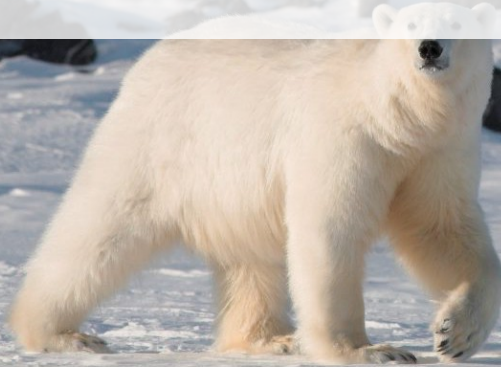


EXPLORE!

Realm of the Polar Bear - In Depth - M/V Polar Pioneer
11 days

Arctic, Norway - Trip code PPSO



Realm of the Polar Bear - In Depth - M/V Polar Pioneer

This Spitsbergen odyssey reveals the diversity of this island archipelago and takes us into the kingdom of the polar bear. You'll explore the coastline, with no open sea crossings, against a backdrop of spectacular glacier-covered peaks and discover deep fjords in the west, mysterious, fossil-rich desert plains in the east and best of all, seals and whales in the Arctic pack ice. This voyage offers the best chance for seeing reindeer and polar bears, and features wildflower walks across sweeping tundra, trapper camps and historical remains of whaling stations.

Trip highlights

- ★ See the mighty polar bear - the King of the Arctic
- ★ Visit the bird cliffs of Alkfejellet - where thousands of Brunnich's guillemots swirl around
- ★ See walruses - lounging around on ice floes
- ★ Get up close to the wildlife - as you cruise by Zodiac
- ★ Travel in the company of like minded passengers - on board a friendly expedition ship

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Premium

Our premium accommodation is hand-picked and chosen for its character, location or local importance. These properties have excellent facilities and a higher level of comfort and service. They provide the perfect wind down after an active day.

TRIP PACE:

Relaxed

You can enjoy easy-going activities and experiences on these Relaxed pace tours, with opportunities to absorb the sights and immerse yourself in the local surroundings, but still come home feeling relaxed and refreshed.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Longyearbyen

You will be warmly welcomed aboard the Polar Pioneer in the afternoon. After settling into your cabin, we will depart Longyearbyen in the evening under the Midnight Sun.



Accommodation: M/V Polar Pioneer (or similar)



Premium Boat



Single room available



Meals Provided: Dinner

DAY 2 - Ice Cliffs and Wildlife

Early morning reveals the spectacular aqua-blue ice cliffs of the 14th July Glacier or perhaps the Waggonway Glacier in Magdalenefjorden. Our itinerary depends on weather, snow and ice conditions, and the presence of wildlife.



Accommodation: M/V Polar Pioneer (or similar)



Premium Boat



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 3 - Ice Cliffs and Wildlife

Thanks to the nutrient-rich Gulf Stream, temperatures on the rugged west coast are relatively mild, ideal for the many Atlantic puffins and thick-billed murres that fill the cliffs. Towards Kingsfjorden, we may visit Ny Ålesund, a mining town turned polar research centre and at Amsterdamoya, we will have the opportunity to walk the tundra, looking out for reindeer and Arctic fox. We explore the remains of a 350-year-old Dutch whaling settlement and learn about the ill-fated ballooning attempt over the North Pole.



Accommodation: M/V Polar Pioneer (or similar)



Premium Boat



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 4 - Spitsbergen

Pack ice and hopefully whales and polar bears feature as we round Spitsbergen's northwest coast into the Arctic Ocean and turn south into Woodfjorden.



Accommodation: M/V Polar Pioneer (or similar)



Premium Boat



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 5 - Spitsbergen

We search for ringed, bearded and harp seals and ashore, trappers's huts, reindeer and Arctic fox. In Leifdefjorden, breeding eider ducks, terns, skuas, glaucous gulls and black-legged kittiwakes, attract polar bears with cubs. Offshore, walrus feed on clams or haul out on beaches, especially on Moffen Island which is a walrus sanctuary.



Accommodation: M/V Polar Pioneer (or similar)



Premium Boat



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 6 - Spitsbergen

With 24-hour daylight, there's plenty of time to admire many of the tundra's 164 species of flowering plants, including purple saxifrage, exquisite yellow spider plants and Svalbard poppies. If ice conditions allow, we will attempt to cross latitude 80° North - certainly a cause for celebration!



