

Jewels of the Arctic

Aboard *Sylvia Earle* | 10 – 23 July 2023





Longyearbyen

DAY 1 | Monday 10 July

Position at 1800 on Jul 10

Latitude: 78° 11.4'N

Longitude: 014° 33.1'E

Course: Alongside

Speed: n/a

Wind Speed: 2 knots NW

Barometer: 1018

Air Temp: 12°C

Explore. Dream. Discover.

—Mark Twain

Today we woke up excited! We were only hours away from starting our Jewels of the Arctic voyage of Svalbard and East Greenland. After a hearty breakfast, we said goodbye to our luggage and met in the hotel lobby for our tour around Longyearbyen.

Our journey took us to the outskirts of town to view the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, home to a seed bank of over 4,000 plant species, along with a visit to the eclectic Svalbard Museum. We spent time at Camp Barentsz, located in the Advent Valley, where we enjoyed a presentation in the large 'lavvo' - a traditional building common in northern Norway. Here we heard tales of living in the remote Arctic before we met the camp's friendly huskies.

Before we knew it, the time had come to make our way to the ship. As we approached the wharf, we could see the *Sylvia Earle*, the ship's X-Bow making it hard to miss.

At the port we were welcomed by Expedition Leader Howard and Assistant Expedition Leader Dot and more friendly team members who took our first snapshot. We embarked via the gangway and were greeted by more friendly faces who showed us up to reception.

During check-in, we had time to enjoy embarkation refreshments before the ship's crew helped us navigate the decks to our cabins - our home away from home for the next 14 days. Howard then called us into the Lecture Theatre to welcome us aboard.

To start Howard told us how Aurora Expeditions came to life and Greg Mortimer's egalitarian style of travelling is what truly makes every one of us get the absolute best out of each day we share in this expedition.

We were then introduced to a multi-skilled Expedition Team who are eager to share their knowledge and are as excited as we are!

Justine helped us settle into life onboard along with Hotel Director Singh, and Dr Gino made sure we knew how to stay healthy during our voyage.

To keep the ball rolling we went straight into a mandatory Zodiac briefing. We learnt about the 'Zodiac three-step', which will soon become second nature.

Finally, it was time to receive our lifeboat and safety briefing and ready ourselves for the abandon ship drill. The sound of seven-short-one-long rings from the ship's signal system was our cue to don warm clothes, bulky orange lifejackets and gather at the muster station to sample our safety gear. Our safety officers and crew guided us to the lifeboats to familiarise us with their whereabouts.

The Polar Class life vessels can hold 136 people each for five days!

Before dinner there was time to exchange expedition jackets and for kayakers to meet their guides Ivan, Wes and Liz. There was no time wasted!

Equipped with a healthy appetite, we made our way to the Gentoo Restaurant to enjoy a delicious dinner prepared by our talented galley team and served by our welcoming waiting staff.

Together we total 95 Expeditioners from Australia (43), Canada (1), China (2), Denmark (1), New Zealand (7), Switzerland (2), UK (11), and USA (28), an international Expedition Team of 18 and 82 ships crew from around the globe.

After hours of travel to reach one of the planet's best kept secrets, it's time to catch up on sleep and prepare ourselves for an expedition we will never forget!



Julibukta, Signehamna

DAY 2 | Tuesday 11 July

Position at 0600 on Jul 11

Latitude: 78°53.5'N

Longitude: 010° 02.7'W

Course: 353°

Speed: 9.1 knots

Wind Speed: 3 knots NW

Barometer: 1014

Air Temp: 9°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

Today was our first expedition day! We started the morning off with a few briefings about how we protect the Arctic environment, and then we were ready to hop in the Zodiacs for our very first cruise. The weather was lovely, and we had a great view of the mountains and glacier in Fjortende Julibukta ('14th of July Bay,' named after the French national day).

One of our first stops on the Zodiac cruise were some bird cliffs, where we got to see some nesting puffins. It was quite special, because puffins are not so common to spot in Svalbard. There were also plenty of guillemots and kittiwakes. The steep, narrow cliff faces provide good protection for the nesting birds and their eggs. The smaller and higher the ledge, the harder it is for predators to reach.

Another unique part of the bird cliffs we saw were the hanging gardens. Plants like tufted saxifrage, purple saxifrage, and moss campion decorated the cliff faces. The area stays well-fertilised thanks to the great guano supply.

After spending some time at the cliffs, we cruised over to the glacier at the end of the bay. The crackling blue ice in the water showed us that the glacier was quite active. Svalbard is still in an ice age— there are over 1,000 glaciers in the archipelago, and 60% of the land is glaciated.

We had a delicious lunch on board the ship before heading out again for our afternoon landing. The spot of the day was Signehamna, a secluded bay containing the remains of a German weather station. This was an important place during the Second World War, when the Germans established manned stations around Svalbard. Weather data was extremely important intel, because the weather systems in Svalbard had a lot to say about the weather in Europe.

We divided into walking groups and set off to the west. A group of reindeer greeted us, who are always a bit curious and interested in new visitors. At the cultural heritage sites, we talked about the mark of history on the landscape, and how the past is always present in many of the sites we will visit.

Those of us on the kayak team had a fun first paddle of the trip, and spent some time in the smaller bay of



Signehamna. We walked up to a viewpoint afterwards, and got to appreciate the surrounding scenery.

After our walks, we headed back to the ship. It was time for the Captain's Welcome, where we were introduced to the Captain and some of his senior officers on board. What a day! Now we are sailing north, and an evening light paints the mountains.



Hamiltonbukta, Ytre Norskøya

DAY 3 | Wednesday 12 July

Position at 0700 on Jul 12

Latitude: 79°51.5'N

Longitude: 011°53.7'E

Course: 164°

Speed: 7 knots

Wind Speed: 4 knots N

Barometer: 1013

Air Temp: 6°C

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

—Blaise Pascal (1623-1662)

Our day started with Howard waking us up at 7am. It was an overcast day with a temperature of 7 degrees celsius and calm seas. The ship anchored off Hamiltonbukta for our morning Zodiac cruise. We started our cruise by heading to the bird cliffs where thousands of guillemots and kittiwakes nest, many glaucous gulls, eider ducks and arctic terns were also seen. From the bird cliffs we headed towards the three glaciers where an arctic fox was seen high on the first glacier. The second glacier gave us an example of a small calving, which was seen from one of the two photography Zodiacs.

The kayakers had a great morning exploring Hamiltonbukta, paddling seven kilometres around the bay and exploring the canals through the small islands.

The plan for the afternoon was to make a landing at Ytre Norskøya but soon after the ship anchored, our first polar bear was spotted by kayak guide Liz. The bear walked quickly along the south coast of the island, heading to the east point. It was decided to view the bear from Zodiacs, so we got busy getting them launched asap.

Once all the zodiacs were loaded, we headed around the east point of the island where the bear was last seen. We found the bear sleeping on the north coast of the island and we set up a round robin with the Zodiacs so we could all get a view of this amazing animal.

Our bear had decided to rest up and take a nap, so after getting plenty of photos we headed around the island to the south side to view the whaler's graves and hear some of the local history from Avi and Kelsey. We then spent some time exploring nearby islands and a glacier before heading back to the bear to see if it had finished its nap. As we approached the island for the second time, Liz noticed the bear had returned to the south side of the island and was again napping near the ridge line. Polar bears are the largest land carnivores in the world. Adult males may grow two to three times the size of females: males weigh 350-700kg, while females 150-300 kg (pregnant females may weigh up to 500 kg). The largest polar bear ever recorded was a male weighing 1,004 kg and was four metres long.

