



OCEANWIDE
30 YEARS OF EXPEDITIONS

North Spitsbergen Explorer
Versatile landscapes, sea ice & wildlife
6th June – 13th June 2024



M/V Plancius

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

Captain Ernesto Barria

and his international crew

Chief Officer: **Elizbar Kadaria**

2nd Officer: **Don Buren**

3rd Officer: **Anar Babaiev**

Chief Engineer: **Daniel Liliac-Zajontz**

Hotel Manager: **Oleksandr Lyebyedyev**

Assist. Hotel Manager: **Bogdan Manevski**

Head Chef: **Ivan Yuriychuk**

Ships Doctor: **Annelou Ubels**

Expedition Leader: **Jan Belgers**

Assist. Expedition Leader: **Eduardo Rubio Herrera**

Expedition Guide: **Paolo Bellezze**
Koen Jongerling
Koen Hoekmeijer
Matthias Kopp
Tiphanie May
Alexander Romanovskiy

Day 1 – 6th June

Longyearbyen - Embarkation Day

12:00 GPS Position: 78°14.2'N / 015°36.9'E

Wind: NW 3, Sea State: Calm, Weather: Clear, Air Temp: 8°C, Sea Temp: 8°C

Today is the today! It is finally time for us to embark upon our arctic adventure! In the late afternoon, we arrived at our ship Plancius, our new home for the next 8 days. She rocked gently against the pier as we climbed the gangway onto the decks. It was a beautiful day. The sun was shining and didn't feel like the Arctic. We all checked in on board and were quickly escorted to our respective cabins. We excitedly started exploring the ship and wandering the decks enjoying the views of Longyearbyen.



Once aboard, we were invited to the lounge to participate in a mandatory briefing and abandon ship drill. Thankfully the good weather was maintained and we didn't get to chilled out on the decks by the lifeboats. After we completed the mandatory abandon ship drill it was time for the ship to leave. At 18:30 the lines were loosed and we were on our way out of the harbour.

Whilst the crew made sure we left the harbor soundly, our expedition leader Jan invited us back to the lounge for the

Captain's Cocktail, where we met our captain Ernesto Barria, our expedition leader Jan Belgers and the rest of his expedition team. We celebrated our expedition with some bubbles and canapes before we were called for the final activity of the day; dinner!

We all filed down to the restaurant for a delicious buffet and an opportunity to meet all our fellow travellers. We spent the rest of the evening enjoying the long summer light into the evening before returning to our cabins to prepare for tomorrow's adventure!



Day 2 – 7th June

Raudfjorden – Hamiltonbukta & Ayerfjorden

12:00 GPS Position: 79°52.7'N / 012°20.9'E

Wind: NE 2, **Sea State:** Calm, **Weather:** Partly Cloudy, **Air Temp:** 1°C, **Sea Temp:** 3°C

This was our first day of activities. And what a day it was. We got to learn immediately what it is like to be on an expedition and the surprises it can give you. We started the day out with a delicious breakfast in the restaurant and soon after got called into the Observation lounge for our mandatory briefing about zodiac and polar bear safety. Here we learned about all the basics that we should know about having a safe journey in the polar region. Not that you have to worry as you will be with an experienced guide who will take care of the rest.

After the briefing, we made our way to the upper deck to scout for animal wildlife. Most people had their eyes on the coastline for polar bears but to our surprise there was a minke whale that came up not too far away from the ship. We also had many birds flying around the ship including Brunnich's guillemot, little auks and black-legged kittiwakes. When we got to our destination, we sadly heard that there were two other ships in the bay called Hamilton Bay, so we had to make a change. Plan B was a ship's cruise through Raudfjorden, the Red Fjord named after the red Devonian sandstone deposited here around 410 – 360 million years ago. Going down the fjord we thought for a moment that we had seen a polar bear high up on the hill although this was sadly not the case. Further down the coast, we found some Svalbard reindeer grazing the hills and another minke whale passed by the ship.

