

EXPLORE!

TRIP NOTES



Realm of the Polar Bear in Depth - M/V Polar Pioneer (PPSO 2017)



TRIP DURATION
11
DAYS



Tour Style: Classic
Tour Pace: Relaxed

Tour Type: Small Groups
Accommodation
Grade: Premium

Trip Code: PPSO

Trip Highlights - Realm of the Polar Bear in Depth - M/V Polar Pioneer

- ✓ See the King of the Arctic, the mighty polar bear
- ✓ Visit the bird cliffs of Alkfejellet, where thousands of Brunnich's guillemots swirl around
- ✓ See walruses lounging around and seals on ice floes - great for photographs
- ✓ Take excursions in Zodiacs, to get off the boat and on shore in the Arctic
- ✓ Travel in the company of like-minded passengers on-board a friendly expedition ship

Trip Essentials

Accommodation: 10 nights Premium Boat
Included Meals: 10 breakfasts, 9 lunches, 10 dinners
Start Point: Join trip: Longyearbyen
End Point: Trip ends: Longyearbyen
Transport: Zodiac, Polar Pioneer
Countries: Norway, Arctic Region

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.

Ship Description

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.



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.

Accommodation Grade: Premium

Our comfortable 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.

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 trip 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 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.


M/V Polar Pioneer

 **Included Meals:** 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.


M/V Polar Pioneer

 **Included Meals:** 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.


M/V Polar Pioneer

 **Included Meals:** 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.


M/V Polar Pioneer

 **Included Meals:** 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.


M/V Polar Pioneer

 **Included Meals:** 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!

M/V Polar Pioneer

 **Included Meals:** 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 its own, as they attempt to reach the region's highlights.


M/V Polar Pioneer

 **Included Meals:** 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.


M/V Polar Pioneer

 **Included Meals:** 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.


M/V Polar Pioneer

 **Included Meals:** 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.

M/V Polar Pioneer

 **Included Meals:** 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.

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 10 breakfasts, 9 lunches, 10 dinners included in the price of this trip. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

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.

Budgeting for your Trip

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

Food

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.

Norway

Lunch £: 12.00 - 16.00

Dinner £: 35.00 - 40.00

Arctic Region

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Norway

Bottle of Beer £: 6.00 - 8.00

Water £: 2.00 - 3.00

Arctic Region

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.

Foreign Exchange

Norway

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.

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).

Arctic Region

ATM Availability: Cash can be drawn on credit or debit cards from ATMs in major cities.

Credit Card Acceptance: Credit cards are useful and can be used in many places, but may be subject to a service charge. The ship accepts Visa and Mastercard.

Travellers Cheques: Travellers Cheques can be difficult to exchange and are not accepted aboard.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: A combination of US dollars cash and cards is best. It is advisable to take a minimum of US\$200-500 of your total spending money in cash, in mixed denominations (notes should be in good condition).

Where to Exchange: Banks or Forex offices in major cities.

Joining your Trip

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

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 on our website at www.explore.co.uk, in the tour specific dates and prices section.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer. For more information please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

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, 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 please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

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.

Important Information

Travel 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. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

EXPLORE!
The Adventure Travel Experts

CAMPBELL IRVINE
DIRECT TRAVEL INSURANCE



Travel Insurance is essential. If you have not already arranged cover, please contact our recommended Travel Insurance providers www.campbellirvinedirect.com/Explore who offer Travel Insurance specifically designed to cover travel with Explore or call **Campbell Irvine Direct** on Tel: 020 7938 1734

Explore Worldwide is an Introducer Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Ltd who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Travel Aware

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 follow the link at www.explore.co.uk/travel-safety

EXPLORE! Share your experiences with us



We strongly advise that you register with the FCO to receive updates to the travel advice for your chosen destination. A hard copy of the current FCO Travel Advice for your chosen destination is available by contacting cr@explore.co.uk or 01252 379438.

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.

Visa 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**.

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.

Arctic Region

Nothing compulsory, we recommend protection against typhoid, tetanus, diphtheria, polio and hepatitis A. 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 Trip

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.

Arctic Region

The average temperatures in the Norwegian Arctic is approximately 5 degrees centigrade during the summer months (June-August.) It can however feel significantly colder with the wind, so be prepared for colder temperatures.

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.

Equipment

There are no hairdryers aboard the Polar Pioneer.

Sunglasses and sun cream
Insect repellent
Personal toiletries
A refillable water bottle
Books/reading material
Camera and memory cards
Seasickness remedy
Walking poles

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: On Tour

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

Luggage allowance on trip: 20kg

General Information

Country details

Norway

Population: 5,000,000

Size of Country: 385,252 sq km

Major Language: Norwegian

Religion: Lutheranism

Time Difference to GMT: +1

Arctic Region

Time Difference to GMT: +1

Electric Supply & Plugs

Norway

2 Pin Round

Arctic Region

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.

- With over 30 years' experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures, self-guided, private journeys & 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, 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.

Cool Earth

Explore are proud to support Cool Earth in their effort to reduce global carbon dioxide levels through the prevention of deforestation in the South America rainforest. Cool Earth focus on areas in immediate danger of deforestation, supporting local communities to be forest guardians. To date 350,000 acres of rainforest has been protected. Saving rainforest also protects rare animals and plants, allows local forest communities to maintain their way of life, and protects a major source of oxygen and fresh water. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year.

Earth Matters

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, 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: Toilet Twinning (helping to flush away poverty), Lone Buffalo Foundation (a community project based in Laos providing creative skills for young people) and have recently supported women's cooperatives in Borneo and Morocco. We are a member of Tourism Concern's Ethical Tour Operator Group (www.tourismconcern.org.uk) and support their campaign for fair and ethical tourism. We also care passionately about the world's wildlife and actively support and promote the Born Free Organisation and Mahouts Elephant Foundation.

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.

For Self-Guided holidays and Private Journeys simply choose your date of travel and let us know so we can confirm all ground services.

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 2016 and 31st December 2017.

Trip 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: 2017 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2017. 2018/19 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2018.

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