

# East Greenland Explorer

Aboard *Ocean Explorer* | 16 August – 28 August 2023





# Reykjavík

DAY 1 | Wednesday 16th August 2023

Position at 2100

Latitude: 64°21.6'N

Longitude: 022°35.7'W

Course: 300°

Speed: 13.6 knots

Wind Speed: 5.3 knots

Barometer: 1018

Air Temp: 15°C

Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you did not do than by the ones you did do, so throw off the bowlines, sail away from safe harbor, catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore, Dream, Discover.

—Mark Twain

Here we are in the vibrant capital city of Iceland: Reykjavík. Home to around 123,000 people, there is a vibrant, lively nightlife, modern museums, world-class restaurants, galleries, shops and bars.

After breakfast, we joined our guided Golden Circle and Geothermal Energy tour. With 85% of its electricity sourced from renewable sources, Iceland sets an outstanding example when it comes to sustainable energy. Our journey takes us to the famous seismic sights of the Golden Circle route: Gullfoss waterfall, Geysir, and the history-rich Thingvellir National Park. We experience firsthand how green, sustainable energy is produced at one of the largest single-site geothermal power plants on the planet at the Geothermal Energy Exhibition and Ljósafossvirkjun Power Station. We also spent time at a true eco-village powered with thermal and solar energy. Sólheimar Ecovillage is fully sustainable, boasting greenhouses and forestry programs, while its sustainable workshops are dedicated to candle-making, carpentry, weaving and soapmaking.

In the late afternoon, the warm and stable *Ocean Explorer* beckoned us aboard, where we had a welcome buffet prepared by the friendly food and beverage team. The stewards helped us navigate the decks to our cabins and settle into our 'home away from home.'

First, it was time for the all-important safety drill. Seven long blasts and one short blast of the ship's horn signalled us to grab our bulky orange life jackets, our beanies, and warm clothing, and muster in the lecture theatre. We followed the crew up to Deck 7, where the polar-class life vessels sit.

Afterwards, we had a welcome briefing from our Expedition Leader, Christophe. We received some handy hints from Samantha, our onboard Expedition Manager, as well as speeches from our hotel director, Ulises, and one of our doctors on board, Andres. Then we headed to the dining room for a delicious dinner prepared and served by our amazing hotel team.



# Sea Day

DAY 2 | Thursday 17th August 2023

Position at 0600

Latitude: 65°55.0'N

Longitude: 024°21.9'W

Course: 018°

Speed: 13.4 knots

Wind Speed: SE 3 knots

Barometer: 1017

Air Temp: 13°C

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

—Blaise Pascal (1623-1662)

Our first night on board the mighty *Ocean Explorer* was a calm passage up the west coast of Iceland, then out across the vast expanse of the Denmark Strait. In the morning, seabirds joined our passage north, surfing the wind and waves alongside the ship.

After exploring the delights of the breakfast buffet, Christophe announced that we were crossing the Arctic Circle.

At 9.30am, we assembled in the lecture theatre. The Expedition Team introduced themselves, cheers erupting from the various nationalities around the room. During the mandatory activity briefings, we learned about the 'Zodiac 3 steps' technique when boarding and embarking Zodiacs, along with the importance of 'the sailor's grip'. An AECO animation engagingly laid out many of the conditions guiding our visit to the Arctic, and we received a further briefing on the do's and don'ts of visiting polar bear country. After a biosecurity check and cleanse of our outdoor gear we took a stroll to the mudroom where, Muck Boots and PFDs were tried on, necessary gear for venturing out and exploring Greenland.

As we continued sailing north into the Greenland Sea, Bettina from the Expedition Team told us about life in Greenland, including its culture and wildlife. In her captivating lecture, she informed us about nearly everything there is to know about the world's largest island. Greenland is locally known as Kalaallit Nunaat, meaning 'land of the people'. Geographically connected to North America, it's politically aligned with Europe. Situated between the Atlantic and Arctic oceans, Greenland experiences extreme weather conditions and houses the world's second largest ice cap. Flora is scarce and fauna have evolved to endure cold temperatures and dry climates. Local people conserve a long lineage of cultural traditions while facing political and climate challenges. We were all eager to learn more about this intriguing place we were about to explore; however, an exciting distraction had us out of our seats looking out across the ocean.

Orcas, humpbacks whales, and fin whales too. Sightings like these couldn't get much better. The tall dorsal fins of two orcas surfaced within a few hundred metres of the ship, the recognisable black and white of humpback flukes as they descended for a deep dive. A pod of fin whales, the second largest mammal on the planet, exhaled, sending water spraying high into the air. Unfortunately, Bruno's Citizen Science lecture was cancelled; however,

with these amazing sightings, please take a minute to check out 'Happy Whale' to help protect and learn more about these incredible creatures.

Our day ended with Captain Vadym's welcome drinks, where he wished us well and introduced us to the officers of the various departments who keep the heart and body of the *Ocean Explorer* alive and running smoothly.

The recap and precap left us excited about the prospect of seeing the Arctic ice pack tomorrow and the adventures of the next two weeks. Another all-too-tempting dinner capped off a great first day on board.



# Sea Day

DAY 3 | Friday 18th August

Position at 0600

Latitude: 73°26.7'N

Longitude: 019°59.1'W

Course: Ice Navigation

Speed: 11.4 knots

Wind Speed: SSE 3 knots

Barometer: 1026

Air Temp: 6°C

We woke up to fog as we sailed north up the east coast of Greenland. Luckily for us, we had very calm seas - not a lick of wind. It felt as if the ship was not moving at all. If anyone feels seasick today, we suggest they do not attempt the Drake Passage.