When we got to the end of the fjord the weather had cleared up really nicely and gave us exceptional views of the whole area. Including the very end of the fjord right where the glacier ended. Here we spotted a female polar bear with 2 cubs. As they were not close, and our ship couldn't go further our EL decided to have lunch here and launch the zodiacs in the afternoon to see them from closer.



Having our bellies filled up, we left the ship for our first excursion. Here we got to practice those things we learned in the morning. Everybody did an amazing job. We made our way to the polar bears and on the way had the chance to spot multiple birds from close range. Here we saw many black guillemots, black legged kittiwakes and the large glaucous gulls. Eventually the fjord got blocked off with fast ice and the zodiacs couldn't go further. This is where we observed the polar bear as best as we could. It was possible to see the two cubs playing next to their mother. Although due to the distance it was not easy to see anything without binoculars that had a very large zoom.

We turned around and made our way back following the coastline looking for more interesting things. And to our luck, there were many to be found. We saw king eiders which are normally hard to find together with the common eider. Some people saw seals in the water, and everybody had the chance to see the group of 4 reindeer walking up the hill. There were birds like the Arctic skua and the rock ptarmigan. Although these elusive birds were not easy to spot for everybody. All in all, a quite exciting cruise especially for our first one.



Getting back on the ship everybody changed and sat down while drinking something warm. However, we were called out soon after by our EL mentioning that there were white whales outside. Belugas! And not just one. No, we had around 40 individuals swimming at the coastline in two different groups. What an extremely lucky situation as the belugas were not just passing through but were actually feeding. They came up

very often and the backs were easy to spot. They even came out with their heads here and there which is not very common to see. An incredible moment that made the EL and everybody else late for our daily recap for a good reason.

During the recap, Jan explained to us what the plans were for the following day and how the hiking groups would work. Everybody would soon find out what it all really meant choosing one of the groups but in any case, one thing is certain. As learned in the morning, in an expedition there is a big chance we will get surprised with wonderful things.

Day 3 - 8th June

Liefdefjorden – Texas Bar & Monacobreen

12:00 GPS Position: 79°36.5'N / 012°43.1'E

Wind: N 2, **Sea State:** Calm, **Weather:** Overcast, **Air Temp:** -1°C, **Sea Temp:** 2°C

Liefdefjorden – the fjord of love – that is how this fjord's name translates from Dutch. Plancius entered it early in the morning and slowly moved towards our morning landing site, which has an even stranger name – Texas Bar. Texas is tens of thousands of kilometres away from here, and the nearest bar is more than a hundred kilometres away in a straight line. What's the mystery? It lies in the fact that there is a small hut on the shore, used by locals as a base camp during their hunting trips, and also just as a place to rest. The wall of the hut proudly bears the inscription "Texas Bar," and inside on the shelf, there is a row of empty bottles of strong alcohol.

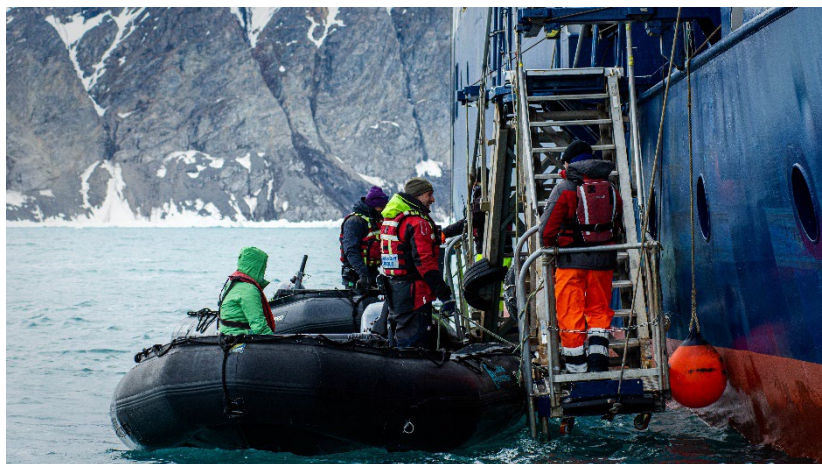


Our guides landed on the shore much earlier than us. As the threat of encountering a polar bear is ever-present, to ensure that there are no furry predators nearby, thorough scouting is required. Zodiacs darted back and forth along the shore, the guides in them