Back onboard we warmed up and enjoyed another delicious dinner. After dinner, Suzanne invited us into the Lecture Theatre to tell us stories of past explorers who had attempted to reach the North Pole.



Bråsvellbreen, Alkefjellet

DAY 4 | Thursday 13 July

Position at 0700 on Jul 13

Latitude: 79°21.9'N

Longitude: 020°41.8'E

Course: Various

Speed: At Anchor

Believe me my young friend, there is nothing, absolutely nothing, half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats... simply messing.

—Water Rat to Mole from *Wind in the Willows*

We awoke to a thick shroud of fog blanketing the sea as we sailed down Hinlopenstretet. When it gently lifted, a seascape of floating ice emerged. Accompanied by the sight of the occasional walrus or seabird, we slowly approached the massive ice face of Bråsvellbreen, a glacier that branches off the Austfonna ice cap (the third largest ice cap in the world, with a surface area of approximately 8,500 km²). It appeared as an almost sheer shelf, with several waterfalls ferrying the surface meltwater into the sea.

We got even closer to the glacier with the Zodiacs and kayaks, zigzagging between small icebergs and pancake ice, spotting a few walrus and the fin of an ephemeral whale, marvelling at the blues and the whites and the ancient history written into the strata of the ice face.

The afternoon was a leisurely ship's cruise through the ice paradise in completely calm waters, punctuated by the appearance of a polar bear swimming peacefully, who we were able to observe from a respectful distance for quite a while.

Aspiring bird watchers then joined John on the observation deck for a session of intensive bird counting as part of the Citizen Science program, before heading down for the recap. There we heard from Nils the story of how a jammed rifle triggered a series of events that brought about the death of four men one bitter Svalbard winter, followed by an introduction to the Brünnich's guillemot given by John (the scientific version) and Liz (the theatrical version). Howard briefed us on the upcoming days, the ice conditions in Greenland and possible new exciting destinations.

After dinner we went for a spectacular evening cruise to the Alkefjellet bird cliff in the Zodiacs and kayaks, with the evening sun catching the cliffs in a golden light as the guillemots crisscrossed above us in flight paths that no human air traffic controller would ever be able to handle.

Not only were the cliffs and skies packed with guillemots, we were also fortunate enough to see two foxes, one with impressive climbing skills that we watched until it disappeared into a high gully, and another that tucked into its dinner of a bird carcass on the beach, completely unfazed by its audience.

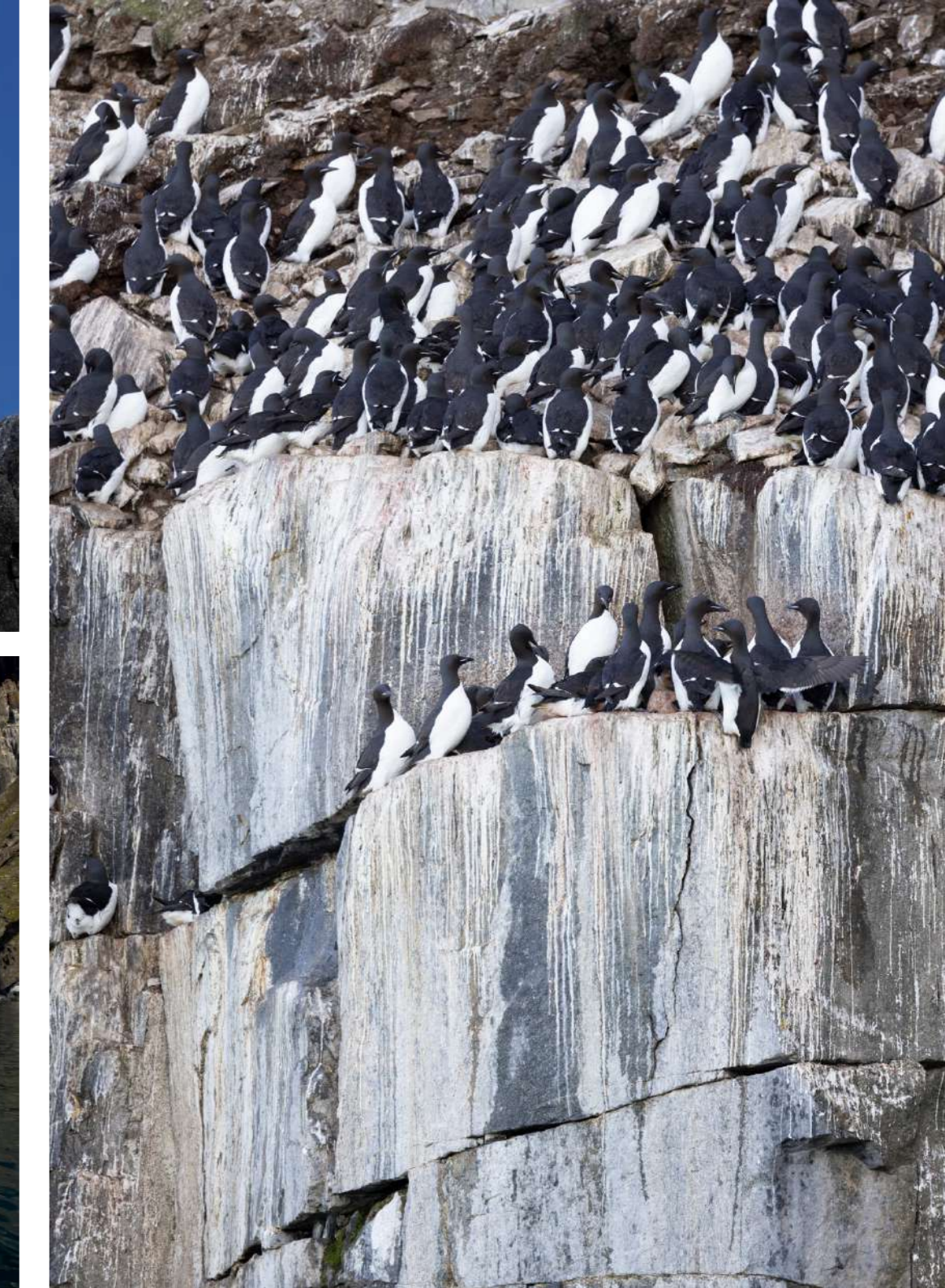
Wind Speed: 3 knots NW

Barometer: 1019

Air Temp: 5°C

We reluctantly left the city of birds behind us and drove back to the ship, carefully avoiding any collisions with the flotillas of guillemots resting on the water.

Goodnight Svalbard.



Diskobukta, Russebukta

DAY 5 | Friday 14 July

Position at 0700 on Jul 14

Latitude: 77°56.3'N

Longitude: 021°10.1'E

Course: At anchor

Speed: At anchor

Wind Speed: Calm

Barometer: 1019

Air Temp: 9°C

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

—Anonymous

Overnight we had left Nordaustlandet behind and moved to the third biggest island on the Svalbard archipelago, Edgeøya. We woke to a real expedition day with fog laying low over the horizon, making our initial planned landing inaccessible. A new plan was quickly put together and while breakfast was being served, we cruised South to Diskobukta where a spectacular experience awaited us.

