



**In search of polar bear and the pack ice
Longyearbyen – Longyearbyen
8th of June – 15th of June 2022
On board of the
*M.V. Plancius***



MV *Plancius* is named after the Dutch astronomer, cartographer, geologist and minister Petrus Plancius (1552-1622). She was built in 1976 as an oceanographic research vessel for the Royal Dutch Navy with the name Hr. Ms. Tydeman. The ship sailed for the Royal Dutch Navy until June 2004, when she was purchased by Oceanwide Expeditions. In 2007 the ship was completely overhauled and converted into a 114-passenger expedition ship. *Plancius* is 89 m (267 feet) long, 14.5 m (43 feet) wide and has a maximum draught of 5 m (20 feet), ice class 1D, top speed 12+ knots and three diesel engines generating 1230 hp each.

Captain Torry Sakkariassen

and his international crew

of 49 sailors:

Chief Officer **Romanas Vicas** [Lithuania]

2. Officer **Yaroslav Pyetukhov** [Ukraine]

3. Officer **Martin Hansson** [Sweden]

Hotel Manager: **Aleks Lebedev** [Ukraine]

Head Chef: **Ivan Yuriychuk** [Ukraine]

Sous Chef: **Sergey Sklyarov** [Ukraine]

Ships doctor: **Steven van de Vijver** [Netherlands]

Expedition Leader: **Pablo Brandemann** [Argentina]

Assist. Expedition Leader: **Andreas Alexander** [Germany]

Kayak Guide: **Alexis Bellezze** [Argentina]

Expedition Guide: **Chloé Maréchal** [France]

Expedition Guide: **Cas Eikenaar** [Netherlands]

Expedition Guide: **Julia Wellner** [Germany]

Expedition Guide: **Guillermina Browne** [Argentina]

Expedition Guide: **Sylvia Gross** [Germany]

Expedition Guide: **Keechy Akkerman** [Netherlands]

Expedition Guide: **Axel Brandemann** [Argentina]

Day 1 - Wednesday 8th of June, Longyearbyen

20h00 GPS Position: 78°13.9'N / 015°38.5'E

Wind: NW 1 Sea: flat Weather: drizzle Temperatur: 6°C

The guests arrive in the late afternoon and when everyone has unpacked and settled it is time for the very important safety drill and rescue boat evacuation exercise. All goes smoothly and after a well-deserved and tasty dinner the Plancius heads off for yet another adventure. We leave the local eider ducks (even one king eider), kittiwakes, little auks and Brunnich's guillemots behind and have a smooth nocturnal sailing to our first stop: Krossfjorden.



Safety drill

Day 2 Thursday 9 June

Morning - Krossfjorden and Lilliehöökbreen

08h30 GPS Position: 79°18.7'N / 011°39.0'O

Wind: N 3 Sea: flat Weather: drizzle Temperature: 6°C

Afternoon – 14th of July Bay

17h30 GPS Position: 79°12.1'N / 010°04.5'O

Wind: NE 3 Sea: flat Weather: light overcast Temperature: 7°C

We wake up in a magical place, with the large Lilliehöökbreen dominating the Krossfjorden. Deep blue pieces recently calved off the glacier litter the bay, some of these populated by kittiwakes and arctic terns. On the distant shore Svalbard reindeer graze, dwarfed by the looming mountains surrounding the bay. Cameras are being taken from their bags to capture the place, and it is difficult to stop shooting because at each new angle the landscape seems even better than before. We must move on though, and during lunch we sail to the 14th of July Bay, where we will have our first Zodiac landing of the trip. This bay got its rather peculiar name from Prince Albert I of Monaco, who did quite a bit of Arctic exploration early in the 20th century, and decided to honour the French National Day, also known as Bastille Day.



Lilliehöökbreen

With a calm sea we have an easy landing and soon the first group of guests go on a walk with the guides towards the 'hanging gardens', a large patch of blooming purple Saxifraga at an overhang. High above the area thousands of kittiwake's nests in the cliffs, neighbored by Brunnich's guillemots. Lower on the slopes a dozen or so reindeer graze, permitting us the first close-up views of these animals. Their legs are clearly shorter than that of their conspecifics living on the mainland, an adaptation to living in the cold. After the hike, we cruise in the Zodiacs past the birds nesting nearer to sea level. Here puffins too breed, showing their beautifully coloured bills. We are back at the Plancius precisely in the time for the daily recap, followed by a lovely diner.