armed with binoculars, studying the shoreline and various folds in the terrain. After that, being already on the shore, they explored several suspicious corners and, having made sure everything was calm, gave the go-ahead for us to join them.

We were to wait for boarding the Zodiac near the gangway. Our lovely doctor Annelou orchestrated the entire process, allowing groups of ten people to descend the gangway and take their places in the boats. Besides that, she made sure our life jackets were worn and fastened properly.

Two minutes of a swift ride – and here we are on the shore! The first thing to do was to take off the life jackets and put them in large white bags. Nearby the bags with life jackets lay cases for rifles. It would have been very interesting to peek into at least one of them, but it was strictly forbidden. Besides, the rifles were already loaded and hung by the guides on their shoulders.



We divided into groups according to our interests. Those who wanted to take a leisurely stroll along the shore, with the opportunity to take photos, joined the leisurely hikers group. Those who wanted to walk a bit farther but not test their endurance joined the medium hiker's group, and those who wanted to climb higher and walk farther formed the long hikers group. When all of us were ready for a walk, each group went its own way.

The weather was quite favourable. It was cool but not cold. A fresh wind was blowing but not strong enough to pierce through our clothes. The sky was cloudy, creating soft light and providing the opportunity to take quality photos. Nevertheless, patches of blue sky occasionally appeared in the clouds, and the sun's rays joyfully broke through them to the ground, delighting us with bright light.

The old, slushy snow was dotted with traces of wild animals in places. One could see the tracks of reindeer, arctic foxes, birds, and even, in some distant spots, the huge paw prints of a polar bear. The snow was melting rapidly, and numerous streams ran down the slopes everywhere.



Where the ground had already freed itself from the snow cover, small purple clusters of flowers could be seen – the purple saxifrage, the very first flower, heralding the arrival of the late Spitsbergen spring. Tiny purple petals opened up, eagerly absorbing the cold northern sunlight. After all, these and

other Spitsbergen plants have so little time. During the short summer, they must bloom and bear fruit, so as soon as the snow melts, the plants waste no time. By September, the snow will fall again, and they can sleep until June.

The high cliff rising above the shore served as home to many birds. From time to time, one could hear the cackling of barnacle geese and pink-footed geese. They had recently arrived and now were scurrying back and forth, occasionally landing to feast on last year's grass and gather moss in their beaks to later line their nests with it. Brunnich's guillemots, so similar to penguins, also flew back and forth. Somewhere high above, a glaucous gull – a pesky predator – wailed mournfully. And far away, the black-legged kittiwakes were chattering – cheerful gulls that love to nest on vertical cliffs.

We wove among large boulders, crossed snowfields, and, finding a spot with a beautiful view, contemplated the northern nature.

We also found time to peek into the hunting cabin with the sign "Texas Bar." Spartan conditions, bunk beds, and a minimal set of kitchen utensils. No matter what, it's better than staying in a tent. Here, a bear won't get in, you can light the stove, and the wind doesn't blow through. A guest book lay on the table. Some of us made entries in it.



But the time for our landing was gradually coming to an end. We returned to the shore and put on our life jackets again. Goodbye, "Texas Bar"!

While we were having lunch, our ship Plancius moved to the far end of Liefdefjorden and stopped near the Monaco Glacier. After lunch, according to the plan, a Zodiac cruise along this glacier was to take place. While we were dressing warmly, our guides were lowering the Zodiacs into the water.