On the long Zodiac drive to shore, we could fully take in the impressive mountains. As a little, green oasis, the canyon of Diskobukta stood out for miles in the barren landscape. We were met by historic huts and whale bones on the shore. We got to learn more about the Norwegian trappers and the whaling that has taken place here on Edgeøya before we hiked up to the canyon. Not only were the weather Gods with us, but the canyon was a lush paradise full of scurvy grass, thousands of kittiwakes, mountain sorrel, and a polar fox patrolling beneath the cliff side. It was remarkable to see the polar fox up close and observe its intriguing behaviour when catching kittiwake chicks, jumping over the stream, and running along the bird cliffs.

As if the day couldn't be more perfect, we arrived in stunning light at Russebukta for the afternoon Zodiac cruise. Having planned a combined cruise and 'mini' landing, the team split up; Howard and Jeff went to scout for a good landing site and the rest of us went to visit the incredible walrus haul-out.

The walrus put on a spectacular show. We had them on shore and in the water at the same time. Some curious individuals came closer to the Zodiacs for an investigative look at our little armada. The huffing and puffing of the walrus brought a special soundtrack to our experience.

Jeff and Howard didn't manage to find a good landing site as they encountered a beautiful polar bear instead. The kayakers were called out of the water quickly, and the Zodiac armada went further south to cherish this lucky moment. As the afternoon sun dipped further down on the horizon we were gifted with an unreal view from the boats. It was as if Svalbard knew we were leaving and needed a special farewell and as the afternoon progressed, we had both walrus and polar bear at the same site at the same time.



At Sea, En route to Jan Mayen

DAY 6 | Saturday 15 July

Position at 0700 on Jul 15

Latitude: 75°27.1'N

Longitude: 015°52.1'E

Course: 202°

Speed: 11.4 knots

Wind Speed: 21 knots NE

Barometer: 1009

Air Temp: 7°C

And yet, there is only one great thing, the only thing, to see in huts and on journeys: the great day that dawns, and the light that fills the world.

—Inuit poem

Our day at sea gave us time to reflect on the days spent around Svalbard. We had cruised around three quarters of the coast of Spitsbergen, visited the islands of Nordaustlandet and Edgeøya. Saw walrus, polar bears, seals, dolphins and thousands of birds. Who could forget our after dinner cruise along the bird cliffs of Alkefjellet?

Today we spent at sea, heading southeast on our way to Jan Mayen. A relaxed start, with a late breakfast and the first of a series of lectures presented by the Expedition Team. First up was photographer Scott teaching us the tricks and techniques of taking great photos and videos on our smart phones, including editing, saving and options many of us probably didn't know were possible.

Late morning and we were back in the Lecture Theatre to listen to Suzanne talk about the Arctic: What is it, who owns it? A look at what defines the Arctic, the countries within the Arctic Circle, the people, fauna and flora, and look at ice within the circle and how the mass changes between the seasons.

Over lunch, conversations varied from discussions on where we had been to where we are going, even interest in the Wimbledon final taking place on Sunday evening in London. As the world's two best players go head-to-head, will it be the year of Carlos Alcaraz or will Novak Djokovic win his fifth consecutive title?

Back to our voyage and back in the Lecture Theatre, Kelsey presented a fascinating lecture on the Pomors and an Edgeøya survival story. The resilience of this men to survive and adapt in such harsh, remote conditions is remarkable.

Our final lecture of the day was presented by Liz Macneil on polar bears. The apex predator of the Arctic, the polar bear is a powerful symbol of the strength and endurance of the Arctic. Known as marine mammals, their Latin name is *Ursus maritimus*, meaning 'sea bear'. An apt name for this majestic creature, which spends much of its life in, around, or on the ocean, predominately on the sea ice.

Avi presented our evening recap on whaling and the products that were made and promoted as fashionable items during the late 1700s and 1800s.

Dinner was served in the Gentoo and Rockhopper, another delicious meal served up by Executive Chef Pai and his galley team. An after-dinner drink and time to retire for the evening. Another day in the far north complete!



At Sea

DAY 7 | Sunday 16 July

Position at 0700 on Jul 16

Latitude: 73°00.5'N

Longitude: 002°13.8'E

Course: 271°

Speed: 11.7 knots

Wind Speed: 12 knots NE

Barometer: 1002

Air Temp: 12°C

Life is not measured by the breaths we take.

But by the moments that take our breath away.

—Fridtjof Nansen

We cruised through thick and thin fog all day towards the remote volcanic island of Jan Mayen. Our second 'sea day' was a time for reflection on our glorious days in Svalbard and anticipation for adventures yet to come.

We love Howard's gentle morning wake-up call but what a pleasure it was to not have it this morning, and to sleep until a later breakfast time. Many of us passed the day sorting through our photographs of the voyage so far, while others passed the day chatting with friends, working out in the gym, attending some interesting presentations from the Expedition Team or enjoying a tour of the ship's bridge.

The day started at a leisurely pace, with the morning presentation not kicking off until 10am. This talk came from Marine Biologist John, who spoke about oceanography and climate change in the Arctic. It was good to have an oceanography talk without equations, as John explained just how and why the world's ocean currents move as they do. The effects of this oceanic circulation vary from local, such as the generation of fog by the collision of cold water from the Arctic with warm water from the Gulf Stream, to global, such as the transfer of warmth to polar regions enabling agriculture to thrive in northern Europe. John then explained how ice cores showed the earth's climate had fluctuated over the last 400,000 years, and how the current heating trend differs from any climate fluctuation over that period. As the Greenland ice cap melts and the Arctic sea ice thins, politicians and others continue to trivialise the risk and defer effective action.

After lunch, Thomas arranged a series of tours of the *Sylvia Earle's* bridge. It was fascinating to see how the control centre for this state-of-the-art expedition ship operates. Captain Arsen Prostov was an eloquent and informative speaker as he pointed out the main features of the bridge. Who knew that the whole ship could be steered by a small joystick like those used in computer games?

Later in the afternoon, Avi provided a wonderfully detailed narrative of Salomon Andrée's, 1897 balloon expedition in search of the North Pole. Andrée and his colleagues, Nils Strindberg and Knut Frænkel, disappeared over the horizon and nothing was heard from them for over 33 years. Sadly, their remains were found on Kvitøya on the north-eastern side of Svalbard in 1930, along with evidence that told the story of their trip and their battle

for survival after the balloon crashed onto the frozen sea. They had fallen well short of their goal and battled to reach Kvitøya, where they died from unknown causes. Avi provided an interesting postscript to this tragic tale during the evening recap, when she told us about the romantic story of the enduring love affair of Nils Strindberg and his sweetheart, Anna Charlier. Before that however we learnt the history of walrus ivory from Dot, which led into a poem read by our fellow Expeditioner Graham Steele called Ode to an Oosik.

A poem we will never forget!



Jan Mayen

DAY 8 | Monday 17 July

Position at 0700 on Jul 17

Latitude: 71°05.3'N

Longitude: 008°54.8'W

Course: 216°

Speed: 7.7 knots

Wind Speed: 10 knots W

Barometer: 1000

Air Temp: 6°C

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew, the furrow followed free: we were the first that ever burst into that silent sea.

—Samuel Taylor Coleridge

This was a very special day of the trip. We woke up approaching Jan Mayen, a tiny remote island located in the Greenland Sea of the Arctic Ocean. In a distance right beneath the low cloud base and fog we could see its rugged coastline getting smashed by big swell. We reached Kvalrossbukta (Walrus Bay) right before breakfast and saw that a northerly wind was causing the swell to build so we could not put Zodiacs on the water. Right away we started repositioning the ship to the southern side of the island hoping that it would give us some lee to try to get to land.

