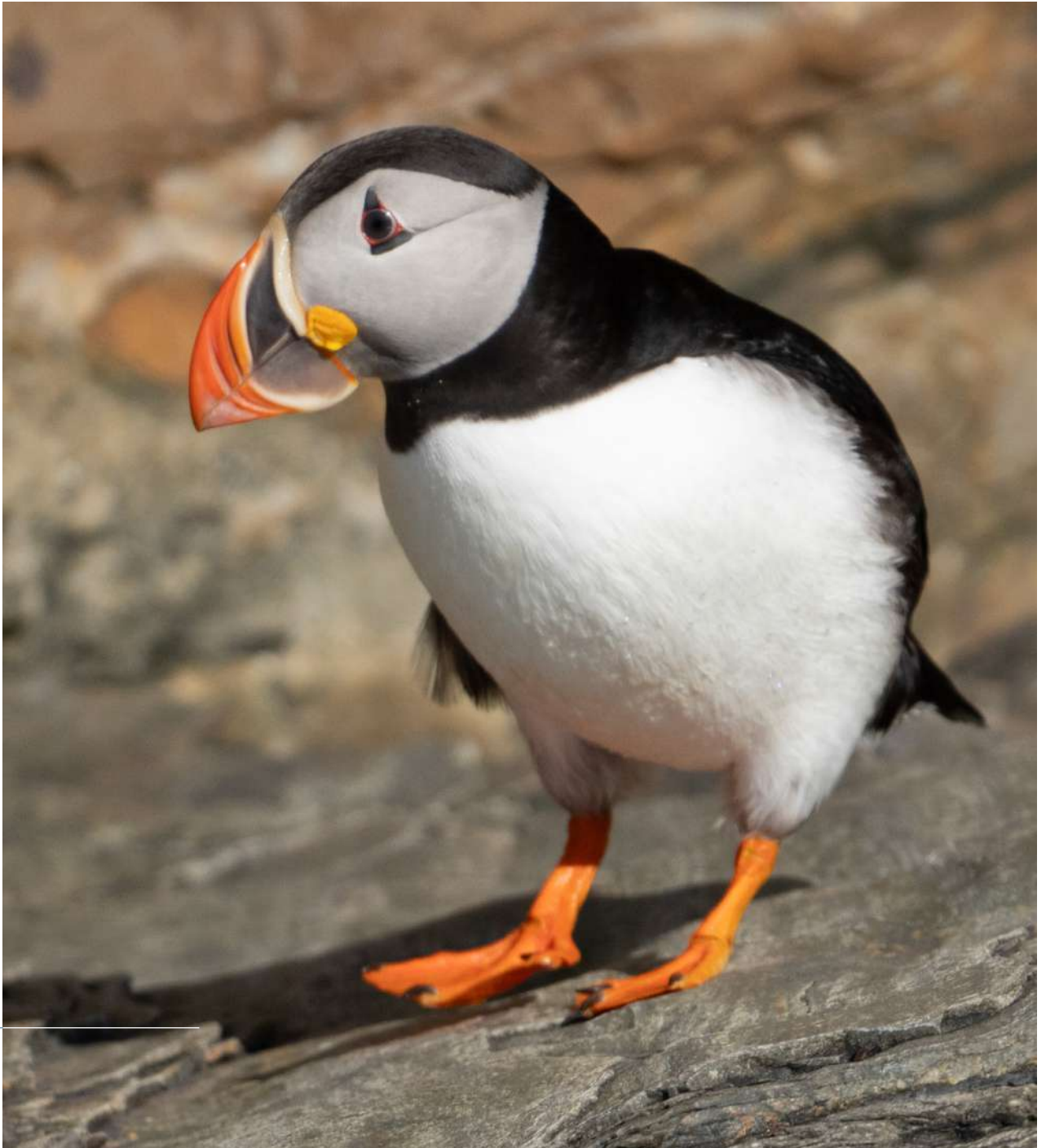


Arctic Complete

Aboard *Greg Mortimer* | 21 July – 12 August 2024





Arctic Complete

21 July – 12 August 2024

Reykjavík

DAY 1 | Sunday 21 July 2024

Latitude:
64° 135.1 N
Longitude:
021° 89.4' E

Course:
At the Pier
Speed:
0 knots

Wind Speed:
6 knots NE
Barometer:
1016 hPa

Air Temp:
8°C

Having explored the vibrant city of Reykjavík, we arrived at the ship knowing that this will be our last glimpse of civilisation for a while. Over the next 24 days, we are more likely to encounter a fox, reindeer, or polar bear than another human.

Upon arrival at the pier, we were greeted by Kerry, the onboard expedition manager, and photography guide, Jamie, who took our photos. The Expedition Team showed us on board to a waiting banquet of canapes.

After checking in and enjoying refreshments at the Elephant Island Bar, the stewards helped us navigate the decks to our cabins and

settle into our 'home away from home.'

This extra-special trip will be led by Greg Mortimer, founder of Aurora Expeditions. Greg called us into the Lecture Theatre to welcome us aboard. To start, he gave a short overview of this eponymous ship, and explained why the X-BOW design and the spirit of adventure is what truly enhances each day of an expedition with Aurora. We were then introduced to a multi-skilled Expedition Team, who are eager to share their knowledge and are as excited as we are for what lies ahead.



At Sea En Route to Greenland

DAY 2 | Monday 22 July 2024

Latitude:

66°06.3' N

Longitude:

024°17.2' E

Course:

021°

Speed:

11 KN

Wind Speed:

W, 3KN

Barometer:

1012 hPa

Air Temp:

7°C

Outside we saw a heavy grey sky over white-capped swell, the west coast of Iceland merely a dark crease to starboard. Northern fulmars slipped past us on the wind without a wing-beat; rising, dipping and gliding low, mocking the complex physics of flight.

Greg introduced us to the polar code around wildlife and how to behave in northern communities; Kelsey briefed us on safety and behaviour around polar bears (for the safety of both people and bears); Leo explained the protocols for getting in and out of the inflatable Zodiacs and using the PFDs; and Greg explained how we can minimise the risk of spreading avian influenza, seeds and other

pathogens by cleaning our outer gear and footwear.

We then got busy with vacuum cleaners and tweezers, checked and cleaned our gear and tried on the warm and waterproof Muck Boots, ready for our first outing.

After lunch (and for some a jet-lagged post-prandial nap), Damon gave an overview of Greenland, our first destination. Jamie the onboard photographer followed this up with tips on how to take the best photographs we can, whether by camera or phone. His top tip? 'I always use shutter priority.'



Rømer Fjord

DAY 3 | Tuesday 23 July 2024

Latitude:

69° 39.0' N

Longitude:

023°30.7' E

Course:

ice navigation

Speed:

2.9KN

Wind Speed:

SE, 3KN

Barometer:

1013 hPa

Air Temp:

1°C

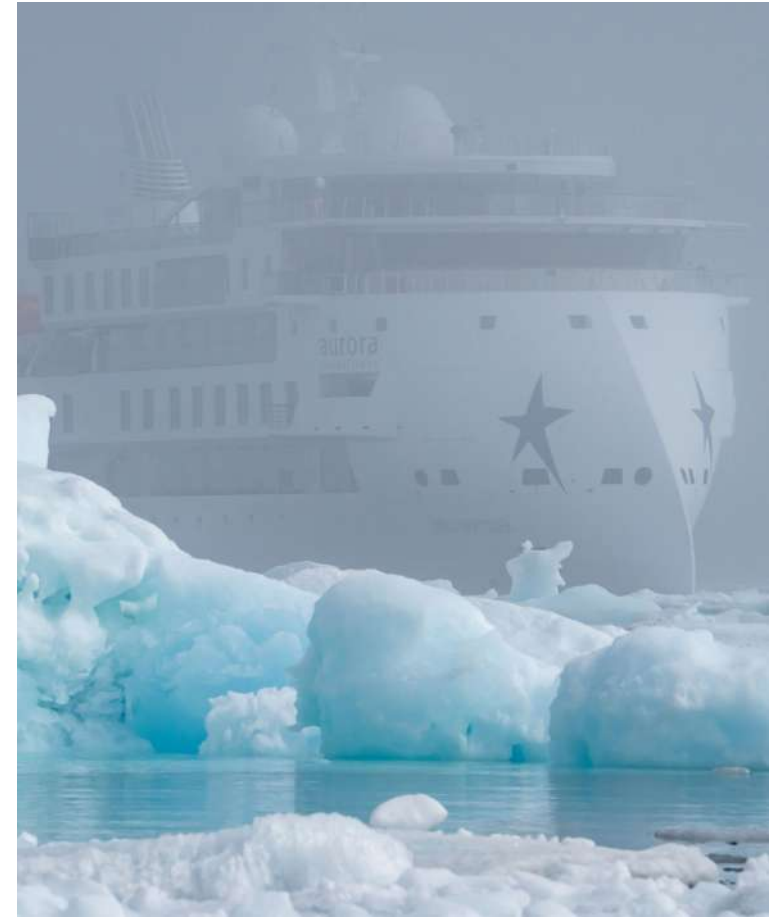
Greg Mortimer (the human) laid out our aims for the day, to investigate this lesser visited landscape, as soon as visibility improved. As they say, above the clouds the sun is always shining and a coffee or two later, the mist was in retreat, a new plan formulated and Zodiacs launched.

We glided on mirror waters, weaving around brash and bergy bits, reeling in the gelid sea. At first, ice movement seemed aimless, larger lumps driven by a current running deeper into the fjord, moving with almost surprising speed. Pushing between floes brought us into several eddies, where ice swirled from one direction and rolled

in from another, pushing Zodiacs around, pinching in close then revealing leads to open water, which closed as soon as one boat passed through.