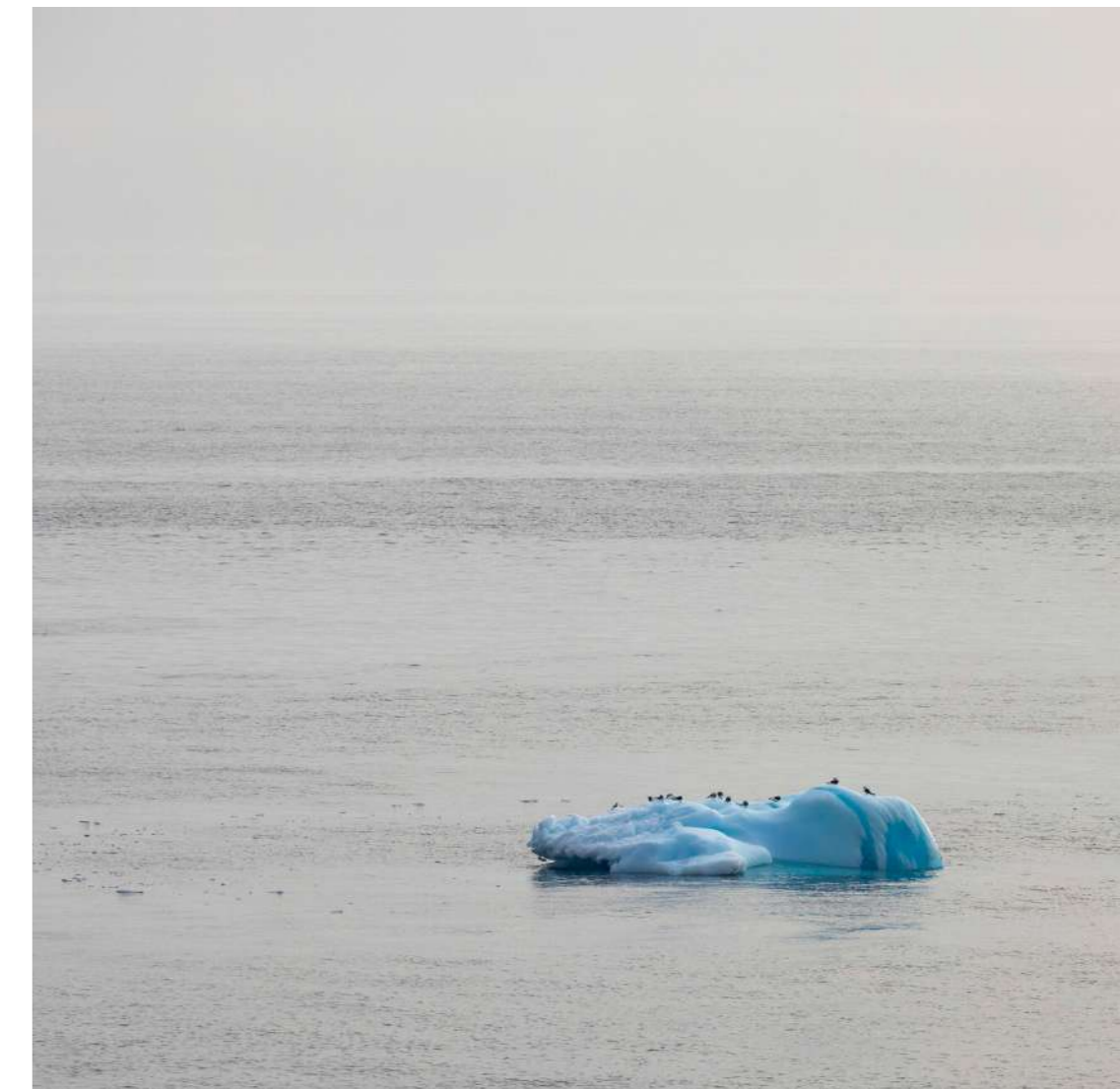
In the morning, we were very lucky to have a personalised bridge tour from Captain Vadym himself. How lucky are we to get a bridge tour from the Captain. We visited the state-of-the-art-bridge, and the Captain explained all the equipment the bridge team uses, most importantly, the coffee machine. He also showed us his teddy bears.

After the bridge tour we got to hear everything about our Citizen Science projects from Bruno. We are lucky to travel in these remote areas. Many scientists who study these areas never get to come here themselves, so any way we can help with data and readings, we should.

Then we had a delicious taco lunch, followed by some great photography tips from Adrian. After Adrian's lecture, we learned all about ice from Linda. It was a great intro to learn about ice as we sailed north into the pack ice. After Linda's lecture, we had afternoon tea and cake, then went to do some citizen science with Bruno, who was conducting a cloud survey on deck 8.

Soon it was 6pm, and it was time for our daily recap and briefing. We learned about orca from Pete. We were very lucky to see them yesterday as it is a rare sight in the Arctic. Then Bettina told us about ice cores that are taken from the Greenland ice cap. She has a lot of good insider knowledge because she has visited the very scientific station where they are taken from. After that, we heard about the naughty Norwegians, who like to lie on their ice charts, but we are wary of their tomfoolery. Christophe told us of the unknown plan tomorrow. After all, it is an expedition. We will try and get as far north as we can in these calm seas and relatively open ice conditions, and reassess tomorrow.

Right before bed, we were treated to an incredible surprise: a polar bear swimming and climbing onto the ice floes. It was magical to witness, especially while the sky lit up with oranges and reds of a vibrant East Greenland sunset. What a way to end the day.



# Dødemandsbugten & Eskimonæs

DAY 4 | Saturday 19th August 2023

Position at 0600

Latitude: 73°26.7'N

Longitude: 019°59.1'W

Course: Ice Navigation

Speed: 11.4 knots

Wind Speed: SSE 3 knots

Barometer: 1026

Air Temp: 6°C

After two and a half days at sea, we were ready to stretch our legs. The premise of this voyage was to get as far north on the eastern Greenland coast as possible, and we have spent the first couple days of the trip doing just that. We slowed down for some sea ice late last night, and then encountered a polar bear drifting through the ice well off the coast, just after dinner. We left him behind as we steamed ahead into one of the most glorious and colourful sunsets I have ever seen. Pinks, purples, yellows, reds and oranges graced the sky and bounced off the ocean and the ice below. It was a sight to be seen.

We awoke in thick fog and calm seas, and we headed for our first landing, Dødemandsbugten, or Dead Man's Bay. We sliced through the water on our first Zodiac trip, and the short distance to shore was covered quickly. We set about exploring the survival hut, which was very well maintained. Coal for fires, cooking utensils, beds with mattresses, a stove/heater, and a few tools and implements were all kept in good order, right down to the boxes of matches.

We then split into our various hiking groups: long-range, medium-range, and short-range walkers, and set about the morning's excursion. We went on the medium hike and explored a few old moraines as we came upon flora (arctic cottongrass, moss campion, arctic poppies, and arctic willow) strewn across the fields and growing in between the rocks. The Greenlandic national flower, broadleaf fireweed, was in abundance and was a favourite.

In the afternoon, we relocated nearby for another landing with walks again. The bay was called Eskimonæs and hosted an old survival hut, as well as a modern one still in use by the Sirius Patrol to this day. Fuel, firewood and stores were evident throughout the hut, and my mind drifted to trying to comprehend the distances covered by these two-man teams and their sled dogs.

We walked across a flat to the north where there lay another beach. Bordered by cliffs, the beach was laced with pristine sands. There were quite a few musk ox and arctic hare footprints that looked reasonably fresh, and we were on the lookout for these elusive animals. While we watched, we were being watched by two long-tailed skua that were keeping a close eye on how far into their territory we were drifting.

It was a great day for walking trips today, with calm and warm weather. What a nice introduction to Northeast Greenland. Looking forward to what tomorrow will bring.



# Claveringstrædet & Germania Havn Sø

DAY 5 | Sunday 20th August 2023

Position at 0600

Latitude: 74°28.9'N

Longitude: 018°48.3'W

Course: 381°

Speed: 3 knots

Wind Speed: NE 2 knots

Barometer: 1022

Air Temp: 6°C

I must go down to the sea again, to the vagrant gypsy life,  
To the gull's way and the whale's way where the winds like a whetted knife...

—John Masefield

This morning, we woke up to a misty sky and light rain. The mountains looked mysterious, shrouded in fog. It was calm outside, and we didn't miss the opportunity to lower the Zodiacs into the water for a morning cruise at Sabine Island.