Going around the southern tip of Jan Mayen was a special experience. The ship endured constant 40 knot winds gusting up to 50 knots and you could feel the walls and windows shivering when the strong gust would hit. The scenery that we were observing was breathtaking. We gazed upon amazing rocky coastline with towering cliffs and volcanic formations washed by the raging metal-coloured sea all covered with whitecaps. From time to time, you could see the wind gusts roaming rapidly along the surface of the water. Dramatic dark clouds were flowing from the tops of the cliffs into the sea which made the landscape so dynamic and vast, that we felt small surrounded by this stunning beauty. Hundreds of gracious fulmars were soaring right next to our ship, playing in the wind. Sometimes they were so close to the open decks we could see every tiny feather. That was a real celebration of the power of the elements.

Once we reached the southern coast of the island, we saw that the sea state was calmer, although the offshore winds were still very strong, gusting up to 30+ knots. We could see the Olonkin City, the Norwegian base where we could land if conditions would allow. Keeping our fingers crossed, we lowered the scout boat in the water to assess the conditions on the landing site. Despite the strong wind and quite splashy ride, the landing was doable, so Howard made a call, and we made a landing on Jan Mayen! Driving in high winds was challenging, but fun and exciting at the same time. We ended up enjoying a little hike among beautiful volcanic mountains and visiting a little souvenir shop at the base, many people got nice t-shirts and other goodies for memories of this magnificent special place.



Not every day you witness a raging storm near the coast of Jan Mayen, not too many people get to land on this remote and beautiful island. It was a day we will all remember!

Heading over to Greenland for more exciting adventures.

At Sea

DAY 9 | Tuesday 18 July

Position at 0800 on Jul 18

Latitude: 68°10.77'N

Longitude: 018°53.4'W

Course: 235°

Speed: 14.3 knots

Wind Speed: 30 knots NW

Barometer: 1013

Air Temp: 4°C

Civilization began to lose its zest for me. I began to long for the great white desolation... the long, long Arctic day, the silence, the vastness of the great white lonely North. And back I went.

—Robert Peary

Across the vast ocean we continue our journey to Greenland, with the hope of getting through the impenetrable ice creating challenges to visit this amazing coastline. But if this expedition has taught us anything, is that luck is often on our side.

As the ship rocked gently from side to side, Avi took to the stage and educated us on life in Greenland, the people, culture, history, and sense of adventure that have allowed these communities to thrive in such an extreme environment, but revealing to us all that life is quite modern these days in the cities and towns across Greenland. The anticipation was building even more after this download, and our first glimpse of Greenland came into view as we peered out the lecture room windows.

A group of wine connoisseurs lead by Nebo our F&B Manager, did a little wine tasting to educate their discerning palettes and learn how to pair their favourite wines with their delicious meals. But before they could really get into the process, it was abruptly interrupted with sightings of whale blows on the horizon. The ship was abuzz with activity as we donned our warm clothes and hurried to the observation deck. Fin whales broke the surface as humpback whales fluked up and dived to the depths, and as always, the whales timed this just as our buffet lunch was being served. Nothing like a sea day to surprise and delight.

Our guest photographer, Richard l'Anson, kept us captivated with his stunning work from the polar regions while sharing some insight about photography, composition, technique and so much more. His visual interpretation of the polar regions left us in awe, and we all walked away more inspired to capture this beautiful natural world.

The call came out across the ship, a pod of humpbacks was feeding off the bow. Once again, their timing was impeccable managing to interrupt Liz's lecture on the origins of kayaking. We ran to the observation decks to watch one of nature's great events. Large groups of humpbacks feeding while sea birds scattered across the surface of the ocean, waiting expectantly to feed on the scraps left behind by these gentle giants. We were mesmerised, as we watched blows from all directions linger above the surface, like a symphony of synchronised exhalations.

Once the commotion had settled, Liz jumped back into her lecture and gave us a history of kayaking and the origins of these strange looking vessels, the highlight watching the video of the people emerging from the inside of this small kayak like a TV comedy skit.

Before we knew it, we were heading for Greenland again, looking for a gap to get us into the fjords.



Nansen Fjord

DAY 10 | Wednesday 19 July

Position at 0800 on Jul 19

Latitude: 67°03.6'N

Longitude: 028°19.4'W

Course: 339°

Speed: 15.5 knots

Wind Speed: 8 knots NW

Barometer: 1018

Air Temp: 5°C

On a small piece of paper, too, I wrote a short account of the progress of the expedition so far, packed it carefully in a little tin, and enclosed this in the bread-box which had belonged to our sealing-boat. In my account I wrote that we were quite hopeful of reaching the west coast, if we were only favoured with sufficient frost; as it turned out, we were favoured with a good deal more than enough.

—Fridtjof Nansen, The First Crossing of Greenland

As we woke amongst the mist and fog, we were unaware of the day that would unfold before us. Our destination was East Greenland, a land of mystery and untamed beauty, and a place where very few had ventured before.

Despite the extra hour of sleep, there were long lines at the coffee machines before Avi's talk on the Paleo People of Greenland when suddenly, disaster struck! One of the coffee machines stopped working and the backup machine ran out of milk... oh, the humanity. Not missing a beat, our amazing crew quickly remedied the coffee crisis, and the sweet sips of cappuccinos and lattes were back on our lips... whew, crisis averted and we're ready to go.

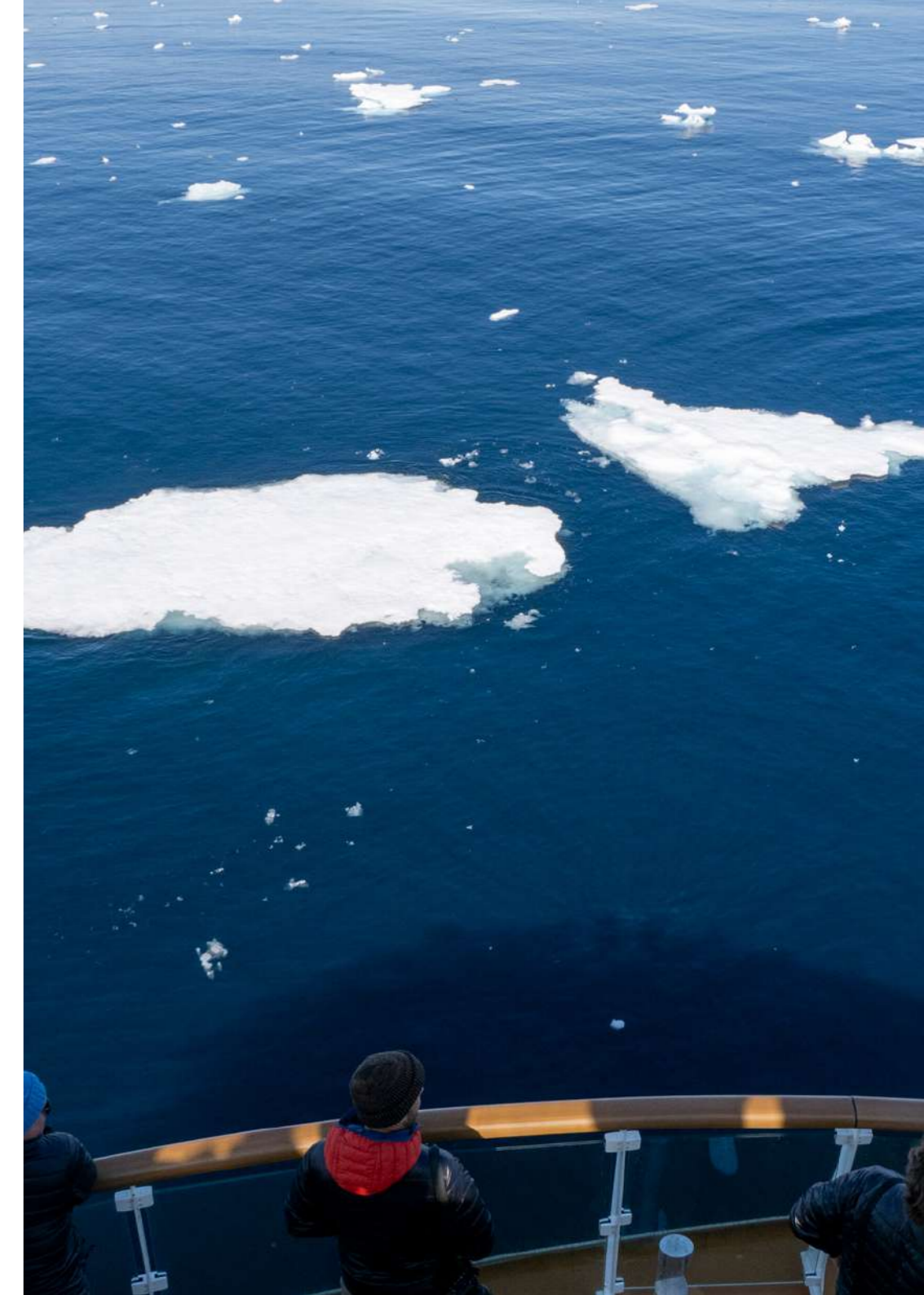
After lunch, the fog began to lift, the sun broke through the clouds, and we witnessed the grandeur of East Greenland for the first time. The sight of towering mountains, massive icebergs, and ancient glaciers sent a contagious buzz throughout the ship as we gathered on the outer decks. With the sun on our faces, we watched as our bridge team skillfully navigated the ship through the ice towards the shore, eagerly awaiting the ding-dong.

