



Across the Arctic Circle



02 – 15 July 2019 | Polar Pioneer



About Us

Aurora Expeditions embodies the spirit of adventure, travelling to some of the most wild and remote places on our planet. With over 27 years' experience, our small group voyages allow for a truly intimate experience with nature.

Our expeditions push the boundaries with flexible and innovative itineraries, exciting wildlife experiences and fascinating lectures. You'll share your adventure with a group of like-minded souls in a relaxed, casual atmosphere while making the most of every opportunity for

adventure and discovery. Our highly experienced expedition team of naturalists, historians and destination specialists are passionate and knowledgeable – they are the secret to a fulfilling and successful voyage.

Whilst we are dedicated to providing a 'trip of a lifetime', we are also deeply committed to education and preservation of the environment. Our aim is to travel respectfully, creating lifelong ambassadors for the protection of our destinations.



DAY 1 | Tuesday 02 July 2019

Aberdeen

Position: 21:30 hours
Latitude: 57°33'N
Longitude: 1°33'W

Course: 15.5°
Speed: 11.6 knots

Wind Speed: 25 knots
Wind Direction: NW

Barometer: 1022.6 hPa & rising
Air Temp: 12°C
Sea Temp: 13°C

Our ability to perceive quality in nature begins, as in art, with the pretty. It expands through successive stages of the beautiful to values as yet uncaptured by language.
—Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac

After months of planning and weeks of preparing, we were minutes away from boarding the *Polar Pioneer* at Blakie’s Pier in Aberdeen. Blue skies and sunshine were a welcoming touch as we were greeted by our leaders Howard and Justine on the wharf. Passports handed over, names marked off and photos were taken before joining the rest of the team onboard who showed us to our cabins.

The luggage soon appeared and we had time to settle in and unpack, take a turn of the decks and track down the dining rooms for a well-earned tea or coffee. Before dinner we were invited to the bar where Howard gave us a briefing about our trip and introduced the Aurora team: Assistant Leader Justine, Ship’s Doctor Lesley, Historian and Archaeologist Carol, Naturalists Roger and Chris, Kayaking Guide Toby, Zodiac Driver Richard and Hotel Manager Anne.

The sound of seven short one long rings from the ship’s horn was our cue to gather at the muster station behind the bar on Deck 4 and near the lifeboats on Deck 5. We piled into the two big orange vessels to experience the cosy ambience of a polar class lifeboat. After a short briefing, the motors revved into action to give the full sensory effect. At 1800 we cast off

lines and edged our way out of Aberdeen port. Most of us headed for the flying bridge for uninterrupted views of the bustling port, lighthouse and the wide, wide ocean ahead –the start of our seafaring adventure!

We were then called to the lecture room where Howard illustrated the ‘Zodiac three-step’ and plans for the first full day of our Scottish adventure. Equipped with a healthy appetite, we made our way down to the dining rooms to enjoy a delicious dinner, prepared by Head Chef Al and Sous Chef Bert, and served by our lovely waitresses Katerina and Sasha. Soon after came the gumboot swap, so now we all have a comfy pair of Wellies for the adventures ahead.

With one order of business left, Toby gathered our paddlers in the lecture room to be fitted in kayak gear: dry suit, booties, life jackets, the works! As the day neared an end, we were captivated by the sunset reflecting on the silky sea around us. Some spotted a dolphin as we passed by the Ardnamurchan Lighthouse.

After the many hours it took to reach this corner of the world, it’s time to kick back, breathe in the Scottish sea air, and enjoy the marvels of this grand and mystical land. Onboard we have 50 adventurers, 22 crew and 11 Aurora staff representing, Australia, Norway, Ireland, United Kingdom, Singapore, New Zealand, Malaysia, United States, Philippines, Malta, Russia and the Ukraine.





Orkney Islands; Kirkwall, Skara Brae

Position:	19:20 hours	Course:	100°	Wind Speed:	11 knots	Barometer:	1021.3 hPa & rising
Latitude:	59°00'N	Speed:	10.3 knots	Wind Direction:	E	Air Temp:	14°C
Longitude:	02°53'W					Sea Temp:	13°C

*I sing the virtue of country living
Of long days spent without misgiving
In calm fulfilment of rustic labours
Among good friends and kindly neighbours.
I sing of Nature’s necromancy,
The beauty and wonder that wake the fancy,
When after winter’s cheerless rigour
Gay summer Flowers the earth transfigure.
I sing of sea-swept burial places,
Shore-graves where native legend traces Time’s finger
And glimpses as in vision
Our ancient Orkney sea tradition.
What would the world be, once bereft
Of wet and of wildness? Let them be left,
Oh let them be left, wildness and wet
Long live the weeds and the wildness yet.
—Gerard Manley Hopkins*

Before lights out, we felt a sense of what life at sea is truly like. A slightly greater swell since leaving Aberdeen had Dr Lesley whipping in and out of cabins making sure we were comfortable. Hotel Manager, Anne was in the bar constructing an ensemble of buffers, so our wine bottles would survive to see another day. The Orkney Islands are an archipelago just a few kilometres north of mainland Scotland and our destination, Kirkwall, is at its centre, a bit confusingly – on the island of Mainland.

But that would come later. Yesterday began bright and early with Howard’s wakeup call as we cruised through Shapinsay sound. At 7am the pilot boat approached from portside and manoeuvred alongside the ship. Still moving, the pilot stepped safely onto the fourth deck and headed for the bridge. A few of us eagerly witnessed this feat before heading to breakfast. With a partly-cloudy start, we rugged up, turned our tags and loaded into the buses on Kirkwall Pier. We settled in and were entertained by our experienced guides Anne and Andy. We passed by Scapa Flow, the large, natural harbour to the south of Main Island. Here, at the end of WW1, the entire German navy was interned – 74 ships!

On 21 June 1919, a secret signal was passed between them and all were simultaneously sunk to avoid having the ships divvied-up between the victors. Most ships were salvaged for scrap metal, but seven remain as ‘attractive’ dive sites. We passed the house of Dr John Rae, who famously solved the mystery of the lost Franklin Expedition, which disappeared trying to traverse the North-West Passage. Onward we journeyed, yet far back in time.

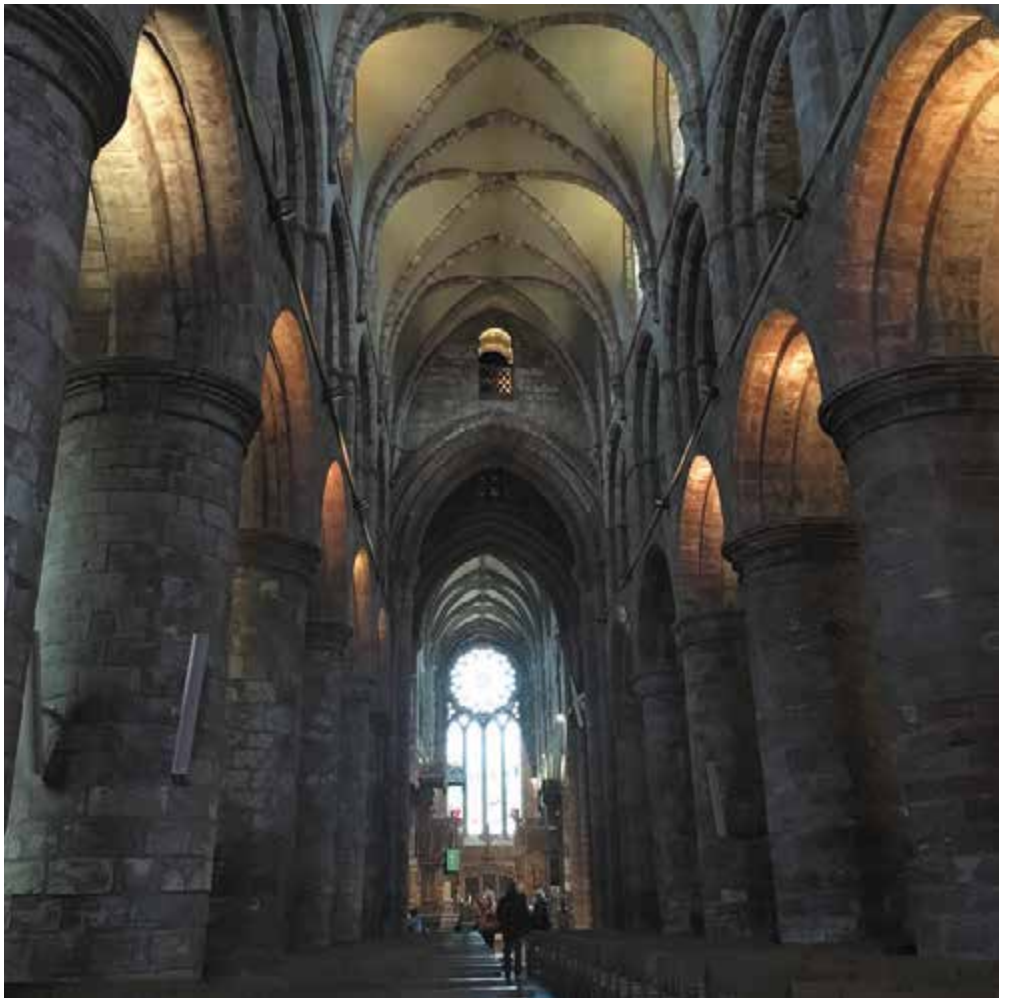
Five thousand years in fact. We passed Maes Howe, a well-preserved stone age tomb and the standing stones of Stenness, imposing at 5-6 m tall, and wafer-thin. How did they get

there? Crossing a narrow isthmus, we ventured on to the Ness of Brodgar. This site was recently-discovered so has not been ravaged by previous ‘explorations’. We stopped at the Ring of Brodgar, where up to 60, five-metre stones had been erected in a large circle – with some 21 that remain standing. One of our guides alerted us to a rare bumble bee, great spotting! Skara Brae was our next destination, an extraordinary stone age village that had been hidden for thousands of years until being uncovered by a storm in 1850.

Here we caught a glimpse of stone age life, complete with stone furniture. The site was likely abandoned when sea level rise made it sandier and saltier some 5000 years ago. A short walk took us to Skaill House., where a diverse collection of artefacts represented many locations and explorers who have intersected with the island’s history.

After lunch, Carol lead a tour through St Magnus’ Cathedral. Built by Vikings in the early 1100’s out of local red sandstone (with ongoing construction for the next 300 years), this magnificent building is both steeped in history and remains Kirkwall’s centrepiece. Back on board we gathered in the bar for Captain’s Welcome Drinks. Captain Sasha wished us good weather and a successful voyage and we toasted him, his officers and crew. Anne’s delicious punch and the Chefs’ canapes were savoured as we chatted with new shipmates, before making our way to dinner.





