

# WILDLIFE TRAVEL

6th-17th July 2026 (12 days)

## SVALBARD

### Polar Bears and wildlife of the High Arctic

"more than exceeded expectations... exhilarating"

"wildlife was even better than imagined"

Svalbard 2017

#### An awe-inspiring ten day arctic cruise, exploring the spectacular land of the ice bear.

The archipelago of 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 attempt to circumnavigate the island of Spitsbergen, although our exact route will depend on the 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 108-passenger vessel.



#### Price

£8,495

(twin cabin, window)

#### Single Room Supplement

£100 (Oslo hotel only)

£4,150 (single cabin)

#### Full board

**Day 1** flight to Oslo

**Day 2** flight to Longyearbyen board MV Plancius

**Day 3-10** circumnavigation around Spitsbergen archipelago perhaps reaching as far as 81° North (ice conditions allowing)

**Day 11** Longyearbyen return to Oslo

**Day 12** Oslo to UK

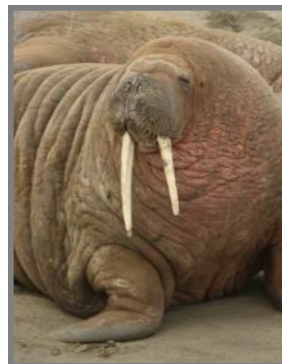
#### Leader

Philip Precey

spectacular scenery  
Polar Bears, Walrus,  
Arctic flora and birds

#### Group size

min 4, max 15



## ITINERARY

**The planned cruise itinerary is to complete a full circumnavigation of Spitsbergen. The itinerary given below is for guidance only.** The actual program may vary depending on ice, weather and wildlife conditions, while landings are subject to site availabilities, permissions and environmental concerns per AECO regulations. In case we cannot complete a full circumnavigation, the expedition leader will devise a suitable program.

**Day 1 6th July** 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 7th July** Our morning flight takes us from Oslo up across the Arctic Circle to **Longyearbyen**, the administrative capital of the Svalbard archipelago. Here we have a couple of hours to explore, getting our first taste of the Arctic. In the afternoon we board the ***MV Plancius***, our home for the holiday, and set sail.

**Days 3-10 8th-15th July** 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.

Heading north along the west coast, we expect to sail to Ny Ålesund, the northernmost settlement on earth: Close to the community is a breeding ground for Barnacle Geese, Pink-footed Geese and Arctic Terns.

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, and the base of the ice is a popular hunting ground for Polar Bears, providing wonderful opportunities for photography.

The northernmost point of our voyage may be north of Nordaustlandet at Phippsøya, in the Seven Islands, at 80 degrees north, just 540 miles from the geographic North Pole. Polar Bear inhabit this region, followed by Ivory Gulls, keen to scavenge from the bears' kill, while Harp Seals and the elusive Bowhead Whale may be found along the edge of the ice.

Heading south into Hinlopen Strait, 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.

The plan is to sail through Freemansundet, the strait between Barentsøya and Edgeøya, before landing at the mouth of the valley Skjolddalen on West Spitsbergen, four kilometers from an Ivory Gull colony.

Cruising the side fjords of the Hornsund area of southern Spitsbergen, we will take in the spire-like peaks that give Spitsbergen, 'the pointed mountains' its name. There are 14 sizeable glaciers in this area, as well as more opportunities for spotting seals, Polar Bears and perhaps even Beluga Whales.

In the evening of Day 10 we arrive in Longyearbyen.



**Day 11 16th July** 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 12 17th July**).

## Leaders and guides

**Philip Precey** will be familiar to our travellers as an experienced Wildlife Travel leader, having led more than 90 of our holidays over the past 20 years. This will be Philip's third visit to Svalbard.

During our time onboard Plancius, we will be led a team of guides from Oceanwide Expeditions.