As we got closer, the raw beauty of the landscape became more apparent and Nansen Fjord was in our grasp... well, almost... the entrance was blocked by huge icebergs, which meant we were now on Plan G... or is it Plan H (for Howard)? Still awaiting the ding-dong... and, there it is.

Undeterred by the ice, Plan H was a go. Zodiacs were craned onto the water, kayaks were launched and put on tow (literally by Liz), and our icy explorations began. Weaving and paddling through the frozen sculptures of time and tide, we were reminded of our place in the grand scheme of things. Then, in true expedition style, Howard and Jeff found a small beach where a glacier once stood and we were able to land. Stepping ashore for the first

time, the sense of remoteness was overwhelming and fresh polar bear tracks (and Jeff), guided us towards a beautiful vista point. This land has remained largely untouched by humans and it was a privilege to walk upon its rugged terrain. Whilst taking photos and checking Greenland off our lists, the conditions began to change and operations got a bit 'sporty' on shore. Determined to finish the landing, our skillful Expedition Team quickly adapted and everyone was able to set their feet on the largest island in the world.

Back on the ship, our time had come to plunge into the icy waters of Greenland and the Arctic. With the sun shining and the music playing, one by one we took our plunge. "Mother of the Sea, be nice to me!" Happy and smiling, we jumped into the frigid waters, and screaming expletives, we quickly climbed out. As we brought up the anchor and made our way back into the fog, the bar was full of euphoric plungers and onlookers sharing their moments of the day and toasting our truly expeditionary afternoon.



Polar Plunge

DAY 10 | Wednesday 19 July





Kivioq, At Sea

DAY 11 | Thursday 20 July

Position at 0600 on Jul 20

Latitude: 68°08.4'N

Longitude: 028°54.0'E

Course: Steering through ice

Speed: 4.3 knots

Wind Speed: 5 knots NE

Barometer: 1014

Air Temp: 4°C

It's strange how hungry for a treat you get on an Arctic journey.

—Roald Amundsen

We woke up to the sound of our 'mini-icebreaker' pushing through ice floes as we worked our way toward Kivioq Fjord. The fog had descended again, giving an ethereal feeling to the landscape as we passed through it.

After breakfast, we were able to listen to another great lecture from Avi about the modern-day Inuit in Greenland, and how their lifestyle and culture developed over hundreds of years. Understanding the people's history of the place allows us to further appreciate the ability to survive in these elements—to not only survive, but to pave the way for modern polar exploration and travel.

As we approached land, the fog lifted and provided us with a sunny window to go out and explore in our Zodiacs. What a cruise! We moved between icebergs and impressive ice sculptures and checked out the sea ice in the north part of the fjord. There were also a couple waterfalls to see. The mountains here are giants compared to what we saw in Svalbard; everything is so much steeper and taller here, and we have really gotten a strong impression of East Greenland's rugged side.

The kayakers started their paddle next to the towering peaks and cascading waterfall. Going for distance, they paddled along the coast to the rocky cape on the outside of the fjord. Witnessing spectacular beauty, an iceberg suddenly began to roll, exposing a vibrant glacial blue underneath.

About 5.5km later, they arrived at some tall peaks of granite, and by the end of the paddle they did not want to get off the water.

After lunch on board, we headed back into the pack ice and fog bank. It was time to explore a different part of the South East coast. As many of us stood out on deck and watched the fog roll in, we got the impression that we were truly in an uncharted area. It was almost as if we were approaching the end of the earth as our skilled captain forged a path through the shifting and scattered ice floes.

Regardless of the fog and the frigid air, our BBQ out on deck was unstoppable! We donned our strange hats and puffy jackets and made our way to Deck 8 to brave our arctic dinner and eat a variety of mixed grills before they got cold. Then there was dessert, some would say, "a smorgasbord of fun," with pies and cakes and our favorite international cheeses. We stocked up in order to have enough calories for the cold temperatures and major dance party that followed!



Nordre Aputiteeq, Hutchison Glacier

DAY 12 | Friday 21 July

Position at 0600 on Jul 21

Latitude: 67°35.4'N

Longitude: 031°42.5'E

Course: 352°

Speed: 13 knots

Wind Speed: 2 knots N

Barometer: 1011

Air Temp: 4°C

Little do you know your own blessedness; for to travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive, and the true success is to labour.

—Robert Louis Stevenson, *Virginibus Puerisque*, 1881

After some spirited dancing on Deck 8 the previous evening, it seemed many expeditioners appreciated a lie-in and leisurely breakfast, which took place in an ethereal seascape. It was hard to tell if the white shapes we could see through the mist were floating on the ocean's surface or somewhere above it.

Around mid-morning, we gradually approached the small island of Nordre Aputiteeq and the fog lifted to reveal a fascinating ghost town in a barren and rocky landscape. It was the remains of an old American weather station, initially set up in Kangerlussuaq Fjord in 1945 and moved out to the island in 1949. We were able to walk among the partly dilapidated wooden buildings and pieces of rusted metal, imagining what life might have been like in such an isolated outpost. In addition to the weather station buildings, the site featured an unusually large Inuit construction built out of rock.

In the afternoon, the ship took us towards the massive glacier front of Hutchison Gletscher, and we lowered the Zodiacs into the water for our final Zodiac cruise in Greenland. The water was like a mirror, scattered with shards of crystal, which gradually thickened to a maze of snow and ice around us that the Zodiacs gently pushed aside as we slowly circled the icebergs whose trajectory had ground to a halt in the sea of ice. The icebergs came in innumerable forms and sizes and were crisscrossed with seams of blue ice and dark rock, their textures ranging from coarse and granular to sleek and shiny to wrinkled like walrus skin. The wind and sea were completely still and it seemed like time stood still as well. We reluctantly made our way back to the ship.