DAY 3 | Thursday 4 July 2019

Shetland Islands; Fair Isle, Jarlshof, Mousa Broch

Position: 18:30 hours **Course:** At anchor Jarlshof
Latitude: 59°51'N
Longitude: 01°17'W

Wind Speed: 9 knots **Barometer:** 1011.9 hPa & rising
Wind Direction: E **Air Temp:** 12°C
Sea Temp: 13°C

One of Scotland’s most important cultural exports: stories.
— Sara Sheridan, Scottish author

Hazy and rainy, Fair Isle beckoned and, in the words of the Aberdonian witnesses to our arrival, “those other cruise ships would never have landed!” Howard released the trusty Zodiacs, with stoic, hardy expeditioners out on our first jaunt. Bullets of winds gusting to 25 knots (increasing to an unpredicted 35-plus while we were on land) and, with more than a wee bit of wind and swell, our first rafts of puffins and a grey seal also seemed a little surprised to see us! Keen walkers trudged blindly into the lively rain with Roger, while puffin-watchers dropped to their bellies on Carol’s Iron Age fort-adorned headland. Cheeky puffins waddled around in the rain, some with beaks stuffed full of sand eels.

Wonderful taxi drivers and a warm inviting community hall with artists, a lovely young musician and scones was the perfect place to indulge in retail therapy. The purchase of world famous Fair Isle knitwear, popularised by Paul and Linda McCartney, soon had us all sporting new headgear and bags. This remote island, populated by 55 including three school age kids, boasts a story of shipwreck from the time of the Spanish Armada and is an ornithologist’s paradise with 345 species of birds – more than anywhere else in the UK.

With succour from warming soup and wraps, the afternoon destination of Jarlshof, on Mainland Shetland, was joyfully approached in mild zephyrs! Walkers romped off to view guillemots, gannets and puffins on the path to the Stevenson Lighthouse at Sumburgh Head, while Carol whipped up our imaginations of life through a period of 3000 years! This site has been continuously occupied over five archaeological periods - Bronze Age farms, an Iron Age broch and wheelhouse, Norse longhouses, a medieval farmhouse and the Earl of Stewart’s house from the tail end of the 16th century. Jarlshof, named by Sir Walter Scott, was obviously a very important and commanding location on the seaways of the North.

Just as the comforts of Anna’s bar and cocktails beckoned, Howard announced that the day was far from over! Mousa Broch, mentioned in the Icelandic sagas, was a honeymoon destination for an eloping couple in 900 AD and also the scene of an abduction in the 12th century! This evening, the world’s most intact broch stands opposite it’s brother broch opposite, now ruined. Fifteen meters in diameter, with dry slate gently curving walls and looking like a nuclear reactor, the structure twinkled with tealights evoking a feeling of the Iron age setting. As storm petrels chattered, we imagined the roaring central fire, a welcome refuge in times of trouble and also the home of a family of status. Marvelling at the double construction, we wended clockwise up the staircase to the parapet for a pastel sunset view.

What an amazing, exhilarating, slightly scary, wonderfully historical day Shetland has shown us!



Puffin Fact File

Atlantic puffin:	Fratercula Arctica
Non-breeding puffins:	Winter out at sea
Breeding pairs:	Arrive at breeding grounds through April
Breeding habitat:	In burrows on cliff tops
Eggs:	Single white egg ~60 gms
Chicks:	Fledge in 38 – 44 days
Life span:	~25 years
Flying speed:	~80 kms/hr
Flapping speed:	300 – 400 beats per minute
Feeding:	Puffins dive into shoals of fish, usually alone They can carry a large number of fish in their serrated beak.
Population:	~5 million pairs worldwide





DAY 4 | Friday 5 July 2019

Shetland Islands; Fetlarr, Hermaness, North Sea

Position: 19:30 hours

Course: 0.42°

Latitude: 60°56'N

Longitude: 0°42'W

Wind Speed: 12 knots

Wind Direction: NNW

Barometer: 1005.3 hPa & rising

Air Temp: 11°C

Sea Temp: 13°C

The land was gone, all but a little streak, away off on the edge of the water, and down under us was just ocean, ocean, ocean – millions of miles of it, heaving and pitching and squirming, and white sprays blowing from the wave-tops...and we had the sky and the ocean to ourselves, and the roomiest place I ever did see and the lonest.

—Mark Twain, Tom Sawyer Abroad

This morning we awoke situated geographically above the 60°N latitude. Beautiful sun was streaming in the starboard porthole windows at 4:41 am. Laying anchor at Fetlarr Island off the north-eastern Shetland Isles, Howard informed us all on the ship's PA of the day ahead. Still feeling some lethargy from yesterday's big day exploring of the southern Shetlands, we were buoyed by the views of rolling green pastures and cute whitewashed village houses on Fetlarr. It is true, that when the sun is out in Scotland there is no more beautiful place on earth. However, as often happens in Scotland, the drizzle rolled in as we boarded the Zodiacs and kayaks for land.

After exploring the little museum some expeditioners followed Roger bird spotting and being lucky enough to spot a red-throated diver, dunlin, golden plover and snipe. Others joined Carol in search of the ruined remains of a little known but commandingly located Broch. Many expeditioners took to the Zodiacs and cruised the cliffs, sighting breeding shags, kittiwakes, black-back gull chicks, puffins, razorbills, terns and more. Some lucky Zodiac passengers even spotted otters!!!

During lunch we motored up to the most northern part of Great Britain to Hermaness. We anchored in sight of the iconic Muckle Flugga lighthouse. Built by Thomas Stevenson, father of the famous author Robert Louis Stevenson in 1858, the lighthouse has served as a beacon for seafarers for over 150 years. Expeditioners in Zodiacs cruising past the lighthouse were amazed at the old stone steps carved into the solid rock cliffs prior to installation of steel stairs and railing. The lighthouse was later automated in 1995.

After lunch we split into three groups, the kayakers, walkers and Zodiac cruisers. The cruisers enthralled by hundreds of gannets diving for prey in the brisk currents. The walkers crossing the peninsula within Hermaness Nature Reserve to the spectacular gannet filled sea cliffs on its western slopes. Hundreds of puffins flew overhead the kayakers along with huge flocks of gannets and guillemots. This was a truly world class wildlife experience.

Back on board at 6pm we readied the cabins and ship for the sea crossing out of the British Isles and on to the Nordic adventures.



North Sea, enroute to Norway

Position:	21:30 hours	Course:	66.9°	Wind Speed:	12.8 knots	Barometer:	1006.6 hPa & falling
Latitude:	64°03'N	Speed:	12.8 knots	Wind Direction:	N	Air Temp:	11°C
Longitude:	07°44'W					Sea Temp:	11°C

A first walk in any new country is one of the things which makes life on this planet worth being grateful for.
—Charles William Beebe

Although we prepared for a night of tumbles and spills, we were delighted by a shift in weather. A gentle swell rocked us gently through our passage across the North Sea, a region renowned for its winter gales. Smooth seas continued throughout yesterday morning, filling most seats at breakfast as well as in the lecture room at 10am for Roger’s lecture.

We learnt the difference between seabirds and tree-dwelling birds. From breeding and survival habits, their tremendous advantage of using wind to glide and what species we are most likely to encounter as we continue our voyage north.

Following lunch and a welcoming afternoon nap, it was back to the lecture room where Carol brought the tales of Vikings to life with her wonderful storytelling.

From the nineteenth century, Vikings flooded out of the Scandinavian homeland and across the North Atlantic. Norway finished up with an empire that stretched from the Arctic down to the Isle of Mann and from the Baltic sea to Greenland – an enormous possession of islands and countries.

This of course had an impact on Scotland, with all its islands becoming a part of Norway. Their strong beliefs about going to Valhalla were seen as a sea journey that would take them to a place where they’d continuously feast and fight until the end of time. Several of the burials in Scotland were boat burials, including the one at Fetlar.

We also learned how people lived and made their living, and how, eventually, they became Christians and evolved into a medieval European nation.

An informal recap in the bar filled our early evening before dinner. Roger took us back over the four days since starting in Aberdeen, some sharing their own special experiences. Howard gave us a brief summary of our plans for the coming days and the early mornings we have to look forward to.

We are slowly approaching the Arctic Circle at 66 degrees 36 minutes North, but as this area is warmed by the tail end of the Gulf Stream (a current that brings warmer water all the way from the Gulf of Mexico) it is not yet the true Arctic in biological terms.

That will have to wait until after we have explored the Norwegian coast with its amazing archipelagos and fjords and historic fishing villages.



Fulmar Fact File

Northern Fulmar:	Fulmarus glacialis (The only petrel that inhabits high Arctic latitudes)
Defence Behaviour:	It can vomit strong, pungent stomach oil aimed at intruders or predators
Breeding Pairs:	Long-lasting and monogamous, reunited after each winter
Breeding Habitat:	Sea cliffs and nunataks
Eggs:	Single white egg; incubated by both adults for 48-52 days
Chicks:	Fledge in 45–50 days
Diet:	Crustaceans, fish and squid as well as scavenging
Plumage:	Two colour morphs; dark and light
Wing Span:	112 cm (44 inches)





DAY 6 | Sunday 7 July 2019

Sør Gjaeslingan and Torghatten

Position:	22:00 hours	Course:	18.5°
Latitude:	65°45'N	Speed:	11.4 knots
Longitude:	12°18'E		

Wind Speed:	8 knots	Barometer:	1011.9 hPa & rising
Wind Direction:	N	Air Temp:	15°C
		Sea Temp:	11°C

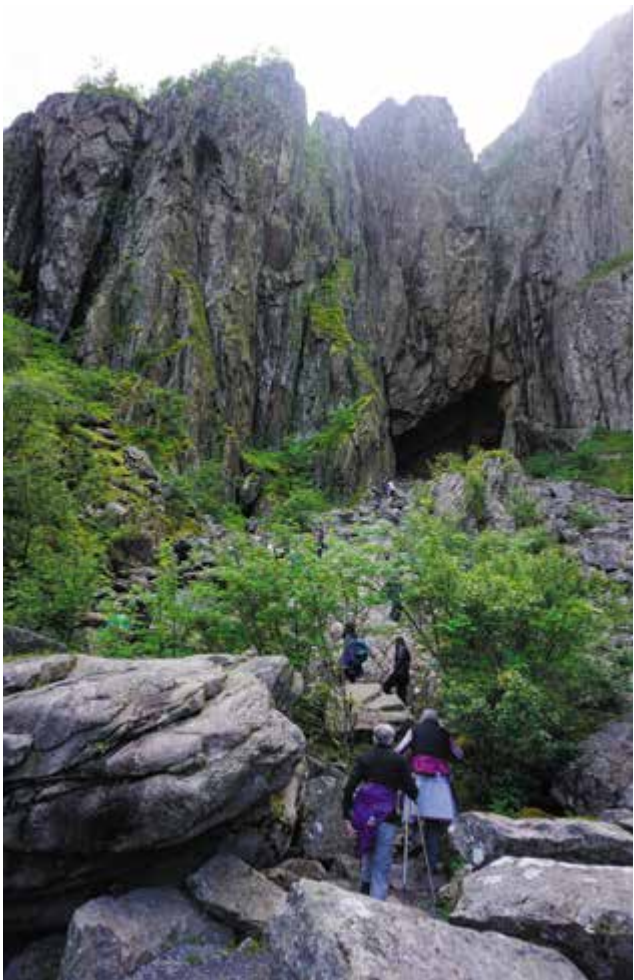
Praise not the day until evening has come; a woman until she is burnt; a sword until it is tried; a maiden until she is married; ice until it has been crossed; beer until it has been drunk.
—Viking Proverb

Norway! Yesterday morning we arrived in the tranquil waters surrounding Sør Gjaeslingan’s myriad, low-lying, offshore granite islands, once the centre of one of Norway’s greatest cod fisheries. For centuries, fishermen gathered here in their thousands to harvest the sea from their small, open boats. Today, however, the archipelago is part of a coastal museum, preserving and gradually restoring the grass-roofed rørbu (fishermen’s cabins) and other historic buildings.