Caught in the swirling slow dance of ice we gained new appreciation for the endurance of polar explorers of the Heroic Age, who forged routes through hundreds of miles of surging and seething pack in search of their salvation. Also, a deeper recognition of the skill and experience of Captain Oleg, his team on the bridge, and the rest of the deck department as they freed us from the labyrinth of ice and brought us safely back to the ship.







Hurry Inlet

DAY 4 | Wednesday 24 July 2024

Latitude:
70°37.5'N
Longitude:
022°29.2'E

Barometer:
1011 hPa
Air Temp:
3°C

Course:
Drifting
Speed:
3.8 KN

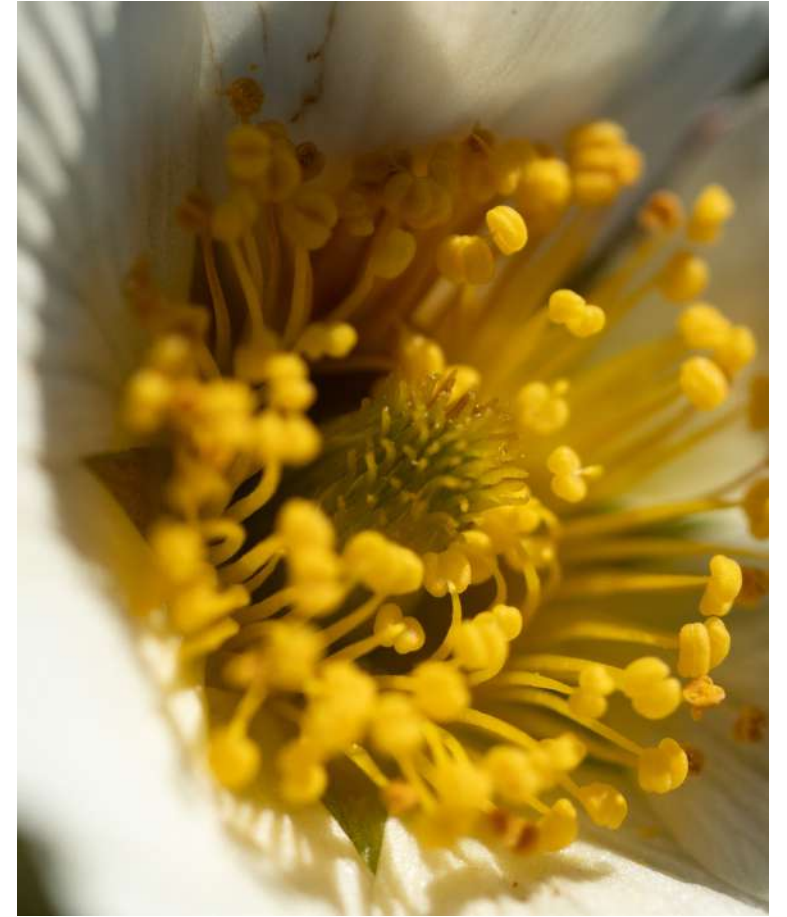
Today marked our unforgettable first landing in Greenland, and it was an adventure packed with awe-inspiring moments. We kicked off the day with a morning tundra hike at Hurry Inlet, where we walked amid rocks that have witnessed 400 million years of earth's history. By afternoon, we were exploring landscapes formed 250 million years ago, highlighting the dramatic 200-million-year difference due to the Caledonian orogeny. It was like stepping into a time machine!

Our hiking groups, varying from small to medium and long treks, allowed each of us to savour the tundra's breathtaking beauty at our own pace. The east side of the inlet was a botanical paradise. We were captivated by the vibrant mountain avens, the striking

fireweed—Greenland's national flower—the delicate black fleabane, and the resilient moss campion. The arctic willow and dwarf birch added a lush green touch, while the hairy lousewort and tundra grass showcased the incredible diversity of the flora. The star of our botanical discoveries was the elusive alpine arnica, a rare and delightful find!

The wildlife sightings were equally exhilarating. We spotted barnacle geese, pink-footed geese, snow buntings, golden plovers, long-tailed skuas chasing dunlins, and even ravens. The weather was nothing short of perfect, with clear skies and a gentle breeze making our adventure even more enjoyable.







Øfjord

DAY 5 | Thursday 25 July 2024

Latitude:
71°12.8'N
Longitude:
026°24.7'E

Course:
Variable
Speed:
5 KN

Wind Speed:
2KN SE
Barometer:
1012 hPa

Air Temp:
4°C

From the first moment curtains opened in Øfjord, it was clear something special awaited outside. The *Greg Mortimer* had anchored just off the Bear Islands, a labyrinthine network of islands and islets.

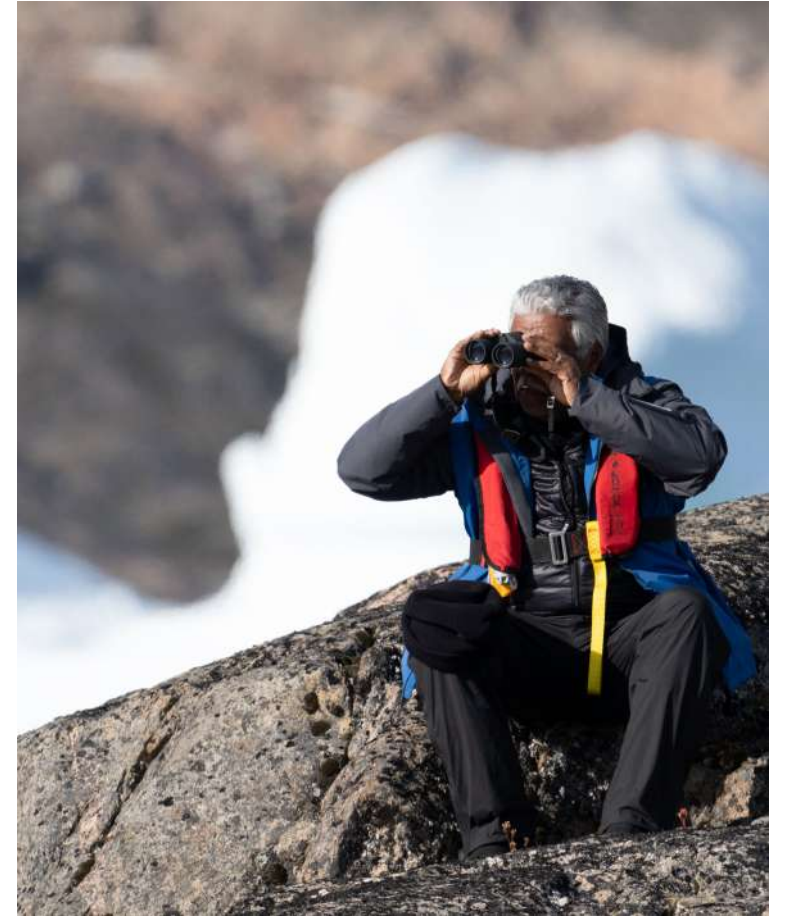
The initial plan was to land on Island 5 – despite their obvious beauty each body has only been given a number by European explorers, rather than individual names. The Zodiac transfer was across mirror-calm water, past icebergs that dwarfed our ship.

On land, a few lucky people got to see a pair of quickly shy musk oxen, but no one missed out on the squadrons of mosquitos that seemed to thrive here.

Even their aggressiveness couldn't distract from the monumental landscape all around, though, and before long Zodiacs set off in different directions to explore this extraordinary archipelago. Some saw a bearded seal along the way, others a curious arctic fox, but while fauna was, of course, interesting, this was a day for landscapes beyond compare.

After a long morning in the boats, a late lunch was followed by a leisurely ship cruise deeper into the Scoresbysund network. The sun continued to shine with golden insistence that this was a day not to be forgotten.









Hare Fjord & Øfjord

DAY 6 | Friday 26 July 2024

Latitude:
70°56.7'N
Longitude:
027°54.1'E

Course:
042°
Speed:
5.1KN

Wind Speed:
SE, 1KN
Barometer:
1017 hPa

Air Temp:
1°C

It was decided to Zodiac ashore to an expanse of undulating tundra, reminiscent in texture and geography of the Scottish Highlands; the terrain beckoned to be walked upon.

The landscape was blanketed by rugs of arctic willow and dwarf birch set upon a carpet of spongy yet firm moss – a most pleasant substrate for hiking. Various species of wildflowers punctuated some brighter colour in the mostly green expanse. The going was relatively straightforward. In a short time musk oxen were spotted in the distance. Now all contingents had a singular focus. Musk oxen are big and hardy, yet easily spooked, particularly in a country where they are actively hunted.

As groups moved towards them, they moved farther away, always maintaining a comfortable distance. Eventually they moved too far for easy viewing, and it was time to return to the landing site. The upshot of such an excursion was a healthy dose of aerobic activity.

During lunch, the ship made way slowly to the east down the way we came the day before. The armada of Zodiacs were opportunistically launched for a more intimate exploration of the mighty fjord's shoreline. Bridal veil falls and cascades spilled from the lofty heights into the turquoise sea. The tough and colourful metamorphic cliffs rising mostly sheer, were broken in places by mighty glaciers and peppered by occasional pockets of precariously clinging clumps of miniature trees and arctic harebells.





Scoresbysund

DAY 7 | Saturday 27 July 2024

Latitude: 70°34.1'N
Longitude: 024°06.4'W
Course: Variable, ice nav.
Speed: 13.7KN

Wind Speed: NE 1KN
Barometer: 1016 hPa
Air Temp: 7° C

After breakfast, Greg offered a briefing with the Plan A for today, visiting the remote settlement of Ittoqqortoormiit, one of Greenland's most isolated settlements. Home to around 350 inhabitants, this small community provides a unique glimpse into the traditional Inuit way of life. Founded in 1925 by settlers from Tasiilaq, Ittoqqortoormiit is a place where modern amenities coexist with age-old hunting and fishing practices.

