrus – amongst them huge males and females with tiny calves – were bobbing up and down in the water like synchronized swimmers as the boats cruised along the shoreline. The Expedition Team scout boat went ahead to look for wildlife and encountered another polar bear, walking straight towards the monument commemorating the ill-fated Andree expedition. We were all amazed when the bear walked straight up to the monument – as if to investigate if Solomon Andree was still around – sniffed the monument for clues, and continued on his way.

The *Greg Mortimer* repositioned along the East coast of Kvitøya to Kræmerpynten – the most eastern point of Svalbard – for the afternoon's excursion. The white of the ice cap was stunning with the contrast of the bright blue sky and the dark gray of the seas. Immediately upon reaching the shoreline, the Zodiacs discovered a bear walking towards the beach; and two minutes later, a mother and a yearling cub popped up from their hiding place directly in front of the other bear – three bears just in front of the ship! We watched in awe as the cub snuggled lovingly with its mother on the shore. The wind was raw and cold but nobody seemed to notice and we



cruised along the shoreline amongst bergy bits and growlers which had calved from the ice cap. Walrus surprised us every now and again, popping their heads out of the water.

A thick bank of fog began rolling back in from the north, as the Zodiacs began returning to the ship – a true expedition day in the wild east of Svalbard!



Brasvellbreen & Torellneset

DAY 7 | Wednesday 6th July 2022

Position at 0700 6 July

Latitude: 79°16.185'N

Longitude: 024°35.396'E

Course: 263.6°

Speed: 10.9 kts

Wind Speed: 3 kts from N

Barometer: 1025

Air Temp: 3°C

For the animal shall not be measured by man. In a world older and more complete than ours, they move finished and complete, gifted with extensions of the senses we have lost or never attained, living by voices we shall never hear.

—Henry Beston (1888-1968), Author 'The Outermost House'

The sun was bright, and the glare of the ocean was blinding as we awoke to another endless day in the Arctic. Imposing ice cliffs lined the coastline presenting the face to the third largest ice cap on the planet.

Today was going to be all about the ice. And little did we know it was going to get better as our morning progressed. The sea was calm, with almost no wind, conditions were perfect to explore nature's impressive sculptures.

Meandering along the coastline stopping to admire the intricate shapes, layers, hues and textures of the many icebergs that had calved from the ice shelf over time.

Each section more beautiful than the last and exploring them from the Zodiac, we could take in all the different angles and perspectives as we looked to the east and west along the icy barrier.

As we peered around the corner of the ice shelf, nature reminded us of its power as thousands of litres of water poured into the ocean from a series of spectacular waterfalls created by the ice melt above. It was the crescendo to a perfect morning and to witness the true essence of nature was a privilege to say the least. Our day was just beginning.

Torellneset is a special kind of place and what made it even more special from the outset was a sighting of a polar bear moving along the coastline at a steady pace. As we watched from a distance the bear, unperturbed by our presence, continued his journey.

Further down the coast walrus were hauled out on the shore, and big social groups were in the water, moving together, bobbing out of the water and interacting with each other. As soon as they spotted us, their curiosity got the best of them, and they slowly grew bolder which each pass. Closer and more curious, the large groups, no doubt feeling confident by their numbers, investigated our Zodiacs and in an instant would dive and disappear below the surface. This game went on for what seemed like hours, but it was entertaining for all involved.



Kapp Lee & Arnesen/Bereznikov Glacier Walk

DAY 8 | Thursday 7 July 2022

Position at 0700 7 July

Latitude: 78°12.221'N

Longitude: 021°11.432'E

Course: 227.7°

Speed: 3.5 kts

Wind Speed: 16.4 Kts from NE

Barometer: 1025

Air Temp: 1°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 woke up this morning all ready to go for a walk on land for the first time in 45 days when Howard announced that a polar bear had been spotted near to our morning's destination. That meant it wouldn't be possible after all, but later he announced that given its location etc... it might be possible after all. Not long after though, he was back on the PA system to tell us that yet another bear had been seen and so there was no choice but to call a halt to our plans for Sundneset and find an alternative site for the morning's activity.

