

Svalbard Odyssey

Aboard *MV Greg Mortimer* | 9 June – 19 June 2023





Longyearbyen

DAY 1 | Friday 9 June 2023

Position at 1700 on 9 June

Latitude: 78°18.593'N

Longitude: 015°29.839'E

Barometer: 1019

Air Temp: 3°C

Explore. Dream. Discover.

—Mark Twain

Here we are inside the Arctic Circle, at 78° North. Surrounded by spectacular mountains in the picturesque coal-mining town of Longyearbyen, we got off our tour buses knowing that this will be our last glimpse of civilisation for a while. Over the next nine days, we are more likely to encounter a fox, reindeer, or guillemot than another human.

We got into 'expedition mode' straight away, donning lifejackets and waterproofs for a Zodiac ride to the *Greg Mortimer*. The Zodiacs are our ticket to fun and they will soon become second nature to us, and we had our first experience of the mudroom, where the team welcomed us onboard.

After a quick photograph with Michael, the next stop was the Elephant Island Bar for refreshments.

The stewards helped us navigate the decks to our cabins and settle into our 'home away from home' then it was time for the all-important safety drill.

The sound of the ship's horn signalled us to grab our bulky orange lifejackets, our beanies and warm clothing, and muster in the lecture theatre. We followed our crew up to Deck 7 where the polar class life vessels sit (they can hold 136 people each, for 5 days!). With the safety drill complete, we had a welcome briefing from our Expedition Leader Christophe, and briefings from Hotel Director Pascal, Medic Hans, and Onboard Expedition Manager Rosie who gave us some tips for life onboard.

Finally, we headed to the dining room for a delicious dinner prepared by our talented galley team and served by our smiley and welcoming waiting staff.

The last task for the evening was the jacket swap, so that we can all stay cosy in the quite inhospitable environment we are about to explore.

After dinner, the kayak team met for a briefing with guides Peter, Liz and Teal, to prepare for the great paddling adventure that lies ahead.

Together we total 103 passengers from around the globe: 45 from the UK, 31 Australians, 23 from the USA, with Austria, Denmark and Venezuela making up the rest, along with 81 crew from all around the globe.

In addition, we have 16 Expedition Team with variety of specialities, including polar exploration, polar bear safety, glaciology, history, marine and terrestrial biology, ornithology, photography, wilderness first responding, and kayaking.

After the many hours of travel to reach the frozen top of the world, it's time to kick back, breathe in the sea air, and enjoy the incredible scenery of Svalbard.



Lilliehöökreen

DAY 2 | Saturday 10 June 2023

Position at 0600 on 10 June

Latitude: 79°18.0'N

Longitude: 011°36.9'E

Course: 023°

Speed: 2.5 knots

Wind Speed: NNE 2 KN

Barometer: 1027

Air Temp: 1°C

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

—Anonymous

The first full day of our expedition to Svalbard started off with a morning wake-up call from our expedition leader, Christophe. After welcoming us to the day and encouraging us to get outside to appreciate some of the extraordinary views that surrounded us, we ventured over to the restaurant for the first of many delectable buffet breakfasts.

Once we had our fill of everything from eggs and potatoes to yogurt and muesli, we gathered in the lecture room for a mandatory briefing on how to be responsible and environmentally-conscious visitors to Svalbard. Following that, we took some time to check out the gear that we'll need during our expedition, such as our Muck Boots, and we even bio-secured our personal belongings so that we don't introduce invasive species or diseases to this incredible landscape.

The morning continued on with an informative lecture from Albert, where we learned all about the ins and outs of life here in Svalbard. Afterward, it was time once again to travel over to the restaurant for lunch.

Although our morning was spent onboard preparing for our expedition, the afternoon had something else in store—our first Zodiac cruise! During the morning, our trusty ship, the *Greg Mortimer*, sailed well north of Longyearbyen into a stunning area called Krossfjord. At the northern end of Krossfjord, we found Lilliehöökreen, a truly incredible glacier with an ice-filled bay for us to explore.

We spent the next couple of hours zooming through the ice on our Zodiacs and kayaks and admiring the reflection of these amazing vistas in the glassy water. Many of us even got to see some wildlife, including a handful of harbour and bearded seals.

Like all good things, though, our afternoon of adventure had to come to an end. Back onboard the ship, we gathered in the Elephant Island Bar for a cocktail hour before assembling in the lecture room. In the lecture room, we heard from our captain and got a formal welcome to our voyage. Afterward, we had recap and briefing where

we learned more about our citizen science projects onboard the ship and got information about the next day's adventures.

As the evening progressed, we made our way to the restaurant for our welcome dinner and enjoyed good chat with friends, both new and old. The night ended with a movie night in the lecture room—featuring popcorn!—and some nightcaps in the observation lounge as we sailed out of Krossfjord and ever northward toward our next adventure destination.



Bjørnfjorden | Sea Ice

DAY 3 | Sunday 11 June 2023

Position at 0600 on 7 June

Latitude: 78°13.5'N

Longitude: 011°36.5'E

Course: 141°

Speed: 13.9 knots

Wind Speed: NNW, force

Barometer: 1028

Air Temp: 3°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

Overnight, whilst we were deep in slumber, Captain Maxim steered the good ship *Greg Mortimer* up the west coast of Spitsbergen. Christophe woke us up with a gentle wakeup call, where we were met by the snow-capped peaks of Bjørnfjorden outside our cabin windows.

