

# Svalbard Odyssey

Aboard *MV Greg Mortimer* | 30 May – 9 June 2023





# Longyearbyen

DAY 1 | Tuesday 30 May 2023

Position at 1700 on 30 May

Latitude: 79°15.593'N

Longitude: 015°29.839'E

Barometer: 1015

Air Temp: -1°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 9 days, we are more likely to encounter a fox, reindeer or polar bear than another human.

Yesterday during our hotel check-in, Anne & Rosie had explained we would take a Zodiac to the ship, but in an unexpected twist, our Captain secured us a space at the dock. So we had a far less adventurous (but warmer!) stroll up the gangway onto the *Greg Mortimer*. Thanks Captain Maxim!

After a quick photograph with Michael, the team guided us up to the Elephant Island Bar for refreshments.

The stewards helped us navigate the decks to our cabins and settle into our “home away from home”.

After a welcome briefing from our Expedition Leader Christophe, and briefings from Hotel Director Pascal, Doctor Andres, and Onboard Expedition Manager Rosie, we had 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, one last job for the evening was the jacket swap, so that all can stay cosy in the quite inhospitable environment we are about to explore.

There was a definite buzz of excitement in the air as we completed the evening's tasks! Finally, we headed to the dining room for a delicious dinner prepared by our talented galley team and served by our smiling and welcoming waiting staff.

After dinner, the kayak team met for a briefing with guides Peter & Teal, to prepare for the great paddling adventure that lies ahead. Our 2 intrepid SCUBA divers met up with divemasters Eddie & Tanja. Even though the thought of submerging in icy water may not appeal to all of us, I think we are all excited to hear what Svalbard's underwater world is like!

Together we total 81 passengers from around the globe: The UK, Australia, USA, Mexico, Germany, The

Netherlands, France, The Philippines, South Africa, Belgium, Ireland, Namibia, and Norway, along with 81 international crew.

In addition, we have 17 Expedition Team with a variety of specialities, including polar exploration, polar bear safety, glaciology, history, marine and terrestrial biology, photography, medicine, kayaking and SCUBA diving.

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 unique incredible scenery of Svalbard.



# Yogliabukta

DAY 2 | Wednesday 31 May 2023

Position at 0600 on 31 May

Latitude: 78°31.1'N

Longitude: 015°07.2' E

Course: 345°

Speed: 7.3 knots

Wind Speed: W 2 knots

Barometer: 1011

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

Today was the first day of a new voyage and the energy and enthusiasm onboard is palpable. Having departed Longyearbyen last evening, the *Greg Mortimer* sailed slightly northward and entered Dickson Fjord perfectly in time for morning tea. The scenery here is striking, and even more so now, in springtime. Fast sea ice remains in this area, and the snowy mountain peaks provided an imposing backdrop. Fog gave an ethereal feel to the scene as it thinned and thickened, offering glimpses into vast valleys before closing in again, as if not yet ready to divulge its secrets to us.

Taking advantage of excellent views from the bridge and observation lounge, the guides and expeditioners donned their binoculars and set to the task of locating wildlife. Seals were seen, hauled out on the ice for a rest. A few walrus were spotted in the water feeding, and reindeer dotted the ridgelines. And of course, the ever-present seabirds made for fun photographic opportunities.

In and out of little coves we went as the morning ensued, eventually transiting deep into Eckmanfjorden and finally down to Yoldiabukta. This being the first day aboard, the interior of the ship was at full bustle. We completed the necessary biosecurity equipment checks to ensure Svalbard stays pristine, and guide Albert presented an introduction to the people, places, and wildlife of the archipelago.

After lunch, it was time for our very first outing – and what an outing it was! Yoldiabukta is a spectacular bay, with tidewater glaciers plunging into the sea and many pointed mountains loom above.

Sea ice still abounds, and all this made for engaging and very photogenic Zodiac cruising. The show-stoppers though, were certainly the two walrus hauled out on the sea ice. The name “walrus” is a corruption of the old Norwegian word “hvalhross”, which translates literally as “whale horse” – and indeed they are huge! Taking great care to not disturb the resting giants, each guide skillfully positioned guests for excellent pictures of the walrus, big tusks and all!

Meanwhile, the dive and kayak teams had their own adventures. There’s really nothing like a paddle amongst sea ice and the glassy sea conditions and setting made this excursion extra special. The colourful boats picked their



# Gnålodden & Burgerbukta

DAY 3 | Thursday 1 June 2023

Position at 0600 on 1 June

Latitude: 76°59.6'N

Longitude: 015°10.2'E

Course: 104°

Speed: 7 knots

Wind Speed: NW force 2

Barometer: 1022

Air Temp: 2°C

The great hurrah about wild animals is that they exist at all, and the greater hurrah is the actual moment of seeing them. Because they have a nice dignity, and prefer to have nothing to do with me, not even as the simple objects of my vision. They show me by their wariness what a prize it is simply to open my eyes and behold.