At the evening recap Avi introduced us to some of the idiosyncrasies of the Greenlandic language, including non-verbal cues: don't forget to raise your eyebrows to say hello. Dot told us some of the stories of the knitting patterns of the north, and how they could be linked to clan affiliations and were even used to identify sailors lost at sea.

The sun dipped lower in the sky, and after dinner the ship looped around an imposing tabular iceberg silhouetted by the oblique evening sunlight against a dark grey horizon, a last farewell to Greenland before setting our course towards Iceland.



Denmark Strait

DAY 13 | Saturday 22 July

Position at 0800 on Jul 22

Latitude: 66°24.1'N

Longitude: 028°56.6'W

Course: 135°

Speed: 10.1 knots

Wind Speed: 10 knots E

Barometer: 1010

Air Temp: 8°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)

During the night, we said our farewell to Greenland and crossed the Arctic Circle towards warmer sea. This final day at sea has been spent together as a team while the calm, blue ocean has provided us safe passage across the Denmark Strait.

The lecture theatre was busy with Richard giving us an introduction to the photo program, Lightroom, followed by Suzanne's introduction to Iceland, and Thomas' account of volcanoes in Iceland – as we have all heard, there is currently an eruption taking place that started when we all arrived in Longyearbyen.

This evening we celebrated our trip at the Captain's Farewell Cocktail followed by the Farewell Dinner in the Gentoo Restaurant. The evening's grand finale was Scott's slideshow that took us down memory lane as we recalled the different landing sites, the remarkable wildlife we have encountered, the impressive Zodiac cruises, the interesting citizen science projects, and the many stories we have heard along the way. Certificates and t-shirts were awarded to our polar plunging community, and adventures cherished.

We have successfully sailed from the high Arctic desert of Svalbard, visited the desolate and impressive volcanic island of Jan Mayen, navigated across the Greenland Sea to reach the rugged and isolated shores of East Greenland before finishing our journey of four Arctic islands in spectacular Iceland. From the ice-covered north to the steep cliffs of the southern Arctic, the *Sylvia Earle* has enabled us to visit remote destinations and broaden our horizons. We have seen the lush vegetation of western Svalbard, collected small gems of incredible views in Jan Mayen, and marvelled at the grand tabular icebergs of Greenland. Needless to say, this has truly been an expedition across four jewels of the Arctic. What seemed like foreign place names have now become familiar sites full of memories. Unknown birds have become companions on our Zodiac cruises, small dots on the horizon have turned into incredible wildlife encounters, and strangers have become friends on board our floating home.

After safe journeys home, we hope that you have taken a little bit of Svalbard, Jan Mayen, and Greenland with you in your hearts. As Norwegian Polar Explorer, Fridtjof Nansen said "Strange. There is always sadness on departure. It is as if one cannot after all bear to leave this bleak waste of ice, glaciers, cold and toil..." (1912).



Reykjavik

DAY 14 | Sunday 23 July

Position at 0800 on Jul 23

Latitude: 64°09.00'N

Longitude: 021°56.13'W

Course: 144°

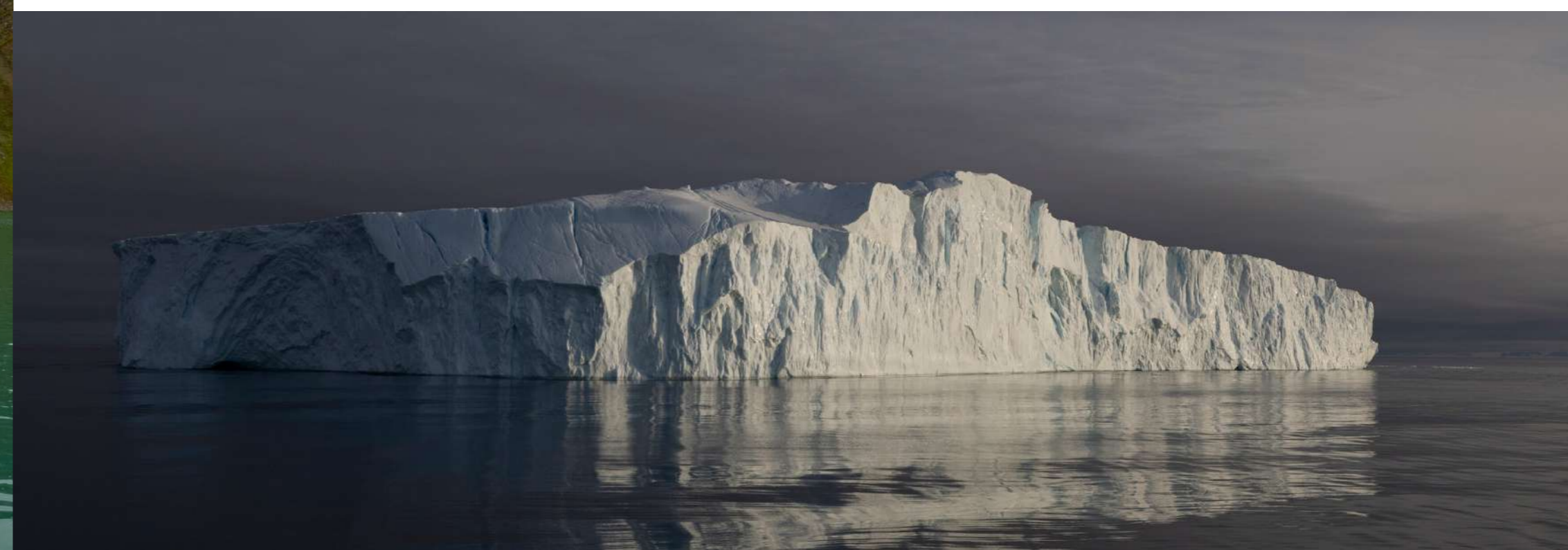
Speed: Alongside

Wind Speed: 11 knots NW

Barometer: 1017

Air Temp: 16°C

Aurora Expeditions send out a big thank you to you all for your great humour, infectious enthusiasm and smiling faces. It was a pleasure having you all on board and being able to share some of the pleasures that Svalbard and East Greenland had to offer. May your memories live long and bright.



Kayaking Log

Kayak Masters: Ivan Klochkov, Wes McNeil, Liz MacNeil

Number of Paddlers: 17

Total Paddle Outings: 9

Total Distance Paddled: 48 km

Paddlers:	Kerry Sutey	Doron Haifer	Rhonda Langham
Alison Goodwin	Simone Fitzgerald	Kerry Lin	Jenifer Bowman
Stephen Goodwin	Peter Fitzgerald	Marianne Berry	Dan Allen
Marylou Solbrig	Lesley Kernaghan	Nic Berry	
Anie Coleman	Dan Manolios	Robert Langham	

July 11th PM. Svalbard, Signehamna - Distance: 4 km

Following all our briefings on safety and fitting equipment, all were eager to hit the water for our first paddle this afternoon. We paddled straight from the ship, stepping off the marina to a Zodiac and then slipping into our kayaks from the Zodiac. As we waited for all to get into their kayaks, Liz kept everyone entertained with some name games and some natural history of the area. Soon we were underway and exploring the bays of Signehamna, the site of an abandoned WWII German weather station, with the impressive backdrop of Nilspynten to the south, a colourful towering bird cliff. We paddled southwest straight to Nilspynten, there we watched the black-legged kittiwakes, some Brunnich's guillemots, and Liz filled us in on their lives and behaviours. We then paddled deeper into the first bay where the water was calmer. We followed the shore and paused to watch a common (harbour) seal that did not seem at all disturbed by us, and was perched high on a rock or shallows, resting with its body mostly out of the water. We rounded Gunnarpynten point and headed across the northern bay to check out a lone, stunningly blue bergy bit, verging on the size of a small iceberg. We communed with the ice for a short while then proceeded to land, to go for a short hike with Ivan as safety, while Liz and Wes towed the kayaks back to the ship.