The day's activities commenced with us donning our wet weather gear and loading into the Zodiacs for a landing at Smeerenburgfjorden, home to a large glacial face. Upon arrival at the shore a friendly harbour seal watched as we unloaded from the Zodiacs as Christophe briefed us on the plan for the outing. As we set off from the landing site, we skilfully navigated our way around the viscous mud and headed north towards the waiting guides. The more adventurous walkers headed up the steep slope and were rewarded with panoramic views upon reaching the summit, where Gaby gave a quick 101 talk on glaciers and geology. The medium walkers enjoyed the view of the glacier face and spotted skuas, guillemots, kittiwakes, eider ducks and barnacle geese.

After another delicious lunch prepared by the galley team, the ship started to experience the unforgettable sensation of the bow cutting through sea ice, sending shuddering vibrations through the hull. As we navigated through the varying densities of sea ice, the ship's PA system came to life with the sound of two Ding-Dongs (meaning a polar bear had been spotted). The Expedition Team were waiting on Deck 8 and advised that three bears had been spotted in the distance. Captain Maxim and his team skilfully brought the *Greg Mortimer* to a halt. As we quietly observed the young male bear from a great distance, he energetically leapt between ice floes, eventually making his way closer to the ship before carrying on his journey.

As the *Greg Mortimer* ventured back out into the open sea ice, Michael delivered his 'Introduction to Photography' lecture. Michael used a collection of his images and experience operating in the polar regions to help illustrate the fundamentals of photography (shutter speed, aperture and ISO), compositional techniques (rule of thirds, eye contact, sense of scale and leading lines) and a few helpful smartphone tricks.

There was a buzz of energy in the bar during the evening, content with seeing our first polar bears for the expedition in addition to the achievement of reaching 80 degrees north.



Sea Ice | Polar Plunge

DAY 4 | Monday 12 June 2023

Position at 0600 on 12 June

Latitude: 80°02.9'N

Longitude: 012°38.1'E

Course: Drifting in sea ice

Speed: 0.3 knots

Wind Speed: SW, 3KN

Barometer: 1000

Air Temp: 2°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

Waking today was not a typical experience for passengers aboard the *Greg Mortimer*! At over 80 degrees north, we spent most of the night drifting amongst the thick pack ice. Peering out our windows after a calm night of slumber revealed a great white expanse, with large, heavy ice floes and seabirds feeding in the areas of open water. The captain fired up the engines at breakfast time and we set out for a day of interesting navigation.

Sea ice in late springtime is characterised as "breakup" – the period when the thick winter ice is melting, and floes split into smaller and smaller bits until only open ocean is left for the summertime. These conditions are perfect for the few ice-strengthened ships like *Greg Mortimer*, which can further push deep into the springtime pack in search of wildlife. Wildlife, though, is really just a bonus – navigating this icy realm is extraordinary in the truest sense of the word, being utterly unlike anything we encounter in our daily lives.

Behind the scenes, our Expedition Leader and Captain had something very special in mind; something not possible on many voyages. They were seeking out large, expansive floes on which to conduct a walking excursion. A suitably well-structured floe was located by mid-morning. As you might imagine, landing on the frozen ocean is tricky and requires a healthy dose of experience, judgment and care. The first task fell to the Expedition Team, who conducted a site assessment that included various ice strength assessments, safety checks, establishing a safe perimeter, and polar bear scouting. Once satisfied that the site would provide a safe and rewarding experience for everyone, the green light was given to begin the operation. And what an outing it was!

The crew dropped the gangway directly onto the floe and we disembarked onto the ice. For almost two hours we were able to wander around with the Expedition Team. It was a great feeling to have boots on the ground, and to feel and witness the sea ice up close. Some were surprised by how much topography actually exists on the sea ice – a tribute to ocean and wind currents pushing and pulling over the course of the winter and creating 'pressure ridges'. Guides explained how seals seek these features for pupping dens, and how polar bears utilise these features when stalking seals during hunts. Eventually, we made our way to the bow, where Aurora's professional photographer Michael was offering portraits of guests with the *Greg Mortimer* positioned along the floe edge.

After lunch we were underway once more, navigating mostly above 80N in search of wildlife. While the polar bears proved absent today, seabirds of all types abounded. E-team conducted an eBird citizen science program, joined by curious wildlife enthusiasts as well as fully-fledged bird nerds. Meanwhile, the guides offered a few lectures for those who desired to learn more about the Arctic. By late afternoon, the ice edge was reached – a proper well-defined edge thanks to the persistent westerly winds of the past two days – and we emerged into the open ocean.

Turning toward land to the south, we were soon in a secluded bay. Small icebergs decorated a glassy calm sea, and the bay's backdrop was dominated by craggy mountain peaks. What better place for a polar plunge! The E-team quickly had all preparations completed and guests spent the next hour jumping into the Arctic Ocean. The conditions today were one for the books! A memorable experience for all and a fine way to finish off another great day in the Arctic.



Polar Plunge

DAY 4 | Monday 12 June 2023





Fridtjovhamna | Midterhukfjellet

DAY 5 | Tuesday 13 June 2023

Position at 0600 on 13 June

Latitude: 77°43.0'N

Longitude: 013°34.8'E

Course: 129°

Speed: 13.4 knots

Wind Speed: NNW force 6

Barometer: 1007

Air Temp: 4°C

The Walrus and the Carpenter were walking hand in hand,
The Carpenter wept bitterly to see such quantities of sand.
“If seven maids with seven brooms swept for half a year,
do you think,” the Walrus said, “that they could make it clear?”
“I doubt it”, said the Carpenter, and shed a bitter tear.

—Lewis Carroll from Alice Through the Looking Glass

Good morning, Greg Mortimer! In true expedition spirit (and after a bit of swell), we're on to Plan D... or is it E?! Either way, we're looking for protection from the 30-40 knot winds, and we've navigated our way into Fridtjovhamna Bay in time for a Zodiac cruise before lunch.

