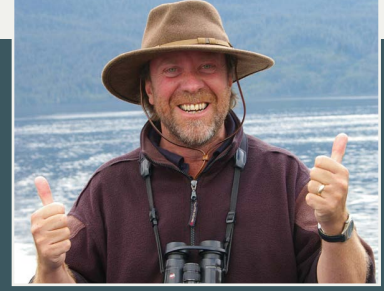


SPITSBERGEN



"The pack ice is such an extreme environment - whiteness in all directions, with just the noise of the ship crunching its way forwards and the occasional Kittiwake... then out in all this nothingness are Polar Bears - huge predators that somehow survive in this extreme place!" Roy Atkins

Dates Sat 23 Jul - Wed 3 Aug 2022
Standard cabin £7,795 SS £3,900
Deposit £1,555
Price for sharing a Standard cabin

Leader Roy Atkins
Flights Scandinavian Airlines, scheduled
Outbound: Heathrow-Longyearbyen
Inbound: Longyearbyen-Heathrow
(overnight stay in Oslo, outbound and inbound)
Weather Generally settled with little rain and light winds. A mixture of sun and showers (-5°-+15°C)
Unlikely to be rough on the water
Walking Generally easy, ½-1 ½ miles, occasionally boggy terrain and rocks. Wellingtons essential for landings, available to hire onboard. Lightweight shoes are suitable whilst onboard
Meals All included from dinner on Day 1 to breakfast on Day 12
Insects No biting insects
Accom Park Inn Hotel, Oslo Airport - double, twin and single rooms
MV Plancius - double, twin and single cabins
All rooms and cabins are ensuite
Fees Gratuities on board are extra, approx EUR 5-10pp per day
Group 12

Just some of what we hope to see:

Polar Bear	Barnacle Goose
Arctic Fox	Pink-footed Goose
Walrus	King Eider
Bearded Seal	Long-tailed Duck
Ringed Seal	Little Auk
Harp Seal	Brünnich's Guillemot
Beluga Whale	Puffin
Minke Whale	Pomarine Skua
Fin Whale	Grey Phalarope
Svalbard Reindeer	Sanderling
Ivory Gull	Turnstone
Sabine's Gull	Purple Sandpiper
Glaucous Gull	Snow Bunting

Polar Bears (seen every time), Walrus, Beluga, Ivory Gull and millions of Little Auks in the Arctic wilderness - join us on this unforgettable cruise around the Svalbard archipelago.

- Get just 600 miles from the North Pole
- Aboard the ice-reinforced, small-group, MV Plancius
- Cruise right round the island of Spitsbergen
- Ivory Gull, Grey Phalarope and millions of Little Auks
- Arctic Fox, Reindeer and big white bears
- Ice-floes with Walrus, seals and Belugas
- Generally mild and settled weather and the sun doesn't set

Flying to Oslo, we'll stay overnight in an airport hotel.

2-10 Our flight to Longyearbyen, via Tromsø, arrives in the afternoon. Our bags will be transferred to the ship, which leaves us a short time to explore Longyearbyen, the archipelago's tiny capital. We can start the bird list: Purple Sandpiper, Snow Bunting, Glaucous Gull and Arctic Tern are all common place and we may see short-legged Svalbard Reindeer, while Arctic flowers are abundant here! Late afternoon we'll board our ship MV Plancius, an excellent, ice-reinforced modern vessel, 89 metres long that can carry up to 116 passengers. Most days, using the ship's fleet of tough Zodiacs, we'll make safe, easy, shore landings and, in case we encounter a Polar Bear on land, which is a real possibility, we'll always be in the close company of our armed guides!



The following itinerary includes many of the likely places we shall visit, but will be influenced by weather and pack-ice conditions. Every trip is different; every trip is astonishing.

First stop may be Ny Ålesund, the world's northernmost permanently inhabited settlement, from where Amundsen and Nobile, in the airship Norge, made their flight to the North Pole. Local pools host Long-tailed Ducks, Barnacle Geese, Red-throated Divers and Arctic Terns. At the Husky pound we may encounter our first Ivory Gull! In Kongsfjorden there are dramatic glaciers, walls of ice where sections calve off and blue 'bergs' bob in the water. Grassy slopes, enriched with bird droppings, are full of fabulous arctic-alpine plants and seabirds include Razorbill, Brünnich's Guillemot and Puffin.