Whether the wind had strengthened, the proximity of the glacier played a role, or because you don't move much sitting in the Zodiac, it seemed significantly colder here. We moved slowly along the front of the glacier, examining the huge masses of ice, cracked in places. Here and there, one could see bearded seals resting on ice floes. Unfortunately, they were quite far away, but through binoculars, one could see them quite well. Black-legged kittiwakes and Arctic terns, having chosen some ice floes, turned their heads watching us. The terns also chirped threateningly.

After about two hours, we, frozen but satisfied, returned to the ship. In the evening, Jan, our expedition leader, gathered us all in the main lounge and told us the plans for the next day, which promised to be no less interesting! Let's see what it brings us.

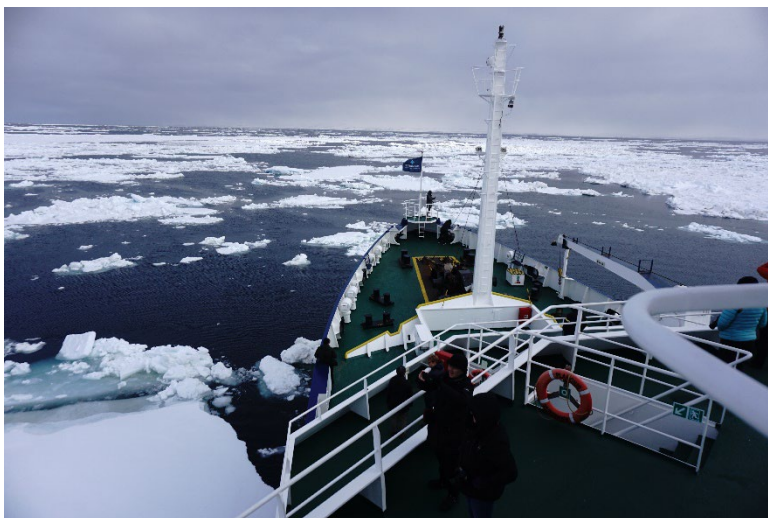


Day 4 – 9th June

Hinlopen Strait & Sorgfjorden

12:00 GPS Position: 79°58.1'N / 017°16.2'E

Wind: SE 4, **Sea State:** Rippled, **Weather:** Cloudy, **Air Temp:** 0°C, **Sea Temp:** 1°C



We all enjoyed a great quiet night on board PLANCIUS sailing to our next activities. During the "night" we sailed along the north coast of Spitzbergen towards the east, entering the Hinlopen Strait, aiming for Alkefjellet. There the plan was to do a Zodiac cruise along a spectacular bird cliff, however, already from a distance we saw that it will not be possible to reach that place due to the ice conditions in that area. It was a beautiful quiet morning, sunshine,

no wind and a lot of drift ice around us. Our expedition team decided to spend a couple of beautiful hours in the pack ice in the Hinlopen Strait in search for wildlife and by doing so, enjoying the great scenery.



For the afternoon Plancius sailed north, heading for Sorgjorden. The name was used since the 17th century as a reminder of troubles that whalers had in this area due to ice or competitors. There a landing at a place called Eolusneset was planned. Once landed we split up in groups, offering different levels of hiking. Hiking was at that time only possible with snowshoes due to the flat and heavy snow-covered ground.

Right next to the landing site was a hill covered with huge rocks and a cross on the top. The cross was erected by a skipper of AEOLUS, a Norwegian sealing ship that was chartered by several expeditions to Spitzbergen which was trapped in the ice in Sorgfjorden in 1855. Behind we found an area with 30 graves, dating from the 16th and 17th centuries, from the period of Western European whaling. The number of graves grew over the years as it was the same few selected places that were in use as burial grounds during the whaling era. All groups went pasted this most interesting feature of that area. Jan, our expedition leader, told us, how it looked underneath the snow, however, we had to come back later in the season because there was at least 40cm of snow.