As soon as all the kayaks were on the shore, Ivan took the group to the little ridge to take a closer look on beautiful and gracious reindeers that were feeding around the area. We also visited Nils who was on a 'sentry' position on the highpoint right above the landing. The landscape that we saw from the top was stunning! Beautiful fjords with green-blue waters, steep cliffs, and big glaciers in the distance. Nils also shared some interesting facts and fun stories about Svalbard.

July 12th AM. Svalbard, Hamiltonbukta - Distance: 7 km

Hamiltonbukta is one of the most beautiful paddling locations in Svalbard and we were fortunate to paddle there. We got into kayaks from the aft of the ship and had followed a mellow swell taking us to the southern tip of the bay. It was so fun to surf those waves and let the power of nature to take our kayaks where we wanted to go. On the way we gazed upon the towering bird cliffs and spectacular scenery in the end of the bay – massive glacial faces separated by rocky ridges. We followed the beautiful coastline and made little stops to enjoy the

view of the glaciers – we even spotted an arctic fox running on top of one of them! Another significant feature of Hamiltonbukta is a group of tiny islets with many channels located in the middle of the bay – we explored them towards the end of our paddle – glass calm waters, lots of nesting arctic terns and other seabirds. Towing back to the ship through the swell was also quite fun. What a great paddle!

July 13th AM. Svalbard, Bråsvellbreen - Distance: 7 km

What a beautiful morning at the Bråsvellbreen Glacier. With the glacial face and waterfalls as our backdrop and glassy waters and an ice field for our paddle, the magic of Svalbard was surrounding us. Practicing our manoeuvring skills, we navigated through brash and growlers launching ourselves on small ice floes and checking out the beauty of the ice below the surface. Brunnich guillemots flew past as we saw walrus and seals hauled out on the ice in the distance. Cruising through the ice, we looped around for our final moment of zen, soaking in the sounds of the waterfalls and the ice crackling and popping around us... truly a magical way to end a beautiful paddle. With smiles on our faces and the stoke level high, we made our way back to the ship excited to share our adventure with our fellow passengers.

July 13th PM. Svalbard, Alkefjellet - Distance: 6 km

Our bonus post-dinner paddle at the bird cliffs of Alkefjellet was welcomed with excitement by our intrepid paddlers. Like Vikings, we loaded into the Zodiacs with our paddles held high and our kayaks in tow, making our way through the glassy waters to where the Brunnich guillemots surrounded us and the waterfalls blasted out of the hanging glaciers above. Surrounded by beauty and the sights and sound of 55,000 pairs of guillemots, it was a slow paddle along the face of the cliffs. The golden hours of light were upon us and the basalt cliffs towered above, as we tried to take photos and videos of the magic surrounding us. There are some moments in time that can only be captured by putting down the camera and activating all of our senses... his paddle was one of those moments.

July 14th PM. Svalbard, Russebukta - Distance: 1 km

This afternoon we had some sizeable swells of half a metre plus, so we towed our kayaks into a small bay off on the western end of Russebukta, protected by an arm of Martinodden. The bay was much calmer but the swells certainly had an effect on us. We paddled in the bay for a short while and observed some barnacle geese on shore. This area is different than the others we have paddled so far. There are no huge cliffs, towering peaks, nor major glacial faces. The area is made up of a number of low-lying islands. There is some interesting geology here, and most of the rock that makes up the islands is dolerite, a liquid, basaltic intrusion, similar to surface lava, except that it forms and cools underground. Wes gave us a few pointers on paddling in swells and we started out of the bay to round the point and headed west towards a walrus haul-out. The plan, as we got closer, was to then get into the Zodiac and finish off the outing with a walrus show. Just as we rounded the point, we got the radio call that a polar bear was in the water, possibly heading our way. This, of course, ended our paddle. We did have a taste and an opportunity to feel the ocean's energy a bit more than we had. Despite having to get out of the water sooner, it is always a blessing to see another polar bear and we also had a longer opportunity to observe the walrus, at the haul-out and in the water.

July 19th PM. Greenland, Nansen Fjord - Distance: 6 km

Following a number of days at sea and the uncertainty that we might not get through the ice and fog to make Greenland, all the kayakers were very eager to get back on the water and paddle their kayaks. Everyone was also eager to step foot on Greenland, and make the landing on this, the largest island in the world. Fortunately, we were able to do both, as Howard and Jeff set a perimeter for us to land, right adjacent to Cape Nanson. It just all worked out so well, and on top of our good fortune to make it to Nanson Fjord, the fog also lifted and we had nice sunny skies.

We first we took a Zodiac in for a short stint on shore, then we met up with Liz, who was tending our kayaks off in the ice. We transferred to our kayaks and Liz led us on a paddle through an ice and brash wonderland. This was a more dense ice pack than any we had paddled in so far, with some very large icebergs interspersed, some the size of small buildings and others looking like spires. There was a long period swell that made some of the bigger icebergs rise and surge as much as a metre. Some of them would suction against the surface of the ocean and sound like they were large animals breathing.

We were also surrounded by the massive sedimentary cliffs on the edges of Nansen Fjord, some at 600 to 1,000 metres right off the water, and in the distance, deeper inland, a much larger mountain range sprung up, with peaks 2,500 metres and higher.

This trip gave us quite a grand first impression of Greenland. It was also an exceptional paddle in the ice.

July 20th AM. Greenland, Kivioq Fjord - Distance: 6 km

Our second paddle in Greenland was magnificent. The ship was positioned at the mouth of the deep Kivioq Fjord with stunning steep cliffs. We towed our kayaks to the amazing waterfall and started paddling along the coastline to the east, gazing upon the massive icebergs floating pretty much all over the place. The highlight of the paddle was when one huge iceberg the size of a building suddenly broke apart with a loud explosion sound and started rolling! That was such a breathtaking action to witness. Fortunately, we were keeping appropriate distance and observed it in a safe manner. Then we continued paddling and got around the beautiful rocky headland, feeling some mellow swell and checking out beautiful rock formations. Towing back to the ship dodging icebergs and icefloes was also fun.

July 21st AM. Greenland, Nordre Aputiteeq - Distance: 7 km

It was a very special morning. The conditions outside were not too promising when were approaching this tiny remote island – very dense ice and fog, visibility was around 50m. But then a miracle happened! The fog raised and we saw an amazing paddling playground – rocky island with beautiful coastline and lots of narrow passages. Moreover, there was an amazing historical site – a US weather station that was operating in 1949-1979. We decided to make the best out of it – to try to paddle around the island and then land. We started paddling counterclockwise, passing an amazing narrow channel where at some point we had to drag our kayaks through the very shallow and narrow gap. Then we made a fun paddle through some coastal rocks. At some point the team divided in two parts: some of us hopped in the Zodiac to check out the landing and some decided to stay on the water and keep paddling further. Both teams had a great time. Some enjoyed their time on the land, observing

the weather station and remains of the ancient Inuit hut, and some were enjoying an amazing barren coastline of the island, almost circumnavigating it. The outing was finished in a dense fog wrapping up the island again. What an amazing morning!