—Annie Dillard, Pilgrim at Tinker Creek

Our day began with staring out the window at some of the most insanely gorgeous scenery we have ever had the pleasure to gaze upon. Irregular scoops of vanilla ice cream balanced on knife-like arêtes, with towering peaks poking in and out of the clouds. Our second morning was blessed by calm seas and light winds with just enough clouds as the icing on the cake, and it was only a balmy zero degrees Celsius! Wow, Gnålodden in Hornsund at the base of Gnalberget, "incessantly humming mountain"! It owes its moniker to the cacophony of thousands of black-legged kittiwakes, Brunnich's guillemot (aka Thick-billed murre) and northern fulmars nesting, chattering and soaring near the vertiginous cliffs.

Christophe announced our morning plans for our first shore visit, as we all excitedly prepared for what was for some of us, our very first contact with the "natural" Arctic. After the E-team scouted the area and set up the perimeters, folks were given the game plan at the beach for where and how to explore this fragile area. We all dispersed while some visited the hill below the cliffs to get even closer to the aerial show; many species of birds were encountered including Atlantic puffins, dovekies, black guillemot, barnacle and Brant geese, snow buntings, purple sandpipers as well as those mentioned above. Others explored the intertidal areas and the old trapper's cabin, used by the hardcore Wanny Wolstad in the 1930's as a satellite cabin while hunting and trapping. I noticed many in our group just kicking back, attempting to take it all in, the sights, the sounds, the gestalt of the place... stunning! The Citizen Science program got going with a secchi disc deployment and a plankton tow that revealed some barnacle nauplii and copepods. Kayakers enjoyed the skerries and the reflections, while divers had a very different perspective from below.

After lunch we Zodiac cruised around the corner at Burgerbukta and slalom-ed our way through sea-ice, bergy-bits and growlers from the nearby glaciers. On our approach to Paierbreen, we encountered rust-colored cliffs, fantastic rock forms, small avalanches and finally fast-ice. The glacier was a lot farther away than the maps would suggest. A few people were fortunate to witness some cloacal-kissing of Atlantic puffins as they began their

nesting season. Others stopped for a moment of Zen to listen to ice-crispies popping, ice smacking into ice while we realized how loud silence can be. The kayakers saw a ringed seal and feeding fulmars while paddling through the brash ice.

After our chilly Zodiac cruise, a few hardy and enthusiastic souls braved the trip to deck 7 for our first cloud survey of the trip. During the recap Chris gave us a tease about the "different" walrus we may encounter tomorrow and Albert explained some of the Citizen Science programs we hope to do. What an incredible day!

breen = glacier

bukten = bay, cove

oden = point, headland



# Kapp Lee | Negribreen

DAY 4 | Friday 2 June 2023

Position at 0600 on 2 June

Latitude: 77°56.7'N

Longitude: 020°31.8'E

Course: 022°

Speed: 13 knots

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

After a night of sailing around the rugged South Cape of Svalbard, we awoke to the enchanting beauty of Storfjord on blue-skied and windstill morning. Fuelled by a satisfying breakfast, and after having an update by our expedition leader that landing would be impossible, we eagerly prepared ourselves for a Zodiac cruise around the ice-filled waters of Kapp Lee.

Our Zodiacs set out, navigating through the pristine icy waters, carrying us towards the heart of this frozen paradise. The air was crisp, and the seas were calm, providing the perfect conditions for our adventure. We could hear the calls of walrus in the still air, where kittiwakes and fulmars were abundant.

As we ventured closer to Kapp Lee, we were greeted by a surreal landscape. Snow-capped mountains and frozen fjords painted a picture-perfect backdrop. The stillness of the surroundings embraced us. As we ventured deeper into this frozen world, our eyes were treated to a spectacle of Arctic wildlife. Dozens of walrus hauled out on the ice, in a stinky patchwork of fat and ivory tusks. Some keen photographers captured unique images with our experienced photography guide Michael, while others trawled for zooplankton hoping to gather interesting organisms with Peter and Albert.

After a rewarding exploration of Kapp Lee, we made our way back to the ship, with hearts full of wonder and a thirst for more.

But the adventures weren't over yet. We set our sights on Negribreen, one of Svalbard's magnificent tidewater glaciers, for a captivating Zodiac cruise. We sailed for a few hours from Kapp Lee, through a puzzle of sea ice and water so still it created a perfect mirror.