Behind that hill was an old trapper hut, which looked from a distance quite intact, however, coming closer, the side facing the shore was broken and the hut was filled up with snow. It was amazing how tiny the hut was, however, for the trapper it was not the main hut, it was a hut, used only for days and not for weeks, so used as stepping stones for covering a bigger area. The sun was shining, and we all enjoyed the time on shore.



While being away in several groups we had also the possibility to perform a moment of silence, just staying in a comfortable position without any movement. It was so calm and peaceful. The sportive group covered a larger distance, however, all groups met at the landing site at the same time in order to go back to PLANCIUS. We enjoyed the evening onboard, while sailing north.

Day 5 – 10th June

Phippsoya & pack ice

12:00 GPS Position: 80°41.4'N / 020°35.1'W

Wind: W 3, **Sea State:** Calm, **Weather:** Overcast, **Air Temp:** 0°C, **Sea Temp:** 0°C

We've sailed north overnight. The landscape outside has changed. There's fog, a stiff wind and it feels so much colder than previous days. The northerly wind is running for hundreds of miles over a frozen pack ice before reaching us and we can tell by the outside temperature and chilling effect of the wind. It's hard to hold onto cameras or binoculars unless well wrapped up. We are in Phippsøya, one of the Seven Islands, north of the Svalbard archipelago.

Lost in the fog, an unusually dark iceberg. What is that? Walrus! A number of these charismatic blubbery seals has climbed on an ice flow. They are crammed on top of it. The piece of ice seems to be defying physics by keeping together under such weight. They look at us, heads bobbing about and suddenly one of them gives up and jumps in the water, the others follow. The walrus keeps an eye on us from the safety of the water, an environment where they are no longer limited by gravity and their weight, in the water they are no longer slow and clumsy...instead these huge animals are nimble and agile in the sea.



Our initial plan was to land here and had several hiking options planned but, the fog is making a landing too dangerous. We are after all in prime, Polar bear territory, and it would be impossible to spot one approaching in these conditions, as always, everything is done to prevent a bad encounter with a bear. As important as passenger safety is to look after the safety of bears and not expose them to a potential confrontation. For this, scouting and good visibility are essential. We wait. We waited some more and ultimately, the decision was

made to leave Phippsøya and we set course north for the pack ice. On our way, we see more walrus hauled out on ice floes.

For a few hours Captain Ernesto weaves Plancius along leads in the drift ice, there's a patchy fog that makes for variable visibility and difficult wildlife spotting. One of the expedition guides, KJ gives us a very detailed polar bear presentation and in the middle of it, surprise! A rare, bowhead whale surfaces right next to the ship and all passengers get distracted from their lecture. That was special, this is a species listed as 'Depleted' in the Marine Mammal Guide, with only 12000 individuals estimated in the Western Arctic.

We continue enjoying our ship cruise along the ice edge and then all of a sudden, the moment we have all been quietly hoping for, the PA system comes alive and our Expedition Leader, Jan brings up the good news... A polar bear has been spotted in the distance.

As we watch through binoculars into a receding fog, we see this beautiful animal resting in the ice, back towards us. It is so relaxed and seems to be laying next to a large stain. Perhaps he/she had a kill earlier and was full after finishing its prey.



We all get the chance to see the animal rest, roll around, sit with his back towards us picking up a scent upwind. Eventually, he/she leaves slowly, walking away from us and into the fog...what a sight, this was a beautiful time!

To wrap up an unforgettable day, tonight is barbecue night, a large variety of food is served, salads, roasted veggies, meats of all kinds, roasted cheese, drinks, you name it. After dinner, tables are put to one side and music makes an entrance, we are so happy we can do other than dancing until late. What a day!

Day 6 – 11th June

Pack ice & sailing the continental shelf

12:00 GPS Position: 80°18.8'N / 008°42.3'E

Wind: N 4, **Sea State:** Calm, **Weather:** Overcast, **Air Temp:** 0°C, **Sea Temp:** 1 °C

Overnight we drifted close to the pack ice, meandering with the waves close to the last position registered last night. The visibility at the break of the day was also limited due to low clouds and grey skies. Overall, the day started slowly on board and a few people were already in the observation area. They were early hoping to spot some wildlife around the ship.