Fortunately, the site of our planned afternoon landing was free and not too far away so that became the new location for our long-anticipated landing. After coming ashore at Kapp Lee, Ben told us some of the history of the Pomor people who had occupied the site and then we went in our groups to a small lookout to see the walrus hauled out on the adjacent beach. There were around 50-70 big animals near the water's edge, not far from the old huts on the wide sandy beach.

We ventured further up and inland past a group of Svalbard Reindeer who were grazing on the green tundra quite close to where we were passing.

The long-walkers went much higher and further inland while the rest of the medium-walkers took it a bit easier and headed up to a vantage point over the bay to admire the view in the lovely sunshine. Both groups came to grief with some boggy ground leading to some getting stuck and having difficulty extracting their boots from the muddy ground, but after a bit of straining and pulling and a bit of digging all managed to get out OK, although a bit grubbier, except for one of Jack's boots which couldn't be retrieved.

After lunch, we headed west across Storfjorden to the main island of Spitsbergen to find a location for our afternoon's activity. In the end we settled on a small bay where the Arnesen and Bereznikov glaciers come

together and spill into the waters. It was going to be a Zodiac cruise until Howard managed to scout around and found a very small bay at the edge of the glacier where we could land and take a short walk up onto the margins of the glacier itself.

Surrounded by a very different landscape, with hummocks of dark moraine left by the retreating ice, and driving through coffee-coloured water laden with silt and mud, it was a memorable end to our day.



Samarinbreen & Gnålodden

DAY 9 | Friday 8th July 2022

Position at 0700 8 July

Latitude: 76°57.972'N

Longitude: 015°44.931'E

Course: 065.9°

Speed: 13 kts

Wind Speed: 2.4 kts from N

Barometer: 1023

Air Temp: 3°C

They brought a piece of Deeres horn aboard, therefore I called this sound Horne Sound.

—Poole, 1610, The Place-Names of Svalbard

What a glorious day! Full sun and calm waters met us as we gazed out on the spectacular scenery of Hornsund and ultimately the glacier front of Samarinbreen dead ahead of the ship. It's hard to imagine more perfect conditions for a Zodiac cruise and we soaked up every minute of the peaceful morning. Some of us spent time playing hide and seek with a ringed seal near shore and discussing who made what tracks through the snow along the moraine snow-bank, while others slowly made their way through the snap crackle pop of the brash ice watching kittiwakes resting on beautifully sculpted bergy bits. The glacier was rather active in the sun, sending various booms and cracks echoing across the fjord. After one impressive calving, a group of Zodiacs gathered around our glacier oracle Ulyana to find out when she thought a particularly enticing pillar of ice might give way... and precisely at 11:06 on her call a few chunks indeed did shatter and slip into the icy deeps.

It was a morning to be still and take in the grandeur of our surroundings, gazing up at the tallest peak on Spitzbergen—the 1480m Hornsuntind. It was difficult to agree to return to the ship instead of continue sunbathing in the Zodiacs but our next destination was calling, and our feet were itching to yet again touch terra firma.

The lovely glen of Gnålodden welcomed us: the kittiwakes were calling, wildflowers ran rampant on the slopes, and Ben invited us to explore the historic hut where intrepid trapper Wanny Wolstead spent several winters in the 1930s—and sometimes even invited her husband and children to stay! The sun and mild conditions continued through the afternoon, inspiring some to climb the steep slopes and get closer to the cacophony of the bird cliffs while others simply found a cushy moss hummock and lay down to bask in the sun and imbibe deeply through all senses the gloriousness of the experience. Spending a few moments watching the tundra plants may have revealed a variety of insects going about their business visiting flowers and even mating—all part of life's frantic activity during the short Arctic summer.

We certainly have been lucky with abundant bear sightings this voyage but it felt like we were in luck that the big furry animals were elsewhere this afternoon, allowing us a special few hours ashore in an idyllic location where each one of us could take the time to connect with this special place in our own way and our own pace.