We manoeuvred around ice floes and small icebergs while taking in the powerful landscape around us. There were quite a few wildlife sightings: long-tailed ducks flew past in a flock and eider ducks paddled by with a group of chicks. Some of us were even lucky enough to catch a bearded seal as it flipped around in the water. A couple boats spotted an arctic fox - quite a rare sighting.

After being out in the drizzling rain, it was extra nice to return to the ship for tea and hot chocolate so we could warm up for lunch. We had a bit of time before we headed out for our second adventure: a landing at Germania Havn Sø.

The place was filled with history— it was one of the locations used by the Second German North Polar Expedition in 1869. The Germans built a cabin there and used it as a research base, before it was eventually used for hunting. The hut remains open today, and we got to go inside after hearing some dramatic overwintering stories from Bettina.

After exploring the cabin, we divided into walking groups so we could continue exploring. While some of us decided to go up into the hill, others decided to stop and smell the flowers. A few of us also spent more time at the cabin, getting the feeling of the place and imagining what it was like to spend a long, dark winter in East Greenland.

Meanwhile, the kayakers were at it again. This time they chose to paddle in front of some impressive bird cliffs made of basalt. Kittiwakes and glaucous gulls wheeled in the sky, and there were even some juveniles in the area. Nowadays, they are all preparing to leave their nests and head south.

At the end of our afternoon activity, we got some surprise visitors: the famous Sirius Patrol, Northeast Greenland's sledge patrol and coastguard. They came by in their flashy yellow speedboat, checking to make sure everything

was in order. Even though we wanted them to stay and visit for a while, they sped off again into the distance.

The day ended with a ship's cruise among some impressive icebergs, standing tall in the evening light. Another stunning day in the Arctic was complete.



# Sea Ice

DAY 6 | Monday 21st August 2023

Position at 0600

Latitude: 73°16.7'N

Longitude: 021°34.65'W

Course: Ice Navigation

Speed: 3.4 knots

Wind Speed: SE 3 knots

Barometer: 1019

Air Temp: 1°C

All men dream, but not equally.

Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds, wake in the day to find that it was vanity: but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act on their dreams with open eyes, to make them possible.

—T.E. Lawrence

The day started out with the now familiar 'Good morning, good morning Expeditioners' as Christophe woke us with his announcement calling us for breakfast. The fog was heavy as the *Ocean Explorer* floated in the sea ice at the entrance of Kaiser Franz Joseph fjord. We ate breakfast in hope for the fog to lift; however, with the completely still conditions it showed no signs of moving.

Our plan A was for an ice landing in the morning and a polar plunge in the afternoon but with the fog still not budging, all operations for the day were delayed. Instead, we were treated to a fantastic lecture from our onboard expert Bettina on all things Greenland. In this lecture we were told about the history of the region from the trapper period to the Sirius Dog Sled Patrol. My favourite part was the story of the North-East Sled Patrol during the second world war (for anyone wanting to learn more there is an amazing book called *Sledge Patrol* by David Howarth).

After the lecture, the fog had cleared enough for us to do the polar plunge. Those who were brave/crazy enough were able to face the frigid arctic waters. Many of us came down in our towels and robes ready to take a dip, while the rest watched from the decks above, laughing as these people jumped in. Those who jumped were treated to a shot of vodka to warm ourselves back up.

After everyone had warmed up it was time for lunch, and much to many people's joy it was pizza day.

As the fog slowly lifted the Expedition Team geared up and got ready for our ice landing. We all came onto the ice floe with the Zodiacs. Once everyone was walking on ice, we all grouped together for the most spectacular group photo from our incredible photographer, Adrian. We were given some more time to enjoy our experience on the ice before we hopped back in the Zodiacs and headed for a cruise around the sea ice, gazing in wonder at all the formations that the ice can make.



# Polar Plunge

DAY 6 | Monday 21st August 2023







# Waltershausen Glacier & Blomsterbugten

DAY 7 | Tuesday 22nd August 2023

Position at 0600

Latitude: 73°44.3'N

Longitude: 024°15.9'W

Course: Ice Navigation

Speed: 5.8 knots

Wind Speed: N 2 knots

Barometer: 1016

Air Temp: 10°C

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 this morning to a colourful sky full of lenticular clouds with the Waltershausen Glacier in the background. This glacier was named after German geologist Wolfgang Sartorius von Waltershausen by the Second German North Polar Expedition led by Carl Koldewey, which first surveyed and partially explored the Kaiser Franz Joseph Fjord in 1869–1970.

The sun was shining, and we could feel the warm foehn wind while we navigated our way through bergy bits, growlers and big icebergs with our Zodiacs and kayaks. While the glacier made some impressive cracking sounds in the background, we enjoyed all the amazing shapes and colours of the icebergs that surrounded us, from black and white to blues and greens. Some were pretty dirty, covered in gravel and rocks. As we were taking in this breathtaking landscape of ice, we were joined by ringed seals, arctic terns and arctic skuas. What a beautiful experience.

Back on the ship, most of us were out on deck 8 enjoying the sunshine and impressive views of the colourful layered rock formations that dominate the Kaiser Franz Joseph Fjord. As the ship cruised further to our next landing site, Blomsterbugten, Bruno organized a bird survey for the bird nerds amongst us and we registered an impressive 115 black-legged kittiwakes, 6 arctic terns and one lonely northern fulmar.

As we arrived at Blomsterbugten, we could see all the striated layers of sedimentary rocks of the famous Teufelschloss or 'Devils Castle'. An impressive sight. We had a little glimpse inside the trapper's hut before we split up in walking groups and set out to explore. On the short hike we stepped into Thule history when we explored a turf house and tent ring, while others enjoyed a more strenuous hike, passing colourful lakes with a stunning backdrop and some musk oxen in the distance.

Content with all these new experiences and memories that will last a lifetime, we went back to the ship for another adventure: the BBQ. We could not have asked for a better evening. The weather remained calm, sunny and relatively warm. As we contemplated the explorations of the day, we enjoyed some fine BBQ food out on the decks. There was a lot of laughter, some artistic juggling, a polonaise, and disco dancing. What a way to end a

wonderful day in Kaiser Franz Joseph Fjord.

And while most of us were fast asleep after this day filled with new adventures, the ship cruised further along the fjord on its way to the Antarctic Sound, surrounded by a palette of deep red, orange and yellow, as the sun set late in the night.



# Alpefjord & Gateau Point

DAY 8 | Wednesday 23rd August 2023

Position at 0600

Latitude: 73°14.4'N

Longitude: 025°25.9'W

Course: 182°

Speed: 5.6 knots

Wind Speed: SE 5 knots

Barometer: 1014

Air Temp: 14°C

The danger of an adventure is worth a thousand days of ease and comfort.

—Paulo Coelho

“Good morning, dear Expeditioners”, one more time, the (arguably) comforting voice of Christophe pulled us out of our dreams and announced a new, exciting day in the Arctic.

