

EXPLORE!

Realm of the Polar Bear - Expedition
8 days

Norway, Spitsbergen - Trip code ACS

Realm of the Polar Bear - Expedition

Arctic Wilderness

Starting in Longyearbyen, we leave civilisation behind. Our aim is to sail this remote polar region in order to experience the arctic wilderness, drift ice, flora and fauna. Our final itinerary is dependant on weather and ice conditions, which have to be assessed during the voyage. The Gulf Stream has allowed the island's 400 km long western coastline to become incredibly rich in animal and plant life, while the remote east is forever under the grips of the arctic winter environment. Some years it is possible to sail through the Hinlopen Strait to attempt a circumnavigation of the archipelago, while other years there is a great deal of ice, which makes it harder to navigate around.

There are departures in July, August and September. We recommend the early tours for those who are keen to see large ice floes and the richest bird life. For those who would rather travel further east, we recommend a tour later in the season. Our specialist guides will ensure we get the most out of the experience, as well as recounting tales of Svalbard's exciting polar explorative heritage - traces of this rich history can be found on several excursions when we go ashore.

The Realm of the Polar Bear

The further north that we sail, the more ice we will meet, and this ice will gradually build up into large ice floes with seals resting on them. This is polar bear country, where the bears hunt for food, here is your best chance of seeing the 'King of the Arctic' in his natural habitat. In Spring there are large ice floes and the richest bird life.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Search for polar bears** - the King of the Arctic is often seen patrolling the ice in search of food
- ★ **See an intoxicating mix of wildlife** - walruses, Arctic foxes, seals and sea birds
- ★ **Discover deep fjords** - enjoy ice blue glaciers & sculpted icebergs
- ★ **Travel with expert naturalist guides** - who will explain all about the wonders of the Arctic
- ★ **Regular Zodiac landings** - to explore the rugged shorelines

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 - Embark at Longyearbyen

Longyearbyen is the largest settlement on the archipelago of Svalbard, with a population of about 2,060 people and about as many snowmobiles. Located in the Advent Fjord at the entrance of the Advent Valley, this community has an infrastructure fit for a much larger city. Within the islands, there are four inhabited settlements and some scientific stations. All settlements are found on the west coast, the part of Spitsbergen with the mildest climate due to the warm Gulf Current.

Longyearbyen is located at 78°13N 15°33E and has an arctic tundra climate. Due to its location far north of the polar circle, it is polar night from mid-October to mid-February and polar day from mid-April to mid-August.

The settlement was founded in 1906 by John Munroe Longyear, main owner of the Arctic Coal Company of Boston. Byen is Norwegian for the city. Longyearbyen was destroyed by the Germans in 1943 and rebuilt after World War II, with the old foundations still visible in some places. Until the early 1990s the coal mining industry was the major employer in Longyearbyen and daily life revolved only around the mining business. Today, the community offers a full range of activities and facilities. There is a bank, post office, hospital, cafes, pubs and restaurants and several tourists shops.



Accommodation: Expedition (or similar)



Premium Boat



Single room available



Meals Provided: Dinner

DAY 2 - Around Spitsbergen

Each day will be planned to take advantage of local ice and weather conditions. Distances are relatively short in the archipelago and as there are no ocean crossings, so the seas are normally calm. Svalbard is one of the few places on the planet that offers such a wealth and diversity of natural and cultural history sites. During the next six days we will visit ice covered seas, fjords with breathtaking mountain scenery and glaciers flowing into the sea around us. We will spend time steaming through the ice in search

of polar bears, hunting for seals. Ivory gulls will be a highlight for keen birders, while we keep a constant lookout for walrus hauled out on ice floes or on sandy beaches.

Krossfjord, Konigsfjord, Monaco Glacier, Edgeoya, Hornsund and Bellsund, are just a few of the places that we may visit, depending on ice and weather. We hope to cruise in zodiacs along the ice edge, viewing seals, walrus or polar bears and in fjords with glaciers spilling down to the sea. We'll enjoy spectacular seabird cliffs from the edge of a Zodiac, as well as walks on shore, enjoying the arctic flora and fauna. Being in the land of the polar bear, your expedition staff will carry rifles and flare guns on shore for your protection. We take on an expedition spirit by not having a set itinerary and are free to take advantage of the best that Svalbard has to offer.



Accommodation: Expedition (or similar)



Premium Boat



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 3 - Around Spitsbergen

Whilst people are initially drawn to this region for polar bears, Spitsbergen also has a prolific birdlife on offer. Enjoy the spectacular bird cliffs, filled with thousands of murres (guillemots), as well as kittiwakes and glaucous gulls and soak up the sound of these chirping, feathered creatures. A little auk colony will also be on our agenda.



Accommodation: Expedition (or similar)



Premium Boat



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 4 - Around Spitsbergen

The Svalbard region is a land of history: from whaling to reaching for the pole, to trapping, coal mining and war. There is some evidence of the whaling industry on some of the landings and the on-board lectures, will give you a bit more insight into the history of this region.