St Jonsfjord & Steinpynten

DAY 10 | Saturday 9th July 2022

Position at 0700 9 July

Latitude: 78°32.374' N

Longitude: 013°06.349' E

Course: 058°

Speed: 11 kts

Wind Speed: 6 kts from N

Barometer: 1024

Air Temp: 3°C

We have striven, we have sought and we have found. Of course our little expedition is not in the same realm as those of the great polar explorers of the past but it is a little taste and sets us apart from 99% of the people we meet every day. Perhaps we can retain some of the beauty, serenity and timelessness of the far northern world we have travelled in. Better still that we can take it back to our everyday lives.

—Ian Collier, Aurora passenger, Arctic season 2005

We awoke to another unbelievable morning of sunshine; Howard's now familiar wake-up call heralding in another day. Overnight the *Greg Mortimer* had moved to St Jonsfjord and from the deck the dramatic Osbornebreen could be seen to the east and Dahlbreen to the north.

After a hearty and yummy breakfast, Zodiacs and kayaks were lowered, and we swarmed off from the ship to explore this icy wonderland bathed in perfect sunlight. Both glaciers were visited and the goal for the morning was to find the elusive bearded seal and witness an exhilarating calving.

St Jonsfjord is surrounded by mountains of 800m in height that cascade down into the fjord. The strongly deformed sediments and metamorphic rocks create a colourful mosaic in the crags. The iron-rich sediments that form the base of the fjord also result in the rather unique looking bearded seal's face and whiskers stained red from its toil searching for food, face-first in the mud. It wasn't long before our first seals were spotted hauled out on the ice flow and the photo frenzy unleashed. In the end many bearded seals were spotted, far exceeding passenger and staff expectations, along with fleeting glimpses of ringed seals spy hopping the cruising Zodiacs briefly. Some bearded seals were particularly mellow and allowed us to approach close without disturbance.

Both glaciers, heated by the bright sunshine of a clear day, with Dahlbreen, in particular, releasing a huge calving and resultant wave that was witnessed by a number of Zodiacs just prior to the all too soon deadline to return to the ship.

After lunch we set off for our last outing for the voyage. In true expedition style Howard, spying an interesting landscape from the Bridge, ordered a stop and led a scout Zodiac to explore the possibilities. A maiden landing was to be had at a place on the map found to be Steinpynten. Once on land, different walking groups headed out and were rewarded with grand vistas from up high on the ridge overlooking the coast, bays, low plains populated

by a smattering of reindeer and more distant ridges. Things were also beautiful for those who took a closer look at what was at their feet with the varied, colourful, intricate and miniature botany rewarding those who took the time.

Once back on board it was time to toast what had been an extraordinary ten days. Captain, crew, staff and passengers were thanked for all contributing. Howard went through a brief recap of highlights with the aid of a map and moving ship. Then all gathered after dinner for the slide show whose beautiful images triggering memories of what a marvelous time was had.



Longyearbyen

DAY 11 | Sunday 10 July 2022

Position at 0700 30 June

Latitude: 79°48.596' N

Longitude: 011°55.330' W

Course: Docked

Speed: 0 kts

Wind Speed: 8.5 kts from SE

Barometer: 1032

Air Temp: 3°C

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



Kayaking Log

By Daniel Stavert

Kayak Guides: Daniel Stavert , Liz MacNeil , Eamon Larkin

Number of Paddlers: 16 Total Paddle Outings: 9 Total Distance Paddled: 62.2km

Paddlers:	David Johansson	Ingrid Kraan	Leslie Edward Robinson
Elisabeth Eschen	Karin Johansson	Darren Payne	Anna Powell
Siegfried Eschen	Mary Schuster-Walker	Jon Sawyer	
Desley Whisson	Vance Anthony	Kem Sawyer	
Victoria Dixon	Camil Haas	Kathrin Robinson	

2nd July: Hamiltonbukta, 7.5km

After a morning of bears and the incredible scenery of Ytre Norskoya, the kayakers were ready to leave the ship and get into their own boats for the first time. As a first paddle there was some time spent fitting kayaks and doing last safety checks before they were finally walking down onto the floating dock and away.

Gliding away from the ship in smooth waters, the bay of Hamiltonbukta welcomed them. The huge rearing cliffs and towers rising up out of the water, the glaciers shining through low cloud. Into this Arctic paradise the team took their boats. In the water and in the air above thousands of Brunnich's guillemot swam, dove, flew, and plummeted. Kittiwakes filling the air with their cries. Moving ever deeper into the bay, the team was drawn by the siren's call of the glacial ice face. Its groans and rumblings eventually rising to a crash as thousands of tonnes of ice collapsed into the shallow bay.