Day 3 - Friday 10th of June

Morning – Texas Bar

08h30 GPS Position: 79°36.48'N / 012°45.21'O

Wind: N 5 Sea: flat Weather: light snow Temperature: 0°C

Afternoon – Ship Cruise Woodfjorden

17h30 GPS Position: 79°44.1'N / 012°55.5'O

Wind: NE 3 Sea: flat Weather: light overcast Temperature: 0°C

This morning we head into Woodfjorden and we find bands of sea ice that slows our progress into the fjord but does prevent us from landing at Texas Bar at 10:00. We have the chance to visit the historical hut and get onto the higher ridge to enjoy the views of the bay and the flat land on the Northern side of the ridge. A group of more energetic hikers has a very nice experience while walking on the soft snow towards the waterfall on the back hills, but the heavy conditions make it almost impossible to continue, but the view from higher grounds give a completely different perspective to their lives.



Polar bears walk many miles in search of seals

In the afternoon our plans are altered because of foggy conditions, but as we are cruising out of the Fjord to our plan B destination the captain spots a Polar Bear on the sea ice! We can observe some incredible behaviour, as the bear is trying to approach a seal to make lunch of it... but fails as the seal eventually spots the hunter and slides into the water. The bear takes a new route and walks away from the location, and we go back to our original course. As we approach Mushamna, our proposed landing, the captain again spots a bear on the cliffs above the kittiwake nests. Amazingly it is not just one bear but a mom and a cub! So, we are blessed with the chance to see them lay on the snow and have some beautiful mom and cub time! After dinner there is chance to visit Mofsen, a strange sand bank formation not higher than 2 meters off sea level that holds a walrus haul out. We spend some time ship cruising the location and then continue our route to our next day's locations. What an amazing day! Excellent landing in the morning and our first polar bear encounters!

Day 4 - Saturday 11th of June, Hinlopenstret

08h00 GPS Position: 79°36.6'N / 018°23.2'E

Wind: NW 3 Sea: Wavy Weather: Light overcast Temperature: 1°C

Morning - Alkefjellet

Afternoon - lectures

A sighting of a Polar bear leads to an exciting start of the day! The polar bear is walking with a fast pace along the beach and clearly stands out against the dark rocks, which provides some amazing photographs. After following the bear through our binoculars and cameras for a good while, we start the slightly delayed plans for the day: A zodiac cruise along Alkefjellet. The ship was already welcomed by multiple Brunnichs- and Black guillemots when we are boarding the zodiacs, and their numbers only increase as we came closer to the cliffs. Alkefjellet is home to the humble number of ca. 60.000 breeding pairs of Brunnichs guillemots, it feels like a scene of the film Birds! Every inch of the majestic dolerite cliffs seemed to be filled with guillemots and kittiwakes and they were flying everywhere. The lesser fortunate amongst us will remember the latter well, as they were presented with a souvenir in the form of guano droppings... Whilst navigating through the sea ice, guillemots are modelling for us on small icebergs, as well as some Great Skuas and kittiwakes. The adventurous amongst us dare to conquer the cliffs and sea-ice in sea kayaks!



Zodiac cruising Alkefjellet

The day is not over yet, back on Plancius we start making our way north and after not too long there are sightings of blue whales! We also activate our brains by learning about adaptations to the cold (in German) and are shown how ketchup on a plate can resemble the formation of glaciers (in English). During the recap we learn about the difference between whales and dolphins (or is there?) and everything you want to know about the blue whale. But the day does not end there! At ca. 21.30 we spot 3 polar bears eating a seal in the middle of the sea ice! The scenery is stunning: sea ice, polar bears, birds, and walrus resting on the sea ice and swimming along the ship! A brilliant ending of an amazing day, from start to end, very successful, exciting, and educational!

Day 5 - Sunday 12th of June - in the ice

08h00 GPS Position: 80°47.9'N / 014°37.9'E

Wind: NW 1 Sea: calm Weather: overcast Temperature: 1°C

We wake up to a stunning scenery – nothing but water and ice. This day will be dedicated to the sea and pack ice. We spend the morning cruising through ice floes, observing the flight of birds and the beautiful and ever-changing patterns of ice. We move north and west and further north. Later Cas speaks in English about the adaptation to the cold and Andreas takes the German public into the world of glaciers.

The afternoon is again spent cruising the pack ice. This time we find a bearded seal on a floe and have a long time to observe it.



It is obvious where the bearded seal gets its name from

Two polar bear lectures (in English by Chloe and in German by Sylvia) give us great insights about this charismatic animal.

We finish the day with a very different dinner: an arctic BBQ on the aft deck with great food, sodas, beer, wine, and punch – and a lot of dancing. Our northernmost position of the day is N80°49.5’.