During the night, our loyal *Ocean Explorer* left the Kaiser Franz Joseph Fjord, crossed the Antarctic Sound, entered the Kong Oscar Fjord, and reached our first destination of the day: the Alpefjord. Our ship made it quite deep into this 50 km-long and 3 km-wide fjord. Hence, we were lucky to wake up with a stunning view on the majestic glacier front formed out of two merging glaciers (the Gullygletscher and the Sefstrøm Gletscher), surrounded by sharp mountain peaks. One may argue that there was a little feeling of Switzerland while looking at the valley glaciers between the Toblerone-like mountains... but the icebergs clearly reminded us that we were in the Arctic. After a quick breakfast, we jumped into the Zodiacs and continued our exploration of the fjord to its southernmost part. From the boats, we could see suspended valleys on the western side, from which waterfalls and moraines were the last remains of the former hanging glaciers that formed those U-shaped, hanging valleys. On the east coast, though, the glaciers were still present, looking like the guardians of the fjords. On that great Arctic morning, a wind of about 20 knots made our Zodiac cruise more bumpy than usual, but the shining sun brought enough comfort for an enjoyable ride.

After our morning adventure, the ship repositioned close to the so-called Gateau Point to attempt a landing. Gateau means ‘cake’ in French. It did not take long before we understood the reason for the naming of the site. Gateau Point displays what might be the most photogenic rocks in East Greenland, and probably among the most photogenic rocks anywhere in the world. It displays a several-km-thick succession of colourful, sedimentary rock layers, which represent the seabed of an ancient marine environment some 900 to 600 million years ago, at a time when Greenland was not too far from the South Pole - and we actually got to walk on it. The beauty of the landing site was indescribable, especially as we were blessed by warm and sunny conditions that made our experience even more enchanting. Greenland never fails to surprise us.

The day continued with our traditional recaps; where Bruno told us more about how to read and understand the colourful rock layers we encountered, Bettina prepared us for our visit to Ittoqqortoormiit by teaching us some basic Greenlandic, and Christophe answered a couple of questions from the question box, including why the fire



alarm did not go off during the iconic, burning dance of Ulises (the hotel manager) before presenting the plans for the next day.

It was definitely another great day in the Arctic.

# Ittoqqortoormiit

DAY 9 | Thursday 24th August 2023

Position at 0600

Latitude: 70°31.8'N

Longitude: 021°18.8'W

Course: 203°

Speed: 8.5 knots

Wind Speed: SSE 4 knots

Barometer: 1018

Air Temp: 7°C

Our ability to perceive quality in nature begins, as in art, with the pretty. It expands through successive stages of the beautiful to values as yet uncaptured by language.

—Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac

The distinctive bright colours of well-kept Greenlandic board-and-batten houses are a novel attraction after travelling through the simply majestic and grandiose fjords of the last few days. Except for the visit from the Sirius Patrol vessel early in the trip we have not seen a single other soul so far in our travels in the seemingly endless wilderness of Northeast Greenland. Despite the occasional signs of passing human life barely etched into these remote shores – fox traps, trapper cabins, tent rings, thule dwellings - seeing a settlement is certainly a contrast. Even on cold, rainy days these Greenlandic settlements have a cheerful charm to them but today it is gloriously sunny and pleasantly warm, and the locals are welcoming and smiling.

Ittoqqortoormiit means 'place with the big houses' in Greenlandic and was founded by the Danish government in 1925 to relocate 90 Inuit and provide them with greater hunting grounds. The area famously benefits from the currents and the polynya (a semi-permanent area of unfrozen water within otherwise contiguous sea ice) at the mouth of Scoresbysund. While the population once peaked at 500 inhabitants, only 350 people now reside in the town – with several living off bear, narwhal, musk oxen and seal hunting.

We fight the urge to pet and spoil the Greenlandic husky puppies and we watch a musher bring food for his sled dog team along the banks of the creek running through the town. Dogsleds and snowmobiles vastly outnumber cars and ATVs here.

There are musk oxen and seal skins stretched out and draped over wooden drying racks, and several polar bear skins marking the homes of the local hunters – these houses often painted in a shade of green. There is a beautiful and very well-maintained church – of course, painted in the red colour associated with religion.

We are kindly offered the chance to sample some musk ox meat – a gamey flavour reminiscent of lamb, perhaps a little chewier. Some find the time to engage some local kids in a quick game of soccer. Many of us hiked up the hill to the east to visit the bust of Ejnar Mikkelsen – who, between 1925 and 1928, led an expedition to move 90 settlers from Tasillaq to where Ittoqqortoormiit is now. Mikkelsen was a Danish hero who had endured and survived three winters in unbearable cold and isolation, and at times dire conditions either stuck in ice, or in a basic hut with his engineer, Iver Iversen, to recover the lost records of the Mylius-Erichsen expedition.



# Sydkap & Bjørneøer

DAY 10 | Friday 25th August 2023

Position at 0600

Latitude: 71°3'N

Longitude: 025° 04.1'W

Course: Ice Navigation

Speed: 4 knots

Wind Speed: E 1 knot

Barometer: 1010

Air Temp: 13°C

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*

Sailing into the twilight last night, we traced the northern coast of Scoresbysund. We awoke to a golden glow lighting up majestic icebergs. We were at Sydkap, the fjord's broadest reach, before it splits into three smaller fjords. The slopes are rounded, made up of glaciated layers of stone interspersed with colourful tufts of tundra vegetation. On the headland stand two huts, one sturdy-looking red one, and another ruinous and bleached.

Expeditioners caught a Zodiac to shore to go exploring. The trappers hut still sees use by local people hunting musk oxen or when fishing the nearby rivers for arctic char. The slopes offered hikes for the adventurous to gain a view and immerse themselves into the mountainous environment. Some chose to find a Zen space and watch the parade of icebergs proceeding out of the Nordvestfjord, bound for the Greenland Sea.

Sea kayakers set off to circumnavigate Ingmikêrterajik Island. It started off amazing with arctic terns flying by to say hi, then only got better. A shaggy musk ox was spotted wandering around amongst the tundra, watching us as we paddled past. The weathered coastline offered charming coves to explore and barren, exposed stretches that must see some wild seas, but thankfully not today. Chuffed with an impressive 6.5-kilometre paddling excursion, kayakers and hikers alike made their way back aboard the *Ocean Explorer*.

The bridge crew navigated gracefully past tabular, dome and blocky bergs, which was great entertainment while we enjoyed lunch. By 2pm we were readying ourselves for our next excursion, a Zodiac cruise and kayaking through the "draw-dropping scenery" of Bjørneøer Archipelago. Thank you for the adjective, Kevin. We spent the following two hours exploring various channels and islets, finding a better view around every point. The sheepish musk oxen were once again seen grazing on lush tundra. We had luck with us today; thank you all for sharing this memorable afternoon.

