

WILDLIFE TRAVEL



21st-30th June 2018 (10 days)

SVALBARD

Natural history of the high Arctic

"more than exceeded expectations... exhilarating"

"wildlife was even better than imagined"

Svalbard 2017

An awe-inspiring week-long arctic cruise, exploring the spectacular land of the ice bear.

The archipelago of Spitsbergen (also known as Svalbard) lies **well north of the Arctic Circle**, midway between the North Cape (the northernmost point on mainland Europe) and the North Pole. During the summer the sun never sets (although don't worry, there are good blinds on the windows!). During our voyage we will explore the western side of the archipelago, although our exact route will depend on the current extent of the sea ice.

Inevitably, the species diversity up here is pretty low: for example, the islands are home to just 165 species of vascular plants and only three species of land mammal, but this is more than made up for with the sheer numbers, especially of the marine life. Around 850,000 pairs of Brunnich's Guillemots and **over a million pairs of Little Auk** nest amongst the islands' cliffs, with several species of seal and whale abundant in the rich waters. The human population is outnumbered by that of the world's largest land predator, the **Polar Bear**.

As we travel around the archipelago we will make daily excursions out to explore the various islands and fjords, enjoying **spectacular glaciers**, wonderful views and travelling up to the bleak but wildlife-rich expanses of the polar pack ice. We will spend time at vast seabird colonies and **Walrus haul-outs**, visit the world's most northerly village, sail amongst icebergs calved off from amazing icebergs and cruise the edge of the pack ice, where Polar Bears hunt for seals, attended by scavenging Ivory Gulls.

We will travel aboard the **MV Plancius**, a former oceanographic research vessel now completely rebuilt and converted to a very comfortable 116-passenger vessel.



Price
£5125

Single Room Supplement
£75 (hotel only)

single cabins very limited, ask for details

Full board

- Day 1** flight to Oslo
- Day 2** flight to Longyearbyen board *MV Plancius*
- Day 3-8** cruise around western Spitsbergen archipelago perhaps reaching as far as 81° North (ice conditions allowing)
- Day 9** return to Oslo
- Day 10** Oslo to UK

Leader
Mike Symes

spectacular scenery
Polar Bears, Walrus,
Arctic flora and birds

Wildlife and culture holidays



Our profits are donated to the **Wildlife Trusts**





Focus of interest

This holiday is suitable for anyone with a general interest in wildlife: the spectacular scenery, interesting history and wonderful, approachable wildlife makes this a real trip of a lifetime. And if you've ever dreamed of seeing a Polar Bear, this is the trip for you!

Accommodation, meals, travel

We will be travelling aboard the *MV Plancius*, a former research vessel now rebuilt as a 116-passenger vessel. More details are available at <https://oceanwide-expeditions.com/our-fleet/m-v-plancius> Our accommodation is in twin rooms, en-suite, with a port-hole (with a black out blind!). Spaces in four-berth cabins may also be available, at a reduced price. There are very limited single cabins available: speak to us about the options. All meals are included: special diets can be catered for. Excursions are taken in Zodiacs, small, open, rigid inflatables. Warm rubber boots are provided for the excursions.

In Oslo we will stay at an airport hotel near to Oslo Gardermoen, on a bed and breakfast basis.

ITINERARY

The exact itinerary of the cruise will depend very much upon local conditions, in particular the state of the sea ice around Spitsbergen and may change at the discretion of the Oceanwide expedition leader and the boat captain.



Day 1 21st June Today we make our way to Oslo, where we spend the night in a hotel near the airport. **You may prefer to fly out early and spend some time in Oslo, meeting up with the group at Oslo airport on the morning of Day 2.**

Day 2 22nd June Our morning flight takes us from Oslo up across the Arctic Circle to **Longyearbyen**, the administrative capital of the Spitsbergen archipelago. Leaving our luggage to be taken on board our ship, we have a couple of hours to explore this former mining town, where we will get our first taste of the Arctic flora as well as the option of visiting the Polar Museum. In the afternoon we board the ***MV Plancius***, our home for the holiday, and set sail early evening. As we head out of Isfjorden, the boat will pass over some deeper water, and we will keep our eyes open for our first whales of the trip.

Day 3 23rd June We sail to Raudfjord on the north coast of West Spitsbergen, a beautiful fjord dominated by spectacular glaciers and favoured by Ringed and Bearded Seal. The cliffs and shoreline of the fjord also support thriving seabird colonies and a surprisingly rich vegetation, which flourishes in sheltered spots. Polar bear are often seen here.

Day 4 24th June Depending on the weather we may now sail into Liefdefjorden, cruising near the 5km long face of the impressive Monaco Glacier. The waters of the glacier front

are a favorite feeding spot for thousands of Kittiwake. As well, Polar Bear have been seen on the glacier, providing wonderful opportunities for photography.