In winter the place is quite deserted (the last islanders were removed to the mainland in 1978), but in summer it becomes a haven for returning Norwegians who come to fish and enjoy the profound peace and beauty that can be found here. We walked amongst the old cod-drying racks and the colourfully-painted houses, meeting friendly locals on vacation, and delighting in the kittiwakes noisily nesting on every possible surface – window sills, lampposts, rooftops. We discovered wildlife in the form of large black slugs and innumerable jellyfish floating amidst the algae, but the abundance of wild flowers everywhere was a joy to the eye – lilac-tinged water parsnip, delicate hare bell, tiny dog violets.

Under the watchful care of our Norwegian pilots, the *Polar Pioneer* threaded her way between islands and the Norway coast, past idyllic summer cottages and boathouses, past locals out fishing, and past the huge Viking ship burial mound on the island of Leka. In the afternoon we came to Torghatten, a mountain landmark renowned for the 160m-long natural tunnel which pierces it from one side to the other. How did this remarkable formation come about? Every Norwegian knows that it was the work of trolls, that it was a troll king’s hat thrown into the air to divert an arrow from killing a beautiful troll maiden. And of course at that moment the sun came up, turning them all to stone, including the hat pierced with the hole. In pleasant sunshine we came ashore, some to clamber up and down the path to the hole, some to pass through and down the far side, and others simply to enjoy some leisure by the shore. The views from the top over scattered islands and skerries, framed by the cathedral-like cave entrance, were quite magnificent. A profusion of wild flowers grew around the base of the mountain, from tufted vetch and meadow cranesbill to dainty pignut and Alpine ladies mantle, and woodland birds called from their perches in the trees.

Passing on through impossibly narrow channels to Brønnøysund, we paused to collect the kayakers who had paddled valiantly from Torghatten, before continuing northwards. Our first day in Norway was indeed as delightful as we could wish, brimming with enchanting landscapes, seascapes, people and nature.



Vedøy, Å and Reine

Position: 13:30 hours **Course:** 10.9°
Latitude: 67°45’N
Longitude: 12°52’E

Wind Speed: 7 knots **Barometer:** 1019.9 hPa & rising
Wind Direction: NNW **Air Temp:** 10°C
Sea Temp: 11°C

- *Never, never board a boat with cow dung on your shoes or hay seeds on your clothes. This is certain to bring bad luck.*
 - *Certain women should not cross over gear that had been made ready. This could bring trouble and lead to a poor catch*
 - *It would not be a good herring catch if the crew did not have lice. The more lice the better the catch. Dreaming about lice meant there would be plenty of herring.*
- From Hurtigruten: The Norwegian Coastal Voyage

We crossed the Arctic Circle in the early hours of the morning – unfortunately a little too early for bubbly on deck - and had our first truly Arctic outing after breakfast. We set out in the fog with 5 zodiacs and 3 sea kayaks to circumnavigate Vedoy island, a granite spire at southern end of the Lofoten Islands, ringed by fallen granite boulders and vertiginous, sheep-grazed pastures.Vedoy proved to be rich in birdlife, with rafts of puffins and guillemots fishing just off-shore; ravens searching the cliffs for eggs to steal; and every 100 metres or so a female eider with a clutch of chicks, which dived and hugged the kelp-covered rocks to make themselves invisible.

Greater black-backed gulls sat on the rocky promontories, watching and waiting to snatch an unsuspecting chick. Rock pipits and oyster-catchers fossicked amongst the exposed kelp; above them rows of black shags drying their wings.

But the highlight for most of us were the white-tailed eagles, their massive ragged wings emerging from the fog, flapping slowly and finally disappearing back amongst the granite cliffs and boulders. We watched a juvenile rotate slowly down to land on a massive granite tor, where it merged so perfectly that only those who saw it land could see it. Owing to the fog we had to take on faith Carol’s account of a hillside sculpture to commemorate the Italian merchant who washed up here (literally)in 1432 after drifting in the open boat all the way from the UK.

The friendly locals revived him, befriended him, got him through the winter and eventually sent him home loaded with dried cod. The fish was such a hit back in Italy that it kicked off the rich cod-trade that lasted another 5 centuries, right up until the 1970’s when the fishery finally collapsed. While we fortified ourselves with salad, soup, fish & chips the captain repositioned the ship and anchored off the tiny hamlet of Å, meaning water. The name is apt as the town surrounds a small inlet, and is backed by a lake. (which some of us couldn’t resist plunging into to discover just how Åchingly cold it was..). We spent the afternoon variously finding new bird species, having a drink on the pier in beautiful sunshine, walking up to the lake and passing under acres of dried fish heads hanging on wooden drying racks behind the town; presumably the dried bodies had been cut away...

Meanwhile the paddlers portaged up a small stream and up into the fresh waters of Lake Agvatnet behind the town.Just before dinner there was an announcement of a Humpback whale siting. We rushed up to the bridge or the bow and were rewarded with the sight of 2 passing whales. Fifteen minutes later, just after sitting down to ur entrees, the captain alerted us to Orca near the ship, again we rushed out, amazed to see perhaps 15 orca energetically herding fish, with synchronised blowing and even some tail slapping. But the day was not over yet! After dinner we headed by zodiac to the extraordinary town of Reine, a series of traditional-style houses and boat-sheds built around a glorious natural harbour enclosed by almost vertical glacier-cut granite peaks.

After a stroll around the town (and some engine troubles) we took the zodiacs for a run up the fjords behind the town, the late evening sun lighting the dark granite and brilliant green summer pastures to perfection. There were beautiful summer houses on the sunniest promontories, accessible only by boat and surely fantastic places to spend the endless days summer: Literally endless as the sun was still shining at midnight.

The Cod Fisher’s Lament

*The streets are cold and quiet and I can get no relief
Bread for sale but I have naught to buy it.
No work for me but I am no thief.*

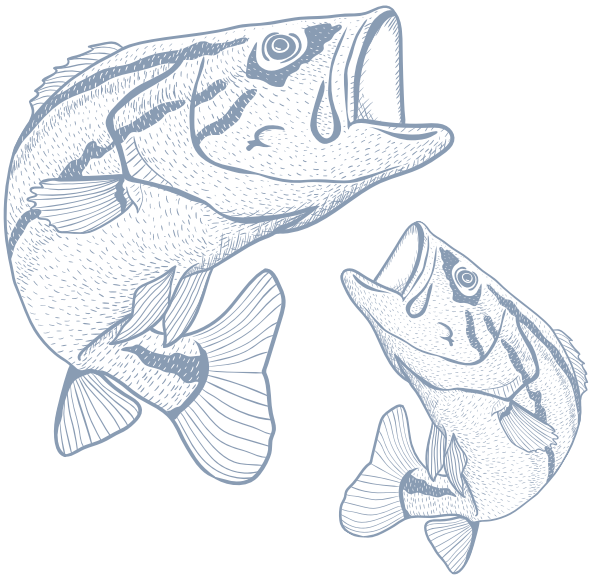
*I have fished the cod for many years
But now they’ve gone and the cold is here.
Thoughts of family drive hard men to tears
But I guess I’ll return in the next year.*

*The saddest sights are in the eyes of those who’s fears
May not survive for another year.
The Lord will provide we have been told
But none foretold of the greed of men.*

*The boats are moored sheltered from the storm
But few move out with the passing of this time
I retire behind the walls of my dorm
And drift into sleep my heart sinks one more time,*

*Soon I wander dim streets rugged against the cold
And pray to the Lord to feed us again,
Sadness flows like water and drags me down once more.
My heart begins to ache for family so far away.*

*Oh that I could make way to my front door
But I must wait here in hope for just one more day.*
— Doug Miller







DAY 8 | Tuesday 9 July 2019

Henningsvær and Trollfjorden

Position:	19:30 hours	Course:	18.5°	Wind Speed:	16 knots	Barometer:	1014.6 hPa & steady
Latitude:	68°40'N	Speed:	11.9 knots	Wind Direction:	N	Air Temp:	18°C
Longitude:	15°25'E					Sea Temp:	11°C

The three great elemental sounds in nature are the sound of rain, the sound of wind in a primeval wood, and the sound of outer ocean on a beach. I have heard them all, and of the three elemental voices, that of the ocean is the most awesome, beautiful and varied.
—Henry Beston

It was a glorious day as we laid anchor a short distance from Henningsvær, a small but bustling town perched amongst a scattering of islands and one affectionately known as the Venice of the Lofotens. While many enjoyed the town and immediate surrounds; twitching, sketching, coffee drinking, shopping or just taking in the sights and sounds, a small group headed off on an adventurous hike. The walk was led by Alex, an Aurora paddling guide and Lofoten Island local fresh off a 2am flight from Alaska!

The walkers made their way through lush green meadows then steeply up a tumble of glacially deposited boulders. From the summit, it was a stunning vista across the town and islands with the surrounding silky smooth waters contrasting starkly with jagged peaks that stretched to the horizon. Meanwhile the kayakers, mere dots on the water, wound their way through the islands and rocks to the hustle and bustle of the “downtown” waterway. Back on the ship, it was time for a group photo in the blazing sun before another sumptuous lunch.

After a brief respite, captain Sasha, the Pilots and the bridge officers demonstrated their skills with the *Polar Pioneer* and treated us to a ship cruise into the narrow reaches of Trollfjorden. Trollfjorden is famous throughout Norway, not only for its stunning landscape and mythical creation story but

also as the site of one of Norway’s most important and well known battles over cod. This battle, fought in 1890, was pitched between fishermen in traditional wooden boats and those who had moved to larger steel hulled, steam powered ships.

