



Realm of the Polar Bear In Depth - M/V Greg Mortimer

ARCTIC, SPITSBERGEN - TRIP CODE GMSO

POLAR

Why book this trip?

Revel in the diversity of the Svalbard Island and sail into the kingdom of the polar bear. We explore the coastline, with no open sea crossings, against a backdrop of spectacular glacier-covered peaks. We 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 reindeers and polar bears and features wildflower walks across sweeping tundra, trapper camps and historic sites. On foot and by Zodiac, we visit abandoned whaling settlements, search for walrus, Arctic fox and reindeer and observe millions of migratory birds, including little auks, guillemots and puffin.

- See the mighty polar bear - the King of the Arctic
- Visit the bird cliffs of Alkfejlet - 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

				
INCLUDED MEALS Breakfast: 12 Lunch: 11 Dinner: 12	TRIP STAFF Expedition Crew Naturalist(s)	TRANSPORT M/V Greg Mortimer Zodiac	ACCOMMODATION 12 nights premium boat	TRIP PACE: Relaxed

Itinerary

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

DAY 1 - Arrival Kirkenes

Arrive in Kirkenes, Norway and join a pre-arranged half day excursion or activity prior to boarding the Greg Mortimer late afternoon. Airport transfers will be included if arriving on preferred flights into Kirkenes. You'll have time to settle into your cabin before our important briefings.



ACCOMMODATION:
M/V Greg Mortimer (or similar)

Grade: Premium Boat



MEALS PROVIDED: DINNER

DAY 2 - At Sea

Over the next two days at sea, enjoy informative and entertaining lectures from our expert expedition

team including naturalists and historians, before reaching Svalbard's southeast coast.



ACCOMMODATION:
M/V Greg Mortimer (or similar)

Grade: Premium Boat



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 3 - At Sea

Crossing the Barents Sea offers some good opportunities to encounter whales and certainly plenty of opportunities to photograph sea birds.



ACCOMMODATION:
M/V Greg Mortimer (or similar)

Grade: Premium Boat



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 4 - Explore Spitbergen

Over the next ten days, the Svalbard Archipelago is ours to explore. Our experienced expedition team, who have made countless journeys to this area, will use their expertise to design our voyage from day to day. This allows us to make best use of the prevailing weather, ice conditions and wildlife opportunities. There are many exciting places we can choose to visit and the order in which we see these, will vary from trip-to-trip.



ACCOMMODATION:
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Grade: Premium Boat





MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 5 - Explore Spitzbergen

In the far north at Nordvesthjornet and Raudfjorden, Willem Barentsz and his crew discovered new land on 17 June, 1596. They described the land as being 'rugged for the most part and steep, mostly mountains and jagged peaks, from which we gave it the name of Spitsbergen.' In the centuries that followed, the large number of bowhead whales found here attracted whalers from the Netherlands and various other countries, and the area became a place of high activity, both on the shore and in the surrounding sea. This is why Nordvesthjornet offers the largest concentration of cultural artefacts on Spitsbergen, all dating back to this first era of the exploitation of Svalbard's natural resources.



ACCOMMODATION:
M/V Greg Mortimer (or similar)

Grade: Premium Boat



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 6 - Explore Spitzbergen

We cruise northwards, along the west coast of Spitsbergen, visiting intriguing places like Magdalenefjorden, located inside the Northwest Spitsbergen National Park. According to historical sources, Magdalenefjorden was first used by the English in the early days of the whaling era. They erected a land station on the headland and named the area Trinity Harbour. The station was closed in 1623. The spectacular alpine scenery is lined with jagged mountain peaks, to which Spitsbergen (pointed mountains) owes its name. The topography of the area is mostly rocky, shorelines are covered with stones and walking here can be challenging. Vegetation in the area is limited to mosses and lichens which grow near to the bird colonies. Little auks breed here in large numbers in the scree slopes everywhere around Magdalenefjorden. Amazingly, reindeer occasionally roam around on mossy slopes and polar bears as well as walrus are regularly seen here.



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Grade: Premium Boat



DAY 7 - Explore Spitbergen

Located along the north coast, Woodfjorden, Liefdefjorden and Bockfjorden are rarely visited places. This is the land of contrasts. By the large, flat Reinsdyrflya there is a great fjord system that stretches towards several mountain ridges of varying shapes and ages, including alpine summits of very old granite, majestic red mountains of Devonian sandstone, cone-shaped remnants of three volcanoes and even hot springs. Large glacier fronts calve into the sea, while polar bears are busy hunting for ringed seals and sweeping the islets for birds' eggs. Walk on smooth raised beach terraces to a superb viewpoint, or hike in the mountains on the tundra where pretty brightly coloured wildflowers and lichen grow and where reindeer graze. We may visit trapper huts of yesteryear where Russian Pomors would hunt and survive the cold harsh winters, all while remaining alert for wandering polar bears and their cubs.