We eventually made it to Negribreen, and most of us were left in awe by the sheer scale of this glacier front spanning over 15 kilometres. Our efficient sailors quickly lowered Zodiacs in the water for us to explore this area,

Wind Speed: W, force 2

Barometer: 1028

Air Temp: 2°C

by means of Zodiac, kayak and even diving for the more adventurous of the group. We must've all accumulated a lot of good Karma in previous lives, because Svalbard has been treating us to incredible weather. Blue skies and calm seas are not what the waters around Svalbard are best known for. This incredible weather allowed us to get an up-close and personal experience of the glacier's grandeur. Towering ice cliffs reflected shimmering hues of blue. Some of us had the chance to encounter an inquisitive bearded seal calling out into the depths with its eerie song, while others spotted one the Arctic's most emblematic birds the Ivory gull.

With the day drawing to a close, we returned to the ship, hearts brimming with gratitude after witnessing the untouched beauty of Kapp Lee and the awe-inspiring Negribreen.



# Freemansundet | Doleriteneset

DAY 5 | Saturday 3 June 2023

Position at 0600 on 3 June

Latitude: 78°08.6'N

Longitude: 020°16.2'E

Course: 151°

Speed: 3 knots

Wind Speed: NNW, force 2

Barometer: 1024

Air Temp: 2°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 we sailed towards Freemansundet, the sound between Barentsøya and Edgeøya. The *Greg Mortimer*, under the incredible skill of the bridge team, showed us her capabilities as we entered the densely packed sea ice in Freemansundet. Bears were on all our minds as there were tracks on what seemed like every other ice floe.

Some of the tracks were a lot fresher than others and the excitement built. We all went out on deck with our binoculars and cameras in hopes of finding something. Despite the bears eluding us, we were not disappointed. The mesmerising beauty of the ice being parted around the ship held all our attentions as we got deeper into the sound. Svalbard reindeer lined the shores either side of the sound, giving us plenty to look at, as well as a couple of ringed seals relaxing on the ice floes cooling down.

As we neared the eastern side of the sound, we glimpsed the pack ice in the distance. At this point, the ice was too densely packed, so our excellent Captain Maxim made the decision to turnaround firing up all four engines for fifteen minutes to be able to turn around in the ice.

After a delectable lunch served up by our excellent galley team, we headed out on an exciting landing at Doleriteneset. At the landing site, we enjoyed amazing views of Svalbard reindeer, and we learned all about the poop of various polar species, such as reindeer, polar bears, and barnacle and pink-footed geese.

We made the most of our landing by going out on a long walk in the tundra, where we took in the wonders of the Arctic first-hand.

Once the landing was all said and done, we headed back to our trusty ship, and joined up in the lecture theatre for yet another fun recap with our expedition team. Gaby answered the eclectic questions from her "Question box", which included, but were not limited to, amorous polar bears, heat-sensing cameras, and walrus eyes. Next up on the docket was a tasty dinner in the restaurant followed by a movie & popcorn night with everyone's favourite nature documentary—Frozen Planet.

Soon enough, it was time to head to bed as we prepared for another fun day of expedition in Svalbard. As we made our way to bed, our skilful bridge team sailed us around the southern edge of Svalbard and we headed north toward newfound adventure in the wondrous Arctic.

Onward and Northward!



# At Sea | Recherchefjord

DAY 6 | Sunday 4 June 2023

Position at 0600 on 4 June

Latitude: 76°25.4'N

Longitude: 016°58.3'E

Course: 234°

Speed: 13.2 knots

Wind Speed: ESE, force 3

Barometer: 1025

Air Temp: 2°C

In familiar environments, it is easy to go blind in the sense that the initial excitement disappears with the passage of time. This is true for any environment—including the Arctic... The views are just as magnificent and the arctic wildlife remains just as exotic and exciting as before. The silence is still balm to the soul and the serenity is present all the time. But the first time experience is a once and for all experience that cannot be repeated.

—Magnus Elander, Quiet days in the Arctic

Overnight, whilst we were deep in slumber, Captain Maxim steered the good ship *Greg Mortimer* up the east coast of Spitsbergen. Christophe woke us up with a gentle wakeup call, where we were met with calm seas and clear conditions outside our cabin windows as the ship raced north.

Just as we were about to devour a delicious breakfast prepared by the galley team, Christophe made an announcement that humpback whales had been spotted off the bow. After donning our warm jackets and gathering our cameras, we raced to the observation area on deck 8 to try and spot the whales. Small pods of humpbacks were then spotted in quick succession around the ship with large flocks of kittiwakes following in their wake. As the sound of cameras clicking filled the air, the water around the bow of the ship started to bubble with small black objects, which were quickly identified as a pod of harp seals. After watching the humpback whales, harp seals and kittiwakes enjoying their breakfast for 30 minutes, we made our way to the restaurant where the galley team was waiting patiently for us. The day's activities commenced with Michael delivering his 'Introduction to Photography' lecture. Michael used a collection of his images 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.