As we loaded the Zodiacs, we made our way over to the fast ice where we were greeted by various bird species — eiders, arctic terns, and black-legged kittiwakes. Navigating along the ice, we enjoyed the breathtaking views of the glaciers surrounding us and a young reindeer on the beach. In the distance, looming dark clouds filled the sky, a real photographer's dream Michael might say, as the clouds and light made for some rather dramatic photos.

Back on board for lunch and a bit of a rest while we reposition and go where none of us have gone before... Midterhukfjellet (say that 5 times fast). Looking out from the bridge and observation lounge, we saw a big brown blob on the beach (larger than the ones on ice), and confirmed they were walrus haul outs... another mark in the 'win column'!

There was an excited buzz in the mudroom, as expeditioners loaded onto the Zodiacs, hoping to get a glimpse of our pinniped friends.

After a bit of a sporty ride, we landed on the beach and were separated into two groups... hiking and walrus viewing. Hikers walked up a glacial stream and up along the foliage and saxifrage, as others strategically approached the walrus haul out. A lot of positive thigmotaxis behaviour happening amongst the walrus (the act of snuggling or cuddling to keep them warm and secure), while we watched, snapped photos, and gazed in awe at their size, humour, and grandeur. 1,500 kilograms, you say? That's a lot of mass to move and roll down the beach.



After switching groups, we headed back to the ship with smiles on our faces and the stoke level high. After a bit of a warm up, we gathered into the lecture theatre to hear Gaby's talk on “the short, confusing, and poorly documented history of women in Svalbard” followed by a recap on our walrus friends and importance of the citizen science program.

Excited about our expedition day, the restaurant was buzzing as we feasted on Chef Edgar's cuisine and shared a toast on our amazing day full of exploration, thigmotactic walrus, and PLAN D!



Kvalvågen | Sundneset

DAY 6 | Wednesday 14 June 2023

Position at 0600 on 14 June

Latitude: 77°04.4'N

Longitude: 017°43.0'E

Course: 009°

Speed: 14 knots

Wind Speed: W force 5

Barometer: 1016

Air Temp: 1°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)

Our day began as the *Greg Mortimer* sailed up Storfjorden towards Kvalvågen. The water was glassy even with latent swells rolling in from the south. The Zodiacs were lowered, and we were off and on our way toward Kvalbreen for an exciting morning out on the water.

At Kvalbreen, we were lucky enough to witness multiple glacier calving where tons of ice crashed into the icy waters below. Better yet, we even had the chance to see a handful of ivory gulls soaring above the freshly calved iceberg.

Back on the *Greg Mortimer*, we got our fill of coffee and tea as we eagerly awaited the start of lunch. After a tasty meal of pizza and sushi, we relaxed onboard for most of the afternoon.

Later in the day, we gathered up in the lecture room for an exciting and interesting talk about circadian rhythms in the 24-hour sunlight from the New Scientist group and Dr Helen Scales. The informative lecture was followed by yet another fun-filled activity—crêpes suzette and ice cream with our restaurant team (featuring guest chef Pascal).

Although the big swell and steady winds threatened to cancel our afternoon activity, our skilful Expedition Team was able to make things happen and get us to land at Sundneset. While on land, we got to see an old scientific research hut that was built in the late 1950s as well as a plethora of difficult-to-spot birds, such as red phalaropes, purple sandpipers, and long-tailed ducks.

However, during our brief time on shore, a squall rolled through and brought visibility down tremendously while also bringing in harsh winds. Unfortunately, with this came an end to our afternoon activity as the conditions were no longer safe for us to continue our hikes.

Back on the ship, it was nearly time for yet another delectable meal in the restaurant, served up by our talented galley team. But before dinner was a reality, many of us gathered in the bar area for drinks and laughs as we recounted the day's adventure.



Bråsvellbreen

DAY 7 | Thursday 15 June 2023

Position at 0600 on 15 June

Latitude: 79°03.0'N

Longitude: 024°07.2' E

Course: 041°

Speed: 5 knots

To dine with a glacier on a sunny day is a glorious thing and makes feasts of meat and wine ridiculous. The glacier eats hills and drinks sunbeams.

—John Muir

We woke up with a bump as the ship drove into heavy sea ice, scraping down the reinforced hull and shunting the *Greg Mortimer* sideways. Up on deck the wind was blowing around 30 knots, spray flying as the wavelets broke on sea ice as we headed for breakfast. David spotted a couple of beautiful all-white ivory gulls on the ice. These rare and elusive gulls are the avian equivalent of snow leopards.

Last night we sailed through Freemansundet, the channel between the islands of Barentsøya and Edgeøya, then north toward the south-eastern corner of the island of Nordaustlandet (Northeastland), the first ship to reach it this season.

We spent today on board exploring the southeastern section of this large island, most of which is covered in ice caps. The ice caps are huge domes of snow and ice up to 550 metres thick, flowing slowly outward to the coast, where they form an unbroken line of ice cliffs 200 kilometres long, eroding slowly into the sea. Our main focus was on the southern glacier face of Austfonna ice cap, called Bråsvellbreen, and on a large area of fast ice immediately west of it called Vibebukta. Our visit to the fast ice bore results almost immediately when Colby spotted a distant mother bear and cub strolling along the landward edge of the ice. Such vanishingly distant bears are fondly dubbed 'pixel bears' by the naturalists.

We then followed the line of ice cliffs eastward, enjoying the changing angles of the ice edge, the endless horizon of the ice dome, seabirds cruising the cliffs, icebergs floating in the water, and heavy grey skies making a striking contrast with the ice and snow: a memorably arctic day. At times low cloud blurred the boundaries between fast ice, mountains and sky.