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Grade: Premium Boat



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 8 - Explore Spitbergen

The Svalbard Nature Reserve of Nordaust is the northernmost high-Arctic part of Svalbard. The fjords here are covered in ice, and drift ice floats around the islands for most of the year and glaciers cover large areas of the terrain. This is the kingdom of the polar bear and walrus. It has been protected as a nature reserve since 1973. Nordaustlandet is the second largest island in Svalbard. The two large ice sheets of Austfonna and Vestfonna cover large areas of the island. The landscape is open and majestic with different types of landscapes, from the prominent fjords in the west and north to the massive glacier front facing east and south. From a distance, Nordaustlandet appears cold, unfriendly and unproductive. However, many places are unexpectedly lush, especially close to the bird cliffs. The vegetation on land and the production in the sea have together formed a foundation for the terrestrial and marine wildlife, creating hunting opportunities for people. There are fewer signs of human activity on Nordaustlandet than in the rest of Svalbard, although there are cultural remains from Russian and Norwegian overwintering trapping, from scientific research and expeditions and from World War II.



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Grade: Premium Boat





MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 9 - Explore Spitzbergen

Moffen Island is situated directly north of 80°N. After the near extinction of walrus in Svalbard in the middle of the 20th century, Moffen Island played an important role in re-establishing the species here, a process which is still going on. Today, there are often larger numbers of walrus hauled out at the southern tip of the island. This is the reason why Moffen is protected. Approach during the summer (15th May to 15th September) is limited to a minimum distance of 500 metres.

In the very north of Svalbard, in the ocean north of Nordaustlandet, is the little archipelago of Sjuoyane, known as the Seven Islands, with its characteristic hat-shaped mountains. The hard granite mountains have acquired a green covering of moss due to thousands of breeding seabirds. Walrus dive for clams in the waters between the islands and in the bays. Most of the islands have been named after the English North Pole expeditions led by Phipps (1773) and Parry (1827). When the ice breaks up around Sjuoyane and the first seabirds return in April-May, the islands wake again after a long winter, during which the only wildlife is the odd polar bear, Arctic fox, reindeer and walrus. There is a large number of bird cliffs in Sjuoyane, scattered around most of the islands. Little auks come in the largest numbers, but there are also several smaller colonies of Atlantic puffins and Brünnich's guillemots. Common guillemots nests are scattered around the islands. One of the few known colonies of ivory gulls can be found on Phippsøya. There are also several haul-out sites for walrus on Sjuoyane. The most reliable place to encounter them is Isflakbukta on the island of Phippsøya, where up to 100 animals can be seen on the beach, and normally walrus are very active in the shallow bay. Polar bears can be seen anywhere on Sjuoyane. The polar bear distribution is strongly related to the distribution of sea ice. If there is drift ice around the islands it is more likely that there will be polar bears on the islands. Usually there are also a few polar bears remaining in the area over the summer, as well as reindeer and arctic fox.



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MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 10 - Explore Spitzbergen

Along the northeast coast of Spitzbergen we enter a different world a polar desert. If ice conditions allow we will pass south through the narrow Hinlopen Strait. The Strait is flanked by creamy coloured slabs of rock that are rich in fossils, as we will discover for ourselves when we go ashore. We may visit Alkefjellet in the Strait, where a series of one-hundred metre high dolerite towers are home to nearly a million nesting Brünnich's guillemots, known as the penguins of the north, who occupy every available nook and cranny. Elsewhere, we seek out eider ducks and geese and hope to spot Arctic fox and the beautiful ivory gulls. Polar bears are common in the Hinlopen area. Normally a few summer bears can be spotted on the

islands or around the bird cliffs. In spring, Hinlopen Strait is full of life, when the seabirds return. There is lots of noise out in the sound, as the little auk, Brünnich's guillemot and northern fulmar all make their presence known. Most birds go to the western part of the Strait, from Lomfjorden and southwards. Alkefjellet to the south of Lomfjorden is the largest bird cliff in the area, with several hundred thousand black-legged kittiwakes and as many Brünnich's guillemots. There are also several colonies of northern fulmar in the area, and little auks nests scattered in and around the Strait.



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MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 11 - Explore Spitsbergen

East of Spitsbergen are two large islands called Barentsoya and Edgeoya. The area has a rich wildlife, especially when it comes to polar bears, reindeer, walrus, seabirds and geese. In the west of Edgeoya, there are cultural remains from European whaling. Edgeoya and Tusenoyane were the main area for Russian overwintering hunting between 1700 and 1850. Traces of Norwegian overwintering, hunting, as well as newer scientific research, can also be found. The area has been a nature reserve since 1973. The beautiful fertile plains of Sundeneset and the area between Spitsbergen and the smaller islands of Barentsoya and Edgeoya, are a major polar bear migration route. The spongy ground is richly covered with bright green mosses, a variety of delicate and colourful flowers, particularly the yellow marsh (bog) saxifrage, various mushrooms, fungi, clear bubbling streams and small tarns. Tiny (micro) flowers such as Mouse Ears grow in Spitsbergen, creating faerie-like mossy rock gardens. We explore this beautiful terrain on foot, marvelling at the contrast between the colourful soft ground and the barren, rocky, terrain from further north.