Next up in the lecture theatre was Colby with 'Life of a snowflake'. Colby used a combination of his personal experience operating in the polar regions in combination with his stunning images to provide an informative session discussing the frozen topography we have seen over the past week.

After another delicious lunch prepared by the galley team we donned our wet weather gear and ventured out into the Zodiacs to explore Recherchefjord (within Bellsund), home to a large glacial face. As we set off from the *Greg Mortimer* in our zodiacs we were met with a vast expanse of mirror like reflections on the water and warm, sunshine. Once ashore we divided into our groups with the beach combers exploring the area surrounding, the



landing site and visiting the resting bearded seal on the nearby spit. The long walkers and photography groups ventured further into the landscape with king eiders, purple sandpipers, guillemots and kittiwakes spotted along the way.

After we were all safely back onboard, Captain Maxim nosed the ship back out into open waters where we continued to sail further north into the evening.



# Bjørnfjord | Sea ice

DAY 7 | Monday 5 June 2023

Position at 0600 on 5 June

Latitude: 79°32.8'N

Longitude: 010°31.6'E

Course: 007°

Speed: 11 knots

Wind Speed: N, force 3

Barometer: 1027

Ar Temp: -3°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

Another day in the northern paradise. At 0630 we went through the narrow strait Sørgattet, that separates Spitsbergen from Danskøya and connects the open sea to Smeerenburgfjord. After a great breakfast, we started to get ready for our morning outing, Zodiac cruising at Bjørnfjord. During our cruise, we saw two wonderful big glaciers and we played “how tall is it?”. Just to think about how many years it took them to become what they are now, it is impressive. There were many different wildlife species going around, and birds flying over. We could see a bearded seal on the water, singing its amazing song, having fun, looking for a mate. Some northern fulmar and common eiders were enjoying the place as well. Our divers carried out their diving in the west coast, exploring new places and the underwater Arctic creatures. Kayakers went to the east and navigated through the pack ice, discovering new passages to make their way in their adventure.

Our “zen Zodiacs” were very popular, so all three boats had a quite morning contemplating the immensity of this bay, the glacier, and appreciating the chance to be here. Our citizen scientists did the secchi disk project and some plankton sampling, it is always fun - a bit of science to learn more about where we are.

After lunch we did the the E-Bird survey whilst heading North in the Smeerenburgfjord, and Albert and Colby helped us to identify Arctic birds. We spotted black guillemont, Brünnich's guillemot, black-legged kittiwake, among others. Some of us joined the watch patrol to spot wildlife.

This afternoon the clouds were too low to make a safe landing but nevertheless we had a very fun activity “The polar plunge”. Some of us had the chance to do it in Antarctica once, and now we had the opportunity to plunge in the Arctic, for others it was their first polar plunge. Who knows... maybe they will eventually head down to the south to become bi-polar plungers. It was fantastic, cool and exhilarating! There was a slight current, and our expedition team were ready for us. A total of 25 brave Expeditioners jumped into this freezing water and went back onboard full of energy and direct to the sauna with a hot drink in hand.

Our evening was even better... our Expedition Leader shared that we had crossed 80° N. The crew and the staff had a barbeque outside on deck 8 for us. Full of music and dancing while we sailed through the ice looking for wildlife.

Then came Hans over the PA system, announcing tonight's “slumber party”! 16 of us gathered excitedly in the mudroom to collect mats, bivy bags and sleeping bags for this “once in a lifetime” experience – to sleep outside under the midnight sun.



# Polar Plunge

DAY 7 | Monday 5 June 2023



# Sea Ice

DAY 8 | Tuesday 6 June 2023

Position at 0700 on 6 June

Latitude: 80°02.9'N

Longitude: 011°58.2'E

Course: Drifting in sea ice

Speed: 0.4 knots

Wind Speed: NNW force 2

Barometer: 1029

Air Temp: -3°C

Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant.

—Robert Louis Stevenson

The morning of 6 June found the *Greg Mortimer* deep in the pack ice to the north of the Svalbard archipelago. As our trusty ship cruised purposefully through the ice and provided incredible views along the way, many of us made our way to the restaurant for yet another scrumptious breakfast buffet.