After lunch Colby gave a fascinating and creative lecture about polar bears, using as a framework to describe their characteristics, the various names given them by indigenous peoples. Albert followed this up with a lecture about plants of the Svalbard tundra, illustrated with his superb photographs.

We eventually back-tracked to the west and sailed slowly along the fast ice again. This time we saw dozens of walruses, both on the ice and in the water. Some people with long lenses managed to snap pictures of mothers

Wind Speed: W 7kts

Barometer: 1020

Air Temp: -5°C

with young pups. They nurture their pups for 2-3 years, teaching them the complexities of walrus social and gastronomic life.

After dinner we anchored at Torellneset, a cape on the southwest side of Nordaustland, ready for an outing tomorrow.



Torellneset | Bjørnsund

DAY 8 | Friday 16 June 2023

Position at 0600 on 16 June

Latitude: 79°21.4'N

Longitude: 020°45.2'E

Course: At anchor

Speed: 0 knots

Wind Speed: NNW 4kts

Barometer: 1034

Air Temp: -1°C

The kayak is without comparison the best one-man vessel to be found.

—Fridtjof Nansen

Our day began at anchor outside of Torellneset. There was current from the east and wind blowing from the west leading to some 'sportier' conditions. The kayakers got on the water and headed to the coast where we followed along towards the east looking at some amazing beached icebergs with plenty of snowpack on top leading to some quite fantastic structures.

With the wind behind us, it was doing the hard work for us, so we made very good time.

We reached our set distance from the ship of 2.5 nautical miles away and got into our Zodiacs to make our way to the landing site to get the chance to briefly go ashore.

Once our landing was complete, everyone headed back onboard, excited for a big lunch.

Lunch was truly something special as we were treated with some ham and cheese toasties, veggie chow mein and my favourite in particular, wiener schnitzel. With our bellies full, we were encouraged to head out on to the open decks to look for some white fluffy things called polar bears.

The wind had died, and the sun shone bright, we were all set for an excellent afternoon activity.

Once we reached the other side of Bjørnsund, our Zodiacs were lowered for a Zodiac cruise around the islands and sea ice. For kayaking, the conditions were perfect. We launched from the ship and made our way to the sea ice to have some fun. We were paddling on the glassy waters when the call was made that there was a polar bear about 1.5kms to the north and was (at the time of the call) was walking towards us. Everyone did a great job, and the kayakers were off the water in a jiffy.

Once we had dropped the kayaks back at the ship, we joined the cruising with everyone else. By the time the Zodiacs arrived to see the bear, it was a cream-coloured dot, barely visible even through binoculars. It really was an impressive spot by Peter (Lead Kayak Guide)!

During the rest of the cruising, we spotted a couple of walrus hauled out on the ice snoozing and relaxing in the sun – their skin flushed a little pink in the heat.



Kapp Waldburg | Kapp Lee

DAY 9 | Saturday 17 June 2023

Position at 0600 on 17 June

Latitude: 78°20.2'N

Longitude: 022°44.0' E

Course: 207°

Speed: 10.3 knots

Wind Speed: SSE 2KN

Barometer: 1032

Air Temp: 0°C

Trapping days:

Wooden fox traps

These simple yet effective constructions comprised of a slatted wooden frame, set on a rock and piled with boulders on top. It was propped up at an angle with sticks. An additional stick was speared with bait, preferably a ptarmigan head. If a fox took the bait and disturbed the props, the trap would instantly collapse, leaving one squashed fox beneath a weight of stones. With this method, the prized white winter coat of the fox was preserved without having to shoot and damage the pelt. The Arctic fox summer coat range from a mottled brown-grey through to silver.

“Kittee-wa-aaake,

kittee-wa-aaake!!!”

What an alarm clock, and with a French accent to boot. The appetising terms “leetle” kittiwake colony and “leetle” canyon send us to the dining room to receive delicious sustenance for the morning hike in anticipation of the day.

As we assembled above the beach, we were struck by the verdant greenery of Kapp Waldburg compared to the “polar desert” we trudged across a day before at Torellneset. As we carefully navigated the creek-bed to avoid trampling the fragile mosses and tundra, the kayakers spotted a moving snow pile in and amongst the reindeer in the distance, an arctic fox in its winter coat! It zigged and zagged from ridge to the intertidal and back to the ridge searching for breakfast, hoping that the proximity to thousands of kittiwakes, possibly a camouflaged ptarmigan, or the luck of some carrion would provide a bounty to take to the den. The luxuriant coat is what almost brought about their demise by fur trappers, it enables them to maintain a body temperature of 104 degrees Fahrenheit in ambient temperatures as low as -76 degrees. Piotr reported watching skuas continuously harass the poor little fox from the scout Zodiac.

We arrived at the entrance to the canyon and the base of the nesting cliffs to an unimaginably hectic scene, a cacophony of squawking from all directions, an air traffic controller’s nightmare of cocky aerobatic mastery. Some were busy nest building, arriving with beaks full of seaweed, grasses and mud. Others were searching for their soul-mate and some real-estate on the crowded cliff face. Many folks sprawled on the hillside to attempt to take

in this incredible scene, while others marched up the hill to take it in from a birds-eye perspective.