As we joined the patient parade of ice giants heading out to sea, Adrian kicked off the recap with a laugh. Next up we learned from Gabriel about the umimmak, meaning long-bearded ox. Musk ox have been wiped out in some regions of the Arctic, and are still hunted in Greenland; however, we were glad to learn that their population



# Borgvig

DAY 11 | Saturday 26th August 2023

Position at 0600

Latitude: 70°10.7'N

Longitude: 023°51.9'W

Course: Ice Navigation

Speed: 0.2 knots

Wind Speed: NW 1 knot

Barometer: 1004

Air Temp: 12°C

There is, one knows not what sweet mystery about this sea, whose gently awful stirrings seem to speak of some hidden soul beneath.

—Herman Melville

During the night, the ship had taken us to the southern lip of the Scoresbysund fjord and the little bay of Borgvig. An early morning Zodiac cruise was planned for us, hence we had been warned there would be no breakfast in the restaurant, but a delicious brunch would be waiting for us after our explorations. The early bird morning munchies would be available on deck 6 as usual, thank God.

This was going to be our last excursion in Greenland. The weather had turned wet, and a quiet drizzle greeted us in the Zodiacs, low clouds festooning the mountains around us. Sheer cliff faces rose straight out of the sea, tiered lengthwise from erosion with long ledges, some greenery clinging on up high. Beautiful waterfalls cascaded down their vertical filaments, shining silvery white against the dark-grey rock. The icebergs had all shades of white. Some stunning blue ones as well, which set off the green colour of the sea water magnificently. The kayakers were out along the coastline, being careful not to be too close as the rain initiated rock falls and mini landslides along the bottom scree slopes.

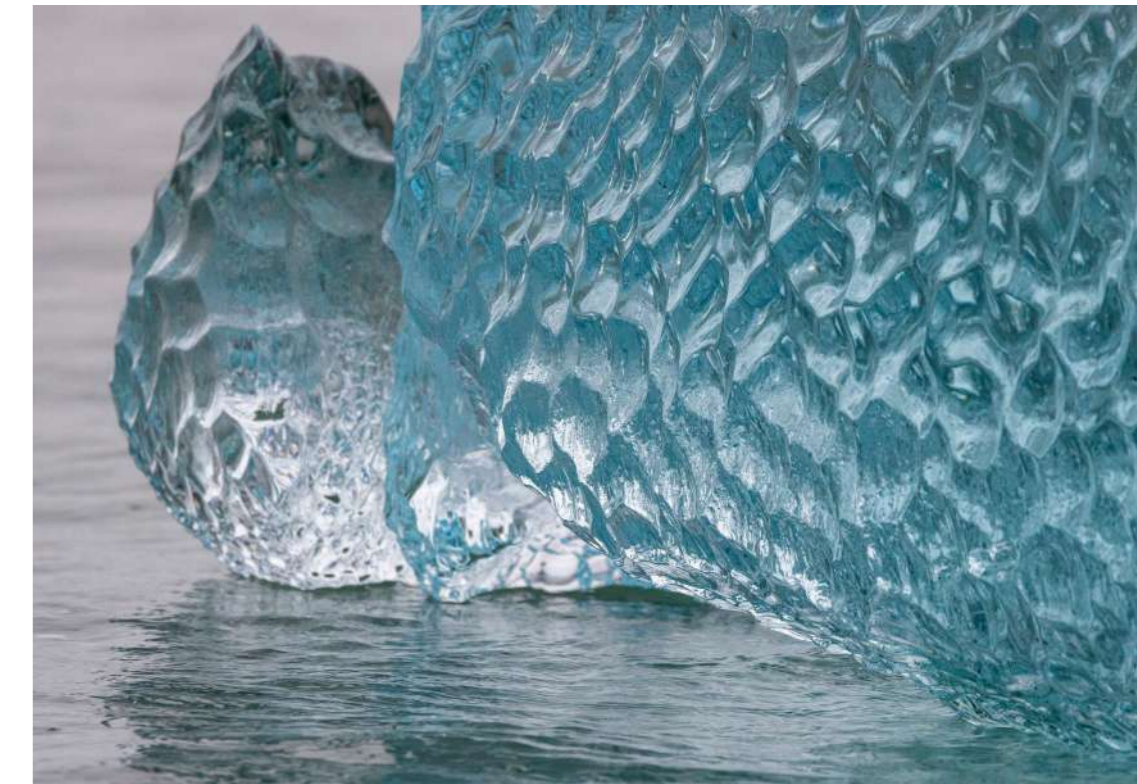
Rounding a little spit, we were treated to a spectacular view of a large glacier flowing out into the small bay, full of icebergs, bergy bits, and growlers. A massive dying glacier on the northern side of the bay was engulfed in layers of black moraines cradling huge ice cliffs, numerous meltwater streams and waterfalls adding muddy browns and yellows to the sea. Other than some glaucous gulls for company one little auk was spotted. A truly magical morning.

Back on the ship and out of the rain gear the restaurant team spoiled us with a splendid brunch. The afternoon first sported a lecture on sled dogs by Piotr telling us the story of the long relationship between man and dog in the Arctic. Very fittingly as this date, 26 August, is International Dog Day. After a break, Bruno, Lelia and Linda conducted a bird survey together with a few Expeditioners who braved the rain. We spotted northern fulmars, manx shearwaters, and black-legged kittiwakes. Jonathan continued in the animal realm by introducing us to the king of the Arctic: the polar bear.

Then it was time for some delicious cakes and other sweet stuff as an afternoon tea was set up in the lecture room and just as the last scone with jam and clotted cream was devoured, Kelsey and Tamsin came on stage with

their quiz show. Participating teams'little grey cells' were put under hard pressure and the winning team could proudly look forward to a dinner with both Snowy and Nacho - and two bottles of wine to make it 'bearable' as the game hosts put it.

Through the night the ship will take us to a whole new country. Iceland, here we come.



# Whale Watching

DAY 12 | Sunday 27th August 2023

Position at 0700

Latitude: 66°26.3'N

Longitude: 023°17.4'W

Course: 147°

Speed: 8.6 knots

Wind Speed: SE 3 knots

Barometer: 1003

Air Temp: 11°C

The whales do not sing because they have an answer, they sing because they have a song.

—Gregory Colbert

The *Ocean Explorer* sailed into Ísafjarðardjúp, the largest fjord in the Westfjords region of northwest Iceland, for our whale-watching cruise early this morning in overcast conditions. As the day progressed, thankfully the weather improved. Breakfast was interrupted with by a call by Christophe over the public address that a group of humpback whales had been spotted close to the ship. Throughout the morning this same pod treated us with lots of tail fluke action as the whales made their deeper feeding dives. Captain Vadym and his officers skilfully manoeuvred the ship to keep them in good viewing distance without any impact on their behaviour. Snowy was able to photograph many of their tail flukes and when he submitted the photographs to his 'Happy Whale' website-connected partner, she was able to confirm that all the first four images submitted proved to be matches with whales that had been previously recorded in the vicinity of western Iceland. Many northern fulmars and the occasional puffin were also sighted throughout the morning.

The *Ocean Explorer* then headed back west out of the fjord, and we began making our way to the southwest bound for Reykjavík. The sunny weather even enticed some sunbathing on the pool deck, where Nacho, our Zodiac manager, also entertained us with circus skills, doing head and hand stands and demonstrated his prowess with his set of juggling clubs. In the distance, we passed Iceland's westernmost point, the famous Látrabjarg bird cliffs. These are the highest cliff in the country and renowned across Europe for being home to millions of sea birds, including puffins, northern gannets, guillemots and razorbills.