The steamers used their bulk to block the fjord in order to secure the cod, inciting the traditional fishermen to attack. While the traditional fishermen were victorious, it was a signifier of the end of a way of life and an era and the beginning of large scale, mechanized fishing along the Norwegian coast. The anchor had barely settled and there was a flurry of activity; zodiacs, kayaks and many scantily clad expeditioners eager to get into the sun and onto the water. The zodiacers motored back into Trollfjord, experiencing the true scale of the cliffs from their tiny craft. Meanwhile the kayakers, aided by the incoming tide, paddled swiftly to the end of Grunnfjorden.

No sooner had the kayaks landed than the dry-suits were off! While some took a cup of tea, others swam and explored the small stream and shores of the nearby picturesque lake. There was a quick shift change on the beach as the zodiacs landed and kayaks departed with several zodiacers also braving the frigid waters before returning to the ship. Back aboard, canapes were served and hungrily devoured, as we soaked in the evening rays of sun and pointed the bow northwards on our way to Bear Island and the Ice beyond!!



Barents Sea, northward to Spitsbergen

Position:	07:45 hours	Course:	5.1°	Wind Speed:	9 knots	Barometer:	1015.9 hPa & rising
Latitude:	73°13'N	Speed:	12.4 knots	Wind Direction:	NNW	Air Temp:	10°C
Longitude:	18°22'E					Sea Temp:	11°C

In the light of the North distances deceive. The stationary man watches the ship depart, so slowly that the steely band of water before it can barely be perceived to extend. The clarity of the Arctic air is such that even when the ship is far off, sails, masts, details stand out sharp to the eye as if they were still close in...
— Georgina Harding’s The Solitude of Thomas Cave, 1616

As we bid farewell to the charm and warmth of Norway, we rode our ship northward across the Barents Sea toward Svalbard. Captain Sasha and his officers promptly took over after our two Norwegian pilots swiftly jumped ship just before midnight. Out on deck a few eager night owls patiently waited to witness the pilot boat and *Polar Pioneer’s* clever manoeuvring.

As predicted, a few bumps were felt through the night, followed by calm seas in the morning that continued throughout the day. How lucky were we!

After a relaxed breakfast, some of us enjoyed watching the world go by on the bridge, some retired back to bed and others found a space in the bar to sift through photos, draw or read. By mid-morning our favourite storyteller, Carol, was ready to share her knowledge on the history of Norway, from the conversion of the Vikings to Christianity, to the present day. Her dramatic presentation included civil war, the black death, the Hanseatic League and the domination of the Contrade, the Kalmar union between Sweden and Denmark and the many years of Scandinavian wars. A brief moment came in 1814, “the year of miracles”, when Norway almost

gained its independence. But this was quickly quashed when Sweden invaded, delaying this momentous event until 1905.

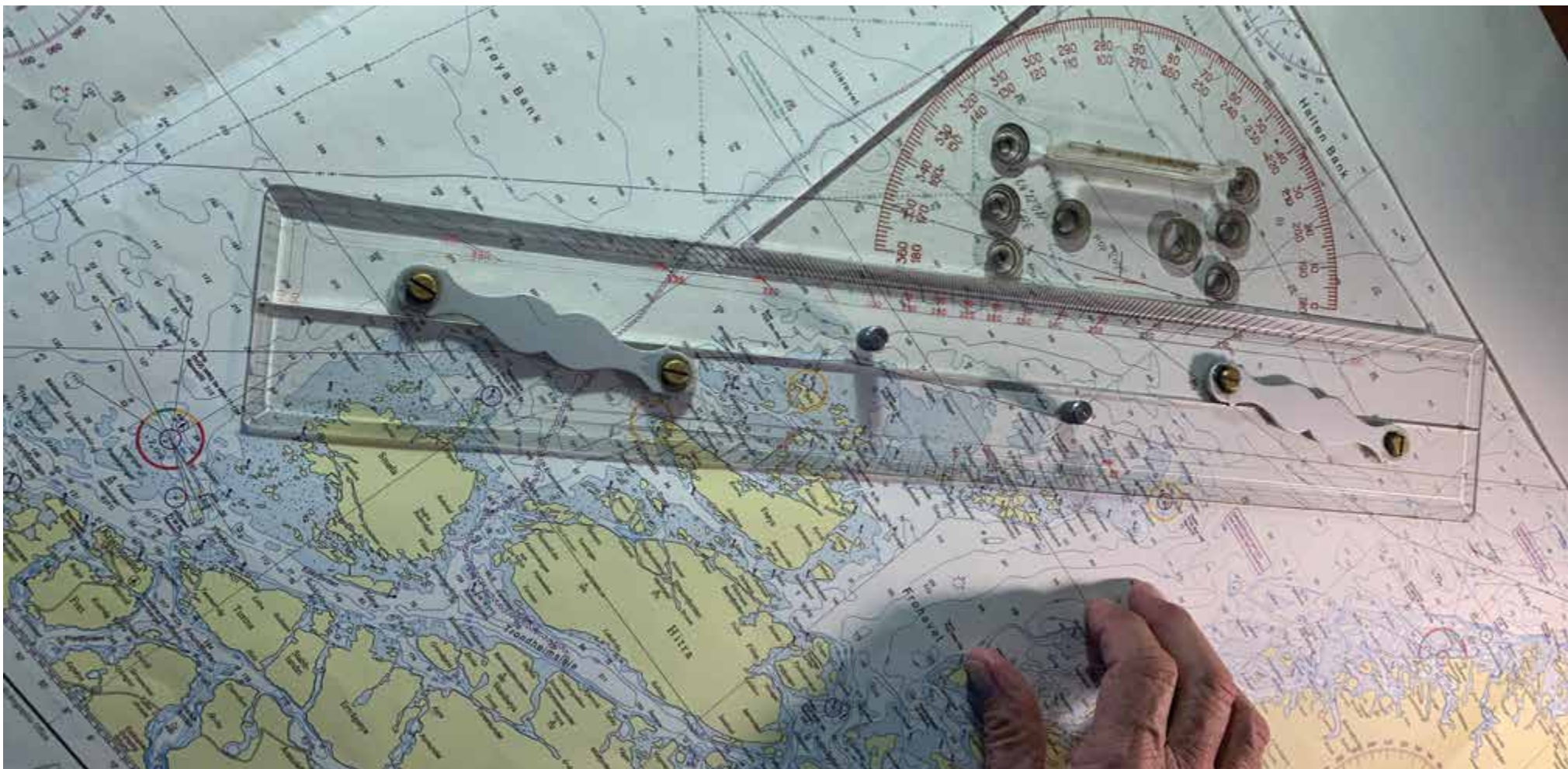
For lunch, the chefs helped us make our own lunch, providing the fixing, and we were happy they did. Delicious platters of meats, salads, cheeses and fruits were accompanied by king prawns. We created sandwiches fit for a Viking King!

Since the lecture room had been abandoned for at least two hours, we marched back down for Roger’s talk on marine mammals. We learnt about the seals and whales we might see on our Svalbard sojourn and behaviour they exhibit. He threw in a bit about terrestrial mammals, including the Svalbard reindeer and arctic fox as well.

Next up was our mandatory AECO (Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators) briefing. Justine ticked each of us off the list before Roger introduced the animated video of the do’s and don’ts when in the Arctic, followed by a more serious approach as to how we must behave when in polar bear territory.

Just before dinner we were called to the bridge to see the rare sight of 10 white-beaked dolphins cavorting. Our evening of leisure that followed included a scrumptuous dinner and the first instalment of a two-part movie as we crept ever closer to Bear Island.





Kvalrossbukta; Bjørnøya (Bear Island)

Position:	21:30 hours	Course:	350°	Wind Speed:	2 knots	Barometer:	1013.3 hPa & falling
Latitude:	75°58’N	Speed:	12.6 knots	Wind Direction:	N	Air Temp:	1°C
Longitude:	19°09’E					Sea Temp:	6°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

BEAR ISLAND IS A GO!

As we anchored in Sørhamna, Howard’s excitement was enough to get us jumping out of bed to see Bøjørnya, Bear island. Located halfway between the southernmost point of Spitsbergen and the Norwegian mainland, this 178 sq km island rises out of the Barents Sea like a Gothic myth, particularly when it’s soaring sea cliffs are wreathed in gossamer cloud. On leaving the ship, we convoyed along cliffs populated by some of the largest bird colonies in the Arctic. Brünnich’s and common guillemots, little auks, kittiwakes, fulmars, glaucous gulls, even a few puffins took to the sky in clouds and the sea surface in rafts many thousand strong.

Watching the guillemots as they swam under our Zodiacs was a sight to behold, with Richard capturing exquisite footage on his GoPro. As we explored the southernmost coast, the mist created an eerie and mystical vista, including Russian fish freezer ship Svetlana, that had been wrecked in about 2008 and since then, has split in two. Thankfully all crew were taken off safely. The phenomenal cliff formations, caused by intensive erosion, continued until we reached the impressive Perleporten, a 200-metre tunnel under Kapp Kolihoff. Our kayakers paddling straight to the southern end tip of the island make the same attempt. A whopping 14.5km paddle in total.

With weather on our side, it was time to try our luck ashore. Heading back north, we passed *Polar Pioneer* and cut through a small arch in the rock on the way to our landing beach in Kvalrossbukta. Carol and Howard went ashore first to scan the area to make sure it was safe for us to explore. Keeping in tight groups as we entered in bear country, we hiked up the hill spying lovely snow buntings grazing the tundra grasses, to reach views from the top of gulls and guillemots nesting in the cliffs, water as blue as the tropics and the *Polar Pioneer* proudly centre stage in the heart of it.

Carol shared the story of Theodore Lerner, a German journalist and adventurer who spent one year on the island hoping to sell coal to the German fishing fleet. One day he woke to the flag ship of the Imperial Navy that had arrived to claim Bear Island for Russia. He got in his boat, with German flag and pistol and rowed out to explain that Bear Island was already in German hands and politely suggesting they move on – which surprisingly, they did.

We moved on as well, loading into our Zodiacs to head back to the ship for lunch. Afterwards, we relaxed and enjoyed near glassy seas as we were carried further north. As we progressed deeper into the domain of the polar bear, we were eager to learn more about this mighty carnivore. Chris gave a stellar presentation about its evolution, life history, adaptations to the Arctic and how and what it hunts. He showed incredible footage, filmed by the BBC, of a mother and her cubs just after birth inside their den. Just before we retired, two fin whales blew just off the starboard side of the ship and showed off their long backs and tiny dorsal fins as we nudged closer to Svalbard.





Edgeøya; Kapp Lee and expedition afternoon

Position:	15:00 hours	Course:	95.8°	Wind Speed:	8 knots	Barometer:	1011.9 hPa & steady
Latitude:	78°11'N	Speed:	6.7 knots	Wind Direction:	E	Air Temp:	5°C
Longitude:	20°52'W					Sea Temp:	3°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

Early risers were treated to our first sighting of Spitzbergen (sharp mountains), through a letterbox vista bordered by glowering cloud and an oily, mist-steaming sea. *Polar Pioneer*, our ice strengthened ship, proved her worth as we bumped through ice floes, appearing further south than usual at this time of year. An ice bow – like a white rainbow – arched above some old blue ice that looked a little like a blue whale! Dovekies, or little auks, the most numerous auk in Svalbard, fluttered around. Rocky moraine was trapped in the ice and phytoplankton, underpinning the arctic food chain, stained the floes that had flipped. Our bow-riders were convinced they could see polar bear prints everywhere. The air was fresh and our excitement mounted as we edged towards Edgeøya, it’s coast swimming enticingly in the fog, while another ship passed on the horizon.