We then cruised through Freemansundet on our way to Kapp Lee on the northwest corner of Edgeøya, attentive for signs of the Isbjørn such as fresh tracks on the drift ice. We were greeted with swell in the Storfjorden as the anchor descended to the leaden depths. Shuttling a group to land, four behemoth tusked sentries greeted us. Again, we divided into the hiking groups while some curious purple sandpipers (no purple was observed) scurried to and fro in the intertidal zone seemingly nonplussed by our presence. A skein of pink-footed geese flew overhead as eider ducks rested on the distant shoreline. Christophe pointed out how the burgeoning walrus community in Svalbard is re-inhabiting former haul-out sites. A grim reminder of the brutal past walrus and whale slaughter, a graveyard of decaying bones and skulls scattered across the undulating landscape. The groups on the hillside reported beautiful flowers while our noses led us to a humongous heap of huddling walrus. I’ve experienced haul-outs of many species of pinnipeds, but this was a special olfactory treat that almost defied description.

Liz and Teal MC’d a quiz as we crossed our fingers for a whale encounter heading back around the south tip of Spitzbergen.



Burgerbukta | Hornsund

DAY 10 | Sunday 18 June 2023

Position at 0700 18 June

Latitude: 76°55.0'N

Longitude: 015°29.2'E

Course: Variable

Speed: 3 knots

Wind Speed: W, 2KN

Barometer: 1016

Air Temp: 2°C

I must go down to the sea again, to the vagrant gypsy life,

To the gulls way and the whales way where the wind's like a whetted knife...

—John Mansfield

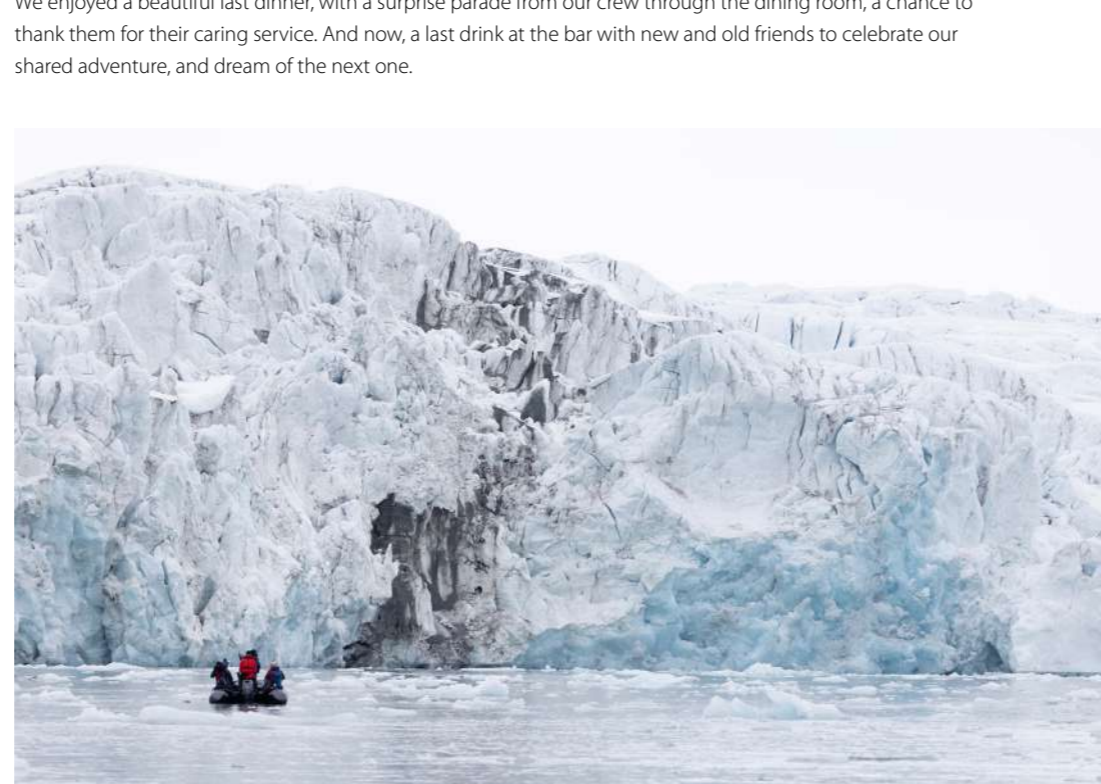
We anchored in the stunning Burgerbukta. There was still some fog in the air, hiding the highest peaks of the mountains. We lowered our Zodiacs into the water and explored along the shoreline, searching the bird cliffs with our binoculars. A few of us got a glimpse of an arctic fox chasing the geese, although it soon disappeared from view – so small, camouflaged and quick, possibly hunting to feed its family. Arctic foxes are apparently quite romantic, in that once they have met their mate, they'll generally stick together for life (although life can be short, on average in Svalbard about 3-4 years). They typically have 5-6 pups per litter, who after eight or so weeks, will be brave enough to venture on long trips away from the den. In fact, Ashley did spot what she thought might be a fox den on the bird cliffs we were cruising along.

Next, we steered our Zodiacs towards a beautiful glacier, navigating past a few bergy-bits laden with kittiwakes. A couple of eider ducks, male and female, bobbed around in the distance, and we admired from afar so as not to spook the timid birds. As we cruised further along the dramatic rust-stained cliffs, we watched melt-water pouring, and mini avalanches from way up beyond the clouds plunged into the greeny-blue fjord. It was quite mesmerising to watch, and to listen to the power of the waterfalls with our engine noise turned off. It was really a memorable last Zodiac cruise to top off our Svalbard adventure.

Back on board, we enjoyed the lunch buffet, before joining Rosie in the lecture theatre for a disembarkation briefing, and then learning about Arctic meteorology from our very knowledgeable lady, Gaby.

For even more variety, we had a towel animal origami lesson from Fernando & Fathur – I think a few of us have collected a little zoo of animals over the trip, and now we got to see the towel champions at work! Our crew are a talented and creative bunch.