Once we had our fill of tasty pastries, gourmet omelets, and bottomless coffees, we ventured out on deck to get a better look at the icy landscape around us. The plan for the morning was to enjoy a lecture and a bit of a lie-in, but our expedition team had other activities in store. Soon after breakfast drew to a close, we learned that everything was in place for an exciting event: a landing on the Arctic sea ice!

After our expedition team took the time to scout the area and ensure that the site was appropriate for a landing, our skillful bridge team navigated our ship up to the edge of a large ice floe, dropped the gangway, and gave us easy passage onto the ice itself. While out there, we were treated to incredible views of the surrounding waters and we got a good feel for the immensity of the ice that covers the bulk of the Arctic Ocean. Before our time on the ice was up, we even got to enjoy a steaming cup of hot chocolate and we gathered together for a group photo.

Unfortunately, all good things must come to an end and it was eventually time to head back onto the ship. After lunch, we watched a couple of lectures from Colby and Piotr on polar bears and dog sledding in the Arctic, respectively, and also got to enjoy some yummy snacks at afternoon tea.

Soon enough, it was time to gather again in the Elephant Bar area for drinks and canapés. But this time, our hotel team had prepared something extra special—a towel-folding demonstration. Once we learned the ins and outs of crafting towel monkeys, elephants, and polar bears, we headed into the lecture room for a quick recap and to get information about the plan for the last few days of our voyage.

Dinner was once again upon us, so we ventured to the restaurant for more amazing food, courtesy of our awesome dining room team. Then, it was time for some evening entertainment in the form of a pub quiz with Teal and Peter before a little nightcap to wrap the day. Thus ended yet another thrilling day in the Arctic!



# Isfjorden

DAY 9 | Wednesday 7 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

After our day in the ice yesterday, our Expedition Leader Christophe decided to make our way to Isfjorden. In the morning, we arrived at the entrance and had a wonderful view of the big triangle rock of Alkhornet.

From 6:30 AM onward, the expedition team started to scout all along the coast of Trygghamna, Ymerbukta and all the way to Yoldiabukta. In the morning, Michael gave his workshop on advancing your photography, during which everybody enjoyed learning about some new features of their smartphones. The morning also provided the ultimate opportunity for us to visit our ship's bridge where we got a lot of interesting information about the *Greg Mortimer*.

Yet another citizen science session with Albert kept us busy until we enjoyed a fantastic lunch in the restaurant. During the day, the weather was a bit overcast, but we were also able to enjoy some blue sky and sunshine. Temperatures during the day were between 1 and 3°C, which made it the perfect time to go for a Zodiac cruise in Yoldiabukta! The divers and kayakers also decided to go under and on the water for some action during our afternoon activity.

While cruising toward the wonderful glacier at the end of the northern leg of Yoldiabukta, we saw king eiders, Arctic terns, a lot of fulmars and black guillemots. But coming closer to the glacier, we were fascinated by the blue icebergs in front of the glacier. The sun came out just in time to give us a spectacular view of the different parts of the glacier and the mountains behind it.

Back on the ship, the chef surprised us with crepe suzette in the Elephant Island Bar for afternoon tea, after which, Gaby gave a very interesting lecture about the History of Women in Svalbard.

A pod of Beluga whlaes graced us with their presence, their cream coloured backs glistening in the afternoon sun as they popped up between the bergy bits.

Next up, we had another riveting recap and briefing for the following day's activities. Afterward, we headed into

the restaurant for dinner and dessert. To top it all off, we even had a super fun night at the Elephant Island Bar hosted by our talented hotel staff who treated us to a variety show.

Just as our fellow polar explorer Bryan was talking about why we haven't yet seen a polar bear, we heard a double ding-dong. Now everybody was very excited to get out and we had an incredible time watching the bear on shore and then swimming around.

After an evening of singing and dancing and our first polar bear, we all ventured back to our cabins to rest up before the last day of our expedition. As we sailed through Isford, we all slept well, anxious if we would see our polar bear on the fast ice in front of Nordenskioldbreen in the morning again. Good night!



# Adolfbukta & Pyramiden

DAY 10 | Thursday 8 June 2023

Position at 0700 8 June

Latitude: 78°39'8 N

Longitude: 016°48.9' E

Course: Drifting at Adolfbukta

Speed: 0.6 knots

Wind Speed: Light air

Barometer: 1028

Air Temp: 4°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

The cold polar sun has kept us awake for long hours as, last night, the King of the Arctic, the Polar Bear, gave us an incredible display of nature in the attempt to stalk a seal who was resting on ice.

This morning we feel complete, finished, every single piece of the trip has now come together and we finally see the whole picture.

The Zodiac cruise along the fast ice in Adolfbukta allows us to feel at one with nature. As we drive by that same piece of ice on where the polar bear stood just few hours ago, we re-live all the adventures of this incredible journey and we enjoy the sounds of the kittiwakes, eiders and black guillemots who populate the area.