The idea was to launch our Zodiacs after lunch to get ashore and walk around town, but the ice played a trick on us today, the currents from the north pushed the ice towards the coastline and although

watching the sea ice was a beautiful scene, it prevented us from visiting the community.

Plan B was then set in place, and we continued our expedition to the north of Scoresbysund.

During the afternoon, our expert and naturalist, John, offered a captivating introduction to polar bears, covering their behaviour, adaptation to the harsh arctic environment, solitary lifestyle, their incredible sense of smell, and how they navigate the icy wilderness. Understanding these magnificent creatures enhances the thrill of potentially spotting one during our voyage.



Kong Oscar Fjord | Gateau Point

DAY 8 | Sunday 28 July 2024

Latitude:

72°03.2'N

Longitude:

022°30.8'W

Course:

Ice navigation

Speed:

3.2KN

Wind Speed:

N 3KN

Barometer:

1014 hPa

Air Temp:

2°C

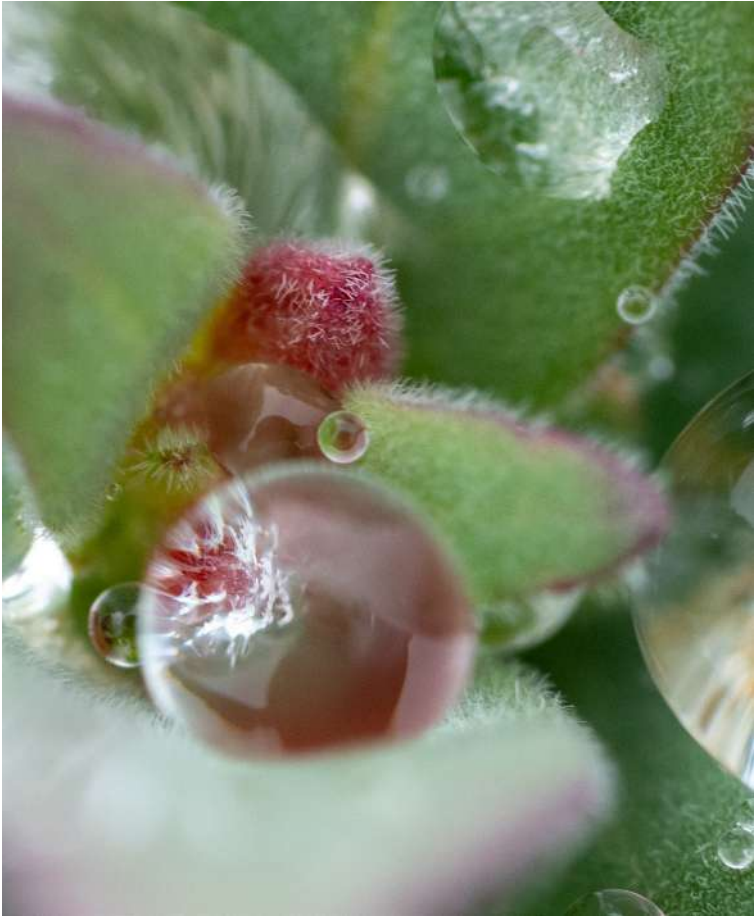
Antarctic Havn was our first landing site. It's an unusual name for a small fjord in the northeast of Greenland. It was named after a famous ship, the Antarctic, which made many voyages of discovery in both polar regions. The site was like an open-air museum, with many remnants of the trappers and hunters who camped here. There also used to be a weather station that was active in the 1930s and 1940s. An avalanche destroyed the station in 2002, only a year after it was restored.

On land, people roamed freely within a safe perimeter, and some very distant musk oxen were spotted.

The plan for the afternoon was to visit Gateau Point. First, we had to get there, so we took a few hours to reposition. I am betting most of us rested and relaxed before emerging for an amazing presentation from Vicky. She had joined a (recreated, hand-crafted) Viking longboat that sailed initially from Norway to Manchester. The second voyage was even more incredible, from Norway to Newfoundland via Faroes, Iceland and Greenland. A colossal adventure conducted by a group of tough, resilient and capable modern-day Vikings, just like Vicky.







Blomsterbugten | Renbugten

DAY 9 | Monday 29 July 2024

Latitude:
75°19.02' N
Longitude:
025°24.2' W

Course:
Drifting
Speed:
0.3KN

Wind Speed:
N 4KN
Barometer:
1019 hPa

Air Temp:
5°C

Still sore in the arms (kayakers) and legs (hikers) from last evening's geological adventure at Gateau Point, we had no time to rest this morning. It was time to explore the beautiful site of Blomsterbugten.

On arrival we first had a good look at the hut 'Varghyten', meaning 'Wolf Cabin'. It was a bit small, dark and slightly creepy, but nevertheless interesting. We also found signs of Paleo-Inuit history: a stone circle, a clear indication of a summer camp, where thousands of years ago the Inuit stayed during their summer hunting trips.

Once everyone got on shore, we divided into different walking groups and we were off on our adventure. The hikes were lovely and we saw many amazing things, from tiny arctic tundra plants and flowers like yellow mountain saxifrage, moss campion and arctic

willow, to at least two species of mammals.

We got to enjoy crazy big white fluffy bunnies, the arctic hares, jump and chase each other around like crazy. Some of us also encountered giant hairy goats, the musk oxen, and we got to observe them in their natural environment for quite some time. Amazing encounters that we will not easily forget. The landscape of the glowing tundra hills and the views of the lakes made the experience complete.

During lunch we had a surprise visit of the Sirius Dog Sled Patrol, the Danish Armed Forces who are responsible for overseeing 16,000 square kilometres of coastline in Northeast Greenland, including the Greenland National Park. Always a lovely sight for the eyes... the dogs we mean, of course!



Nordfjord | At Sea, En Route to Svalbard

DAY 10 | Tuesday 30 July 2024

Latitude:

73°47.0'N

Longitude:

024°12.9'W

Course:

Ice navigation

Speed:

5KN

Wind Speed:

NW, 3KN

Barometer:

1014 hPa

Air Temp:

5° C

Waltershausen Glacier is named after a German geologist. It stretched from one side of the bay to the other. At a guess it looked several kilometres wide. When it was measured on the bridge, it was over 10 kilometres in breadth!

The Zodiacs spread out in their buddy pairs in different directions. We cruised along the face of the glacier, noting the convolutions and twists of multiple ice flows merged into one. Dark streaks criss-crossed both the glacier wall and floating icebergs.

We stopped at several caves created in the ice, and watched as chunks fell from the ceiling and smashed into water below. Throughout our entire cruise, the drizzle of rain did not stop, so few of us dared take our cameras out of the dry bags. As an additional

exercise, a 'plankton tow' was dragged behind a Zodiac to catch any small floating animals.

After a quiet and snoozy afternoon on board the ship, including another talk by John about polar bears, we had an early dinner.

The after-dinner landing was at Myggbukta, translated from the Norwegian for 'Mosquito Bay'. Due to the midnight sun still being in effect even in late July, the 'night' landing was in complete daylight. The black-and-white buildings were the largest buildings we had visited since Iceland! Remains of horny musk oxen lay strewn about the elaborate hut. Inside the kerosine-smelling dwelling was a range of tools and half-used consumables.





At Sea En Route to Svalbard

DAY 11 | Wednesday 31 July 2024

Latitude:
73° 41.1'N
Longitude:
015° 048.2'E

Course:
044°
Speed:
12.3 knots

Wind Speed:
2 knots S
Barometer:
1026 hPa

Air Temp:
2°C

Leg two of our voyage will soon begin, but first we must get to Svalbard by crossing the Greenland Sea. We are in luck in that the seas are being kind to us with smooth, windless rolling swells; however, the fog has enveloped us, as Greg describes it, 'a bowl of milk'. As we sail to the northeast, fulmars occasionally fly past wishing for some wind to lock their wings and soar in their element.

We started our day with a lecture from our chief officer, Andrey, chief engineer, Branimir and our hotel manager, Alex, on the behind-the-scenes of our ship, the *Greg Mortimer*, telling us how the ship runs, how it was built and how it is provisioned. This was followed up by a lecture from Vicky and Meike on seabirds – what we see in the arctic, their threats and conservation. This ended with some thought and

action-provoking conversations about what we can do to stop/slow down our own plastic consumption, Meike said, adding 'Refuse' onto the classic 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle'.

At 4pm Linda, John and Chris gave a workshop on what we have found and collected in the water from our two plankton tows in Øfjord and in Nordfjord by the Waltershausen Glacier. Linda told the importance of the microplankton, followed by John and Chris telling and showing live with the microscope, what was found, including copepods and dinoflagellates. Linda wrapped up by showing some photos of the microplanktons with microplastics in and around them.



At Sea En Route to Svalbard

DAY 12 | Thursday 1 August 2024

Latitude:
76°40.01' N
Longitude:
002°20.1' W

Course:
049°
Speed:
12 kts

Wind Speed:
NW 3 Kts
Barometer:
1022 hPa

Air Temp:
5°C

During the morning and after breakfast, we enjoyed three rounds of bridge tours, where the officers explained to us all the control panel elements of the beautiful vessel.

Shortly after, Damon entertained us with an interesting presentation about marine mammals. He covered various aspects of these unique creatures, from groups of seals, location and behaviour, to cetaceans' classification, and some key tips on how to identify them. He also included some very specific anatomic details, and a quite 'interesting' museum to visit in Reykjavík.

During the afternoon there was a wide and tasty range of offerings. From the delicious crepe suzette to a wine tasting conducted by

our food and beverage manager and Certified Sommelier, Raj, who offered a guided 'walk' through some of the most exquisite wines.