Accommodation: M/V Polar Pioneer (or similar)



Premium Boat



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 7 - Hinlopen Strait and Alkefjellt

Welcome to the wild side! Cold Arctic currents sweep around Spitsbergen's northeast corner, lowering air and sea temperatures, and creating a landscape eroded by severe frost. Even in summer, pack ice could bar our way. We attempt to pass through narrow Hinlopen Strait, between Spitsbergen and the austere, ice-capped, Nordaustlandet. The expertise of our Russian crew and expedition staff really comes into it's own, as they attempt to reach the region's highlights.



Accommodation: M/V Polar Pioneer (or similar)



Premium Boat



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 8 - Hinlopen Strait and Alkefjellt

We cruise by Zodiac beneath Alkefjellt - sheer basalt cliffs rising more than 250 metres and literally buzzing with some 200,000 nests of Brunnich's guillemots, possibly with Arctic fox scavenging below. On Torrellneset, we might stumble across dozens of sleeping walrus. A true polar desert, the east coast offers walks among stunted glaciers, exposed fossil fields and tundra. Here we watch for Arctic fox, eider ducks and the elusive Svalbard ptarmigan. Sailing between Barentsoya and Edgeoya, we cross polar bear migration routes and may visit Sundeneset, a fertile plain covered in green mosses and delicate flowers, including the yellow marsh saxifrage.



Accommodation: M/V Polar Pioneer (or similar)



Premium Boat



Single room available




Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner


DAY 9 - South Cape

This is true expedition cruising, where plans are dictated by ice conditions and our desire to explore. If pack ice allows, we round South Cape, returning to the world of open water and rugged coastal mountains and sail north toward Hornsund and Bellsund, deep fjords with remarkable glaciers and wildlife.



Accommodation: M/V Polar Pioneer (or similar)

 Premium Boat

 Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner


DAY 10 - South Cape


If ice stops us on the east side, we adjust our itinerary, backtrack and delve deeper into the wonders of Spitsbergen's north and west coasts, including a visit to colonies where hundreds of thousands of little auks nest, darkening the sky as they commute to their fishing grounds.



Accommodation: M/V Polar Pioneer (or similar)

 Premium Boat

 Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 11 - Longyearbyen

A midnight cruise of Isfjorden returns us to Longyearbyen where we end our spectacular voyage. On arrival, we will transfer to the airport for your onward flight.

 Meals Provided: Breakfast

Polar information

Ship information

The MV Polar Pioneer is a Finnish ex-research vessel, refurbished to provide an adventurous journey in the polar regions; its ice class means it has excellent manoeuvrability. The vessel accommodates only 54 passengers, meaning more time with the experts and a friendly on-board experience. Informed crew and experts will ensure you learn about how a polar expedition runs, your unique surroundings and the wildlife; Zodiacs will take you to shore for close encounters.



What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 10
Lunch: 9
Dinner: 10



Transport

M/V Polar Pioneer
Zodiac



Trip staff

Expedition Crew
Naturalist(s)



Accommodation

10 nights premium boat

Trip information

Country information

Arctic

Norway

Climate

Seasonal Climate Despite the northern latitudes the climate in Norway is not extreme, due to the affects of the North Atlantic Drift. Between May and September is the best time to visit this region, with summer temperatures reaching the high teens and rain a regular feature year round along the coast. North of the Arctic Circle the sun does not set between the middle of May and the end of July, so you can expect to encounter the midnight sun during this period.

Time difference to GMT

+1

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Lutheranism

Language

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Whilst landings are included in the cost of your trip as per the outline itinerary, some departures aboard the Polar Pioneer have additional optional excursions which can be pre-booked with the ship operator directly. These will be charged at an additional fee, depending on the excursion and we recommend booking these in advance, to ensure availability. Please speak to a member of our Polar team who will advise you on the booking process.

Clothing

Parkas

A complimentary parka is provided for you on board the ship and is yours to keep after the voyage. It has a comfortable wind-resistant inner jacket, which is detachable from the waterproof outer shell, and is designed to be worn over your essential base layers.

Gloves

Keeping your hands warm and dry can be a challenge. Thin polypropylene gloves can be worn underneath warm outergloves. This allows you some protection from the cold when removing your gloves to operate your camera etc. We strongly recommend that you bring more than one pair of gloves, in case one gets wet (or lost).