It was soon time for our official Captain's farewell speech – along with the officers and heads of department. Some were also leaving the next day, including Chief Mate Andrey who has an important commitment coming up – his own wedding.



Longyearbyen

DAY 11 | Monday 19 June 2023

Position at 0700 on 19 June

Latitude: 78°18.593'N

Longitude: 015°29.839'E

Barometer: 1022

Air Temp: 4°C

Early this morning we arrived in Longyearbyen, waking up to our last morning together onboard the *Greg Mortimer* which has been our sturdy and comfortable base for the last 10 days. To our delight the captain was able to pull alongside the wharf, making for a relaxed stroll down the gangway and into the buses. Here we made our farewells to the expedition team before heading into town or continuing with own arrangements.

And what a voyage it has been, from the surreal marine world of the sea ice far in the north, to the lush tundra of the southern fjords.

The wildlife has amazed us: polar bears, countless walrus; Svalbard reindeer with mighty antlers placidly grazing, arctic fox. We have seen birds of all descriptions flying in all directions. The ever-present backdrop of the ice featured throughout our voyage, whether cruising in front of a glacier or being lost in the enchantment of the sea ice. There were walks, hikes, paddles, plunges, and great companionship from a delightful bunch of fellow travellers.

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



Kayaking Log

Kayak Guides: Peter Wainwright, Teal Morgan, Liz MacNeil

Number of Paddlers: 23 Total Paddle Outings: 7 Total Distance Paddled: 34.45km (18.6nm)

Paddlers:	Nola Cruickshank	Christopher Houck	Lisa McMeeken
Glenn Addison	Carole Davis	Joshua Houck	Claire Pitham
Tanya Addison	Robert Davis	Ingrid Kuster	Elisabeth Sutherland
Ronald Capps	Carole Florman	Ruth Mackay	Alex Was
Graeme Clarke	Tracy Halgren	Irmela Mayer	Brittany Was
Janine Clarke	Aiden Houck	Peter Mayer	Robyn Young

Saturday 10 June, PM: Lilliehöökreen 4.90 km

Having done all the outfitting with equipment and kayaks that morning, we were all very excited to get out on the water. We were all so keen in fact that we were all ready five minutes before. We all circled around to listen to Liz give a 'wet exit' and group management briefing. All fired up, we launched from the Zodiacs tied to the back marina deck. We started out by paddling towards the Lilliehöökreen face, which looked massive even at 500 metres away (standing approx. 60 metres). We continued paddling west in front of the glacier weaving our way in-between the brash ice and marvelling at the deep blue colour of the ice. We pressed on until it was time to get off. Peter and Sergei helped us off the water and we began our ride back to the ship, after a successful first paddle to get used to our kayaks.

Sunday 11 June, AM: Bjørnfjord 6.78 km

Unlike the previous day, the wind was blowing a bit more today. We set out from the ship and started paddling upwind as it funnelled down off the glacier into the fjord. We reached the first tidal island which we paddled round as plenty arctic tern flew above us. As we paddled through the channel, past the landing site, we spotted a harbour seal briefly. We then made our way across the fjord towards the next point, weaving our way in between the icebergs and brash ice when Peter pointed out a bearded seal in front of us. Once we got to the point, we continued paddling around hugging the coast hiding from the gusts of wind. The time came that we started to head back to the ship, and we paddled along another island venturing through a narrow channel on the northern tip. From there the wind carried us back to the ship in good time.

Wednesday 14 June, AM: Kvalvågen 3.12km

The waters were glassy with no wind and mesmerising rolling swells from the south, unfortunately we were constrained to having an hour on the water with a long sail to our evening activity. We left from the ship, and Liz led the way towards the Kvalbreen, we regrouped and headed west along the glacier face until we saw a huge calving. There we watched from a distance as the iceberg rolled and collapsed on itself. Ivory gulls flew over it eating the scraps from the collapse. We got into the Zodiacs and headed back onboard for lunch.

Friday 16 June, AM: Torellneset 5.46km

Our day began at anchor outside of Torellneset, there was current from the east and wind blowing from the west leading to some 'sportier' conditions. We got on the water and headed to the coast where we followed along towards the east looking at some amazing, beached icebergs with plenty of snowpack on top leading to some quite fantastic structures.

With the wind behind us, it was doing the hard work for us, so we made very good time. We reached our set distance from the ship of 2.5 nautical miles away and got into our Zodiacs, to make our way to the landing site to get the chance to briefly go ashore. Once our landing was complete everyone headed back onboard excited for a big lunch.

Friday 16 June, PM: Bjornsund 2.04km

Once we reached the other side of Bjornsund, our Zodiacs were lowered for a Zodiac cruise around the islands and sea ice. For kayaking, the conditions were perfect, and we launched from the ship and made our way to the sea ice to have some fun. We were paddling on the glassy waters, when Peter made the call that there was a polar bear to the north about 1.5kms to the north and was (at the time of the call) was walking towards us. Everyone did a great job, and we were off the water in a jiffy. Once we had dropped the kayaks back at the ship, we joined the cruising with everyone else. During the cruising we spotted a couple of walrus hauled out on the ice cooling off and relaxing in the sun.