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MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 12 - Explore Spitsbergen

Majestic peaks and dramatic fjords make a visit to Hornsund special. The highest summits are often

shrouded in mist, but if you are lucky you might get a glimpse of Hornsundtind, peaking at 1,431 metres. Hornsund is the southernmost fjord in Svalbard, located in Spitsbergen National Park. Traces of human activity spanning 400 years can be found almost anywhere, where there are possible landing sites. With regards to birdlife, Hornsund is mainly the domain of the little auks, due to the large scree slopes - their typical nesting habitat. With abundant plankton and crustaceans, Hornsund and the areas off the west coast represent a giant food reservoir for the little auk. The West Spitsbergen Current - a branch of the Gulf Stream brings temperate waters north along the western Spitsbergen coast and provides favourable conditions for biological production in the area. Northern fulmar can be seen in several colonies in Hornsund. Brünnich's guillemot and kittiwake nest at the same locations. Dunoyane and Isoyane are important nesting areas for barnacle geese, and the islands were protected as bird sanctuaries in 1973. The sanctuaries and the strand flats on the west coast are important migrating localities for barnacle geese, pink-footed geese and brent geese. Pink-footed geese nest in large numbers on Dunoyane and on the scree slopes and hillsides close to the sea, including in Hyttevika north of Hornsund and Gnalodden. Eider ducks nest in the sanctuaries and at most headlands and islets in the Hornsund area.



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MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 13 - Disembark Longyearbyen

During the early morning we cruise into Longyearbyen. Farewell your expedition team and fellow expeditioners as we all continue our onward journeys. Enjoy a town tour of Longyearbyen before an onward transfer to the airport in the afternoon.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

Trip information

Climate and country information

Arctic

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

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 MV Greg Mortimer 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 \$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.

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

Spitsbergen

Food and drink

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Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£35.00-40.00	£6.00-8.00	£2.00-3.00

Foreign Exchange

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

M/V Greg Mortimer, Zodiac

Ship description

The MV Greg Mortimer is a 104-metre ship, purpose-built in 2019 for expedition travel. Capable of negotiating the strongest winds and waves, the vessel is being built to world-class polar standards and has been designed in close consultation with expedition specialists. The MV Greg Mortimer is limited to just 120 passengers and guests can enjoy some added comforts such as spacious stateroom cabins, a large mud room with easy boarding access and a hydraulic viewing platform, offering unobstructed views of the wildlife. Other features include a library, Wellness Centre with a gym, sauna and spa and a multimedia room for keen photographers wishing to edit their photos after a day of exploration. As a modern and custom-designed ship, this vessel is at the cutting edge of nautical technology and will ensure a comfortable and safe passage through polar waters.

Cabins

The lead-in prices on our website are based on triple outward facing, Stateroom cabins. All staterooms have private bathrooms, ample storage, with twin beds. Many of the stateroom categories, have floor to ceiling windows that offer prime observation opportunities around the clock. Additionally, there are private balconies in most of the staterooms, allowing you to watch the world float past and take in the

salty air of the open ocean. A full layout of the deck plan can be found under the Polar Ships section on our website. Your confirmed cabin type will appear on your Booking Confirmation, which will be sent on receipt of your deposit payment.

Ship dining

Meals are served in the large, spacious dining room with an open seating arrangement, perfect for swapping stories with your extended expedition family. A range of courses is offered at each meal time and you can enjoy a variety of house wines, beers and soft drinks which are included with your evening meal. Complimentary coffee, tea and snacks are available throughout the day and any additional drinks can be purchased at the fully-stocked bar.

On the last day of your trip, the team on the MV Greg Mortimer will provide a special farewell four-course dinner with cocktails - a perfect way to end your voyage and reflect on your magnificent time on-board.

Essential Information

Government Travel Safety 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, Commonwealth & Development 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 be able to apply 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 receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The complimentary transfers will be arranged from the Explore designated airport or train station to your trips joining point, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. Generally the airport or station that Explore have selected will be the one that is closest to the town or city where the trip starts, or the one nearest to the joining point. It will be either an airport or train station but not both.

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

Spitsbergen

Polar information



GMSO_2020 KIRK

Ship information

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standards and has been designed in close consultation with expedition specialists. The MV Greg Mortimer is limited to just 120 passengers and guests can enjoy some added comforts such as spacious stateroom cabins, a large mud room with easy boarding access and a hydraulic viewing platform, offering unobstructed views of the wildlife. Other features include a library, Wellness Centre with a gym, sauna and spa and a multimedia room for keen photographers wishing to edit their photos after a day of exploration. As a modern and custom-designed ship, this vessel is at the cutting edge of nautical technology and will ensure a comfortable and safe passage through polar waters.

Additional Information



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Reviews