EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

Spitsbergen, Greenland & Iceland - M/V Polar Pioneer (PPGI 2014)

TOUR DURATION **14** DAYS

Tour Pace: Relaxed

Tour Type: Small Groups

Tour Comfort: Comfortable

Tour Highlights - Spitsbergen, Greenland & Iceland - M/V Polar Pioneer

- ✓ Witness the immense grandeur and wilderness of remote Northeast Greenland
- ✓ Experience a voyage to see the Arctic highlights
- ✓ Sail to the Land of Ice and Fire - Iceland
- ✓ Discover prolific birdlife and other Arctic wildlife
- ✓ Great opportunities for photography

Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	13 nights Comfortable Boat
Included Meals:	13 breakfasts, 12 lunches, 13 dinners
Start Point:	Join tour: Longyearbyen
End Point:	Tour ends: Reykjavik
Transport:	Zodiac, Polar Pioneer
Countries:	Arctic Region

Spitsbergen, Greenland & Iceland - M/V Polar Pioneer

Spitsbergen, Greenland and Iceland
This voyage combines the best of Spitsbergen and Greenland, with a taste of Iceland. Spitsbergen's rugged northwest coast comprises mountains, tundra and fjords. While crossing the icy waters of the Greenland Sea, our onboard experts share their knowledge of the region's plants, animals and history. Greenland's remote east coast shows off the immensity of the icecap, fantastic icebergs and a fairytale landscape of granite spires rising 1000 m above exquisite fjords! The local Inuits welcome us and share their unique culture.

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 Arrive Longyearbyen

We board Polar Pioneer in Longyearbyen in the late afternoon.

Overnight: **Comfortable Boat**

DAY 2 North West Coast of Spitsbergen

Spitsbergen's northwest coast features calving icebergs, historic whaling stations and trappers' camps. Brunnich's guillemots, little auks and kittiwakes nest in their thousands. Reindeer roam the tundra and so can you, photographing wildflowers like saxifrage, moss campion, bell-heather and hairy lousewort.

Overnight: **Comfortable Boat**

DAY 3 North West Coast of Spitsbergen

From our Zodiacs, gain fantastic views of ice cliffs, including Monacobreen, one of Spitsbergen's largest glaciers. In the north, there's a good chance of seeing walrus - and possibly even polar bears - on the pack ice.

Overnight: **Comfortable Boat**

DAY 4 Greenland Sea

Crossing the Greenland Sea, we sail through the Polar Basin's nutrient-rich waters, searching for fin and beluga whales, encroaching pack ice, and seabirds. Our expert naturalists and guest lecturers entertain us with fascinating, illustrated talks on European Arctic plants and animals, and epic tales of such early explorers as Nansen, Andrée and Scoresby.

Overnight: **Comfortable Boat**

DAY 5 Greenland Sea

These are relaxed days, wonderful for getting to know fellow expeditioners and preparing for a landing, if conditions permit, in the world's largest national park - Greenland's northeast coast. The region is home to polar bear, walrus, Arctic hare and musk ox. Watch for ringed, bearded, harp and hooded seals from the Zodiacs.

Overnight: **Comfortable Boat**

DAY 6 Greenland Wildlife

Ice is often the overwhelming first impression of Greenland. An ice cap covers 81 per cent of the island and pack ice, even in summer, may fill northern bays.

Overnight: **Comfortable Boat**

DAY 7 Greenland Wildlife

Ashore, cosy trappers' huts beckon from across the tundra, where musk ox, Arctic fox and eider ducks roam. These are just some of the delights found in Kaiser Franz Josef Fjord.

Overnight: **Comfortable Boat**

DAY 8 Greenland Wildlife

Lively cascades at Kap Humboldt provide a microclimate for spectacular hanging gardens. Kong Oskar Fjord offers spectacular glacier-carved mountains.

Overnight: **Comfortable Boat**

DAY 9 Scoresbysund

In Scoresbysund, the world's biggest fjord, the vast Greenland icecap sweeps down in massive glaciers that calve explosively, creating giant icebergs.

Overnight: **Comfortable Boat**

DAY 10 Scoresbysund

Near Sydkap, our Zodiacs weave through a maze of grounded icebergs, some more than 30-metres high, sculpted with deep green tunnels and aquamarine lakes.

Overnight: **Comfortable Boat**

DAY 11 Scoresbysund

Enjoy a warm Ittoqqortoormiit welcome, from Inuit happy to share their culture and explain the challenges of Arctic life. Enjoy weaving our way through interconnected waterways by Zodiac, watching for polar bears and narwhals.

Overnight: **Comfortable Boat**

DAY 12 Blosseville Coast

Sailing south along the Blosseville Coast, searching for musk ox and narwhals and marvel at the mountain scenery that dominates the skyline. If weather permits, we head for Rømer Fjord, a deep waterway with stunning mountain views.

Overnight: **Comfortable Boat**

DAY 13 Denmark Strait towards Iceland

As we sail across Denmark Strait towards Iceland, there's time to reflect on our rich experiences, enjoy the flying antics of northern fulmars and black-backed gulls, and spot dolphins, orcas and other whales in their feeding grounds.

Overnight: **Comfortable Boat**

DAY 14 Reykjavik

Arrive early morning in Isafjordur, a stunning fishing town in Iceland’s northwest. After breakfast, bid farewell to Polar Pioneer as you are transfered to the airport for your flight back to Reykjavik.

Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 13 breakfasts, 12 lunches,13 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.

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 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.

Foreign Exchange

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 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 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 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.

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.

Vaccinations & Protection

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 Tour

Climate

Arctic Region

Equipment

There are no hairdryers aboard the Polar Pioneer.
Sunglasses and sun cream
Insect repellant
Personal toiletries
A refilllable water bottle
Books/reading material
Camera and memory cards
Seasickness remedy

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 tour: 20kg

General Information

Food

The prices for meals and 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. 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.

Arctic Region

Drink

Arctic Region

Country details

Arctic Region

Time Difference to GMT: -12

Electric Supply & Plugs

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 & tailormade holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one 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 traditional, 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 support 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 CO_2, 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/

Know before you go

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 http://www.explore.co.uk/essential-travel-information/travel-resources/travel-safety

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.

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.

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