Saturday 17 June, AM: Kapp Waldburg 5.70km

Launching more or less at slack water from the ship, the kayakers were on the water before the land scout was even complete. We initially paddled to the east of Freemansundet, before following the shore line of Barentsøya to the West. Alerted by Ashley we spotted a brilliantly white arctic fox energetically circling back and forth presumably foraging amid the tundra. After watching it for a while, we paddled over to the landing beach at Kapp Waldburg, pulling our kayaks up and turning them around in readiness for an emergency evacuation should a polar bear emerge in the vicinity. We hiked up the stream bed to the base of the canyon to marvel at the kittiwake colony. After filling our senses with the cacophony surrounding the kittiwakes we wandered back down to the boats, relaunched, and continued down the coast a short distance before turning into the flooding tide current which swiftly carried us back to the ship and made for a slightly interesting egress back onto the ship – turns out it's far easier to get back onto a Zodiac that is also drifting in the current than on a ship anchored in 1.5kn of current.

Sunday 18 June, AM: Burgerbukta West Arm 6.45km

The last paddle, and what a paddle it was! We began at the mouth of the west arm of Burgerbukta fjord, and swiftly paddle to the west side of the fjord. The snow looked like leaking water colours with the numerous avalanches that had taken place in the summer. Continuing on there were beautiful waterfalls descending from peaks clouded in fog, we gathered together for a group picture when we were treated to an avalanche cascading down one of these waterfalls. As we continued paddling towards the glacier we got to see a couple of very impressive tributary hanging glaciers on top of the cliff face, the second of which had a one metre waterfall that

must have flowed out through the rocks and jetted out at near the bottom of the cliff. Once our paddle was drawing to a close we stopped to soak it all in with a minute silence. We got back into the Zodiacs and towed back the way we came, rounding off a fantastic voyage of paddling with a puffin relaxing on the water as spotted by Lisa



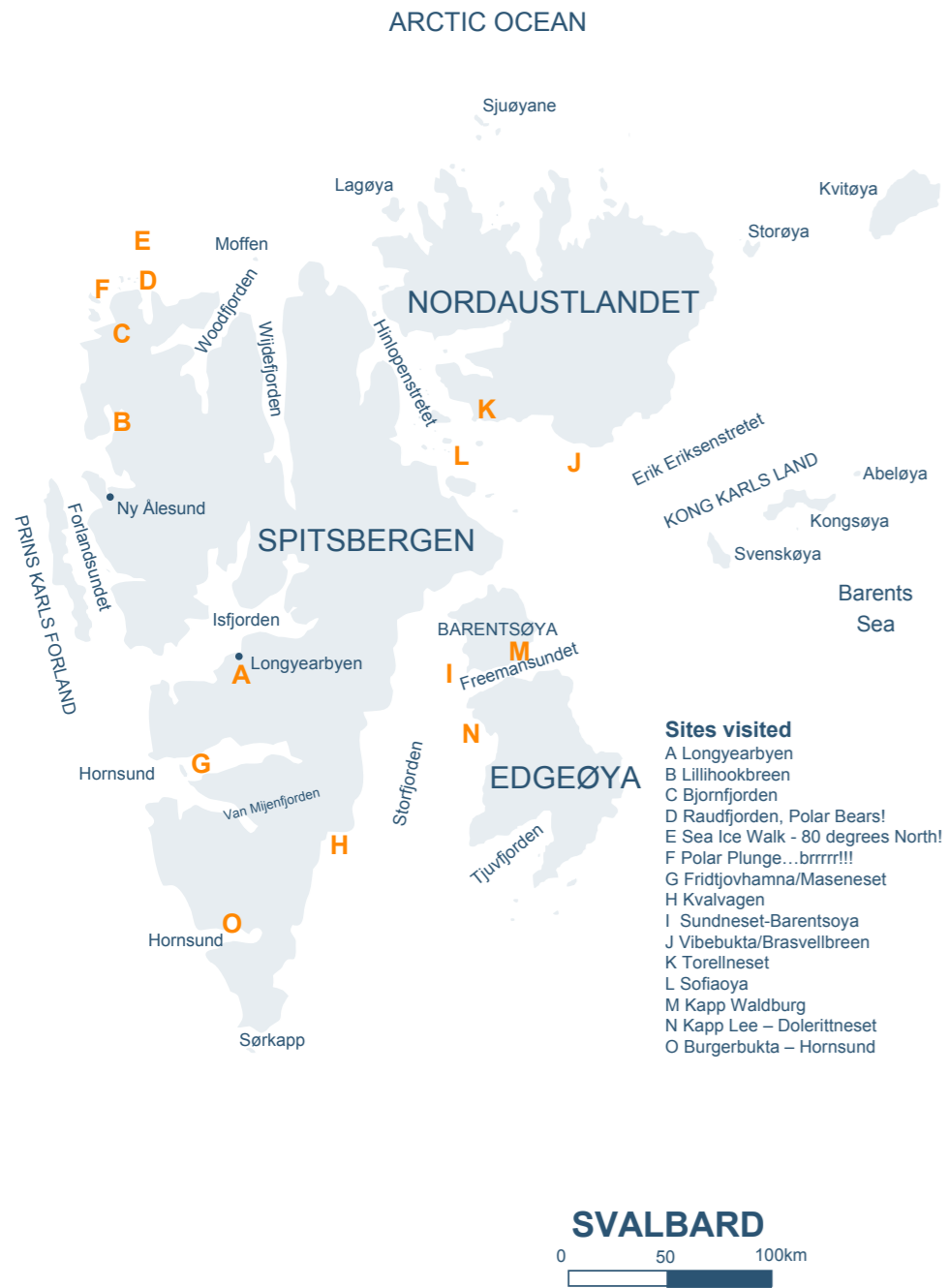


Bird and Mammal Sightings

Bird Species	June								
	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Red-throated Diver			•		•				
Northern Fulmar	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Pink-footed Goose		•	•		•		•	•	•
Barnacle Goose	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•
Common Eider	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
King Eider	•	•		•	•			•	
Long-tailed Duck (Oldsquaw)	•	•			•			•	•
Rock Ptarmigan								•	
Purple Sandpiper	•	•			•		•	•	•
Grey Phalarope					•				•
Arctic Skua	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Long-tailed Skua (ib)	•			•				•	
Great Skua	•	•				•			
Glaucous Gull	•								
Kittiwake	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Ivory Gull			•				•		
Arctic Tern	•	•		•	•	•		•	•
Brunich's Guillemot	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Black Guillemot	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Little Auk	•	•	•	•				•	•
Atlantic Puffin		•	•					•	•
Snow Bunting	•	•			•				•