The water is crystal clear and we can see the underside of the small icebergs as we cruise past them in the Zodiacs. It is soon time to get back to the ship as Rosie has to give us an important briefing about our disembarkation tomorrow.

Meanwhile our bridge team repositions the ship to a nearby place which will bring a lot of incredible surprises: the abandoned Russian settlement of Pyramiden.

Here we meet our local guides who walk us around the old buildings of this town, which started off its activity because of coal mining. We visit the dining house, the school, the swimming pool and the culture house and, thanks to our guides, we become part of that once frantic city. We think about the miners, their clothes blackened by coal. Their families and children, growing up in such a place, a parallel universe. The hardships and the sense of community.

We get back on the ship. It is going to be our final night of the voyage: we are greeted by our Captain Maxim who hosts our farewell cocktail. Then it's time to say thank you to all the crew of the *Greg Mortimer* and to the expedition team who made this voyage a lifetime memory.



# Longyearbyen

DAY 11 | Friday 9 June 2023

Thank you for joining us on this amazing adventure! We hope to see you onboard again in the future.



# Kayaking Log

Kayak Masters: Peter Wainwright, Teal Morgan

Number of Paddlers: 7

Total Paddle Outings: 7

Total Distance Paddled: 36 km

Paddlers:	Dani Kers	Ralph Pollack
Sandra Costa	Ronald Kers	Nigel Warren
Matt Gropp	Catherine Marquardt	

## Wednesday 31 May, PM. Yoldiabukta - 3.15 km

A fantastic first day in Svalbard, the day started with a misty morning ship sailing up Nordfjorden. As the afternoon started to roll around the mist lifted into beautiful sunny weather. Having been fitted into our kayaks the night prior we got into the Zodiac and towed the kayaks out into the middle of Yoldiabukta. To begin with we paddled in circles to get used to the kayaks, with some light coaching from Peter and Teal. There were lots of bits of sea ice about helping to test our skills as we weaved our way in between and around. We finished off at the ship after a successful first paddle in perfect conditions.

## Thursday 1 June, AM. Gnålodden - 3.62 km

We arrived in Hornsund early in the morning and dropped at anchor. The weather gods were once again in our favour with virtually no wind once again and the sun showing its face again. This time we launched from the ship and started heading west towards some skerries. We paddled through a channel and began heading towards the coast. There were alcids of all varieties flying about us but of note, Sandra spotted two puffins sitting on the water right next to us. As we got closer to the coast we started heading northeast to try and get a view into Burgerbukta.

On the way we saw the cool rock formation of a small arch into the middle of small rocky island. Once we could see into the fjord we got back in the Zodiac and headed to the landing site to explore on land.

## Thursday 1 June, PM. Burgerbukta - 5.50 km

Having sailed up the fjord during lunch we dropped anchor once again and we got ready for our second paddle of the day. Ashley towed us and the kayaks north through the fjord weaving around ice floes and bergs until we found a good spot to launch. By this point the wind had picked up a little bit and was coming from our left and the sun was hiding behind clouds, however this would not stop us! We paddled down the fjord around and between icebergs when we found a very large piece of fast ice we had to go round. On the way Ashley spotted some feeding fulmars which we aptly described as looking like they were having some sort of epileptic fit. As we got to the southern end of the east arm of Burgerbukta we paddled between some deep blue grounded

icebergs. We finished off by quickly paddling towards the west arm, spotting barnacle geese on the way, then headed back to the ship.

## Friday 2 June, PM. Negribreen - 5.81 km

After beautiful morning cruise looking at the walrus sunbathing at Kapp Lee, we sailed over glassy waters to the largest glacier face on Spitsbergen, Negribreen a beautiful ice front stretching a whopping 30km. With everyone excited and eager to get on the water we launched from the ship and got going. The glacier face looked ginormous as we paddled along it even though we were still approximately 2km away. There was a big bay on the periphery of the glacier that we went towards with lots of icebergs around with a beautiful blue colouring. At this point we were treated to a big male bearded seal singing looking for a mate. After spending some time with the seal, we continued to make our way round the bay stopping at various bergs to soak in the atmosphere. We hopped off in a nice wide bay to have a Zodiac ride back to the ship which got a little chilly.