After a careful polar bear assessment with spotters at the high points, our first landing in Svalbard offered a thigmotactic wodge of walrus with a few outliers scratching and sparring in the bay. Complete silence accompanied our intense observation of these lumbering tooth-walkers, as we wondered how their tusks didn’t tangle. Vibrissae twitched as they settled down to digest a massive clam feast and the sea trio squished in amongst friends. Snow buntings cheeped and flashed past, pink-footed geese cackled and all around, the splendour of dolerite cliffs towered above a gently-graded green outflow to a curving bay with three huts.



Carol treated us to an historical account of the Russian Pomors who arrived in the 18th century to exploit whale and walrus, and characteristically brought their own bricks to build a kiln. More recent scientific researchers, mainly Norwegian and Dutch, make use of the newer huts as the walrus are gradually reclaiming their beach.

Kayakers sidled amongst eider ducks and arctic tern in the lagoon, before spotting a purple sandpiper. On the terraces behind, scattered bones and the tiniest wildflowers nestled close to the dry tundra. Delicate Svalbard poppies, hot pink moss campion, the beautifully described mouse ear chickweed, and fat polar buttercups sparsely-populated the tiny creeping polar willow forest and brightened the scree.

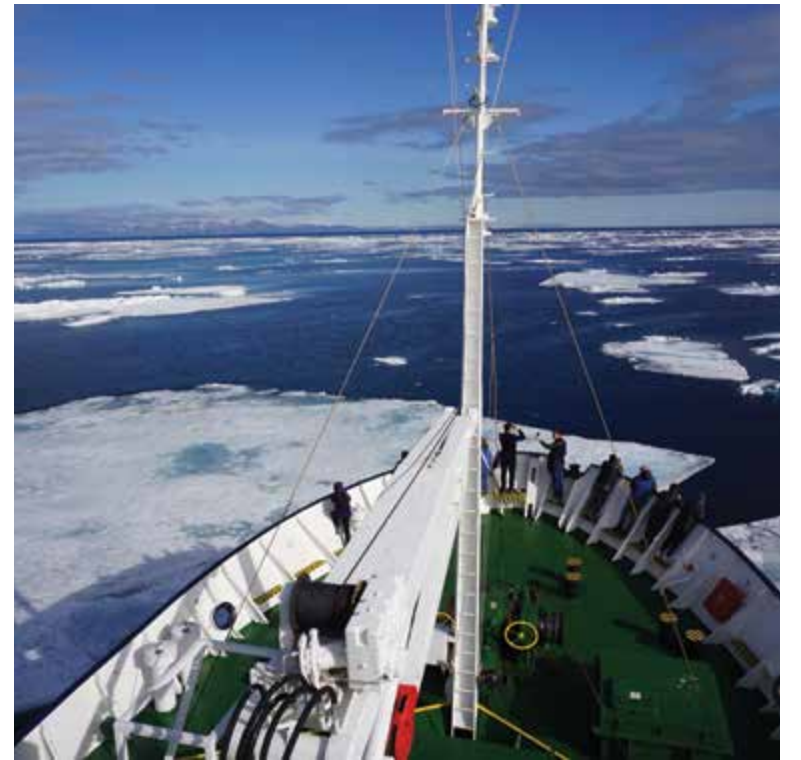
Arctic fox cubs and an adult, playing around their den, clambered onto a flat rock observe their visitors and one even followed us all down to the beach for a last look and sniff.

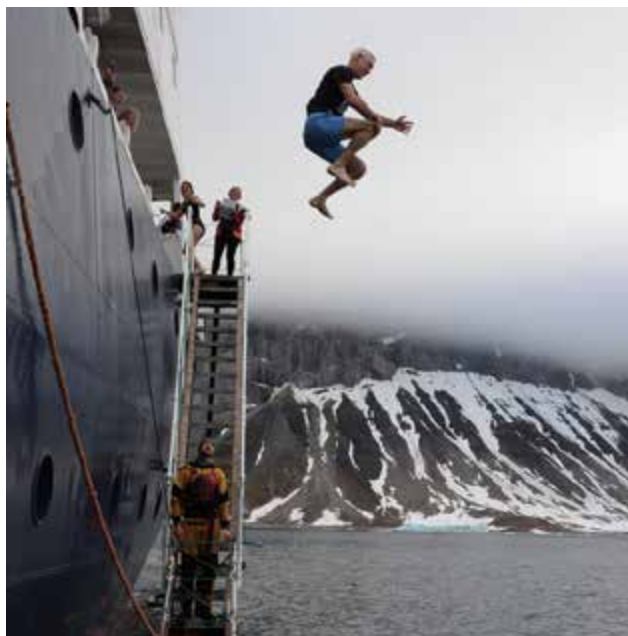
We were fortunate to have found ourselves in their world, enjoying the sunshine and bounty of summer. Once hard winter conditions set in, their brownish coat is shed to reveal a white garment, perfect for blending in with the snow.

Ravenous expeditioners polished off a French beef stew as fortification for an afternoon of polar bear searching along Freemansundet. Wayne proved to be handy with his spotting scope as another fifty reindeer were spotted, but not the elusive ursus maritimus. Late afternoon light sparkled on the breen (glaciers) and gorges carved amongst the dolerite and scree looked interesting to explore, while the beach was littered with drift wood.

Last night we rounded the southern tip of Spitsbergen and entered Hornsund where we hope to explore the icefront of Samarinbreen, then the bird cliffs of Gnalloden.











DAY 12 | Saturday 13 July 2019

Samarinbreen, Gnålodden

Position: 19:30 hours
Latitude: 77°01’N
Longitude: 15°57’E

Course: at anchor,
Burgerbukta

Wind Speed: Calm

Barometer: 1014.6 hPa & steady
Air Temp: 9°C
Sea Temp: 5°C

*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

We rounded the southern tip of Spitsbergen at dawn, its mysterious snow-capped peaks swathed in passing fog – the ever-present northern fulmar keeping us company on either side of the ship. During breakfast, we entered Hornsund as the clouds parted and an amazingly soft light painted the glaciers. Our hearty expeditioners felt the chill air bite on the bow, while they scanned the shoreline for elusive polar bear.

We alighted into kayaks and Zodiacs at Samarinbreen, pushing very slowly through the brash ice and bergy bits; the moraine and glacial front growing larger as we approached. Soon the ice shelves seemed all around us, evoking expressions like “raw, ragged, wild, untouched, colossal and grand”. Zodiacs engines were turned off and we could hear the pops and crackling of floating ice and occasionally the creaks and groans of this massive moving beast we call a glacier. As small sections fell off with sharp retorts, it was with nervous anticipation that we got closer, all watching, waiting, anticipating...

Kittiwakes, guillemots, glaucous gulls, eider ducks, bearded and ringed seals were seen amongst the floes, keeping our cameras snapping. But the true beauty of this fjord was its scale. Towering ice cliffs backed by mist covered mountain peaks. Although the most immediate peaks were

inspiring, it was the higher ones behind, their soaring flanks revealed through the moving mist that filled us with feelings of awe.

On board *Polar Pioneer*, we motored across to Gnålodden within Sør-Spitsbergen National Park and after lunch, surveyed the shores for polar bears. Then, with the coast clear, we landed near the inspiring hut built in the 1930s by Wanny Woldstad. Built by Wanny as a satellite hut for use while trapping polar bears and arctic foxes.

Roger led a walk up the steep scree to the base of the cliffs. Along the way we were surrounded by stunning carpets of buttercups, saxifrages and rare alpine cress. The cliffs were alive with breeding kittiwakes, Brunnichs guillemots and northern fulmars.

We’d barely made it back on board when the Polar Plunge was called. Although some seafarers observe the ritual of a quick dip on crossing the Arctic Circle at 66o 33”N we waited til we were even further north for our swim.

Those brave souls that took part described the jump as exhilarating, which was plain to see as they emerged with facial expressions of equal parts shock and joy. Following ‘the plunge’ and obligatory sauna, we all partook in music, dancing and a hearty charcoal fired barbeque on the stern deck. Enjoying the backdrop of 12 glaciers flowing to the sea, many wondered if it could get any better.



DAY 13 | Sunday 14 July 2019

Recherchefjorden, Bamsebu

Position:	16:30 hours	Course:	at anchor, Bamesbu
Latitude:	77°33'N		
Longitude:	15° 03'E		

Explore. Dream. Discover.

— Mark Twain

This morning we woke to calm conditions again. Particularly fortunate for those who participated heavily in the BBQ festivities, dancing and karaoke carry-on of last night. *Polar Pioneer* entered Recherchefjorden just before breakfast. This small fjord on the southern coast of Bellsund has a remarkably long history of human endeavour. Eight whalers were accidentally left behind here in 1630. (How does that happen? Accidentally... are you serious? Fortunately, we have the tag board and life-jacket counting so such a thing wouldn't happen to us. Anyway, they survived off the land.

In 1764, a Russian expedition whose eventual aim was to get to the North Pole, overwintered in Recherchefjord. The eight men survived. But eight men that tried to winter the following year all perished – they never got close to the Pole. A French expedition on the research vessel, Recherche, spent several weeks in the fjord, and named it after their vessel, in 1838. And in the early 20th century, the British Northern Exploration Company, made four attempts to mine spuriously 'valuable' resources in the area. One of these was led by Frank Wild of Antarctic exploration fame. Another attempted to mine 'Iron Mountain'. Despite considerable housing construction, all endeavours failed.

We Zodiaced and kayaked through a narrow channel in what was formerly the terminal moraine of Recherchebreen (glacier), into a post-glacial lagoon. It was huge and strewn with ice. An

Wind Speed: 15 knots

Wind Direction: NW

Barometer: 1014.6 hPa & rising

Air Temp: 9°C

Sea Temp: 6°C

attempt to find a route up the flank of the glacier failed, unfortunately, due to a dynamic alteration to the glacier. A formerly easy slope of ice is now a toy-box of jumbled, icy, seracs. After exploring the lagoon further, Zodiacs passed crowds of kittiwakes, out through the channel and up to 'Iron Mountain Camp'. There we enjoyed a landing amongst the remains of the station, gardens of arctic flowers and wonderful views across to the glacier. Then Toby called to say belugas were lunching around their kayaks. Zodiacs sped back to the lagoon to catch glimpses of beluga backs. Following our very pleasant lunch break, we unloaded around the corner at Bamsebu, in Van Keulenfjord which is also in Bellsund. Here, Carol told us about the beluga whaling industry that took place in the 1930s.