Mammal Species	June								
	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Arctic Fox								•	•
Reindeer	•	•		•				•	•
Polar Bear			•			•	•		
Ringed Seal	•	•							
Bearded Seal	•	•		•	•	•		•	•
Walrus		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
Minke Whale		•			•		•		
Humpback Whales									•





- Sites visited**
- A Longyearbyen
 - B Lillihookbreen
 - C Bjornfjorden
 - D Raudfjorden, Polar Bears!
 - E Sea Ice Walk - 80 degrees North!
 - F Polar Plunge...brrrrr!!!
 - G Fridtjovhamna/Maseneset
 - H Kvalvagen
 - I Sundneset-Barentsoya
 - J Vibebukta/Brasvellbreen
 - K Torellneset
 - L Sofiaøya
 - M Kapp Waldburg
 - N Kapp Lee – Dolerittneset
 - O Burgerbukta – Hornsund



Expeditioners:

Sasha Abdul-Rahman

Tanya Addison

Glenn Addison

David Ascanio

Mary Bambrough

Judith Beardsworth

Julian Beardsworth

Gillian Bellas

Susan Blaha

Joshua Bonner

Steve Bowker

Rayleen Bowman

Leslie Bridgen

John Bridgen

Lady Jennifer Bute

Anna-Lou Campbell

Domenico Cappelli

Pamela Cappelli

Ro Capps

Robin Carter

Janine Clarke

Graeme Clarke

Fiona Crawley

Christopher Crocker

Nola Cruickshank

Kevin Currie

Graeme Cutler

Suzanne Cutler

Carole Davis

Robert Davis

Carolyn de Wytt

David Dennis

Lynne Dickenson

John Dickenson

Richard Dorn

Judy Drasin

Carl Emont

Carole Florman

Susan Gaastra

Christine Gilbert

Malcolm Gilbert

Glenys Greenwood

Michael Griffiths

Tracy Halgren

Matthew Hooper

Chris Houck

Joshua Houck

Aiden Houck

Paul Hyde

Margaret Irving

Rodney Irving

Jill Kinder

Ian Kinder

Claudia King

Rebecca King

Douglas King

Deborah King

Ingrid Kuster

Julie Lee

Paul Lee

Lisa Lewis

Ruth Mackay

Irmela Mayer

Peter Mayer

Susan McKegney

Douglas McKegney

Lisa McMeeken

Eve Mensch

Lynne Miller

Charles Miller III

Paris Milner

Sophia Milner

Anoushka Milner

Helen Moss

Hadrian Moss

Anne Ngapo

Bridget Norton

Lesley Paton

Sue Peters

Chris Peters

Claire Pitham

Harry Pringle

Anne Pringle

Helen Scales

David Scott

Elizabeth Scott

John Sevenair

Peter Simpson

John Sloan

Alex Supnet

Andrew Sutherland

Elisabeth Sutherland

Kaya Taylor

Claire Taylor

Terrell Taylor

Swee-Im Ung

Brittany Was

Alex Was

Robert Washburn

Roberta Ann Williams

Bill Williams III

Neil Wilson

Robyn Young

Expedition Team:

Expedition Leader: Christophe Bouchoux

Assistant Expedition Leader: Ashley Perrin

Onboard Expedition Manager: Rosie Leaney

Marine Biologist & Citizen Science: Albert Michaud

Glaciologist: Gaby Pilson

Historian: Mario Placidi Spring

Firearms Manager: Piotr Damski

Expedition Guide/Naturalist: Chris Todd

Expedition Guide/Naturalist: Colby Brokvist

Lead Kayaking Guide: Peter Wainwright

Kayaking Guide: Liz MacNeil

Kayaking Guide: Teal Morgan

Photography Guide: Michael Baynes

Medic/Expedition Guide: Hans Bruning

Zodiac Master: Sergei Andronov

Onboard Expedition Assistant: Reza Rusooly

Senior Officers & Heads of Department:

Master: Maxim Makarovskiy

Chief Officer: Andrey Zakalashnyuk

Safety Officer: Sergei Voina

Bosun: Giovanni Dela Torre

Deck Cadet: Miguel Delgado

Deck Cadet: Goncalo Costa

Ship Doctor: Andres Peralta

Ship Doctor: Anzor Chomakhidze

Chief Engineer: Dimitar Vasilev

Hotel Director: Pascal Joubin

F&B Manager: Raj Murao

Chief Purser: Willie Lirio

Executive Chef: Edgar Mangalinao

Head Waiter: Allan Liscano

Hotel Controller: Alvin Johnson

IT Officer: Ihor Yesmienieiev

Receptionist: Ana Fernandez

Receptionist: Johnny Valdez

Head Stateroom: Roniel Garcia

Able Seaman: Tim Kitson

Able Seaman: Bobby Penuliar Payumo

Able Seaman: Hardik Rao

Able Seaman: Ajay Fnu

Able Seaman: Joel Valdevieso Noble

Photography thanks to:

Michael Baynes

Peter Wainwright

Liz MacNeil

Teal Morgan