Day 6 - Monday 13th of June – Raudfjorden

08h00 GPS Position: 80°36.6’N / 14°18.1’E

Wind: NW 3 Sea: Wavy Weather: Light overcast Temperature: -1°C

This morning we start our day in Raudfjorden. At first, the kayakers go out with Alexis and Julia into the bay in front of Smithbreen, a beautiful glacier. Then we start disembarking our Zodiacs on shore and Pablo, Andreas and Guillermina are waiting for us.

We spend at least three hours in this amazing place and have two options to go hiking. The longer hike is led by Pablo, and the shorter one is led by Silvia. Both hikes eventually go to places where we have spectacular views over the surroundings. The guest who do not feel fit to trudge through the deep snow stroll around the beach, where there is an historic hut of the famous hunter “Sven of Stockholm”.

The afternoon holds a surprise because of the great encounter with big walruses at Smeerenburg. On shore, Julia teaches us how to approach these animals and we enjoy seeing them in their own environment. We stay at 50m distance, which does not disturb these majestic animals at all, meaning that we can observe their natural behaviour at close range.



The true “king of the Arctic”

Day 7 – Tuesday 14th of June

Morning – Gjertsenodden

08h00 GPS Position: 78°32.5’N / 12°58.3’E

Wind: NE 2 Sea: calm Weather: clear sky Temperature: 12°C

Afternoon – Alkhornet

16h00 GPS Position: 78°12.8’N / 13°52.0’E

Wind: NE 2 Sea: calm Weather: overcast Temperature: 15°C

This morning we have bright and sunny weather, perfect for a bit of hiking followed by a polar plunge! But first the hikes. One group stays low down and has

an easy stroll around the beach which is lined by strongly deformed rock formations. A second group goes a bit higher, while the third group goes for the long (ca. 2h) hike to the top of an old moreen for a splendid view of one of the glaciers that straddle St. Jonsfjord, named after the apostle St. John. Several Svalbard rock ptarmigan are seen, the only bird that truly is a Svalbard resident as it is the only bird that stays the winter. Back at the shore it is time for what the young guests have been asking for many days now, the polar plunge. Wearing nothing but shorts and/or bikinis, some 30 daring guest brave the near freezing glacial melt water. Most are out within seconds but some are more polar bear like and manage close to a minute or so. After a quick towelling it is time to dress up and Zodiac back to the Plancius for a warm shower and a good meal.

In the afternoon we head for our last destination, Akhomet. We land on a sheltered beach and climb up to the tundra area stretching out for several hundred meters under the looming triangular cliff of the Akhomet. On the tundra reindeer graze and kittiwakes collect nesting material, which they transport hundreds of meters up to the cliffs. They share these cliffs with thousands of Brunnich's guillemots, lining the narrow ledges. Several pink-footed geese fly by, cackling loudly. Back on board the Plancius we have yet another lovely meal, followed shortly by the captain's cocktail and final slideshow of this fantastic journey.



The expedition team says hi!

Day 8 – Wednesday 15 juni 2022

Arrival in Longyearbyen

GPS 08.00 position: 78°14.0' N, 015°37.6'E (Harbour Longyearbyen)

Early this morning, we arrive in Longyearbyen. While we enjoy a last breakfast on board, our suitcases are taken off the ship. It is a sad moment to disembark from the Plancius, which has been a comfortable and cosy home during this unforgettable journey. We have shared really unique moments, have seen a lot of animals, and made new friends. Loaded with fond memories we now must head home.



- **1: Longyearbyen** (08/06)
- **2: Landing at Lilliehookbreen, 14th of July bay** (09/06)
- **3: Ship cruise Fjorende Julibukta** (09/06)
- **4: Landing at Texas Bar** (10/06)
- **5: Ship cruise at Mushamna** (10/06)
- **6: Zodiac cruise at Alkefjellet** (11/06)
- **7: Phippsoya** (Into the pack ice) (11/06)