After crepe time, Linda and Melina presented a talk about ice in all of its forms. Melina covered glaciers, types and their dynamics in different regions like Greenland, Svalbard and Antarctica. Linda continued with the sea ice and its vulnerability and consequence of the changes that are being recorded in the arctic.

Jamie followed not long after, with a lecture/workshop about Lightroom photo editing for our Expeditioners.

14e Julibreen and Signehamna

DAY 13 | Friday 2 August 2024

Latitude:
79°06.0'N
Longitude:
011°33.3'E

Course:
061°
Speed:
4.4 KN

Wind Speed:
NE, 4KN
Barometer:
1033 hPa

Air Temp:
7° C

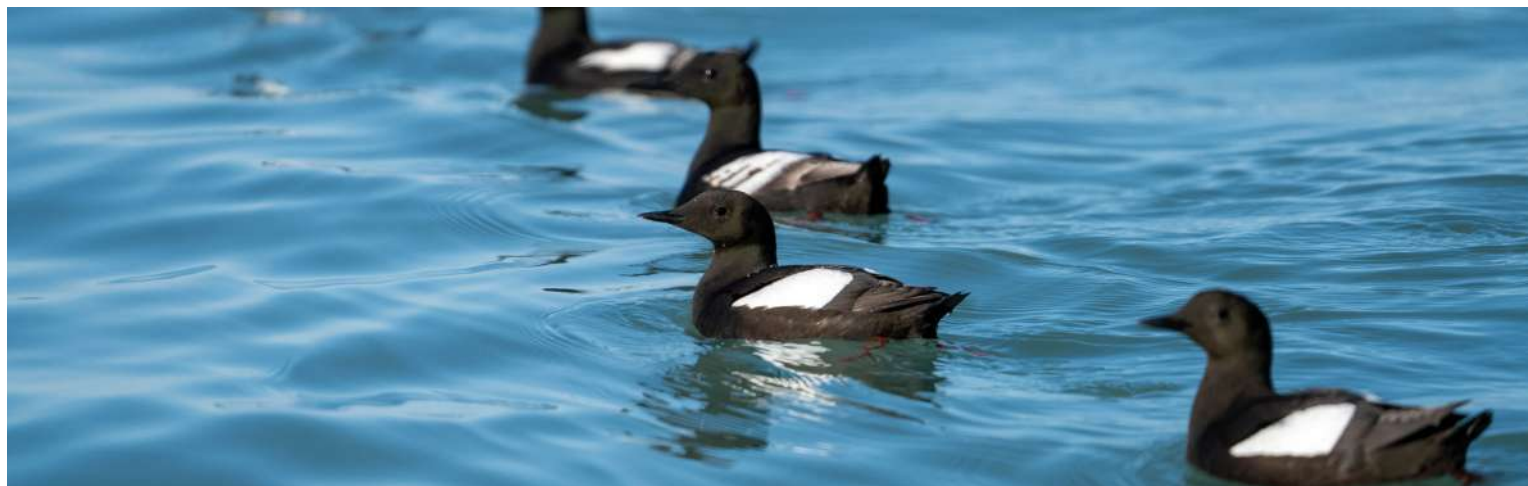
From the front deck, we surveyed the scene as we entered Krossfjorden: a glassy sea under blue sky. Glaciers calving down between bare mountains from the ice cap to the ocean. And birds flying in all directions: flocks of tiny dovebies in formation just above the surface; kittiwakes, puffins, fulmars and guillemots.

We had a split landing: One group headed out in Zodiacs to look at the bird cliffs, the 'banana'-like harbor seals resting on the spit, and the terminal face of the glacier. The remainder headed for land, where they watched the constant stream of birds coming and going from their nests and a small group of reindeer grazing the slopes under the bird cliffs, the sward bright green from centuries of

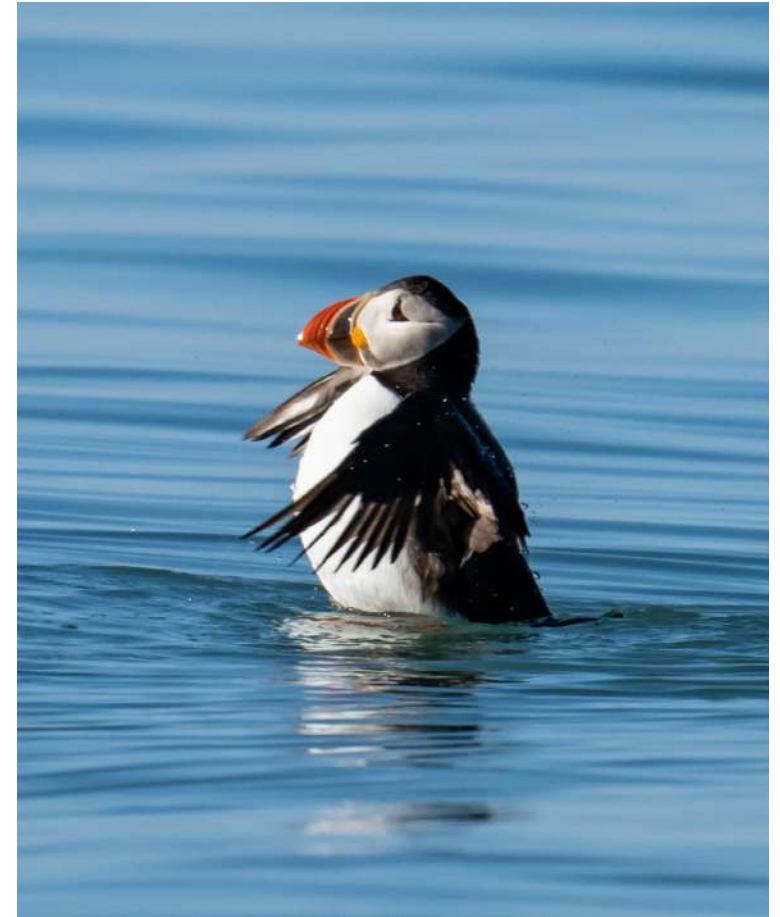
leached guano. Then at half-time we all switched over.

Signehamna is best known for its clandestine German weather station during WWII. Hidden from view of the fjord, it operated for only a year before Norwegian forces discovered and blew it up.

After lunch we took either a stroll or a stiff walk on the tundra. At Lake Hejeren just inland of the landing beach, we saw a pair of divers, a group of barnacle geese and a colony of arctic terns nesting on a small island. Groups of kittiwakes congregated in the middle of the lake, cleaning the nesting grime off their feathers in the fresh water. A few reindeer grazed on the choice pasture around the lake outlet.







Hamiltonbukta + Ytre Norskøya

DAY 14 | Saturday 3 August 2024

Latitude:
79°50.0° N
Longitude:
011°58.9° E

Course:
183°
Speed:
7.8kn

Wind Speed:
1 KT SE
Barometer:
1034 hPa

Air Temp:
8°C

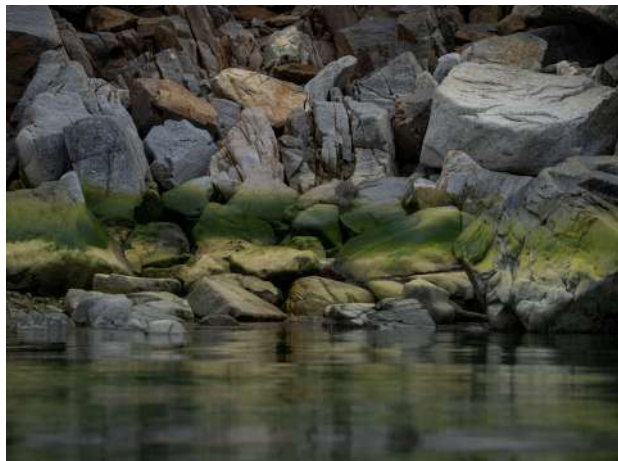
Our Zodiac exploration of Hamiltonbukta took in the skerries on the edge of the bay, low isles smoothed by long-ago ice, home to a screeching colony of terns, and edged by rocks softened by feathery fronds of kelp, but ready to crunch incautious propellers. We pushed through slushy brash calved from the fissured face of the glacier, hearing the snap, crackle, pop as bubbles of ancient air were released from its grip.

We made our way along the base of the craggy cliff, encrusted with generations of guillemot guano, which contributed to a verdant

mossy carpet between the foot of the cliff and the rocky shoreline. Then, rootling under a rock over us, the amber eyes and dark-chocolate brown velvet plush of a blue morph arctic fox, more than happy for us to watch as he ripped up some moss, chased his bushy big tail, and rolled on his back to scratch an itch.

Over lunch we made our way north out of Raudfjorden to Ytre Norskøya. Despite our initial attempt at landing being thwarted by an aerial attack from angry arctic terns, we made it ashore, with a short scramble over big cobblestones to make it to solid ground underfoot.







The Edge of the Pack Ice | Seven Islands

DAY 15 | Sunday 4 August 2024

Latitude:

81°01.4'N

Longitude:

017°45.1'E

Course:

Ice navigation

Speed:

Ice navigation

Wind Speed:

SW .75 KTS

Barometer:

1029 hPa

Air Temp:

4° C

To explorers who scabbled, starved and even died attempting to reach the North Pole, the ease of travel today would surely be astonishing – perhaps even infuriating. A little under a century later, the *Greg Mortimer* wasn't attempting to reach that ultimate destination, but as we were over 81 degrees north, it lay under 1,000 kilometres from our bow. We had temporarily left Svalbard behind to go in search of the pack ice, which in theory runs all the way to the top of the world.

Unfortunately, we also found ourselves enshrouded in thick fog, making it difficult to spot wildlife. Going out in such conditions

was also impossible, ironically precisely because of the animal most people wanted to see – the elusive polar bear. The poor visibility meant there could have been one very close, or 100 kilometres away, and we'd have been none the wiser. With little sign that conditions would improve, we turned back south.