Turning along and out of the bay, the kayak pod was delighted to find barnacle geese with small chicks, and dozens of eider ducks, cruising amongst the islands. It was a sublime moment, and worth taking a few minutes to appreciate the beauty, and the good fortune that we have, in paddling in the Arctic

4th July: Karl XII-oya, 6km

This morning we find ourselves just off the east coast of a small island named Karl 12th. Named after one of the former Norwegian Kings. It is located at the northeastern extremity of Svalbard. Today was the team's first circumnavigation of an island. Impressive! Well, it is pretty small. Once we reached the shoreline, we had clear and sheltered waters. Our diligent safety boat was scouting around the corners and behind headlands in front of us for any surprises. A reasonably tall cliff face on one end of the island was home to many nesting kittiwakes and guillemots, with the occasional fulmar and puffin flying past our paddlers also. Sheltered bays and rocky points made up the western side of this bird island. It was here Eamon went into the water and displayed a calm and smooth re-entry into the kayak with Liz there to assist a rescue. The dry suits really do work. A short paddle back to the ship and another wonderful outing completed.

4th of July: Foynoya, 7km

Thick fog blanketed the ocean as the paddle team rolled down the pontoon and into their vessels. A huge iceberg wallowed nearby, appearing and disappearing in the mist. The kayakers moved slowly around marveling at the shapes and angles, the story of its ocean bound life revealed in every crack, melt line, and colour. With the wind blowing from the north, the team followed the rocky shoreline of Foynoya. It's incredible polished granite domes, deeply stratified metamorphic gneiss, and remarkable raised beaches, all drawing the eye of the paddlers.

The sunshine and the glassy smooth seas made for a paradise paddle, and the team revelled in the chance to stretch the arms and get the boats in the water. Returning to the ship, the team took in the sun on the sea, and the glowing icebergs and stone cliffs of Brochoya across the sound. A truly sublime arctic view to finish a great paddle.

6th July: Brasvellbreen

Orcas: The team split into two groups from the start today. The "Orcas" got a slight head start and paddled smoothly along the ice face. This is the longest continuous ice cliff face in the northern hemisphere at 137kms. Naturally we only explored a portion of it, but what a beautiful section it was. Sheer cliffs of white interrupted by the occasional waterfall running off the top. The regular calving produced kilometres of brash ice which we paddled into and out of occasionally. A few bergy bits floating around were good ice sculptures. The finale was a group of three waterfalls pouring into the sea. Although a spectacular site, it reminded us that the ice up here is melting before our eyes. The ship came to our finish point today which meant we did not have to turn back.

Belugas: What a magical day on the water! Blue skies, glassy seas and, just like that, we were cruising along the face of the third largest ice cap in the world. Brash surrounded our kayaks as we carved thru the ice, listening to the glacier face as it calved and creating a bit of a swell whilst we paddled. As the sun shined on our faces and gave us some much appreciated vitamin-D, waterfalls poured into the ocean from the glacial face and dropped our jaws in awe. As we cruised along, the scenery was imprinted in our memories much like the smiles on our faces.

7th July: Kapp Lee, 4km

With a strong 15 knot wind, and currents pushing against us, a paddle seemed unlikely as the ship rounded the point toward Kapp Lee. Yet a little shelter, a helpful Zodiac up wind, and the kayak team was away and paddling. The wind at their backs, and astonishing scenery made for a wonderful down wind sail. Reindeer dotted the hillsides, their grey and white fur making for sudden heart jumps before their antlers and long legs were seen. Walrus occasionally surfaced, the kayak fleet quickly podding up and allowing the wind to drift them serenely past.

Soon the shallow skerries of Kapp Lee came into visibility and a quick turn allowed the kayaks to glide into the shelter of a shallow tidal bay. There a landing was possible and a walk up onto the permafrost and tundra. Wildflowers dotted the landscape, signs of Pomor history from the 1600's lay silent in amongst the polar willow and moss campion. Below this arctic splendour, on the long beach dozens of male walrus wallowed in their haul-outs. Their huge tusks miraculously leaving each other uninjured as they bellowed and rolled.