Day 5 25th June Today we will sail into Hinlopen Strait, home to Bearded Seal, Ringed Seal, Polar Bear, and Ivory Gull. At the entrance there is the possibility to see Blue Whale. We'll navigate the ice floes of Lomfjordshalvøya in our zodiacs and explore the bird cliffs of Alkefjellet with thousands of Brünnich's Guillemot. On the east side of Hinlopen Strait, we'll attempt a landing at Palanderbukta on Nordaustlandet, home to reindeer, Pink-footed Goose, breeding Ivory Gull, and Walrus.



Day 6 26th June We will try reach our northernmost point at Phippsøya, in the Seven Islands north of Nordaustlandet. Here we will be at 81 degrees north, just 540 miles from the geographic North Pole. Polar Bear inhabit this region, along with Ivory Gull. The ship may sit for several hours in the pack ice, before turning west again.



Day 7 27th June Retracing our route westwards, our route takes us through and along the pack ice, keeping watch for Polar Bear and the elusive Greenland Whale (Bowhead). About 40 nautical miles west of Spitsbergen we sail along the edge of the continental shelf, where Fin Whale forage in summer in the upwelling's along the Spitsbergen banks. At the mouth of the Kongsfjorden we have also good chances to see Minke Whale.



Day 8 28th June In Forlandsundet at Sarstangen is a haul out place for Walrus. Alternatively we sail into St. Johns Fjord or south to the mouth of Isfjorden and land at Alkhorneret. Seabirds nest on its cliffs and Arctic Fox search the cliff base for fallen eggs and chicks, while Spitsbergen Reindeer graze the relatively luxuriant vegetation. At nighttime we arrive in Longyearbyen.



Day 9 29th June We disembark in Longyearbyen, and will have some time in the morning to explore the town and its surroundings, before our transfer to the airport and the flight back to Oslo and, after another night in the airport hotel, returning to the UK
(Day 10 30th June).

Leaders and guides

Mike Symes is an excellent all-round naturalist who has worked for Devon Wildlife Trust for almost ten years. Mike has led for Wildlife Travel in Estonia, Romania, Tanzania, the Dolomites and Norfolk. Mike will help you to enjoy all aspects of the wildlife of Spitsbergen. We will be led at all times by expedition guides from Oceanwide Expeditions.

Flights

The group flights are with Scandinavian Airlines.

21st June	SK810	departs Heathrow 17.30, arrives Oslo 20.40
22nd June	SK4490	departs Oslo 09.45, arrives Longyearbyen 12.40
29th June	SK4425	departs Longyearbyen 13.35, arrives Oslo 16.30
30th June	SK805	departs Oslo 13.15, arrives Heathrow 14.35

Oslo and Spitsbergen are one hour ahead of UK time.

It is also possible to fly to Oslo with KLM via Amsterdam, from many regional airports, including Manchester, Edinburgh, Norwich and Birmingham. Ask us about the options.

Weather, Health and Fitness

There may be some rain or snow flurries and it can be windy, although the weather is generally calm and **surprisingly mild**, with average summer temperatures between -5° and $+5^{\circ}$ Celsius. You will need good water/wind proofs and warm weather clothing, including thermals for this trip. There is 24 hour daylight in the Arctic summer.

Please see the General Information leaflet for health and fitness requirements. We will be walking for at least some of each day, as well as taking excursions by Zodiac. It is necessary to walk on **rougher and/or wet ground and up some slopes**: some longer walks may be offered. All excursions are optional.

TO BOOK

Contact us to check availability and reserve a place. Complete the Booking Form and send to Sunvil Holidays (CAA-ATOL Licence 808, ABTA V6218), our tour operator, with your deposit. All details about booking are given in the Booking Pack.

DEPOSIT £1350 per person, second instalment on confirmation of holiday £1400, BALANCE DUE BY 19/04/2018

INCLUDED: Return flights: UK to Oslo, and Oslo to Longyearbyen, including airport taxes. Local transport as specified in itinerary. Nine night's accommodation (two nights in Oslo, seven nights on boat), full board basis, except two dinners (days 1 and 9) and two lunches (days 2 and 9). Use of rubber boots during excursions. Services of leaders and guides.

NOT INCLUDED: Two dinners and two lunches. Drinks and refreshments. Entrance fees to optional visitor attractions: eg Museum, Longyearbyen. Gratuities. Travel insurance.

WILDLIFE TRAVEL

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Front (clockwise from top): Little Auk, Walrus, Longyearbyen, Polar Bear.

Inside (left): Svalbard scenery and route map. (Right: top to bottom): *Pedicularis hirsuta* and *Saxifraga caespitosa*, M/V Plancius (courtesy Oceanwide Expeditions), King Eider (pair with male Common Eider), 14th July Glacier, Polar Bear from the zodiac.