"It is so hard to put into words what makes this trip so incredible - the sheer beauty of the surroundings, the feeling of being so privileged to see such special wildlife, the remoteness - this is a real adventure into a place so wild, it feels different to almost anywhere else. You have to be there!"

Roy Atkins



Sailing into Liefdefjorden - great for Minke Whale and porpoising Harp Seals - we'll explore tundra islands at Andøya, where Common and King Eider breed, with maybe Pomarine Skua overhead. We'll cruise near the impressive Monaco Glacier, a favourite feeding spot for thousands of Kittiwakes 'blue' Fulmars and Glaucous Gulls - and occasionally Polar Bears.

We'll head north to our first areas of pack ice, spending a day immersed in a wonderful white world like no other, reaching our northernmost point at around 81 degrees north, just 540 miles from the North Pole. Remote areas north of Hinlopen and around Nordaustlandet, may be locked in shifting pack ice, where Ringed and Bearded Seals haul out and there are great chances of seeing Polar Bears in their endless ice wanderings, often with Ivory Gulls in attendance. We may sit for several hours in the pack ice, taking in our spectacular surroundings.

We visit islands where herds of Walrus may congregate, getting close up to these huge animals as they 'sunbathe', grunting to each other. Sabine's Gulls have nested on these islands, as well as delightful Grey Phalaropes and we'll look out for delicate alpine flowers such as Tufted and Drooping Saxifrage, White Arctic Bell-heather and Mountain Avenas.

Sailing into Hinlopen Strait, we'll keep our eyes peeled for whales. Fin Whales can be here in small numbers and we've also seen Blue and Humpback Whale. We'll explore the magnificent bird cliffs of

Alkefjellet, with tens of thousands of Brünnich's Guillemots and we'll scan for Arctic Fox - looking for a dislodged chick or egg.

Continuing south, we pass the islands of Barentsøya and Edgeøya, denning spots for Polar Bears. Our southernmost stop is the hauntingly beautiful fjord of Hornsund, where towering peaks show why Dutch explorers gave Spitsbergen its name - 'pointed mountains'. Here, the glaciers and shore-fast ice are great for bear encounters and Beluga Whales are a scarce but regular possibility too.

At Bellsund we should visit the spectacular cliffs at Ingerborgfjellet, where incredible numbers of Little Auk nest amongst the boulder fields, allowing close approach, their laughing cries filling the air. The tundra here is particularly lush, great for botanising and a favoured haunt for curious Svalbard Reindeer, as well as delightful Arctic Foxes.

11 We return to Longyearbyen and make our sad farewells to our ship. We shall have the morning to explore more of Longyearbyen with its museum and galleries before our afternoon flight to Oslo, via Tromsø, where we have an overnight stay.

12 We take a morning flight back to London.

Standard cabin, with window - two lower beds. Other cabin types are available; twin with porthole, twin deluxe with window, superior with window. Please contact us for discounts/supplements on these.



Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Fly to Oslo - 1 night Park Inn Hotel
- Day 2** Fly to Longyearbyen, via Tromsø, where we have some time to explore before we board our ship MV Plancius
- Days 3-10** The itinerary is dependent on the weather and where the pack ice is to be found. We hope to circumnavigate Spitsbergen Island, heading out of Isfjorden and then north to Kongssfjorden and Ny Ålesund before exploring the north coast perhaps visiting Liefdefjorden and Andøya. We may head into the pack ice north of the islands before passing through the Hinlopen Strait between the islands of Spitsbergen and Nordaustlandet. We are likely to visit Alkefjellet, Hornsund and Bellsund on our way back to Longyearbyen
- Day 11** Disembark in Longyearbyen, fly to Oslo in the afternoon, via Tromsø 1 night Park Inn Hotel
- Day 12** Fly back to London

Roy Atkins: Polar Bear, Grey Phalarope, Walrus, 14th July Glacier, Brünnich's Guillemot, Arctic Fox