Whales were caught in seine nets and processed on the shore where today piles of beluga bones rest. A large contingent headed off overland to walk to the head of the fjord. Along the way they encountered a family of foxes, a parent and seven pups - one a blue morph the others brown. They saw the gathering of blue jackets but simply gambolled and tumbled on by, hardly breaking stride to acknowledge us. Next, a young reindeer nearly trotted over the top of Howard, then an older reindeer with large velvet-coated antlers passed us cautiously, pausing along its passage by to bite off some juicy grass.

What a pleasure the day was. In the evening we gathered in the bar for a recap and Captain's drinks, then proceeded to the dining rooms for a delicious end-of-voyage dinner. Filled with food and joy we toppled down into the lecture-room to see our voyage slide show. What a huge trip it has been – every day filled and so many brilliant photos to take home with us.







DAY 14 | Monday 15 July 2019

Longyearbyen

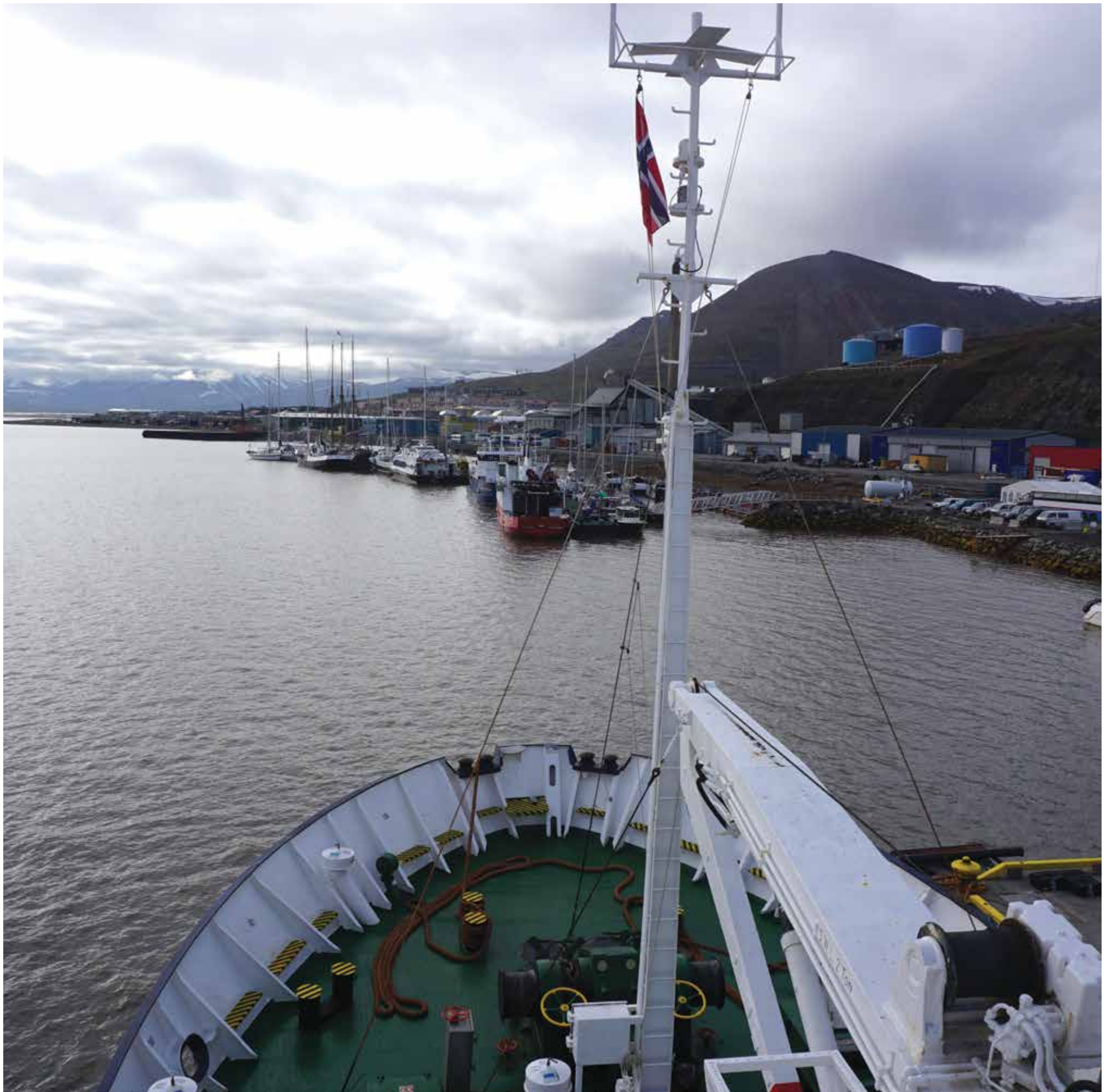
Position:	09:00 hours	Course:	At anchor Longyearbyen	Wind Speed:	5.3 knots	Barometer:	1015.9 hPa & steady
Latitude:	78°13'N			Wind Direction:	W	Air Temp:	10°C
Longitude:	15°37'E					Sea Temp:	5°C

This morning we docked at the small port of Longyearbyen in Spitsbergen. Longyearbyen is located in Isfjord, a fjord measuring 105 kms long by 12 kms wide—the biggest fjord on the west coast of the Svalbard archipelago. The name translates to Ice Fjord and was named in 1610 by Jonas Poole who encountered pack ice in the fjord. Longyearbyen has around 2,650 inhabitants of whom around 500 work in the mines, 200 in tourism and 100 in education. The town was named after American John Munroe Longyear who founded a mining company there in 1901 after visiting as a tourist. The town of Longyearbyen was founded in 1910.

We completed the sea leg of our voyage at Longyearbyen's Coal Pier, there to be whisked away by a coach for a morning tour of Longyearbyen and surrounds. After a free half hour roaming the small township many of us boarded the coach, bound for the airport.

From Aberdeen to the Orkney and Shetland Islands; across the Barents Sea to breathtaking bird cliffs and quaint fishing villages of Norway's dramatic Lofoten Islands, home to tiny single-lettered village names. Onto the wind-chilled reaches of Spitsbergen, we gathered a wealth of extraordinary experiences to carry home.

American author John Steinbeck wrote: a journey is a person in itself, no two are alike, and all plans, safeguards, policies and coercion are fruitless. We find after years of struggle that we do not take a trip; a trip takes us. Aurora Expeditions is thrilled to have shared with you this special journey and the many magic moments of nature, culture, archaeology and history our planet has to offer. We hope to see you on the high seas again someday!



Kayaking Log

Kayaking Guide: Toby Story

Kayakers:

Joanna Cull	Chris Gould	Vanessa Fitzgibbon	Igor Pavlovskiy
Wendy Cull	Ken Gray	Yanfeng Lim	

DAY 1:

Paddle briefing and gear allocation.

DAY 2:

Paddle talk and boat fitting.

DAY 3 (AM): No paddle due to windy conditions.

DAY 3 (PM): Jarlshof – Distance: 6kms

The wind and swell had decreased significantly from the morning, allowing us to begin paddling operations while also giving great conditions for our first outing. We paddled directly to the coast with the wind at our backs then made our way through a rocky passage leading out to the open sea. We saw grey seals in the water as we paddled along the shore towards the historic site of Jarshoff. Once at the site we were greeted by Carol who gave us an in-depth tour of the multi-age ruins. Feeling the cold we made a move to the kayaks and had just enough time to explore our first sea cave before paddling back to the ship.

DAY 4 (AM): Fetlar – Distance: 7kms

Despite the glaring sunshine before breakfast there was both wind and rain as we launched from the ship. We made our way across an open bay then explored some lovely sea caves before turning and taking advantage of the winds by forming a raft and “sailing” into the bay with our paddles. After some more sea cave exploration, one even requiring a headtorch, we made a quick stop at the local museum on our way back to the warmth of the ship.

DAY 4 (PM): Hermaness – Distance: 8kms

The winds were kind for our afternoon outing and we slipped over the side of the ship with ease. Our objective for the afternoon was to paddle to Muckle Flugga, the most northerly point in the British Isles. Paddling slowly under the bird filled skies, we watched as skuas harassed gannets, forcing them to regurgitate their food which they then stole from the water. We made our way tentatively towards the outer islands, wary of the strong currents running on either side out to open ocean. We wound our way through the rocks under the lighthouse at what certainly felt like the end of the world before making the crossing back to the Isle of Shetland. Along the coast, we found several enormous sea caves to play in before letting the wind take us back to the ship. A lovely last outing in Scotland!

DAY 5: At sea

DAY 6 (AM): Sor Gjaeslingan – Distance: 5.5kms

There was a full-compliment of eager paddlers for our first outing in Norway. After hitching a ride on the zodiacs to the once bustling fishing village of Sor Gjaeslingan, we re-grouped and set off for a lazy paddle through the village. Paddling out of the settlement we were delighted by urchins and a variety of undersea life in the crystal-clear waters. Our attempts to get through our first gap in the islands was thwarted, forcing a longer paddle and, to the relief of all, another zodiac ride to the ship!

DAY 6 (PM): Torghatten – Distance: 10kms

While some chose a hike through the well-known cave through Torghatten, a small group set off on a long, one-way paddle further into the islands. Shortly after leaving the ship we made a quick portage over a 30m spit of land and set out due North. After a section of relaxing paddling past brightly painted red and white houses, we picked up the pace and set out across a large bay. We passed under a fabulously engineered bridge before pausing at a small white sand beach for a collection of quick refreshments. Hearing the call from the ship, we were quickly on our way and made our way up one of the narrow channels. As we waited in the water we watched as the *Polar Pioneer* snuck out from behind an Island, made a neat u turn and picked us up. A fun one-way paddle.

DAY 7 (AM): Vedoy – Distance: 8kms

Visibility was barely at 300 meters and the GPS and compass were out as we began our paddle towards the Island of Vedoy. After a short upwind paddle, the islands, dark lumps in the mist, began to come into view. We hugged the coast to escape the winds and enjoy the numerous birds on the rocks and in the water. At the northern tip of the Island we committed to completing the circumnavigation and, after an unscheduled stop, we turned and with the winds at our back paddled into the mist until the ship appeared out of the gloom.

DAY 7 (PM): Å – Distance: 6.5kms

The afternoon was warm enough for shorts and t-shirts but we diligently slipped into our dry-suits to protect ourselves for the cold waters and set out for the coast. We paddled into a small bay and made an impromptu landing to explore a cave up on the cliff edge. It was a fun climb in our wetsuit booties and an even more fun descent using a rope to guide our way down. After a short paddle we were in the village of Å where we found a small stream and dragged our boats up and into the lake behind the town. After a brief exploration, we stopped for a quick swim and a chance to grab some vitamin d before making our way back to the ship.