Later, to the surprise of some, a post-dinner Zodiac cruise was announced, a cold dessert in the polar desert. This wasn't to be some random stop, however – a hardy scout boat had confirmed the presence of several groups of walrus near shore.





Valhallfonna & Alkefjellet

DAY 16 | Monday 5 August 2024

Latitude:

79°44.4' N

Longitude:

018°08.0' E

Course:

167°

Speed:

11Kts

Wind Speed:

NW 2 Kts

Barometer:

1029 hPa

Air Temp:

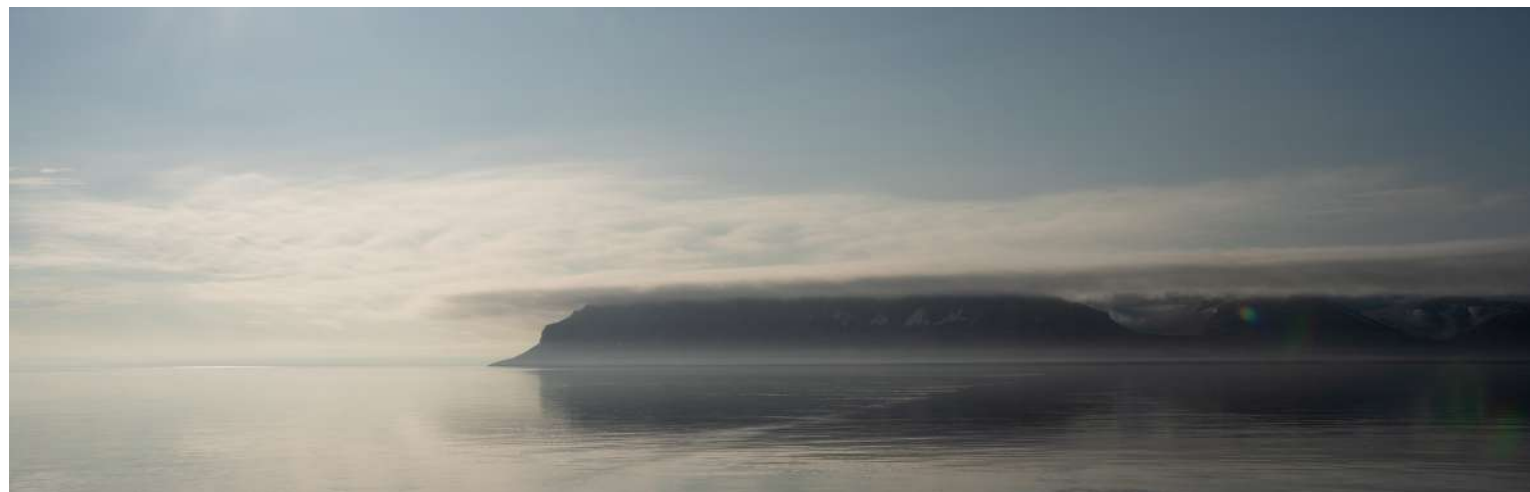
6° C

Outside the ship, the mighty Valhallfonna awaited exploration. This gigantic icecap stretches over 1,000 square kilometres across the northern reaches of the island of Spitsbergen. Theoretically it would be possible to walk from here all the way to Longyearbyen, but we settled for a short ascent of its gently sloping face. Here at the fringes, the glacier seemed to have sprung a leak – several leaks, in fact. So much water was flowing from its humongous mass that it gave the impression it was perspiring under interrogation.

After avoiding crevasses and taking in the view across the surrounding fjord, we reboarded for a short transfer to Alkefjellet. Before we'd even dropped anchor, the locals were whizzing past the

ship. These spectacular cliffs are home to over 150,000 Brünnich's guillemots, as well as hundreds of other birds. Taken together, they provide one of the world's great aerial spectacles as they loudly fly hither and yonder from their vast avian city.

These guillemots, also known as thick-billed murre, are remarkable even by the high standards of polar evolution. They are known to forage up to 100 kilometres away from their homes, despite very plainly having abysmal flying technique. So inefficient are their flights that they are thought to have the highest energy expenditure of sustained locomotion in any animal.





Kvitøya | Nordaustlandet – Austfona

DAY 17 | Tuesday 6 August 2024

Latitude:
80°29.0'N
Longitude:
030°53.4'W

Course:
047°
Speed:
12.7 kts

Wind Speed:
SW 4 Kts
Barometer:
1026 hPa

Air Temp:
4°C

During the night, our ship had steamed northeast towards Kvitøya (White Island), the most easterly island of the Svalbard Archipelago. Two Zodiacs were dispatched to scout the area and see if a landing was possible.

Our scout team was quick to report. Near the broad, shallow bay around the memorial, four polar bears were lazing near the coastline. A landing was obviously not possible. An ad hoc plan was hatched: launch as many Zodiacs as necessary and cruise the region to view the bears.

Beyond a haul-out of walrus, just inside the bay's eastern curve, we spied our first bear. Slowly, cautiously, our armada did a 'round robin'

approach – all boats ordered in a rotating wheel. This technique assures everyone equal opportunity for viewing. The bear was lying down and seemingly comfortable with the watercrafts. In a short time, and as the fog began to lift, we moved on towards the location of the monument. Below its base were three more bears, all comfortably reposing just above the beach.

The afternoon saw a repositioning to the edge of Austfona, the great ice cap covering almost all Nordaustlandet's southeast bulk. During our transit, the fog cleared, and the sun beamed. We pulled in closely to Austfona's most eastern edge to scan its topography, but no wildlife was spotted. We sailed into the night, sated with our time with the bears. From a Zodiac, polar bear encounters get no better.





Kapp Lee | Spjutnes | Negribreen | Mohnbukta

DAY 18 | Wednesday 7 August 2024

Latitude:
78°10.7'N
Longitude:
021°11.4'E

Wind Speed:
4 Kts NW
Barometer:
1025 hPa

Course:
243°
Speed:
5.7 kts

Air Temp:
6°C

As if we had not seen enough polar bears yesterday, Mother Nature surprised us with another bear today. Unfortunately, right at our landing site Kapp Lee, which meant we could not go ahead with our morning operations. Instead, we decided to sail north to the unexplored and new site of Spjutnes on Barentsøya.

We immediately got into action, jumped into our Zodiacs and we went to explore. And what an amazing time we had, we not only spotted that one polar bear, but we also spotted eight polar bears! The relatively fresh walrus carcass on the shoreline must have brought these bears together. What a lucky bunch of Expeditioners

are we to encounter 16 polar bears within 24 hours? Absolute magic!

A ship's cruise at Negribreen (glacier) followed soon and we were all impressed with the vastness of the landscape, the towering ice cliffs and the spectacular lighting.

After a lovely dinner, we jumped into our Zodiacs once more for an evening cruise at Mohnbukta. A cruise along the glacial front as the evening sun peeked through the clouds, creating a golden glow on the scenery, was just what we needed to settle down and relax at the end of an amazing day and one we will not easily forget.





Russebukta & Hamburgbukta

DAY 19 | Thursday 8 August 2024

Latitude:
77°40.0'N
Longitude:
020°37.9'E

Course:
090°
Speed:
7.5 kts

Wind Speed:
6 knots S
Barometer:
1023 hPa

Air Temp:
7° C

An impressive backdrop of mountains and glaciers awaited us as we made our way to breakfast. Overnight the bridge team had guided us safely to the southwestern side of Spitzbergen, to Russebukta.

The morning outing offered a chance to wander freely within a safe perimeter. Lots of wide-open spaces and a couple of decent-sized bog lakes. It looked like a perfect meadow for reindeer to graze in, and in fact a few were spotted below the hills in the distance.

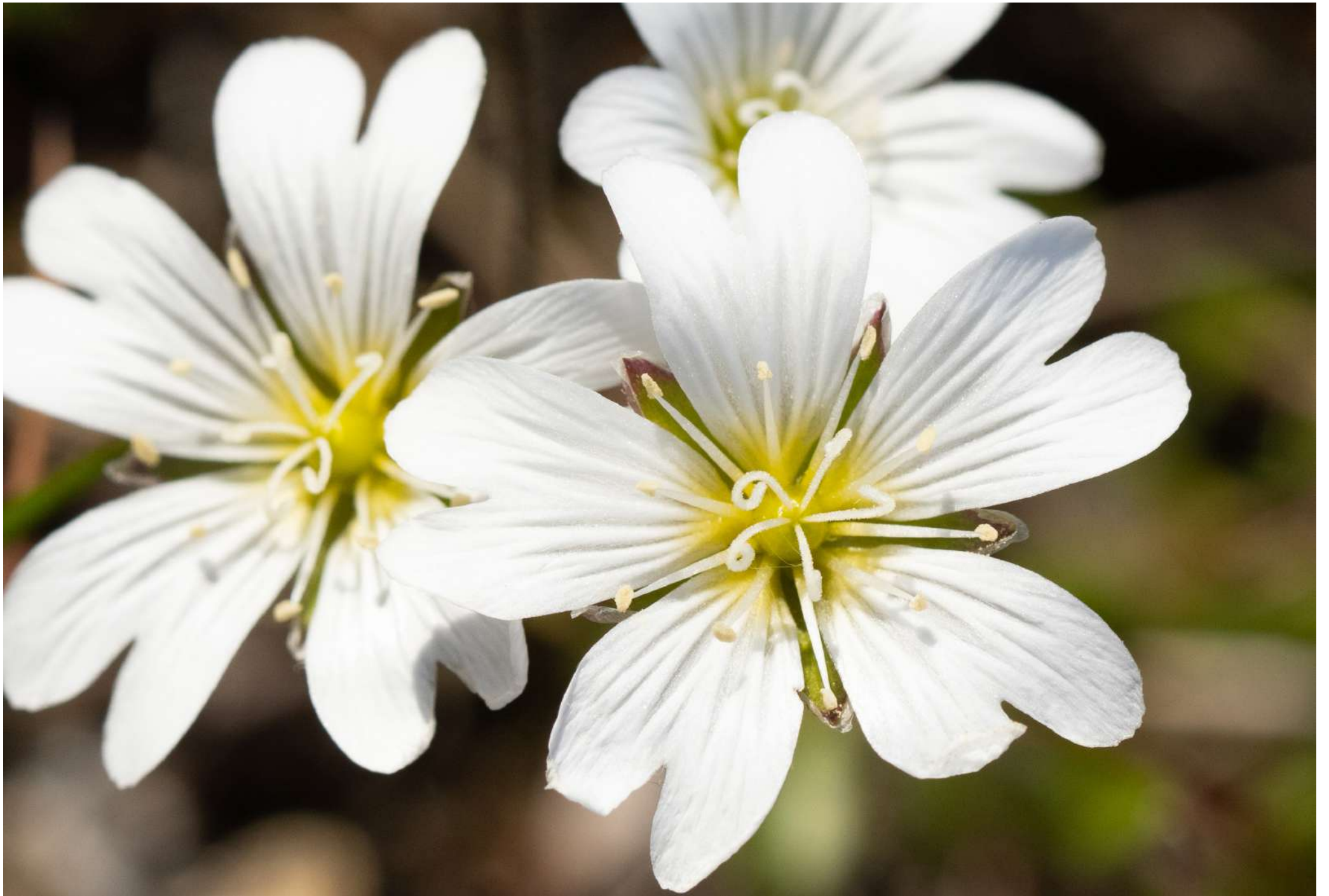
Back on board, we had a slightly later lunch and time to recover. The ship cruised in front of the spectacular and immense Hamburgbukta glaciers; stunning.