A quick walk back down the hill and the kayakers were in a Zodiac and zooming home. A great paddle and walk complete in the face of a windy morning.

7th July: Inglefieldbreen-Teiknarneset, 9.2 kms

Was it a very large glacier or was the glacier further from the ship than we estimated? It was both. Luckily, we had the swell behind us as we departed the marina and set a course for the glacier. Careful not to get too close, we measured our distance often as we approached. Everyone was keen to paddle this afternoon, and it was a good decision. We took a moment to listen to the sounds around us; the ice colliding, the glacier rumbling, the air popping and cracking out of the ice floating around us. It was a decent paddle to get here, and we were grateful for a "uber Zodiac" lift back against the wind and swell.

8th July : Samarinbreen Glacier, 6km

Coming into Samarinvagen Fjord this morning was an absolute paddlers dream. Glassy waters and clear blue skies welcomed us as we sailed through the mountain-lined fjord towards Samarinbreen Glacier. With our group of 12 paddlers, we launched off the dock into the ice-filled waters and the stoke level was high. Meandering through the ice and along the glacial face was our plan, and taking lots of photos was our mission. While navigating through the brash and ice, we came across a harbour seal who was just as curious about us as we were about it, and as we stopped to watch it, the first calving of the glacier face crashed. A thunderous roar echoed through the fjord as we continued to paddle our way through the ice, waiting for the swell to hit, and watching the kittiwakes fly above us. Waiting and watching for the next calving, we took a round robin of photos with the towering mountain landscape behind us. As our time started to come to an end, we weren't only just a group of paddlers, but a group of perma-grins.

8th July: Gnålodden, 7.4km

The afternoon came and the ship cruised into Hornsund and in sight of the immense glacially carved cliffs of Gnålodden. Thousands of kittiwakes crying, and hundreds of guillemots plunging into the sea, made for a visual feast as the kayakers prepared to leave the *Greg Mortimer*. Allowing the wind to push them along, the team zipped past the rocky shoreline, enjoying puffins in the water and the blissful scenery rolling past. Soon a series of small islands beckoned and we hopped out to make a spontaneous landing. The drama of the landing was only surpassed by the amazing seal launch as the team re-embarked to carry on. Some of us elected for the graceful exit on the shallow rocks. Others strapped themselves into their boats and slid down and into the sea.

The journey continued onwards and around into Burgerbukta where the scenery grew even more grand, and the mountains more jagged. A turn along the shoreline allowed the team to explore the waterfalls and rocky boulders in the shallow waters, and to finally land on Gnålodden in blazing glorious sunshine.

9th July: St Johnfjorden

Orcas: It was a bittersweet moment as we set out for our last sea kayak this morning. The ship was anchored alongside an impressive glacier that was in full sunshine. The team was split into two groups this morning and Eamon ventured a little further around into the next bay with seven paddlers. Very quickly we were in among the brash ice when we spotted a bearded seal lying on a bergy bit. We approached cautiously and kept our distance. The glacier here is full of soil and rock and it was evident that it had been scouring the landscape around it for eons.

Belugas: We're getting totally spoiled with all of these bluebird glacier days. St Jonsfjorden did not disappoint as our cruising paddlers made their way towards the glacier. With bearded seals hauled out on the ice and poking their heads up out of the water, we had beautiful sights in every direction. As we meandered through the brash, we saw a big calving off the face and once the swell hit, even the seals were riding it out. Continuing with our paddle, we circumnavigated growlers and icebergs, enjoying the depth of colors and unique formations.

As we made it back towards the ship and our final paddle, it was hard to believe it was coming to an end. Thanks so much for all your positive energy, enthusiasm, and participation during our expedition and we hope to paddle with you all again.