DAY 7 (EVENING): Reine – Distance: 10kms

No sooner was dinner finished then it was time to don our suits once again and head out into the fjords around Reine. There was not a breath of wind as we set out onto smooth waters under the heat of the evening arctic sun. We made our way to the far reaches of the fjord and into a small tidal lagoon where we made a landing and walked across the cushioned grass to a view of towering mountains reflecting in the mirror black waters of a small lake. As the sun began to slowly sink, we began our paddle back to the ship. We paused in the last rays of the sun’s light for the night and watched the sun dipping behind the mountains at 11pm. We made quick detour through the village of Reine before making our way back to the ship just as the clock struck midnight.

DAY 8 (AM): Henningsvar – Distance: 6kms

A small group of sleepy paddlers in single kayaks set out on glassy waters that sparkled under the glaring sun. We made our way out to a collection of skerries then towards the main group of Islands that comprised the town of Henningsvar. We paused to watch as a large school of cod fed near our boats then paddled into the centre of town – a short body of water lined with houses and shops. After passing several fellow paddlers and other expeditioners, we made our way back to the ship, the warming sun on our backs.



Kayaking Log

DAY 8 (PM): Trollfjorden – Distance: 7.5kms

After a fantastic ship cruise into Trollfjorden, we paddled into the adjacent fjord. The incoming tide swept us quickly into the fjord to a sunny, rocky beach beside a swiftly flowing stream. We landed, quickly stripped off our dry-suits and plunged into the waters, some in the lake and others in the stream. Ken even managed to find a natural waterslide into the sea! After a brief time, ashore, we paddled back to the entrance to Trollfjorden where Carol (our guest paddling historian) related the story of Norway's most famous battle over cod. We made our way back to the ship feeling sad to leave sunny Norway but full of anticipation for what Svalbard would bring.

DAY 9: At sea

DAY 10 (AM): Bear Island – Distance: 14.5kms

The waters were unusually calm as we began our paddle under the towering cliffs of Bear Island. Thousands of birds swirled around us, in the water, in the air and up onto their perches in the mist high on the cliffs. We past the remains of a rusting hulk of a vessel, a salient reminder of the potential sea conditions in the area, then paddled through a giant tunnel through the cliffs. The swift current whisked us through the passage and down to the southern end of the island. On our return the flow in the passage had picked up even more, making for a stiff uphill paddle! After more cliff-line paddling we made our way to shore for a short stroll to the cliff tops overlooking the *Polar Pioneer* before being swept back with the tide through an arch to the ship after our longest paddle of the trip!!

DAY 11 (AM): Kapp Lee – Distance: 6kms

It was deceptively bumpy as we launched for a short paddle to a shallow lagoon at Kapp Lee. We made our landing beside a giant rib-bone from a blue whale then, after a short stroll, came to the rest of the expeditioners observing a mass of hauled out walrus. Once we had our fill of the walruses, we walked a short distance to observe a sleeping arctic fox cub before ambling back to the kayaks with reindeer grazing on the nearby hillsides. A fantastic wildlife filled outing!

DAY 12 (AM): Samarinbreen – Distance: 7kms

Despite the strong winds in the bay it was mirror calm in the silty waters in front of Samarinbreen. We made our way towards the towering glacier face being wary to keep a safe distance as the ice popped, cracked, groaned and even collapsed nearby. After pushing through ice, we found a small spit to land on and toasted our first glacier paddle and even placed a few tentative feet on the ice before paddling back to the ship.

DAY 12 (PM): Gnalodden – Distance: 8kms

We were again put to the test as we unloaded in bumpy conditions before paddling to the shelter of the rocks close to shore. We then paddled slowly past gleaming icebergs and into Burgerbukta, a deep bay with pointed, towering mountains on either side. As we paddled, we heard the call that the ship would move to meet us and took advantage of the extra time to take a long amble on the tundra to a high point. We wandered past thawing lakes surrounded by rich green moss then along the steely shore before paddling back to the ship.

DAY 13 (AM): Researchefjorden – Distance: 7kms

More calm conditions greeted us for our last paddle in Svalbard in front of Recherche Glacier. After entering the lagoon in front of the glacier through a narrow gap in the old terminal moraine, we paddled gently through stranded pieces of glacial ice resting in the shallows like a garden of ice sculptures. We made our way slowly past the glacier face to a small spit where we made a landing to toast the final outing and enjoy a cup of tea. As we stood idly chatting a beluga whale rose from the milky waters. Suddenly there was another, then another and another! We jumped in kayaks and were almost instantly approached by several curious belugas which then settled into feeding in the waters surrounding the kayaks. We sat in quiet excitement until it was time to paddle away and back to the ship for one last paddle. What a wonderful way to finish a very successful trip!

DAY 14: Disembark in Longyearbyen.



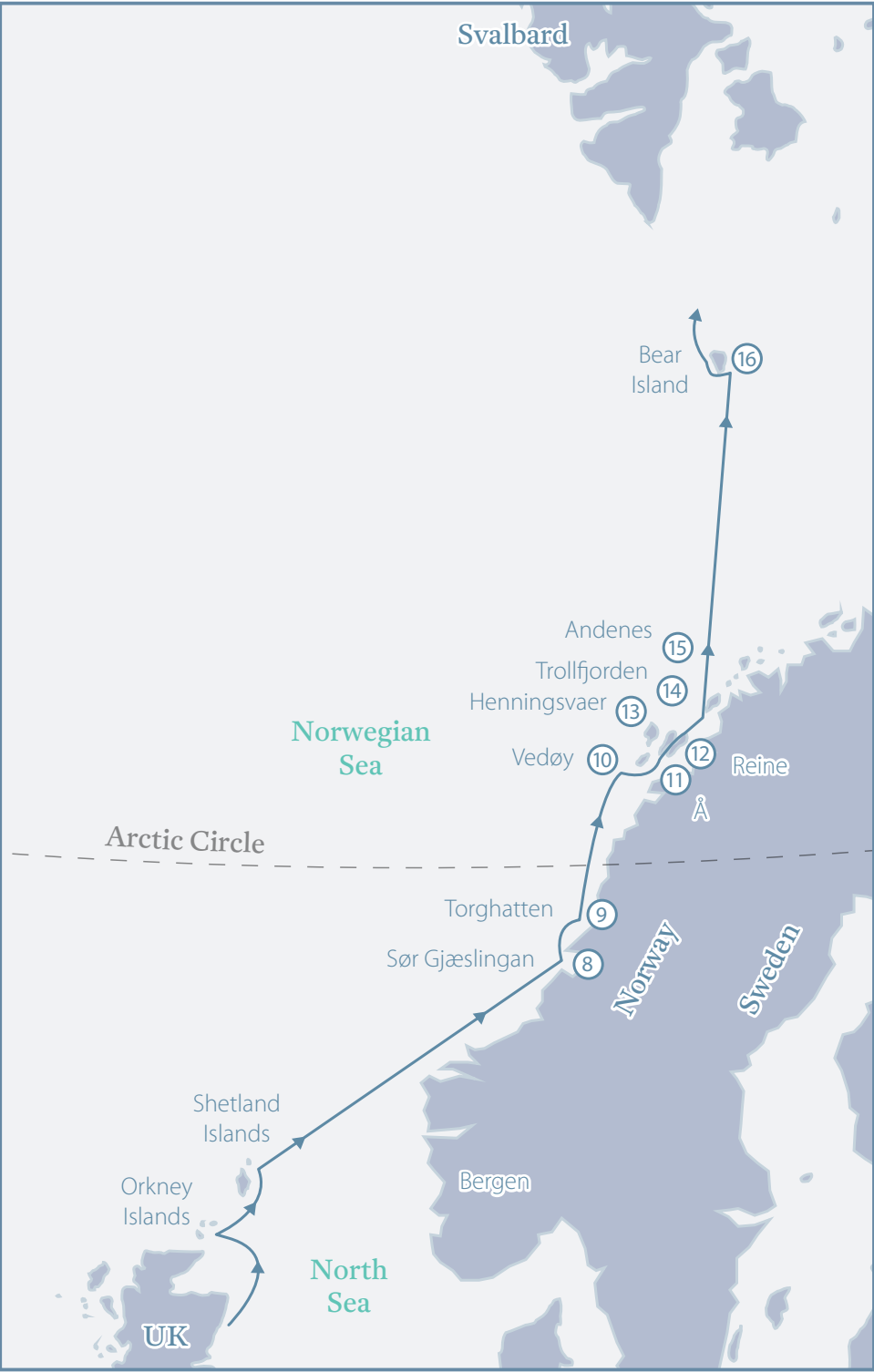






ACROSS THE ARCTIC CIRCLE

02 – 15 July 2019 | Distance Travelled: 2,045 nautical miles
Northernmost point of voyage: 78° 16' N 15° 24' E