Kelsey enlightened us about Svalbard: A general history of the settlement of these remote islands. So many different groups of people had at one stage called this place home, initially attracted by the resources of seals, whales, animal furs and ivory. Later, coal attracted miners and more recently its wildlife and beauty bought tourists, like us.

Dr Greg Sindmack shared a presentation with us this afternoon, a look at what it is that causes an aurora/the northern lights. He showed us some amazing photos he had taken of this beautiful natural phenomenon, as well as of his experiences over the years with arctic wildlife.







Gnålodden | Sofiebogan | Burgbukta

DAY 20 | Friday 9 August 2024

Latitude:
76°56.1'N

Longitude:
015°26.7'E

Course:
053°

Speed:
5.7 Kts

Wind Speed:
NW 4Kts

Barometer:
1025 hPa

Air Temp:
8°C

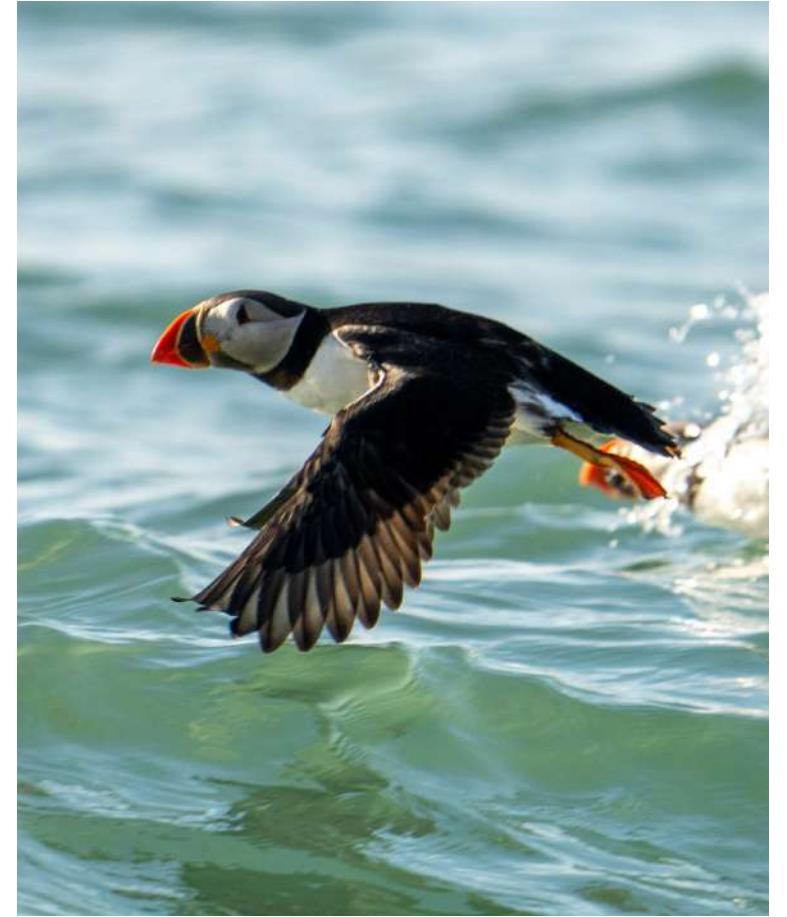
The adventures on land at Sofiebogan this morning included a choice of two walks: the long one and the slightly less long one. The long one was led by Chris and Leo, two southern hemispherians guiding in the very top of the northern hemisphere. John, the font of all-natural knowledge (and failed Hollywood actor), led the medium walk, which went some way up the ridge and to a secret lake full of kittiwakes.

On the way back to the mother ship, Kelsey pointed out where an alleged polar bear was busy sleeping. This was a small dot, a 'polar smear' rather than a polar bear. We had been spoiled in the last few days: this smear was more like the kind of view we often get of polar

bears, not the 'sales brochure' experiences we had enjoyed the last few days.

The midday munching of the lunch was followed immediately by an exhibition by four Expeditioners displaying their paintings, water colours and sketches, from foxes to the *Greg Mortimer* (the ship, not the bloke). In the aft of the noon, we set ourselves up at Burgbukta for the famous and freezing 'polar plunge', our doctor's favourite standby. No hearts were attacked in the making of this activity. Frigid water was followed by warm drinks, and the blood pumping high lasted for many hours afterwards...





Fridtjovhamner + Bamsebu

DAY 21 | Saturday 10 August 2024

Latitude:
77°45.0'N
Longitude:
014°33.8'E

Wind Speed:
5 Kts
Barometer:
1018 hPa

Course:
018°
Speed:
11.3Kts

Air Temp:
7° C

Once we entered Van Mijenfjord, and anchored by Fridtjovhamner, Kelsey and Nacho took a Zodiac out to scout the surrounding area looking for walrus hauled out in the surrounding area, unfortunately to no avail.

After we hopped in the Zodiac and drove over to the island of Akseløya to explore the east coast of the island southwards.

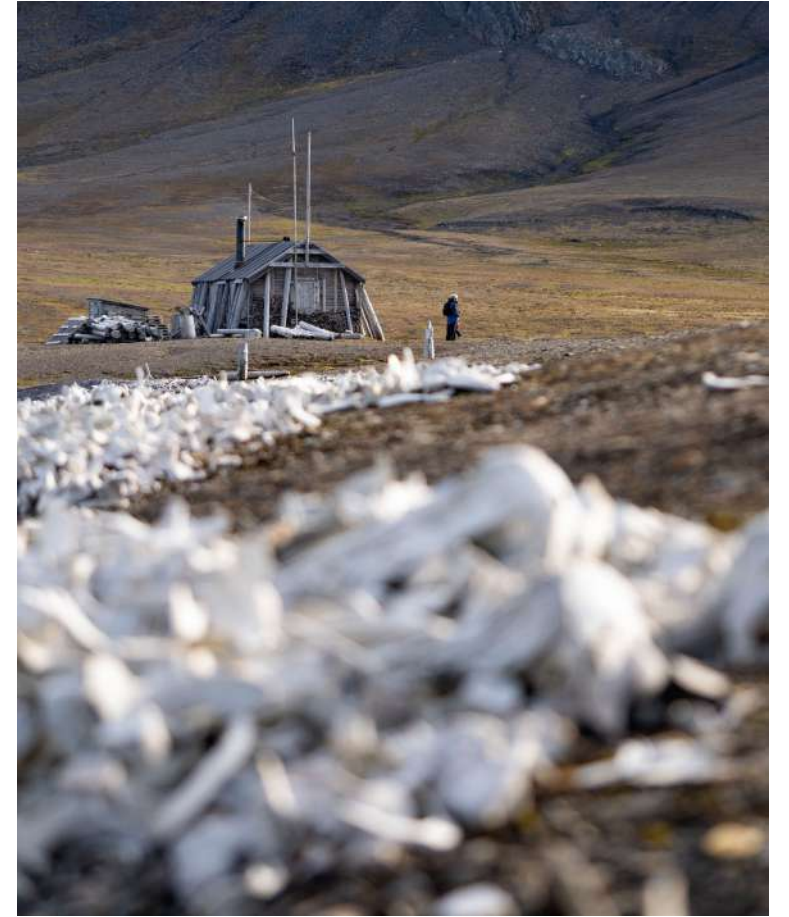
Getting ready for the afternoon ashore we headed out in the Zodiacs to the big beach that was by the Governor of Svalbard's hut.

From the hut we walked up onto the tundra behind, where we

managed to see a herd of reindeer and some young calves mixed in there as well.

The walk finished at the Bamsebu hut, which is privately owned, and where two women spent the entirety of COVID, for the 'Hearts in the Ice' project. Around the landing beach there were hundreds of skeletal remains of Beluga whales massed in piles.