Hat/Cap

Warm, woollen hat/cap to protect your ears, as well as a scarf, neck gaiter or other face protection, such as a balaclava.

Trousers

Water-resistant trousers of coated nylon or, even better, Gore-Tex® are essential for your comfort. They can be worn over your regular clothes to keep you warm and dry. We suggest that you purchase trousers a few sizes larger than you normally wear as you will be wearing them over other clothing. Gore-Tex® or similar fabrics are excellent for keeping out wind and water without trapping excess heat. Rain gear and Gore-Tex® products can be found in any outdoor sport clothing store. In addition to your waterproof trousers, warm ski pants are suggested if you have them. Warm trousers such as jeans, corduroys etc are also good.

Socks

Warm wool socks worn over a thin pair of silk, polypropylene socks should provide enough warmth and insulation for your feet. Bring several pairs of socks, since you will inevitably get your feet wet.

Outer Clothing Woollen, knit or cotton sweaters/tops, polar fleece tops (medium weight), several cotton turtlenecks and T-shirts for layering on and off the ship.

Underclothing

Thermal underwear is highly recommended as it will keep you warm without adding bulk. Most polar travellers prefer a lightweight version.

Footwear

Complimentary waterproof boots will be supplied on-board. However, if you have extra small or large feet, you are advised to bring your own.

Also ensure you take good walking boots and trainers for relaxing.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and daypack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Equipment

Sunglasses and sun cream

Insect repellent

Personal toiletries

A refillable water bottle

Books/reading material

Camera and memory cards
Seasickness remedy
Walking poles

Tipping

Local crew

Tipping is of considerable significance to the people who will take care of you during your travels. It is an expression of satisfaction. The suggested amount is USD \$10 - 12 per person per day spent on board. Of course, tipping is a personal choice and the suggested amount is set only as a guideline.

Country Information

Arctic

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Foreign Exchange

Norway

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price

£18.00 - 25.00

Dinner price

£35.00 - 40.00

Beer price

£6.00 - 8.00

Water price

£2.00 - 3.00

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Norwegian Krona

Recommended Currency For Exchange

Take Norwegian Krona with you

Where To Exchange

Recommend you buy some Norwegian Krona before departing the UK (or whilst in transit in Oslo).

ATM Availability

ATMs are available in Myre and at Oslo and Evenes Airports.

Credit Card Acceptance

Credit cards are generally accepted at many hotels and optional excursions may be paid for by credit card.

Travellers Cheques

Not recommended.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

M/V Polar Pioneer, Zodiac

Ship description

The MV Polar Pioneer is a Finnish ex-research vessel, refurbished to provide an adventurous journey in the polar regions; its ice class means it has excellent manoeuvrability. The vessel accommodates only 54 passengers, meaning more time with the experts and a friendly on-board experience. Informed crew and experts will ensure you learn about how a polar expedition runs, your unique surroundings and the wildlife; Zodiacs will take you to shore for close encounters.

Cabins

Prices are based on the use of outward facing, category one cabins on the main deck. Category one cabins are based on triple share. They are comfortable, with two lower bunks and one upper bunk. The cabin has a desk, a small washbasin, a sofa and a porthole. Showers and toilets are close by and shared with other main deck cabins. The Polar Pioneer has a number of different cabin categories, all are outside facing and most cabins have two beds (suites have double beds.) Most cabins have en suite facilities and some have larger windows, rather than portholes. Single occupancy is an option on board, subject to availability. Call us for details on the cabin choice to fit your requirements.

Ship dining

Onboard the expedition ship you'll find a diversity of international cuisines prepared and catered by professional chefs; all meals are included in the price of your expedition. Dining is casual in one of two dining rooms. There is always a selection of different meals available, and vegetarians will find plenty of options. Special dietary requirements can be accommodated with advance notice, please advise us at time of confirmation. Coffee, tea and water are all provided free of charge. All other beverages, alcoholic and non-alcoholic, are not included and can be purchased in the bar.

Essential Information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Price Guarantee

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa and Passport Information

Norway: Entry visas NOT required by UK, AUS, NZ, USA, CAN Citizens. Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate.

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related issues with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Arctic

Norway

Vaccinations

Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.
