

EXPLORE!

Tour Notes



Realm of the Polar Bear - M/S Expedition (ACS 2014)



TOUR
DURATION
8
DAYS



Tour Style: Classic
Tour Pace: Relaxed

Tour Type: Small Groups
Tour Comfort: Comfortable

Tour Code: ACS

Tour Highlights - Realm of the Polar Bear - M/S Expedition

- ✓ 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, 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

Tour Essentials

Accommodation:

Included Meals: 11 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 2 dinners

Start Point: Join tour:
Longyearbyen

End Point: Tour ends:
Longyearbyen

Transport: Boat

Countries: Norway

Realm of the Polar Bear - M/S Expedition

Arctic Wilderness

Starting in Longyearbyen, we head north first visiting Barentsburg, then Ny-Alesund and leave civilisation behind. Our aim is to sail to the remote Polar Regions 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 with the chance to sail around Spitsbergen, 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 cultural and exciting polar explorative heritage - traces of this rich history can be found on several of 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.

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Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Tour Comfort: Comfortable

Hand-picked and chosen for their 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.

Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

Tour Pace: Relaxed

Easy paced tours with plenty of time to relax and absorb the sights and immerse yourself in the local surroundings.

Your tour itinerary

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.



DAY 1 Embark at Longyearbyen

Longyearbyen is the largest settlement on archipelago of Svalbard with a population of about 2,060 people and about as many snowmobiles. Most of the inhabitants are Norwegians, and some are Russians. 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. The Governor of Svalbard resides there. 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. Longyearbyen has an arctic tundra climate. 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. The daily life revolved only around the mining business. Today, the community offers a wide range of activities and facilities. There is a bank, post office, hospital, public library, cafes/restaurants, tourist information, a swimming hall, a climbing wall, a big sports hall, a grocery store, three pubs, three hotels, one church, several tourists shops, there are various forms of lodging, from hostels to modern full-service hotels, a cinema (Sundays) and one night club. During summer, most of the people you meet here will be tourists or young people working to accommodate the visitors. A very friendly and international atmosphere reigns. And, of course, Longyearbyen has its own international airport.

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, 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 these 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 seals. Ivory gulls will be a highlight for the birders, while we keep a constant lookout for walrus hauled out on ice floes or on sandy beaches. We will visit, ice permitting, spectacular bird cliffs filled with thousands of murres (guillemots), as well as kittiwakes and glaucous gulls. A little auk colony will also be on our agenda. Our shore stops will be highlighted with flowers nearing, or at the peak of, their bloom. We will have the opportunity to observe and discuss some of their adaptations to what we consider a harsh environment. At one or more of our stops, we hope to see Svalbard's unique subspecies of reindeer. They are much smaller than their southern relatives, but still carry impressive antlers. We also have the possibility of seeing arctic foxes. This is also a land of history: from whaling to reaching for the pole, to trapping, coal mining and war. We will visit some of these historic sites. We may cruise in zodiacs along the ice edge viewing seals, walrus or polar bears, in fjords with glaciers spilling down to the sea or in front of spectacular seabird cliffs. We will have opportunities to walk on shore, observe and photograph the arctic flora and fauna. As we are in the land of the polar bear, your expedition staff will carry rifles and flare guns on shore for your protection. Krossfjord, Konigsfjord, Monaco Glacier, Hinlopen Strait, Northeast Land, Edgeoya, Hornsund and Bellsund are just a few of the places that we may visit. By not having a set itinerary, we take on an expedition spirit and are free to take advantage of the best that Svalbard has to offer. The evening of our last full day of adventure will find the expedition ship anchored off Longyearbyen.

DAY 3 Around Spitsbergen

DAY 4 Around Spitsbergen

DAY 5 Around Spitsbergen

DAY 6 Around Spitsbergen

DAY 7 Around Spitsbergen

DAY 8 Disembark at Longyearbyen

We arrive in Longyearbyen in the early morning for disembarkation.

Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 11 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 2 dinners included in the price of this tour. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Other Sightseeing & 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.

Optional Excursions

To add to your polar adventure, take to a kayak for an eye-to-eye view with seals and whales. Kayaking is available as an optional excursion on our Realm of the Polar Bear trips for GBP 429 per person.