St. Jonsfjorden | Alkhornet | Longyearbyen

DAY 22 | Sunday 11 August 2024

Latitude:

78°26.8'N

Longitude:

011°59.2'E

Course:

049°

Speed:

10.1 kts

Wind Speed:

5 Kts NE

Barometer:

1020 hPa

Air Temp:

10° C

By breakfast, the *Greg Mortimer* was on final approach to Poolepynten on the edge of Prins Karls Forland, westernmost and fifth-largest island in the Svalbard archipelago. The goal here was to spy Atlantic walrus, which are known to frequent the location as a haulout. However, it was clear no walrus were nearby.

To maximise our limited morning time, our vessel quickly turned 180 degrees and steamed into scenic St. John's Forland. Zodiacs were lowered for an exploration of its main tidewater glacier. The sparsely scattered icebergs, some shot through with bolts of electric blue, were photographic highlights.

After days of exploring some of the least frequented sites in Svalbard,

our final afternoon was a hike at Alkhornet. Standing guard at the mouth of Isfjorden's north shore, it is a metamorphic skyscraper girdled in level, verdant tundra. Alkhornet's ledged cliffs are home to tens of thousands of nesting seabirds, and its sweeping green cummerbund provides fodder for scores of reindeer, and denning sites for arctic fox.

Heading to Longyearbyen, we are satiated from our 20-day adventure. From the amazing sights of Atlantic puffins, to reposing seals, to stately icebergs, and from the pungent odour of seabird guano to the crispness of salty sea air, and finally from our encounters with the arctic's signature animal, our senses have been filled to their limits.



Longyearbyen

DAY 23 | Monday 12 August 2024

Aurora Expeditions thanks you for joining us aboard *Greg Mortimer* as we explored Svalbard and Greenland's incredible scenery, history and wildlife. We hope to see you on the high seas again some day!



BBQ





Polar Plunge







Kayaking Log

with Kayak Guides: Teal & Eamon

Tuesday 23 July 2024, PM – Rømer Fjord 3.2 km

After a full day at sea, we were excited to enter Rømer Fjord. High mountains on either side and plenty of ice awaited us. As the ship negotiated its way through the sea-ice bands, we fitted out kayaks and made ready to paddle. Leaving the ship we could see plenty of ice floes, so to start we headed via Zodiac to the open water near the old trappers hut. Once in our kayaks we went over some safety signals and glided along the shore. We played about among some smaller ice floes and got used to our kayaks. It soon became apparent that the ice was moving as a big mass. Our open water was shrinking. We made the call to get into the Zodiac and tow to more open water. A good decision as all around us we could hear Zodiacs getting into difficulties with the ice and current. Unfortunately, we did not get back into the kayaks, but eventually we returned easily to the ship.

Wednesday 24th July 2024, PM – Hurry Inlet 3.1 km

The morning started with clear skies and no wind, apart from the fog bank sitting to the south of us, and the sea ice was loosely spaced over the fjord. We loaded into the Zodiac and towed the kayaks northwards to the next river estuary up from the landing site, then we hopped into kayaks and started weaving our way through the ice, looking at the sculptures formed by the old pressure ridges in the ice. We pressed on after a quick session on draw strokes so we could move the kayaks sideways. We kept paddling and found we were fighting against the current, so by the time we were ready to get off the water it felt like we had paddled 6 kilometres rather than the 3 kilometres we actually travelled. We then went ashore with Eamon to land in Greenland for the first time and viewed the arctic 'forest'.



Number of Kayakers: 10
Total Paddle Outings: 19
Total Distance Paddled: 93.6 km

Kayakers:
Carol Thompson
Alison Mackay
Mark Lawrence
Warren Mason
Di Mason
Steve Hall

Lesley Hall
Dave Allen
Elena Marinaki
Cathy Finch

Thursday 25th July, AM – Bear Inlet 7.8 km

Waking up to the scenery around us was special. The ship was steaming towards the Bear Island. A spectacular group of islands that offered a maze of options for kayaking. From the moment we glided onto the water we were at the foot of beautiful geology. All shapes and colours of rocks in twisted patterns. It was totally calm; the water was a mirror. We paddled past icebergs big and small. The mossy green gardens clung from the rock faces. The imposing cliffs loomed in the background. All round it was amazing kayaking. One of my best outings ever. We stopped only because we had to, and we were getting so warm in the sun.

Friday 26th July, AM – Harefjord 8 km

After a beautiful ship cruise through Øfjord the evening before, now in the back of the world's largest fjord the weather gods were kind and blessed us with clear skies, sun and a mirror-like water surface. We took the Zodiac westward deeper into

Harefjord, where we were surrounded by huge icebergs, some pristine, some loaded with strips of embedded sediment. One of the first bergs we passed had two arches on it and looked relatively rotten, and we watched one of those arches collapse on itself. As we continued weaving through the icebergs, we encountered two ringed seals; they watched us for a couple seconds each respectively, decided that we weren't of interest and moved on. We paddled past the ship and took a group photo in the reflection of a huge iceberg. We got into the Zodiac and stopped at the ship briefly to load the kayaks and remove the skirts, and then headed ashore to enjoy the tundra.

Sunday 28th July, AM – Antarctic Fjord 2.8 km

The sunshine of the past days had been replaced with a light rain and fog. This was also great weather and added to the atmosphere of the outing. It would be a short kayak as we wanted to go to land as well. The water was still, there was no wind, but a bit of a current in our favour. We had a

refresher on good paddling technique, tips and tricks. We spotted a group of barnacle geese on shore. As we approached, they could not decide which way to go; it was comical watching them swim in circles to escape our gazes. A ringed seal was cautiously watching us at the same time, slowly popping up to see what these strange, colourful aliens were doing in his/her fjord. We landed on the beach and walked at the site observing the remains of the trappers camp and weather station that was here.

Sunday 28th July, PM – Gateau Point 5.5 km

It was already late afternoon when we arrived at the so-called 'Gateau Point'. The wind in the middle of the fjord was blowing around 15 knots and the water was a little sporty. We took the Zodiac eastwards from the ship to an island that provided us shelter from the wind coming from Kong Oscar Fjord. We paddled round the southern tip of the island, then crossed back over to the mainland to follow the more protected

coastline towards the landing site. As we paddled, we had amazing views across the fjord to the huge layers of red and yellow rocks on the mountains opposite. The strata near us on our left was much thinner and warped and folded in incredible ways. The colours changed from black to yellow to red as we rounded the corner to Gateau Point. We then had a short landing to view these fantastic rocks on foot. The beauty of the geology here will be hard to forget.

Monday 29th July, AM – Blomsterbugten 4.4 km

One of the many things I love about Greenland is the geology; the rock formations are beautiful. There is no better way to see it than gliding past in a kayak. You can touch it, feel the different textures. The coastline here was steep rocky and full of surprises. We started at a group of three waterfalls hiding from our view until we rounded the last point. From there we cruised along, exploring little caves and nooks. A Glaucous gull was watching us and was not so happy that we were paddling



near her nest. We finished at another huge waterfall. We still had time to go to land and hike up the hill; as luck would have it we saw musk oxen as well. A superb outing in Blomsterbugten.

Monday 29 July 2024, PM – Renbugten 4.5 Km

After a wet and windy morning in Blomsterbugten, we headed round the corner into the neighbouring fjord, Isfjorden, so named for the huge icebergs that come from the two glaciers in the back of the fjord. With the clouds hanging low and there being no wind, there was an eerie, mystical feeling about the place. We took the Zodiac around the mountain that sticks out by the Rendal's valley making the bay. The mountain is a 1900-metre-high mountain called the Jomsborg. Once around the corner in Isfjorden, we launched into the kayaks to paddle under what must be some of the most impressive sea cliffs in the world. With the tops of the cliffs in the clouds, one has to feel anything but awe for the power of nature to create these landscapes. We continued around into the bay, where we viewed some beautiful

icebergs before heading back to the ship.

Friday 02 Aug 2024, AM – 14e Julibreen 4.9Km

For a change, we launched from the ship this morning. We were ready early and the sea was very calm. We took a direct line to the bird cliffs about a kilometre away. It was not long before we saw a good variety of nesting birds coming and going from their nooks in the rocky cliff. We were greeted by guillemots, kittiwakes, gulls, terns, a skua or two and puffins. Our necks were getting sore from paddling and looking up so much. These cliffs provided the perfect place for nesting. The glacier was not too far away so we headed a little closer. We passed groups of quiet kittiwakes resting on the ice growlers; they appeared to be enjoying the view and the sunshine as much as us. With some time left we landed at the beach and wandered on shore for the last 40 minutes or so.

Friday 02 August 2024, PM: Signehammer – 4.3 Km

After a ship cruise to the Lilliehöökreen, it was time to get outside and kayak again.

We left the ship by Zodiac and headed southward to the steep west side of Krossfjord. We glided out onto the water and started paddling northwards. The slopes were incredibly green, which was good news for the reindeer that we spotted on the slopes above us. As we rounded the corner into the sun and into Signehamna there were a bunch of local holiday boats, all on a two-week trip, which were anchored up in the lagoon. After that we paddled around the next corner and found the landing site. There was time left for a short walk up to have a view of the lake. The kayaks lay colourful on the beach below us. We took the Zodiac Uber back to the ship.

Saturday 3rd August 2024, AM: Hamiltonbukta 9 Km

The waters were unbelievably calm and the horizon was non-existent as the sea faded into the sky looking towards the North Pole. We paddled to the north side of the bay first, following the coastline along with its steep cliffs and a small waterfall beside us. Black guillemots, puffins, Brünnich's guillemots and kittiwakes flew around

us. We doubled back on ourselves and made for the skerries in the middle of the bay, where hundreds of arctic terns were nesting. The terns certainly let us know we were closer than they liked by dive bombing around us; it was a warning, and wisely we retreated. Coming around the skerries we paddled through the brash ice in the southside of the bay. We could hear the glacier cracking far away. Then we made our way towards the bird cliffs. A blue morph fox was spotted by the shore, so we enjoyed its company for some time before exiting the bay. A seal briefly popped up as we began to hop back in the Zodiac.