## Sunday 4 June, AM. Recherchebreen - 7.49 km

As we sailed into the Bellsund there was no sign of a cloud or even an ounce of wind. Once we dropped anchor we launched from the ship and paddled towards the lagoon at the front of the Recherchebreen Glacier. There was a bit of current as we entered the lagoon. We found lots of fast ice in front of the glacier and we paddled around looking at some black guillemot and common eider ducks. There was some space in the fast ice and Peter had spotted some seals, so we tried to paddle up as far we could getting closer to the glacier. When it was time to turnaround, Dani tried a particularly daring 3-point turn which turned into a stuck in the ice experience. We continued through the lagoon to find another lead in the ice which unfortunately we were not able to get through. As we left the lagoon we paddled over to the neighbouring valley, the water was very shallow and super clear so we took our time and relaxed enjoying the sun and mirror like conditions before heading back to ship.

## Monday 5 June, AM. Bjørnfjord - 5.11 km

Cloudy skies seemed almost foreign and unusual after the exceptional high pressure weather all trip so far. Despite being quite windy at the entrance to the fjord it was surprising calm in the bay in front of the glaciers, and the low clouds added an element of mystique. We launched from the ship and were almost immediately paddling amongst radiant grounded bergy bits recently shed from the glacier front. The scenery provided perfect examples of glacial erratics, scouring, lateral moraines and glacial lichenometry changes. Keeping a safe distance away from the ice face we made our way round the bay weaving around ice floes and bergs. Several granite islands at the toe of the glacier made for great paddling, and hidden among them we found a bearded seal lounging on a floe unpeturbed by our presence. The sun began to break through the cloud and we decided to keep paddling as far round the bay as possible before hitching an exciting ride back to the ship in Sergei's Zodiac. An outstanding kayak in very impressive mountain and glacial terrain.

## Wednesday 7 June, PM Yoldiabukta North Arm - 5.4 km

After a couple of intensive days of wildlife scanning we had a full complement of kayakers eager to get back on the water in Yoldiabukta. Having just spotted 30-40 beluga whales shortly before the outing, we were hoping we might even get an inquisitive visit while in our kayaks. But before we were even able to get out onto the water, one of our number got everyone way too excited by spotting what he thought was a bear, but was really just a fur-free no-legged white rock.

Once on the water, we paddled along the shore of the bay keeping a watchful eye out for walrus, and past several snowmelt streams pouring over the undercut snowbanks into the bay. At this point in the trip, it was a joy to see everyone so relaxed and comfortable in their kayaks and demonstrating great paddling technique, the pace was impressive, and we covered distance quite quickly while still leisurely enjoying each other's conversations. At the back of the bay, we were able to paddle out in front of the glacier front and marvel in the stunning scenery.



# Bird and Mammal Sightings

## Bird Species

May - June

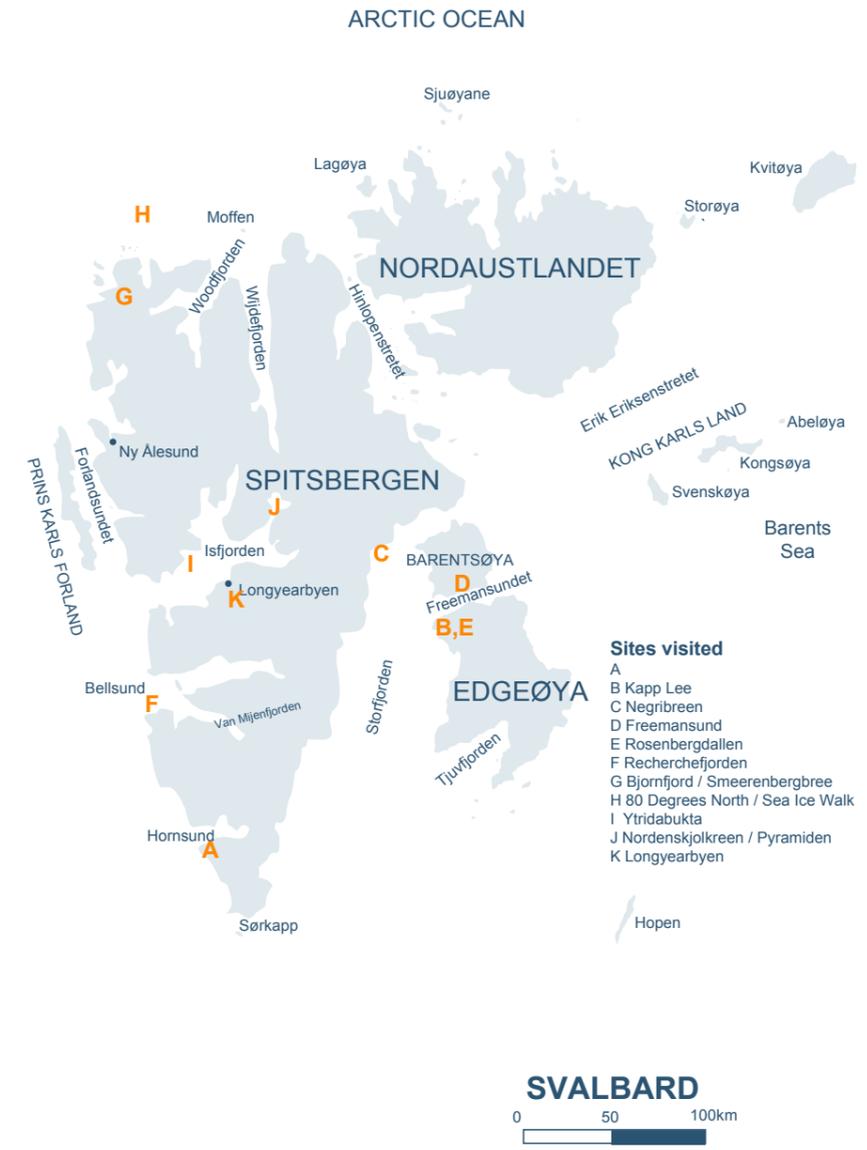
	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Red-throated Diver					•				
Northern Fulmar	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Pink-footed Goose	•	•		•	•	•		•	•
Barnacle Goose	•	•	•	•	•	•			•
Brent Goose		•				•			
Common Eider	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
King Eider	•	•			•				•
Long-tailed Duck (Oldsquaw)	•	•		•					•
Purple Sandpiper	•	•	•	•				•	•
Arctic Skua	•	•	•	•			•	•	•
Long-tailed Skua (ib)		•	•	•	•			•	•
Great Skua		•				•	•	•	•
Glaucous Gull	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Kittiwake	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Ivory Gull			•	•	•			•	•
Arctic Tern	•	•				•		•	•
Common Guillemot									•
Brunich's Guillemot	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Black Guillemot	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Razorbill (ib)						•			
Little Auk		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
Atlantic Puffin	•	•		•		•	•		
Wheatear (ib)		•						•	
Snow Bunting		•		•	•			•	•