Bird and Mammal Sightings

Bird Species	30th June to 10th July										
	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Red-throated Diver											
Great Northern Diver	•										
Northern Fulmar	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
Pink-footed Goose	•	•					•				
Barnacle Goose		•	•					•			
Brent Goose											
Common Eider	•	•	•		•	•			•	•	
King Eider											
Long-tailed Duck											
Svalbard Ptarmigan											
Ringed Plover											
Golden Plover											
Sanderling											•
Purple Sandpiper		•									•
Ruddy Turnstone											
Grey Phalarope											
Pomarine Skua											
Arctic Skua					•	•		•	•	•	
Long-tailed Skua											•
Great Skua			•								•
Sabine's Gull											
Glaucous Gull		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Great Black-backed Gull				•							
Black-legged Kittiwake	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Ivory Gull			•		•		•				
Arctic Tern	•	•		•	•		•	•	•		

Bird Species	30th June to 10th July										
	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Common Guillemot											
Brunich's Guillemot		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		
Black Guillemot		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
Razorbill											
Little Auk			•	•	•			•	•		
Atlantic Puffin		•	•	•	•						
Snow Bunting		•	•		•			•	•	•	



Mammal Species	30th June to 10th July										
	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Arctic Fox			•		•				•		
Svalbard Reindeer		•	•				•	•			
Polar Bear			•			•	•	•			
Ringed Seal			•	•		•	•		•	•	
Bearded Seal			•	•			•			•	
Harp Seal											
Hooded Seal											
Harbour/Common Seal									•		
Walrus					•	•	•	•			
Common Minke Whale			•						•		
Humpback Whale									•		
Beluga											
Killer Whale/Orca											
Blue Whale					•						
Atlantic White-sided Dolphin											







Expeditioners:

James Anderson	Jane Garden	Adrian O'Connor
Kim Anderson	Camil Haas	Fiona O'Leary
Van Anthony	Sandy Holmes	Darren Payne
Sabine Bartz	Kevin Holmes	Linda Payne
Sue Basedow	Sarah Hucker	Anna Powell
Jim Basedow	Michael Jacobi	Kathrin Robinson
Philippe Boyer	Cecilia Jacobi-Borges	Les Robinson
Mark Bulle	Günther Jacobsen	Jon Sawyer
Carole Clarke	Karin Johansson	Kem Sawyer
David Clarke	David Johansson	Marmie Schuster-Walker
Keith Coleman	Ingrid Kraan	Norna Sinclair
Jamie Davidson	Tanya Kurukulasuriya	Bruce Sinclair
Carol Davidson	Rodney Langdon	Tammi Sirett
Stephen Davidson	Christoph Lesniak	Steve Tattersall
Katherine Dixon	Catrin Lorenz	Stephanie Tattersall
Victoria Dixon	Caroline Maber	Paula Turner
Kevin Docherty	Robert Main	Dave Turner
Dinah Docherty	Vicki Main	Pam Valentine
Trish Dugard	Phil McAlister	Gabrielle Venturi
Gerith Eden	Jenifer McClymont	Fiona Wellings
Clive Eden	Gavin McCormack	Ian Wellings
Martin Engler	Elaine McNeilly	Desley Whisson
Siegfried Eschen	Graham McNeilly	Genette Wirtz
Elisabeth Eschen	Richard Mills	Keith Wirtz
Joanna Evered	Graeme Myburgh	Gary Wynd
Mal Garden	Judith O'Connor	

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 Pena

Biologist: Joselyn Fenstermacher

Historian: Ben Maddison

Firearms Manager: Jeff Nagel

Expedition Guide/Naturalist: Graeme Snow

Expedition Guide: Jack Alscher

Expedition Guide: Catherine Ardagh

Expedition Guide: Justine Bornholdt

Lead Kayaking Guide: Daniel Stavert

Kayaking Guide: Liz MacNeil

Kayaking Guide: Eamon Larkin

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: Sergiy Melnyk

First Engineer: Ion Toma

Hotel Director: Patrice Degron

F&B Manager: Uysal Berrak

Chief Purser: Liza Merillo

Executive Chef: Christiand Mini Pineda

Head Waiter: Diogenes Encinares

Hotel Controller: Richard Cayeta

IT Officer: Nataniel Vibares

Receptionist: Jelyn Merillo

Receptionist: Marie Annecy Reynoird

Head Stateroom: Florante 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

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Scott Portelli

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Justine Bornholdt

Daniela Abras

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