Birds and Mammals of Svalbard

English Name	Latin	German	Dutch	8 June	9 June	10 June	11 June	12 June	13 June	14 June
Great Northern Diver	<i>Gavia immer</i>	Eistaucher	Ijsduiker							
Red-throated diver	<i>Gavia stellata</i>	Sterntaucher	Roodkeelduiker	x					x	
Northern Fulmar	<i>Fulmarus glacialis</i>	Eissturmvogel	Noordse stormvogel	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Pink-footed Goose	<i>Anser brachyrhynchus</i>	Kurzschmabelgans	Kleine rietgans		x	x				x
Barnacle Goose	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>	Weisswangengans	Brandgans		x	x				x
Brent Goose	<i>Branta bernicla</i>	Ringelgans	Rotgans							
Common Eider	<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	Eiderente	Eidereend	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
King Eider	<i>Somateria spectabilis</i>	Prachteiderente	Konings eider	x					x	x
Long-tailed Duck	<i>Clangula hyemalis</i>	Eisente	Ilseend			x			x	
Rock Ptarmigan	<i>Lagopus mutus hyperboreus</i>	Alpenschneehuhn	Alpensneeuwhoen							x
Eurasian Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus ostralegus</i>	Austernfischer	Scholekster							
European Golden Plover	<i>Pluvialis apricaria</i>	Goldregenpfeifer	Goudplevier							
Ringed Plover	<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>	Sandregenpfeifer	Bontbekplevier							
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	Sanderling	Drieteenstrandloper							
Purple Sandpiper	<i>Calidris maritima</i>	Meerstrandläufer	Paarse strandloper		x	x	x	x	x	x
Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	Alpenstrandläufer	Bonte strandloper							
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	Steinwätzer	Steenloper							
Grey Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i>	Thorshühnchen	Rosse franjepoot							
Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>	Odinshühnchen	Grauwe franjepoot							
Pomarine Skua	<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>	Spatelraubmöwe	Middelste jager							
Arctic Skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	Schmarotzerraub-möwe	Kleine jager	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Long-tailed Skua	<i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i>	Falkenraubmöwe	Kleinste jager							
Great Skua	<i>Stercorarius skua</i>	Skua	Grote jager	x	x	x				x
Sabine's Gull	<i>Xema sabini</i>	Schwalbenmöwe	Vorkstaartmeeuw							
Glaucous Gull	<i>Larus hyperboreus</i>	Eismöwe	Grote Burgemeester	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Iceland gull	<i>Larus glaucoideus</i>	Polarmöwe	Kleine burgemeester							
Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	Heringsmöwe	Kleine mantelmeeuw	x						
Great black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	Mantelmöwe	Grote mantelmeeuw						x	
Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	Dreizehenmöwe	Drieteenmeeuw	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Ross' Gull	<i>Rhodostethia rosea</i>	Rosenmöwe	Rossmeeuw							
Ivory Gull	<i>Pagophila eburnea</i>	Eifenbeinmöwe	Ivoormeeuw			x				
Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	Küstenzeeschwalbe	Noordse stern	x	x	x			x	x
Brunnich's Guillemot	<i>Uria lomvia</i>	Dickschnabellumme	Dikbekzeekoet	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Black Guillemot	<i>Cephus grylle</i>	Grylleteiste	Zwarte zeekoet	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Little Auk	<i>Alle alle</i>	Krabbentaucher	Kleine alk	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>	Papageitaucher	Papegaaiduiker	x	x	x			x	
Snow Bunting	<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>	Schneeammer	Sneeuwgorst	x	x	x			x	x

MAMMALS

English	Latin	German	Dutch							
Walrus	<i>Odobenus rosmarus</i>	Walross	Walrus			x		x	x	x
Bearded seal	<i>Erignathus barbatus</i>	Barbrobbe	Baardrob					x		
Ringed seal	<i>Phoca hispida</i>	Ringelrobbe	Ringelrob			x		x		
Harp seal	<i>Pagophilus groenlandicus</i>	Sattelrobbe	Zadelrob					x		x
Hooded seal	<i>Cystophora cristata</i>	Klappmütze	Klappmuts					x		
Common /Harbour seal	<i>Phoca vitulina</i>	Seehund	Gewone zeehond							
Minke Whale	<i>Balaenoptera acutorostrata</i>	Zwergwal	Dwergvinvis							
Sei Whale	<i>Balaenoptera borealis</i>	Seiwal	Noordse vinvis							
Blue Whale	<i>Balaenoptera musculus</i>	Blauwal	Blauwe vinvis				x			
Fin Whale	<i>Balaenoptera physalus</i>	Finnwal	Gewone vinvis							
Humpback Whale	<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>	Buckelwal	Bultrug							
Bowhead whale	<i>Balaena mysticetus</i>	Grönlandwal	Groenlandse walvis							
Sperm Whale	<i>Physeter macrocephalus</i>	Potwal	Potvis							
Narwhal	<i>Monodon monoceros</i>	Narwal	Narwal							
White-beaked Dolphin	<i>Lagenorhynchus albirostris</i>	Weisschnauzendelphin	Witsnuitdolfijn							
Beluga	<i>Dezhnapterus leucas</i>	Weisswal	Beloege							
Polar Bear	<i>Ursus maritimus</i>	Eisbär	Ijsbeer			x	x	x	x	
Arctic Fox	<i>Alopex lagopus</i>	Polarfuchs	Poolvos							x
Spitsbergen Reindeer	<i>Rangifer tarandus platyrhynchus</i>	Svalbard Rentier	Rendier	x	x	x	x	x	x	x