## Accommodation and Meals

For our Svalbard cruise, we will be travelling aboard the m/v 'Plancius', a former oceanographic research vessel which was completely rebuilt as a 108-passenger vessel in 2009.

Our accommodation is in twin rooms, en-suite, with a window. Double superior cabins are also available, at a higher price, and there may be single spaces in 4-berth cabins, at a reduced cost: speak to us about the various options/costs.

All meals onboard are included: special diets can be catered for. Excursions are in Zodiacs; small, open, rigid inflatables. Warm rubber boots are provided for the excursions, and it is possible to rent suitable waterproof clothing for the period of the cruise.

In Oslo we will spend two nights in a comfortable hotel close to the airport.

## Health and Fitness

Excursions will be by 'zodiac' inflatables, accessed from the ship by a steep gangway, with a step down into the inflatable: landings will be 'wet landings', stepping directly from the zodiac onto the beach.

Most walking will be at a slow pace to give us the time to enjoy the scenery and wildlife. To see the best of the wildlife, it will be necessary to walk on rough, slippery terrain, with snow and ice, and up/down slopes, sometimes quite steep. You need to be steady on your feet, able to climb stairs and hold onto hand rails whilst moving about the ship.

The sun can be very strong and **sun protection is essential**.

We are travelling in remote areas, with the nearest medical facilities a considerable distance away.



**Photos:** (clockwise from top). Moss Campion, Alkefjellet, Polar Bear family on the ice, Brünnich's Guillemot, Svalbard Reindeer, Ivory Gull, Arctic Fox

## Flights

The group flights are with Scandinavian Airlines from London Heathrow (Terminal 2) to Longyearbyen, with connecting flights in Oslo. Flight times for 2026 aren't yet available, but are likely to be similar to 2025, as follows:

6th July	<b>depart London Heathrow 15.35</b> , arrive Oslo Gardermoen 18.50
7th July	depart Oslo Gardermoen 07.05, arrive Longyearbyen 10.00
16th July	depart Longyearbyen 16.40, arrive Oslo Gardermoen 19.35
17th July	depart Oslo Gardermoen 13.15, <b>arrive London Heathrow 14.35</b>

## Entry requirements

Your passport must be issued less than 10 years before the date you enter the country and valid for at least 3 months after the day you plan to leave.

If you hold a British passport, you are able to travel to the Schengen area (including Norway) for up to 90 days in total in any 180-day period without a visa.

From 2026 (exact date yet to be confirmed), UK passport holders will need to apply for the ETIAS European Travel Authorisation to visit Schengen countries. This must be applied for online prior to travel. Once granted, your ETIAS will be valid for 3 years.

For up-to-date information, check [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/norway](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/norway)

## Weather

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° 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.

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**TO BOOK:** Contact us to check availability and reserve a place. Then 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 PER PERSON £750, SECOND INSTALMENT ON CONFIRMATION OF HOLIDAY £2,500 BALANCE DUE 05/04/2026**

**INCLUDED:** Local transport as specified in the itinerary. 2 nights hotel accommodation and 9 nights on-board m/v Plancius. Full board basis: all meals from dinner day 1 to breakfast day 12, EXCEPT lunch on days 2 and 16. All excursions as described in the itinerary, except those shown as optional. Use of rubber boots during cruise. Services of leaders and guides.

**NOT INCLUDED:** Lunches on days 2 and 16. Refreshments. Entrance fees during any optional sightseeing (e.g. museums in Longyearbyen). Laundry. Items of a personal nature. Gratuities. Travel insurance. Visa costs.

\*Deposit and cancellation amounts are set in order to allow us to confirm the holiday as soon as possible based on the minimum number of clients needed to cover shared costs and to prevent us from having to cancel the holiday if any bookings are cancelled.

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## **WILDLIFE TRAVEL**

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**Photos (front):** Beluga, Walrus, Longyearbyen road sign, Polar Bear.

Trip reports from our previous trips to Svalbard can be found on our website.