After lunch Jonathan entertained us with his lecture, 'A Brief Introduction to Iceland' which gave us some better understanding of this unique island country. Samantha also briefed us on the disembarkation procedures. Later in the afternoon Tamsin and Linda hosted the fun quiz game 'How Big Is it?' which was very amusing. The kayakers enjoyed their final gathering with a slide show and refreshments. The day kept rolling with the Captain's Farewell Drinks and the very entertaining parade of offices and crew, plus the Expedition Team were given the traditional thank-you line up. After another delicious dinner, the evening's entertainment was Adrian's voyage slideshow, which was a wonderful visual summary of the highlights of this fabulous cruise to East Greenland. Another great finale to an Aurora Expeditions' Arctic cruise.



# Reykjavík

DAY 13 | Monday 28th August 2023

Position at 0600

Latitude: 64°15.3'N

Longitude: 022°14.9'W

Course: 122°

Speed: 8.3 knots

Early this morning we arrived in Reykjavík, waking up to our last morning together on board the *Ocean Explorer* which has been our sturdy and comfortable base. Here we made our farewells to the Expedition Team before heading into town, to the airport, or continuing with own arrangements.

And what a voyage it has been, the lush tundra of the Northeast Greenland National Park, to the surreal world of the sea ice in the Greenland Sea.

The wildlife has amazed us: polar bear, ringed seal, arctic fox, arctic tern, soaring fulmar, and even some humpback whale. 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, lectures, games, surveys, and great companionship from a delightful bunch of fellow travellers.

Aurora Expeditions, thanks you for joining us aboard *Ocean Explorer* to East Greenland. We hope to see you on the high seas again someday.



Wind Speed: 5.5 knots  
Barometer: 999

Air Temp: 11°C





# Kayaking Log

**Kayak Masters: Peter Wainwright, Teal Morgan, Gabriel Wackernagel**

Number of Paddlers: 6                      Total Paddle Outings: 13                      Total Distance Paddled: 63.4 km

<b>Paddlers:</b>	Chris (Christine) Linn	Prem Sirbadhoo
Saunders Carmichael-Brown	Iain (William) Linn	
Kevin Clarke	Bonnie (Bronwyn) Orrock	

## Day 4 | Saturday 19 August AM – Dødemandsbugten 4.4km

We were treated to perfect conditions for our first introductory paddle in Greenland. Lifting fog and calm seas made the first launch from the Zodiac straightforward and the lack of wind made practising skills much more enjoyable than in windy conditions. We relished the beautiful morning light and vibrant colours of the tundra and rocky landscapes reflecting in the glassy water. Working our way east we broke up the paddling with coaching tips to improve our paddling technique and set ourselves up for the rest of the trip. Then we doubled back west, hugging the shoreline to a landing spot in front of the historic Danish Sledge Patrol radio and telegraph station hut, with sunshine between some coaching tips on various paddle strokes. We landed with the kayaks and relived the tales of the brave men who worked for the Danish Sledge Patrol kindly, retold to us by Bettina. After a short leg stretch exploring the archaeological remains, we relaunched from the beach and paddled back to the ship – now ready for some more challenging paddles.

## Day 4 | Saturday 19 August PM – Eskimonæs 5.2km

Our crew of kayakers were on the water at 3.15pm, Gabriel touched up on our sweep strokes then introduced the draw stroke and sculling draw. Warmed up and with some new skills in our toolbox we headed of on an adventure into Eskimonæs Bay. Remains of the scientific site lay scattered behind the beach. In 1943, a weather war took place here between Germany and the Danish military. Today a couple of small huts are maintained. Continuing our paddle, we made our way around the headland, working our way further west into the fiord. The sea state became a little choppy as the wind picked up to 10 to 12 knots. Glaucous gulls swooped overhead, reminding us that it’s their home. Snow buntings were observed flittering through the rocky landscape. The scenery looked like a setting on Mars, sedimentary mountains of red and browns eroding away, and a long, sandy beach lay before us. We landed to take a short stroll, then attached the kayaks to the Zodiac and motored bay to the ship, while a couple of us took the opportunity to walk back over the peninsula to the landing site.

## Day 5 | Sunday 20 August AM – Sabine Island, Clavingstrædet 4.4km

Low cloud and light rain greeted us this morning; however, the crew cheerfully geared up and hopped into the Zodiac. We towed the kayaks 6 kilometres to the west into a protected bay. We launched in the lee of a basalt

promontory reminiscent of the Giant’s Causeway, and paddled into a bay where a maze of grounded growlers made for some great exploration – although some channels blocked our path and occasionally we ended up grounded ourselves and forced to find an alternative route. The ice made for an awesome contrast with the dark basalt landscape. It was a chilly Zodiac ride back to the ship and we were glad to get back on board with a cup of tea in hand.

## Day 5 | Sunday 20 August PM – Germania Havn Sø 4.8km

After the chilly morning paddle only three of our six kayakers wanted to go out again. Paddling east along the coastline from the ship was stunning, checking out the last remains of a glacier where some of the ice had turned black from the wind-blown basalt granules. Seabirds swam about in the protected waters of Germania Havn Sø. Interested in the local history, we stopped to stretch our legs and take a stroll up to an old hut. A few relics lay about, including an old wheelbarrow and bullet shells. The hut was cosy and dry, and stocked with Danish books. This sight had been used as a base by the Karl Koldeways expedition in 1869.

Having caught sight of some enticing columnar basalt cliffs that had come into view, we headed over to Halveros Island, where we found some beautiful paddling beneath some nesting glaucous gulls and kittiwake perched high up on the basalt ledges. Very content with our day’s paddling, we loaded into the Zodiac with Teal and motored back to the ocean to explore.

## Day 6 | Monday 21 August PM – Foster Bugt 3.6km

With the morning’s sea fog beginning to lift, breathless conditions and millpond seas meant we were eager to get out and paddle. After the suggestion was made for a team photo, we beached our kayaks on an ice floe not far from the ship in much more style than the cumbersome Zodiacs. After 10 surreal minutes of walking around on this multi-year sea-ice floe, we seal-launched off the floe and headed off into the fog. We cruised around bergy bits, navigating through some narrow channels and marvelling at the clarity of the water, allowing us to peer down beneath our kayaks into the depths and understand the vast ratio of the icebergs, which are normally invisible beneath the water and that were now illuminated in a mesmerising and radiant turquoise colour. Perfect Arctic paddling conditions. All too soon it was time to join the rest of the passengers on board so the ship could continue sailing in Kaiser Franz Joseph Fjord.