Saturday 3rd August 2024, PM: Ytre Norskøya 10.2 Km

The hike onshore to some great views appealed to most of our kayak group, so they are forgiven for going to the landing this afternoon. Steve and Lesley were keen and were joined by Eamon and Dr Nico for a memorable kayak around this imposing little island. Once again there were plenty of birds nesting here, though this was definitely the domain of the arctic tern.



These tenacious little birds defended their nest tirelessly. They let no other birds close, nor kayakers as it turned out. We crossed over to the island south of us, Ytre Norskøya. Here we saw remains of an old stone hut that was used by Astronomer Edward Sabine, and then a stone monument as we rounded the south of the island. A great long paddle full of discoveries.

Monday 5th August, AM – De Geer Bukta 4.8 Km

Blessed with yet another day of incredible stillness, we got in our Zodiac and drove along the southern face of the Valhallfonna. We paddled in as close as we were comfortable and enjoyed the glacier's icy face paddling northwards. There were many waterfalls pouring off the ice cliff from the top or even from the middle. The sea was glassy calm. We continued on to a rocky headland and saw that we were a long way from the ship. There was enough time to zoom back to the beach of the landing site and admire the immense ice from land as well. A fantastic start to the day.

Monday 5th August, PM – Alkefjellet 3.3km

For bird lovers these cliffs are world famous. As we approached the site we could hear, smell and see the chaos of thousands of birds. Little did we know that this noise and strong smell was just the beginning. A small glacier was our starting point before we set out south for the cliffs. We were lucky the sea was very calm so we could glide beneath the cliff line and look up a lot. Our necks may be sore by the end of the paddle as the cliffs soared high into the mist. The amount of birdlife was hard to fathom. Guillemots mostly, but also gulls, kittiwakes and the odd skua. We finished the last kilometre paddling against some constant wind until making it to some lovely waterfalls. It was around here we jumped back into a Zodiac, a little cold but happy.

Wednesday 7th August, PM – Mohnbukta 4km

After the second and arguably best bear encounter of our lives in the morning, and an afternoon ship cruise in front of the

incredible Negribreen glacier, we were ready to go paddling. We got on the water after dinner and drove over to the east side of the bay. The mix of the gentle, rolling swell and the glassy water played into the serene environment created by the late-evening arctic sunlight. We reached the glacier face, paddling westward. After a perfect Zen moment, we hopped back in the Zodiac and made our way back to the ship. It was a beautiful finish to a long and interesting day.

Thursday 8 August 2024 – Russebukta 4.7 km

The wind was coming off the land, but we could see that the rock cliffs offered us somewhere sheltered to paddle. We towed the kayakers over there. Below the sheer dolerite cliffs, we easily rounded the islands. There were a lot of arctic terns diving in front of us, more concerned with their catch than us.

There were a couple of small crossings that were exposed to the wind, but we managed to ferry glide easily across. Rounding the last corner, we saw a small, rocky beach that

would be perfect to land on. On land we walked around the lakes and admired the landscape. It's always nice to paddle to the site and continue exploring on land.

Saturday 10 August 2024, AM – Akseløya 8.4 km

The skies were grey and the clouds low as we got in the Zodiac from the ship on the northeast side of Akseløya. We launched slowly but surely from the Zodiac with just a little bit of current. We were paddling southward looking at the incredible vertical rock strata, while purple sandpipers jumped around the rocks and kittiwakes were getting harassed by great and arctic skua. There were rafts of eider ducks, some with ducklings, others running across the water. There was a group of barnacle geese with goslings first swimming, but then getting out to walk along the beach. Towards the end of the paddle what was at first believed to be a whale turned out to be a stray walrus. Catching sight of a building as the fog rolled in, we returned to the Zodiac.



Saturday 10 August 2024, PM –
Bamsebu 2 km

There was a constant wind and swell today, but it was in our favour from the ship. We launched from the marina and drifted with the waves. It was a bit of work staying straight, as the swell and wind were coming from slightly different angles. We tucked behind a headland and found calm and shelter in the circular bay. It was peaceful paddling in here; we passed the old remains of a small wooden boat. We easily covered the length of the bay and jumped into the Zodiac to find somewhere else sheltered to paddle. Sadly, it proved to be too windy, so we sat and had a hot chocolate in the Zodiac. There was plenty of time left so we drove to the landing site and spent the remainder of the outing on the land. There is an old hut here. It was a lovely place to walk among the flora and sweeping landscape.

Sunday 11 August 2024 –
St. Jonsfjorden 2.6 km

This was to be our last paddle, and what a beautiful one it was. By now we were so efficient at getting onto the water it will feel strange not to be doing it again. It was bittersweet; we had so many great outings in the last 20 days. We would savour every dip of the paddle. We started facing the tall glacier in front of the ship; it seemed to disappear into the distant mountains. Soon after getting into our kayaks, we spied a couple of ringed seals. They were not shy, and we exchanged stares. I sure we looked very strange to them. Around the corner we were facing another large glacier, way off in the distance. The walls beside us had become solid marble, polished smooth by the glacier in years past. Gorgeous rock. We finished here and said our farewell to our kayaks. What an adventure it has been. Thank you all.





Bird Sightings

Bird Species	July–August																							
	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Arctic tern	•			•					•	•			•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Glaucous gull			•	•	•		•	•	•	•			•	•		•	•		•		•	•	•	•
Herring gull	•																							
Great black-backed gull	•										•													
Lesser black-backed gull	•																							
Kittiwake	•						•	•	•	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Sabine's gull																								
Ivory gull																		•	•					
Great skua	•																							
Arctic skua	•												•	•		•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•
Long-tailed skua				•	•	•		•	•	•			•	•		•								
Pomarine skua					•																			
Northern gannet																•								
Northern fulmar	•	•		•			•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Common guillemot	•																							
Brünnich's guillemot				•									•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Atlantic puffin	•												•	•		•								
Black guillemot	•		•					•		•			•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Little auk (Dovekie)				•			•	•					•	•	•				•	•				
Pink-footed goose				•		•		•		•											•			
Barnacle goose				•	•	•		•	•				•	•					•		•			•

Map



Arctic Complete

21 July to 12 August 2024



Our Expeditioners

Dave Allen	Mary Lynne Henry	Eleni Marinaki	Michael Skacej
Ayman Alshayji	Diane Henry	Warren Mason	Annette Skacej
Lyn Amos	Robert Herrmann	Di Mason	Jacqueline Smith
Yihan An	Jon Hind	Richard Morecroft	Glen Smith
Richard Banman	Sue Hind	Maria Necco	Grenville Snelling
Claire Banman	Julie Holloway	Barbara Neuberg	Noelene Snelling
Kevin Bogan	Philip Holloway	Michelle Peters	Arinna Somwong
Prue Browne	Gillian Jenkins	Barry Philippson	Jane Spencer
Maritza Castro	Brian Jenkins	Adele Philippson	Chris Spencer
Linda Chen	John Jiang	Gary Richardson	Janice Stark
Pete Cherry	David Kenney	Renee Robbins	Phillip Stark
Annie Crowe	Vivien Kite	Larry Robbins	Leonard Thompson
Theresa De Mestre	Valerie Kleindienst	Eva Rosinger	Carol Thompson
Cathy Finch	Mark Lawrence	Herbert Rosinger	Laurie Tuchel
Bob Fisher	Joe Lewit	Anna Sherwood	Charles Tuchel
Lesley Hall	Garry Linnell	Ken Shoemaker	Ning Zhu
Steve Hall	Alison Mackay	Belinda Shoemaker	
Peter Hart	Max Maksimovic	Gregory Sindmack	

Expedition Team

Expedition Leader: Greg Mortimer

Assistant Expedition Leader: Leo Soibelzon

Onboard Expedition Manager: Kerry Lorimer

Firearms Manage/Historian: Kelsey Camacho

Expedition First Responder / Naturalist / CSC: Linda Steutel

Geologist: Melina Peltzmajer

Marine Biologist: Damon Ramsay

Naturalist: John Kernan

Naturalist/Expedition Guide: Meike Sjoer

Naturalist: Chris Todd

Naturalist/Expedition Guide: Vicky Inglis

Photography Guide: Jamie Lafferty

Lead Kayak Guide: Eamon Larkin

Senior Kayak Guide: Teal Morgan

Onboard Expedition Assistant: Ari Benzo Ciria

Zodiac Master: Nacho Marino

Senior Officers & Heads of Department

Master: Oleg Kapko

Chief Officer: Andrey Zakalashnyuk

Safety Officer: Dariel Beto

Bosun: Bobby Payumo

Deck Cadet: Carlos Florido Carvalo Da Silva

Ship Doctor: Javier Martinez Rodriguez

Support Doctor: Juan Nicolas Diaz Rodriguez

Chief Engineer: Branimir Ujevic

First Engineer: Iurii Peretiaka

Hotel Director: Alex Barkar

F&B Manager: Rajesh Murao

Chief Purser: Pia Blanca

Executive Chef: Edgar Mangalinao

Sous Chef: Hubert Ramiro Barreto

Head Waiter: German Orlando Cayasso Wilson

Hotel Controller: Orlando Costa

IT Officer: Ihor Yesmienieiev

Receptionist: Joy Acelar

Receptionist: Jonathan Valdez

Head Stateroom: Roniel Garcia

Spa Manager: Venila Vythilingum

Able Seaman: Angelo San Antonio

Able Seaman: Iwan Setiawan

Able Seaman: Hardik Dipakbhai Rao

Able Seaman: Roberto Ixtan Mejia

Able Seaman: Nikola Georgiev

Able Seaman: Francis Marvin Linga


Photography thanks to:

Jamie Lafferty





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