## Mammal Species

May - June

	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Arctic Fox		•							
Reindeer	•	•	•	•	•			•	•
Polar Bear								•	
Ringed Seal	•	•		•		•	•	•	
Bearded Seal	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Harp Seal					•				
Walrus	•		•	•	•	•		•	
Minke Whale								•	
Humpback Whales					•				
Beluga								•	
N. Bottlenosed Whale					•				
UNID Cetacean		•							





## Expeditioners:

Nicola Abraham

Kathryn Batchford

Lauren Boyd

Mary Boyd

Susan Carstens

Pieter Carstens

Gerardo Ceballos Gonzalez

Pablo Ceballos Mondragon

Regina Ceballos Mondragon

Catherine Chapman

Françoise Chardevel

Sandra Costa

Val Cox

Sarah Crellin

Adrian Crellin

Brian Crowley

Amanda Cunliffe

Robert Davies

Tina Davies

Kim Eades

Daniel Eades

Pamela Forrest

Annie Fredvang

Kasey green

Matthew Gropp

Edward Gropp Jr

Jean-Philippe Hamon

Katherine Harber

Vivian Harrold

Bruce Henderson

Tootie Henderson

Caitlin Henning

Karen Hollands

Zoey Husband

Thomas Jones

Lynn Kearvell

John Kearvell

Ronald Kers

Dani Kers

Monika Krauss-Lange

Rebecca Ladley

Trixi Lange-Hitzbleck

Jacqueline Lee

Elizabeth Lloyd

Mercedita Mandocdoc

Catherine Marquardt

Maria Guadalupe Mondragon Arreguin

Maria Mondragon Villar

Joyce Pollack

Ralph Pollack

Vladimir Preysman

Irene Preysman

Rebecca Pullen

Stanley Raucher

Barry Reid

Jo Reid

Jennifer Reynolds

Nichola Saville

Steve Sexton

Kim Sexton

Murtaza Siddiqui

Fareeda Siddiqui

Philip Spriet

Sandra Stone

John Stone

Ken Taylor

Lynda Taylor

John Thompson

Melanie Thompson

Brenda Veland

Geoffrey Walters

Denise Walters

Sonia Ward

Nigel Warren

Peter Williams

Shan Williams

Laura Wing

Anjalina 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: Teal Morgan

Photography Guide: Michael Baynes

Lead Dive Guide: Tanja Bauer

Dive Guide: Eddie Hauzer

Medic/Expedition Guide: Hans Bruning

Zodiac Master: Sergei Andronov

Onboard Expedition Assistant: Ana Perdo Padro

## 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

Albert Michaud

Tanja Bayer

Teal Morgan