## Day 7 | Tuesday 22 August AM – Waltershausen 5.2km

The day started with a beautiful slow sunrise of over the mountains of Muskoxenfjord, and a katabatic breeze off the glacier face. We launched from the marina and ventured on our way upwind towards the glacier front. We kept a safe distance from the huge blocky icebergs that towered out of the water and marvelled at the myriad intricate shapes sculpted by compression, tension, friction, erosion air and water. Each iceberg’s characteristics tell a different story, but all are somewhere on the steady road of decay from a solid state back to a liquid state. We bounced off smaller chunks close to the end of their iceberg life, and weaved our way further north until the glacier face was in front of us. Its vast scale made it feel like we were much closer than the 500-metre distance that we were careful to maintain from it. Moving westwards, a curious ringed seal popped up in front of us as we sat enjoying the spectacular scenery, ducking down and reappearing next to us. Then the wind pushed us towards another iceberg with a gorgeous huge arch in it. After an obligatory few photos we reluctantly made our way back to the ship.

## Day 7 | Tuesday 22 August PM – Blomsterbugten 5.1km

As we sailed deeper into the Kaiser Franz Joseph Fjord, the venturi effect was funnelling the wind up to 30 knots and kayaking seemed unlikely, but as we rounded Kap Petersen and sailed past the Teufelschloss we could see calmer waters in the Blomsterbugten. However, once at anchor we realised we were in a wind eddy, and the wind was now blowing from the north. Still, rather than paddle in the shade and staring into the sun and glare, we opted to paddle north into the wind so that we could stay in the sun and take in the ever-changing colours of the rock. The headwind made for more strenuous paddling along the Chokoladebjerg (chocolate mountain), but fortunately the wind began to abate after several kilometres as we reached a bay with two stunning waterfalls. Pausing to confirm the two yellow rocks weren’t polar bears we continued north, aiming for a castle of an iceberg. With fjord distances being deceptive we eventually hopped into the Zodiac for a lap of the iceberg and the return trip to the ship. Strong work from our three paddlers.

## Day 8 | Wednesday 23 August AM – Alpefjord 2.2km

What a spectacular fjord. It was hard not to get over-ambitious when staring at the possibilities outside – as Kevin said we could spend the whole expedition exploring this one fjord alone. Seeing this giant glacial tongue spilling out into the water and almost blocking the passage beyond, compounded the curiosity of what lay beyond. And the towering peaks and hanging glaciers all added to the dramatic ambience of this magical place. Unfortunately, the 20 knots of outflow wind at the ship’s anchorage meant we had to tow to find shelter, and several lagoons within terminal moraines at the base of glaciers further into the fjord had inspired us. However, the choppy conditions snapped several of the bow painter lines while towing, eating into our operational time and shortening our paddling opportunities. We did find some shelter to launch and managed a quick downwind paddle in the sun before needing to make our way back to the ship. We also bore witness to a frightening rockfall, where Zodiac-sized boulders crashed down the mountainside, shattering into the talus slopes and eventually exploding into the cloudy waters of the fjord with a giant spray of water. As the deafening crashes receded, all that lingered was a residual dust powdercloud – it was a humbling experience and one that seemed fitting for this colossal landscape. It was a short paddle but memorable, nevertheless.

## Day 8 | Wednesday 23 August PM Gateau Point – 6.9km

In true fjord fashion the wind didn’t want to play by the forecast – blowing 180 degrees in the opposite direction of the model. Adjusting quickly once on the water, we decided to head to shore to begin with and land at Gateau Point to check out the wonderous rock formations on the shore. Having taken 20 minutes to marvel at the striations and patterns in the sedimentary layers of rock, we turned our attention back to the paddling. Rather than paddle into the wind we decided to hop into the Zodiac and tow the kayaks upwind into the lee of Karlene Ø to launch. From there it was a very pleasant downwind paddle, with the light breeze on our backs speeding our progress as we marvelled at the mind-blowing colours and striations in the rock bands. We kept paddling past the landing site of the hikers and past to an outwash plain of a glacial stream. The line of the rock-flour filled fresh water hitting the turquoise saltwater was astounding and the scenery just gorgeous. It all made for a very pleasant paddle.

## Day 9 | Thursday 24 August PM Ittoqqortoormiit - 3.5km

After a morning on the ship, we were all excited to stretch our legs, but the conditions were also so inviting for kayaking, so after our briefing with Christophe, it was decided to spend one and a half hours ashore to explore the settlement and community, and then come back to the ship to get ready for a short afternoon paddle. Under glorious conditions we set off directly from the ship and made our way towards the shoreline of Ittoqqortoormiit. Once close to the shoreline underneath the oil tanks keeping the settlement energised, we found some small caves, of which Bruno was very happy with the basement gneiss these were formed from. The traditional reliance on wildlife for sustenance and clothing was still visible, with animal skins drying in the sun and seal carcasses for sled dog feed being kept fresh in the icy-cold water. With a relaxed pace we paddled into Walrus Bay and reached a long, sandy beach where we saw a local family swimming in the lagoon ‘or braided river’ that was behind the rise. After waving the family goodbye, Gabe and Teal thought it would be a good idea to demonstrate some kayak rolling, since we were at an Inuit community, and following that an ‘X-rescue’, where Teal hopped out of his boat and Gabe ‘rescued’ him, with both guides giving tips for this preferred method of rescuing a capsized kayaker. Fortunately for everyone else there wasn’t time to practise this themselves, so we jumped into the Zodiac and headed back to ship to rejoin all the other passengers.

## Day 10 | Friday 25 August AM Sydkap – 6.5km

Magical morning light was illuminating the giant icebergs and surrounding cliffs in a golden glow as we awoke. It was hard to choose where to go paddling – every direction offered something inviting. However, the island of Ingmikértikajik seemed just about the right size for a circumnavigation, providing a good sense of achievement and giving us a constantly changing vantage point. To begin with we had to carefully keep our distance from some of the giant bergs and marvel at the endless rock walls and spiky peaks off in the distance in Øfjord. The rocky shoreline of Gneiss also provided a few islands and channels to navigate through and we had a small group of arctic terns pay us a visit. Around the corner a solitary shaggy musk ox was spotted just above us, blending in surprisingly well against the tundra and among the boulders. A little wary of our presence, he did extend the distance between us but kept on turning back to check us out. The weathered coastline turned from charming coves to a more barren, exposed stretch that must see some wild seas, but thankfully not today. Snow buntings flittered by along the shoreline, all while we maintained a steady speed to complete our loop. After a solid 6.5 kilometres we closed the circuit and made our way back to the ship with the assistance of the Zodiac.

## Day 10 | Friday 25 August PM Bjørneøer – 6.1km

Archipelagos almost always equate to good paddling and the Bear Islands certainly did not disappoint. We used the Zodiac to help us get from the ship into the heart of the maze of islands and narrower channels, while carefully navigating past more giant grounded icebergs (with 70 metres above the surface of the water, these icebergs may have been over 500 metres tall in total). We quickly came across a group of four musk oxen grazing on the tundra, which spooked pretty quickly on our approach. Beyond the islands, the rocky gendarmes and spires of many impressive alpine peaks, some cloaked in hanging glaciers, created an even more stunning backdrop. It was hard to know where to look and around each corner another gorgeous view would open up before us, offering yet more islands and channels. We could have spent an entire voyage just paddling in this corner of Scoresbysund with magnificent camping opportunities all around us. Unfortunately our allotted time

had run out and under one particularly impressive ridge of knuckled peaks we rafted together for a last group photo. Finally, our Expedition Leader Christophe, had heard that the kayakers have the most fun, so he had joined us for this outing. As a seasoned paddler himself, he was keen to see if he still had a working roll – which indeed he did, impressing us all with another of his many talents.