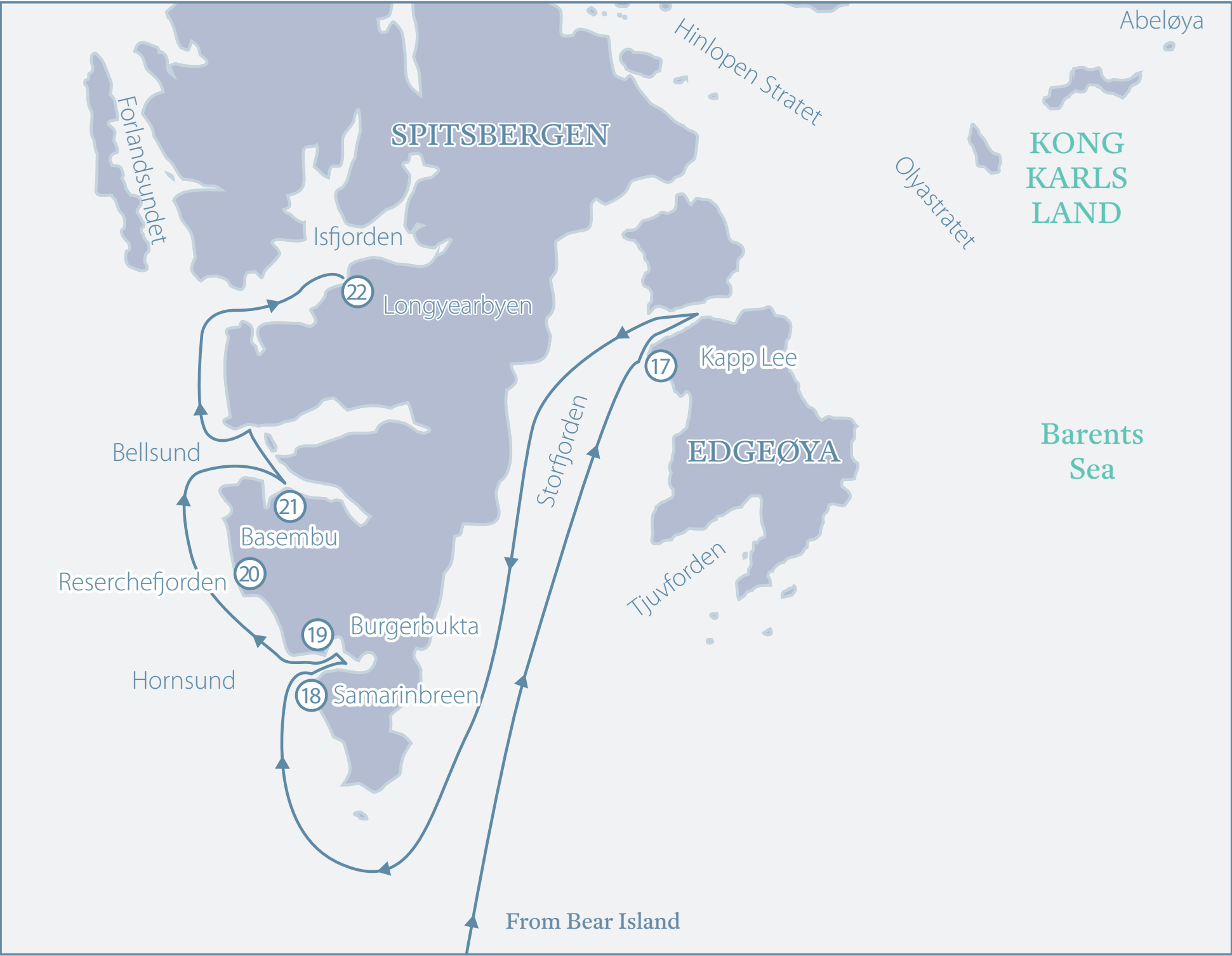
Destinations

- | | | | |
|--------------|-------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 01 Aberdeen | 05 Mousa | 09 Torghattan | 13 Henningsvaer |
| 02 Kirkwall | 06 Fetlarr | 10 Vedøy | 14 Trollfjorden |
| 03 Fair Isle | 07 Hermaness | 11 Å | 15 Andenes |
| 04 Jarlshof | 08 Sør Gjæslingan | 12 Reine | 16 Bear Island |

ACROSS THE ARCTIC CIRCLE

02 – 15 July 2019 | Distance Travelled: 2,045 nautical miles

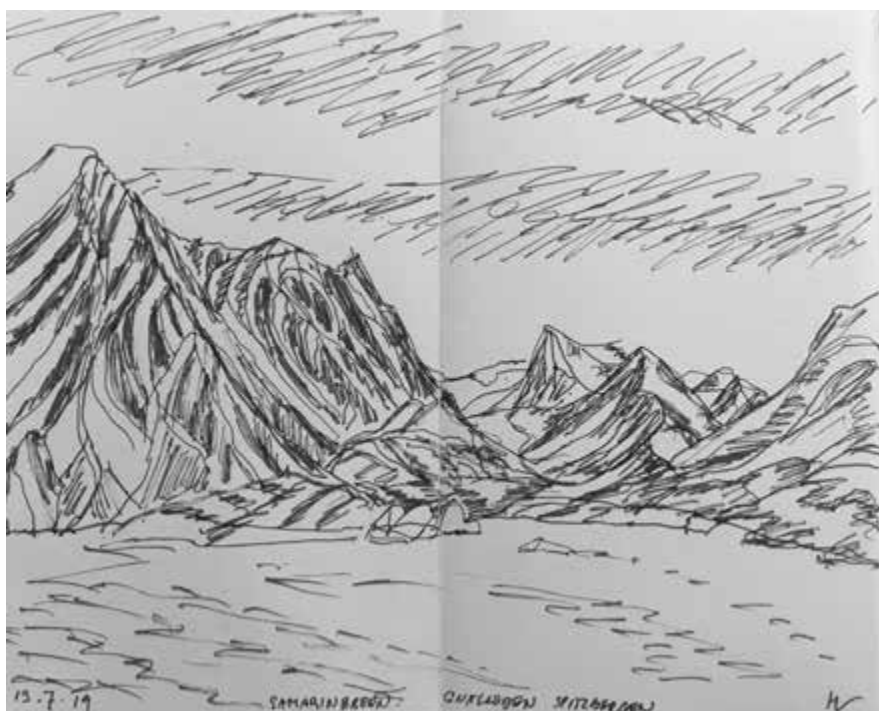
Northernmost point of voyage: 78° 16' N 15° 24' E



Destinations

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| 17 Kapp Lee | 21 Bamsebu |
| 18 Samarinbreen | 22 Longyearbyen |
| 19 Burgerbukta (Plunge & BBQ) | |
| 20 Reserchefjorden | |

Voyage Illustrations









Bird species log

BIRD SPECIES	JULY														
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
Northern Fulmar	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Gannet	X	X	X	X	X		X			X					
Common Guillemot		X	X	X			X	X	X	X					
Brünnich's Guillemot										X	X	X	X		
Black Guillemot			X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	
Atlantic Puffin			X	X		X	X			X					
Razorbill				X			X			X					
Little Auk										X	X	X			
Storm Petrel			X												
Manx Shearwater				X											
Herring Gull	X	X	X			X	X	X							
Glaucous Gull										X	X	X	X	X	
Great Black-backed Gull		X	X	X		X	X	X		X				X	
Lesser Black-backed Gull	X	X	X	X			X								
Common Gull (Mew)		X					X	X							
Black-headed Gull								X							
Kittiwake		X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Arctic Tern		X	X	X		X	X	X			X	X	X	X	
Common Tern	X							X							
Arctic Skua			X	X			X			X	X	X			
Great Skua		X	X	X		X	X			X	X				
Pink-footed Goose											X				
Barnacle Goose											X	X			
Common Eider				X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	
Mallard			X			X				X					
Mute Swan		X						X							
Shag	X	X	X	X		X	X	X							
Oystercatcher	X	X	X	X		X	X	X							
Purple Sandpiper										X	X	X	X		
Rock Pipit		X				X	X								
Ringed Plover				X							X		X		
Ruddy Turnstone										X					
Dunlin				X											



Meadow Pipit



Common Tern



Arctic Tern

Bird species log

BIRD SPECIES	JULY														
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
Red-throated Diver				X											
Grey Phalarope											X				
Golden Plover				X											
Snow Bunting										X	X	X	X	X	
House Sparrow		X	X	X			X	X							
Blackbird		X	X	X											
Starling		X	X	X		X									
Skylark		X	X			X									
Meadow Pipit			X	X		X	X	X							
Pied Wagtail						X		X							
Wheatear			X				X	X							
Magpie						X		X							
Robin						X									
Fieldfare						X	X	X							
Pied Flycatcher							X								
Redpole							X								
Great Tit								X							
Blue Tit							X								
Martin			X												
Wren			X	X											
Crossbill		X													
Linnet		X													
Grey Heron						X	X	X							
Curlew			X	X											
Snipe				X											
Pigeon (Rock Dove)		X	X	X				X							
Raven		X	X												
Hooded Crow				X		X	X								
White Tailed Eagle						X	X	X							
Kestrel		X													



Pied Wagtail



Hooded Crow



Common Magpie

Mammal species log

MAMMAL SPECIES	JULY														
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
Rabbit		X	X	X											
Hare		X													
Otter				X											
Moose										X					
Rodent (Brown Rat?)						X									
Reindeer											X	X	X	X	
Arctic Fox											X	X	X		
Polar Bear															
Walrus											X				
Grey Seal			X												
Harbour Seal				X				X							
Bearded Seal												X			
Ringed Seal												X	X		
Humpback Whale							X								
Fin Whale										X					
Beluga													X		
UNID Whale				X											
Orca							X								
White-beaked Dolphin									X						
Harbour Porpoise				X		X		X		X					
UNID Dolphin	X														



Reindeer



White Beaked Dolphin



Harbour Seal



Walrus





Expeditioners

Kathi Anastassiou	Anne Clark	Lynne Hume	Lay Kim Lim	Doug Miller	Yvonne Reidy	Angey Yallop
Giselle Backo	Joanna Cull	Bob Inns	Yanfeng Lim	Ian Miller	Chris Shattock	Mike Yallop
Matt Backo	Wendy Cull	Jude Irwin	Louise Little	Rosalind Miller	Norma Shattock	
Kathy Blackshaw	Mary Lou Finlan	Leonie Key	Dianne Lumb	Louise Nash	Alan Smeaton	
Jan Bowman	Vanessa Fitzgibbon	Fern Lee	Marie Lund	Barry Neaton	Jan Smeaton	
Peter Bowman	Chris Gould	Belinda Liew	Trevor Lund	Sue Parsonage	Poh Ting	
Nancy Brogan	Ken Gray	Hui Liew	Lynette Mace	Igor Pavlovskiy	Helen Wallace	
Lulu Chong	Jenny Hume	Choi Liew	Wayne Merritt	Kerrie Rawson	Jane Wright	



Expedition Team

Polar Pioneer Crew

With Thanks

Expedition Leader:	Howard Whelan	Master:	Aleksandr 'Sasha' Evgenov	Able Seaman:	Igor Popp	Kathi Anastassiou	Fern Lee
Assistant Expedition Leader:	Justine Bornholdt	Chief Mate:	Vladimir Zimin	Able Seaman:	Vasilii Berlizev	Justine Bornholdt	Choi Liew
Archaeologist/Historian:	Carol Knott	Second Mate:	Evgenii Aleksandrov	Motorman:	Vladimir Zhukov	Peter Bowman	Louise Little
Senior Naturalist:	Roger Kirkwood	Third Mate:	Aleksandr Kiselev	Head Stewardess:	Svetlana Fedorova	Nancy Brogan	Marie Lund
Naturalist:	Chris Todd	Radio Operator:	Ilia Liamzin	Stewardess:	Aleksandra	Lesley Cadzow	Wayne Merritt
Kayaking Master:	Toby Story	Chief Engineer:	Evgeny Petukhov		'Sasha' Belusova	Anne Clark	Doug Miller
Expedition Guide:	Richard Dakin	Second Engineer:	Pavel Voronov	Stewardess:	Uliana Koval	Wendy Cull	Barry Neaton
Doctor:	Lesley Cadzow	Third Engineer:	Aleksei Moiseev	Stewardess:	Ekaterina Rumiantseva	Richard Dakin	Sue Parsonage
Head Chef:	Allan Estoque	Fourth Engineer:	Yurii Horobets	Stewardess:	Natalia Trofimova	Chris Gould	Kerrie Rawson
Sous Chef:	Herbert Cruz	Electrical Engineer:	Valentin Lomachenko	Stewardess:	Elena Liukshina	Mary Lou Finlan	Toby Story
Hotel Manager:	Anne Oyasaeter	Boatswain:	Aleksandr Agafonov	Russian Crew Chef:	Denis Zhenchevski	Roger Kirkwood	Helen Wallace
		Able Seaman:	Rashit Ganiev			Kerrie Rawson illustrations	





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