Accommodation: Expedition (or similar)



Premium Boat



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 5 - Around Spitsbergen

We will spend time in Zodiacs, cruising around the iceflows and may encounter some lounging walrus, with their young. There will be more landings, with different options for walks to suit all members of the group. The walks are normally divided into slow, medium and fast paced groups and depending on whether you want to take photographs near the beachfront, or hike up to the highest point, you can vary which option you choose each day.



Accommodation: Expedition (or similar)



Premium Boat



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 6 - Around Spitsbergen

Catch a glimpse of an arctic fox, roaming on the tundra. We also hope to see Svalbard's unique subspecies of reindeer. They are much smaller than their southern relatives, but still carry impressive antlers.



Accommodation: Expedition (or similar)



Premium Boat



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 7 - Around Spitsbergen

After our last full day of adventure, soaking up the sights of the Arctic wilderness, we will anchor off Longyearbyen in the evening and enjoy our final night aboard the ship, recounting tales of our week-long adventure.



Accommodation: Expedition (or similar)



Premium Boat



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 8 - Disembark at Longyearbyen

We arrive in Longyearbyen in the early morning for disembarkation.

 Meals Provided: Breakfast

Polar information

Ship information

At a nimble 105 metres (345 ft) in length, with a capacity to hold 132 guests, the Expedition is an ideal vessel to ply polar waters. The ship is large enough to provide stability, speed, spacious cabins and ample public space, yet she is small enough to manoeuvre in remote areas and get you close to the action. Ship stabilizers ensure a smooth ride in rough waters, such as the infamous Drake Passage, allowing you to enjoy more of your time at sea. A fleet of ten zodiacs allows passengers to get out and actively explore the remote shores of our destinations. The Expedition is a speedy vessel. A top speed of 16 knots means you'll spend less time getting from A to B, and more time to explore your surroundings.



What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 7
Lunch: 6
Dinner: 7



Transport

Expedition
Zodiac



Trip staff

Expedition Crew
Naturalist(s)



Accommodation

7 nights premium boat

Trip information

Country information

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

Norwegian

Spitsbergen

Climate

Between May and September is the best time to visit this region, with summer temperatures reaching a maximum of 5 degrees centigrade. 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

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.

To add to your polar adventure, kayaking is available as an optional excursion on some of our departures for GBP 509 per person. This optional extra is only available if you book prior to departure - please speak to one of our polar experts for availability and to reserve your place.

Clothing

Parkas

This will be provided by the ship operator. Please register your size with us before travel and we will arrange for your parka to be available in your cabin on arrival.

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. 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 jumpers/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, used, waterproof boots will be supplied onboard. However, guests might want to bring their own if they are the following sizes due to the limited quantities onboard:

- men's UK size 12 & 13 1/2

- women's UK size below three & seven and above

Guests must bring their own if they are:

- men's UK size six 1/2 or smaller

- men's UK size 13 1/2 or larger

- women's UK size two or smaller

- women's UK size nine 1/2 or larger

These are rubber, waterproof boots that are just below your knees with a strong, ridged non-skid sole.

You usually have to step from the Zodiac into icy water up to 30 cm high on most landings. Do not bring heavy, cumbersome boots that make it difficult to walk or boots with metal cleats, as they cannot be used for landings. For maximum warmth, wear loose-fitting boots and two pairs of socks. Try out your boots before the voyage.

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
Personal toiletries
A refillable water bottle
Books/reading material
Camera and extra memory cards (and something to protect the camera when out in the elements - dry bags are very useful for protecting camera gear)
Seasickness remedy
Walking poles
Personal First Aid

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 - 15 per person per day spent on board. Of course, tipping is a personal choice and the suggested amount is set only as a guideline. The money is collected by the Hotel Manager at the end of the voyage and distributed among the crew and Expedition Staff. The Officers choose not to participate in the tipping pool.

Country Information

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.

Spitsbergen

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.

Dinner price
£35.00-40.00

Beer price
£6.00-8.00

Water price
£2.00-3.00

Foreign Exchange

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Expedition, Zodiac

Ship description

At a nimble 105 metres (345 ft) in length, with a capacity to hold 132 guests, the Expedition is an ideal vessel to ply polar waters. The ship is large enough to provide stability, speed, spacious cabins and ample public space, yet she is small enough to manoeuvre in remote areas and get you close to the action. Ship stabilizers ensure a smooth ride in rough waters, such as the infamous Drake Passage, allowing you to enjoy more of your time at sea. A fleet of ten zodiacs allows passengers to get out and actively explore the remote shores of our destinations. The Expedition is a speedy vessel. A top speed of 16 knots means you'll spend less time getting from A to B, and more time to explore your surroundings.

Cabins

Prices are based on the use of outward facing, category one cabins on the lower deck. Category one cabins are triple or quad share. They are comfortable with a private toilet and shower, and porthole. The Expedition has a number of different cabin categories, all outside facing and with two beds (apart from suites which have queen size beds). Some have larger windows. We can also offer single occupancy, subject to availability. Call us for details on the cabin choice to fit your requirements.

Ship dining

Onboard our expedition ship you'll find a diversity of gourmet international cuisines prepared and catered by professional chefs; all meals are included in the price of your expedition. Dining is casual, tables are unassigned and the dining room is capable of seating the entire passenger complement at one time. 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 dining room, pub or in the lounge.

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.

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.

Spitsbergen