Amid many remarkable outings – this stood out as the best paddle yet.

### Day 11 | Saturday 26 August AM Borgvig – 5.5km

An early start for our last paddle of the voyage; we were ready to go at 7.15am and on our way by 7.25am. The dark basalt cliffs, partially shrouded by low cloud and drizzle, added to the mystical feel of where we were, with the huge glacier in the back of the bay and half a dozen waterfalls visible along the coast – it was a moody, atmospheric outing. The base of the cliffs had some columnar basalts, which had lots of little caves and nooks and crannies we could explore. Making our way deeper into the bay we found more and more icebergs; the crackling, snapping and popping of the slowly melting ice was incredible with the amount of noise it was producing. We then found a river mouth, with a lot more flow than the waterfall at the back of the valley indicating that there was a lake or lagoon behind the black sand beach. We passed one particularly beautiful iceberg, almost transparent apart from some sediment intrusions and the deep blue colour within. Soon after, Gabriel pulled alongside us and handed out some very welcome hot chocolate that had the added bonus of warming our hands. Now paddling back to the ship, we were treated to a last surprise of an iceberg rolling right in-front of us. It gave us an added appreciation for the distance we had respected all voyage from the larger icebergs. After marvelling at it for a couple of minutes we made our way back on board ready for a well-deserved brunch. A great last bonus paddle to finish up a wonderful trip to Greenland.





## Bird and Mammal Sightings

Bird Species	August												
	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
Red-throated Diver							•		•	•			
Barnacle Goose					•								
Common Eider				•	•			•		•	•		
Harlequin Duck													
Long-tailed Duck					•			•					
Rock Ptarmigan				•									
Common Ringed Plover					•								
Sanderling					•					•			
Purple Sandpiper			•	•	•								
Ruddy Turnstone							•		•				•
Pomarine Skua			•				•						
Arctic Skua		•	•	•			•	•		•			
Long-tailed Skua			•	•	•	•							
Sabine's Gull							•						
Glaucous Gull				•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Lesser Black-backed Gull	•											•	•
Common Gull				•			•						
Iceland Gull	•												•
Ivory Gull													
Black-legged Kittiwake		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Arctic Tern				•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•	•
Common Guillemot	•		•				•						•
Black Guillemot			•				•			•			•
Razorbill		•											
Little Auk		•	•		•						•		
Atlantic Puffin		•											•
Northern Gannet	•	•											•



Bird Species	August												
	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
Northern Fulmar	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Manx Shearwater		•							•			•	•
Sooty Shearwater		•											
Gyr Falcon			•										
Northern Wheatear					•			•	•		•		
Common Raven					•			•			•		
White Wagtail													•
Snow Bunting					•	•		•	•	•	•		•
Hooded Crow										•			



Mammal Species	August												
	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
Ringed Seal											•		•
Bearded Seal										•	•		
Harp Seal													
Fin Whale													•
Humpback Whale												•	•
Orca													
Atlantic White-sided Dolphin													•
Arctic Hare													•
Arctic Fox													•
Musk Ox													•
Polar Bear													







## Expeditioners:

Margaret Barr	Christiane Delongueville	Rhonda Lane	Lynne Morley	Clive Steeper
Karen Belding	Giles Duncan	Christine Linn	Beng Ong	Annette Stevens
Mark Belding	Alec Foster-Brown	William Linn	Rosalind Ong	Ian Stevens
Lindsey Berglund	Thomas Foster-Brown	Chris Long	Bronwyn Orrock	Susan Stockdale
Susan Broadbent	Katharine Foster-Brown	Dwight Long Jr	Mary Perera	Andrew Tait
Julie Bull	Mark Foster-Brown	Gary Luck	Anna Perera	Clare Tolmie
Clinton Bull	Deanna Heath	Amanda Luck	Karen Roberts	Lisa Withrow
Robert Byrne	Ian Heath	David Mc Callum	Evan Rowlands	David Wood
Saunders Carmichael-Brown	Daryl Ho	Johnny Meyer	Vickie Rowlands	Penelope Worthy
Joyce Cheang	Anne Inglis	Hanne Meyer	Frank Sadow	Bing Wu
Linda Clarke	Marianne Jacobsen	Jane Michell	Sandra Selby	Xin Xu
Kevin Clarke	Ove Jacobsen	Judith Miles	Kelsey Simmons	Rose Zuberma
Brian Crathorne	Charlotte Kerr-Wilson	Alan Miles	Prem Sirbadhoo	Isidor Zuberma
Elizabeth Crathorne	Robyn King	Graham Mitchell	Randi Staight	
Stephen Davidson	Geoffrey King	Christine Mitchell	Rae Staight	
Carol Davidson	Mark Lane	Miles Morland	Leslie Staudt	

## Expedition Team:

Expedition Leader: Christophe Bouchoux

Assistant Expedition Leader: Piotr Damski

Onboard Expedition Manager: Samantha Deer

Firearms Manager: Graeme Snow

Zodiac Master: Ignacio Marino

Expedition Medic: Linda Steutal

Geologist: Bruno Lauper

Historian: Johathan Chester

Regional Expert: Bettina Ovgaard

Local Guide: Kelsey Camacho

Expedition Guide: Tamsin Both

Photography Guide: Adrian Wlodarsky

Onboard Expedition Assistant: Reza Rusooly

Onboard Expedition Manager Trainee: Lelia Cataldi

Senior Lead Kayaking Guide: Peter Wainwright

Kayaking Guide: Gabriel Wackernagel

Kayaking Guide: Teal Morgan

## Photography thanks to:

Adrian Wlodarsky

Gabriel Wackernagel

## Senior Officers & Heads of Department:

Master: Vadym Tavrovetskyy

Chief Officer: Alexandru Taraoi

Safety Officer: Valeriy Zelenyak

2nd Officer: Jovanka Savovic

Bosun: Bobby Penuliar Payumo

Ship Doctor: Andres Peralta

Ship Doctor: Julio Lopez

Chief Engineer: Andrei Ciurea

Hotel Director: Ulises Cantillo

F&B Manager: Raj Murao

Chief Purser: Willie Lirio

Executive Chef: Cristiand Mini Pineda

Head Waiter: Jemuel Alcantara

IT Officer: Dimitrios Kasagiannis

Receptionist: Ana Fernandez

Receptionist: Johnny Valdez

Head Stateroom: Florante Jr. Lusong

Carpenter: Roberto Ixtan

Able Seaman: Gilberto Azusano

Able Seaman: Muhammad Karier

Able Seaman: Jongie Rebello

Able Seaman: Khenette Verzosa

Able Seaman: Joel Valdevieso Noble