July 21st PM. Greenland, Hutchinson Glacier - Distance: 4 km

As we completed our visit to Nordre Aputiteeq, the fog set in once more. Again, we were faced with uncertainty on whether or not we would be able to paddle one last time in Greenland. Our good fortune prevailed, and by the time we neared the face of Hutchinson Glacier, just to the northwest of Cape Edvard Holm, the skies cleared, and the sun shone brightly on us.

We could not enter our kayaks at the ship because the brash ice was just too dense, so we towed our kayaks just a short way so we could get in using the Zodiac. This final paddle was indeed a major high point. The glacier face was taller than any we had witnessed, the density of the brash ice was at the limit of kayak navigability, and as the clouds lifted, more and more of Greenland was revealed to us. Liz led us on a nice circuitous route in and around the ice, focusing on keeping us in just enough open water to keep paddling and not get stranded.

The paddle was both fun, challenging, and incredibly scenic. The paddle ended all too soon. We took solace, a few Zen moments, just to stare out... stunned at the vast landscape of Greenland... in total silence. I'm sure there was not a soul ready to leave, and as we take memories of Greenland with us, we may have also left a bit of ourselves still sitting there staring out at such a breathtaking place.







Bird and Mammal Sightings

Bird Species	July																						
	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23									
Red-throated Diver		•																					
Pink-footed Goose		•	•		•																		
Barnacle Goose	•			•	•																		
Common Eider	•	•	•	•	•								•										
Northern Fulmar	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•									
European Storm Petrel									•														
Northern Gannet									•														
Purple Sandpiper	•																						
Arctic Skua		•	•		•																		
Long-tailed Skua					•																		
Great Skua												•											
Sabine's Gull														•									
Herring Gull												•		•									
Glaucous Gull	•	•	•	•	•																		
Black-Headed Gull														•									
Lesser Black-backed Gull						•								•									
Black-legged Kittiwake		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•									
Iceland Gull														•									
Ivory Gull				•							•												
Arctic Tern		•	•	•	•			•						•									
Common Guillemot								•	•	•	•	•											
Brunnich's Guillemot		•	•	•	•	•																	
Black Guillemot		•	•	•	•					•	•	•											
Razorbill													•										
Little Auk				•																			
Atlantic Puffin		•	•	•	•			•						•									
Snow Bunting		•		•	•						•												



Mammal Species	July																						
	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23									
Arctic Fox		•	•	•	•																		
Reindeer		•			•																		
Polar Bear			•	•	•																		
Harbour (= Common) Seal		•																					
Ringed Seal												•		•									
Bearded Seal				•																			
Harp Seal																							
Walrus				•	•																		
UnID Seal			•									•	•										
Minke Whale				•																			
Humpback Whale												•	•										
Fin Whale				•					•	•													
Blue Whale																							
UnID Baleen Whale										•													
White Beaked Dolphin										•		•		•									
White-Sided Dolphin										•													









Expeditioners:

Daniel Allen	Rodger Eade	Rhonda Langham	Lisa Nunn	Christina Steele
Laurie Berger	Pam Euston	Robert Langham	Gary Nunn	Patricia Stone
Marianne Berry	Don Euston	Kerry Lin	Elizabeth Ovenden	Stuart Stow
Nicholas Berry	Sunny Fitzgerald	Ross Littlewood	Patricia Perry	Margaret Stow
Zaher Bou Hassoun	Simone Fitzgerald	Jill Littlewood	Joseph Perry	Kerri Sutey
Jennifer Bowman	Peter Fitzgerald	Anthony Long	Andrew Phillips	Axel Tennie
Graham Brown	Steve Goodwin	Leonie Lorenz	Judy Pittaway	Diane Tennie
Deirdre Brown	Alison Goodwin	Kathleen Lorenz	Bob Pittaway	Kate Twomey
Janie Bullard	Ricardo Guytingco	Daniel Manolios Reichert	James Popsys	Allan Twomey
Bryan Cartelle	Betty Hack	Garry Maxwell	Glenn Ringer	Rod Watson
Heather Cartelle	Doron Haifer	Dulise Maxwell	Georgina Russell	Sandy Watson
Jeri Clausing	Michele Haifer	Susan Maynard	Rod Russell	Dana Welch
John Coffey	Shelly Honeyball	Kirk Maynard	Bernadette Ryan	Xi Yang
Sandra Coffey	Richard l'Anson	Carol Mc Kee	Carolyn Schloss	Michael York
Annie Coleman	Mads Peter Iversen	Stephen Mc Kee	Jim Sharp	Lie Zhang
Nigel Danson	Aynsley Jardin	Maggie McCafferty	Dorothy Sharp	
Jane esilets	Del Johnston	Alison McPike	Marylou Solbrig	
Tim Desilets	Lesley Kernaghan	Sabrina Middleton	Ivan Solomano	
David Downs	Jesse Knight	Margot Milne	Gary Southon	
Nancy Downs	Kathryn Lamphier	Nicole Murray	Graham Steele	

Expedition Team:

Expedition Leader: Howard Whelan
Assistant Expedition Leader: Dot Robertson
Onboard Expedition Manager: Justine Bornholdt
Marine Biologist & CS Coordinator: John Kirkwood
Local Expedition Guide/Historian: Kelsey Camacho
Historian: Aviaaja (Avi) Schluter
Historian: Suzanne Lapstun
Firearms Manager: Jeff Nagel
Firearms Manager Trainee: Nils Egeland
Photography Guide: Scott Portelli
Expedition Medic: David (from Dunedin) Palmer
Expedition Guide: Thomas Gov
Kayak Guide: Ivan Klochkov
Kayak Guide: Wes McNeil
Kayak Guide: Liz MacNeil
Onboard Expedition Assistant: Ari Benz Ciria
Zodiac Master: Sergei Hincu
Zodiac Master Trainee: Ryan Kaempfe

Photography thanks to:

Scott Portelli Wes McNeil (kayak) Ivan Klochkov (kayak)

Senior Officers & Heads of Department:

Master: Arsen Prostov	Sous Chef: I Gusti Ketut Purnawirawan
Chief Officer: Konstantinos Giannopoulos	Hotel Controller: Rey Satuito Nolasco
Second Officer: Matko Zagorac	Receptionist: Jonalyn Rivera Ecija
Safety Officer: Clyde James Houston	Receptionist: Jaypee Alota Abonitalla
Ship Doctor: Gino Tiraboschi	Head Steward: Anil Kumar Kashyap
Chief Engineer: Ciro Sapio	Bosun: Leo Francis Magnaye Marzan
First Engineer: Warlito Versoza	Able Seaman: Anthony John Narvaez Brosas
IT Officer: Nathaniel Vibares	Able Seaman: Eduardo Caranoo Aloyan
Hotel Director: Balvant Singh	Able Seaman: Bahar Buhari
Head Bartender: Restlie Dimasaka Baldemor	Able Seaman: Rajiv Mahajan Rauniyar
Head Waiter: Naif Khan	Able Seaman: Luis Fernando Alvarez Santos
Chief Purser: Mark Walsh	Able Seaman: Ferdy Noel Diaz Roque
Executive Chef: Suresh Pai Karkala	

Artwork thanks to:

Rhonda Langham