Contact us for more details and to reserve your place; booking in advance is necessary.

Foreign Exchange

Norway

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.

Joining your Tour

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 land only package with Explore

For passengers making their own travel arrangements, please ensure you join the group as described on day one of the tour itinerary. If you are considering purchasing your own airline tickets, you can book these through any travel agent, directly with an airline or through an online flight consolidator. In all cases, we would be happy to arrange transfers to and from the joining point of your tour if required.

Joining Tour Abroad

Clients booked on '**Land Only**' arrangements should make their own way to the joining point. Please refer to separate '**Joining Instructions**' for time and place of rendezvous with tour leader

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a huge selection of competitive 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 to ensure you get the very best priced flight at all times.

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

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of joining **any** of our tours that you must have valid travel insurance. It must indicate that you have cover for (at least) medical expenses and emergency repatriation in the event of illness or injury. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling in England and Scotland. We also strongly recommend your policy includes curtailment, personal effects and cancellation protection as all deposits paid are non-refundable.

If you require travel insurance for your tour, Explore Worldwide is an appointed representative of Campbell Irvine Limited, who is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services authority. Our travel insurance policy is specially tailored to the needs of the adventure traveller and will cover you for any included activity on any Explore trip. You can either purchase this at the time of booking or call us on 0844 499 0903 after you have booked.

Vaccinations & Protection

Norway

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 <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.

Preparing for your Tour

Climate

Norway

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.

General Information

Food

Norway

Lunch: 12.00

Dinner: 32.00

Water

Norway

1.4

Country details

Norway

Size of Country: 385,252 sq km

Population: 5,000,000

Major Language: Norwegian

Religion: Lutheranism

Time Difference to GMT: +1

Electric Supply & Plugs

Norway

2 Pin Round

Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

EXPLORE! The Adventure Travel Experts available online 24/7

- With over 30 years experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures & tailor-made holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one of the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, elephant, or any number of unusual forms of transport. Often you will stay in family-run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to – and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Our commitment to the environment

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures and traditions, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: The Sunshine Orphanage (which cares for abandoned children in Luxor, Egypt), Education for All (sponsoring children through their secondary education in Morocco), The Hope Foundation (helping an Indian Village to recover from the 2004 Tsunami) and the Mufindi Orphanage, which supports AIDS orphans in Tanzania.

We also care passionately about the world's wildlife. We are patrons of the Born Free Organisation, Travel Operators for Tigers (helping save the Bengal Tiger from extinction) and Friends for Conservation. We have also adopted a beautiful Sri Lankan Elephant called 'Serendip'.

We are delighted to have received a Five Star sustainable tourism status from the Association of Independent Tour Operators in recognition of our on-going commitment to sustainable tourism.

Cool Earth

Explore are delighted to support Cool Earth to reduce carbon emissions through preventing the illegal deforestation of the South America rainforest. One of the top sources of global carbon emissions, rainforest deforestation equivalent to the USA's annual emissions, it also destroys flora and fauna, sometimes to the point of extinction. It also degrades the lives and communities of the 350 million residents of the rainforest.

Cool Earth prevents the deforestation through its support of local communities as forest guardians and by focussing on areas in immediate danger of deforestation. It has so far protected over 350,000 acres of rainforest, with each acre saving an emission of 260 tons of CO2, as well as protecting rare animals and plants. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers' flights each year. In addition to mitigating emissions, when you travel with Explore, you are helping to protect the source of 20% of the world's fresh water and oxygen, as well as the livelihoods of the 1.6 billion people who are reliant on the rainforest.

www.coolearth.org

Earth Matters

- [The Travel Foundation](#)

Explore are active members and supporters of the Travel Foundation which has established a variety of sustainable tourism projects in destinations and works with industry to improve practice. Visit their website www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk

- [Tourism Concern](#)

Explore support the work of Tourism Concern who campaign for fairly and ethically traded tourism, and are part of its Ethical Tour Operator Group www.tourismconcern.org.uk

- For further information on responsible travel go to <http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/>

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is 'Available' or 'Guaranteed' we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

EXPLORE! The Adventure Travel Experts available online 24/7

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2013 and 31st December 2014.

Tour Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2014 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2014. 2015/16 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2015.

These tour notes were last updated on 10/12/2013 02:39:18