Jan our Expedition Leader, did his wake up call at 07:30, half an hour later than usual given that today we would be planning to stay at sea with no activities outside the ship. With his energetic voice, he announced the new day as well as some of the parameters describing the outside conditions such as air temperature, water temperature and wind speed. Today we had a chillier morning and consequently, these parameters were very low compared to previous days.

We even saw a few icicles that formed along the railing of the ship.

Watching all this silently was Mathias who from the outside of the Bridge was watching since half an hour earlier, looking for wildlife with his binoculars. The sea was calm and looked dark grey and to our regret, no wildlife had been observed by Matthias.

As the clock ticked after the wake-up call, our ship burst with life. Shortly before breakfast was announced, there were already many guests with their cameras, looking around and making pictures

of the landscape around us. To port side the sea extended limitless, undisturbed, while to starboard side, we had a big extension of pack-ice floating undisturbed. We sailed along this ice, during a good part of the morning until 12 when captain started to put an end to our visit to this region, given that we still plan to do two activities tomorrow, we started sailing back to the mainland of Spitsbergen.

The morning went by quite quickly and we were all amazed to see at least some wildlife of this region of the world. Perhaps the most interesting sights were those of Ivory Gulls, a beautiful kind of seagull -completely white- which is a kind of the holy grail of the enthusiasts and professional bird watchers. During the morning, guests and staff managed to spot three of these rare animals and even at the beginning of the afternoon, one came flying very close to the port side of our ship, at the height of the bridge.



During the afternoon we had the chance to hear two very good presentations. One was made by a guest, Dr. Udo Engelhard a climate scientist. In this presentation he emphasised about the importance of understanding not just climate change, but instead, becoming an active citizen demanding for the election of the right politicians to take the right decisions in the governments as well as in the economies of each country, aiming for a collective and not individual view of the problem. His talk was very provocative and left many -if not all- the participants with a big impression.

Later another presentation was given by our staff member, Paolo about the history of Svalbard. In his lecture he explained how this archipelago was first seen as a place to extract commodities such as whale oil, skins, and furs but later became a leading place to protect nature, and where scientists come to try to understand more about the climate, the ocean and the atmosphere of our planet. Today this is a place of vital importance into the understanding global warming and climate change. Paolo also spoke about the Treaty of Spitsbergen, a treaty signed by many countries that establishes the politics in the archipelago still today.



Last but not least, as we were preparing for our daily recap, our staff and the bridge spotted some distant whale blows in the horizon. As we came closer with our ship for a better view, we discover a numerous group of fin and minke whales as well as a possible humpback whale. The whole group consisted of about 30 individuals and they were feeding along the surface, just directly above the place where the continental shelf starts. The display

we had was very memorable and as we started to enjoy whale watching, several dolphins appeared in

the scene as well, joining the feeding whales. The dolphins charmed many of our passengers with their displays and we could see clearly their dorsal fins, their backs, heads and flukes. This spectacle lasted for about 30 minutes without interruption, making it hard for us to know where to see -there were whales appearing everywhere in front of the ship.

Dinner came shortly after the ship reassumed its course set by our officers and our heading went back to the south south-east. After dinner we had our daily recap and this time we were lucky to not be interrupted by wildlife. Thanks to that, Jan shared the program for tomorrow as well as supplemental information about what we did in the high arctic, the northernmost point of our course and the number of nationalities on board including crew, staff and passengers (30).



After Jan's recap, we learnt many incredible facts about walrus with Matthias. He was followed after by Tiphonie who did a brilliant recap about the different sounds and vocalisations of walrus. Finally, Eduardo closed the day making a short reflection about the fragility of our planet when seen from deep space, making it appear as a pale blue dot.

Day 7 – 12st June

Poolepynten & St. Jonsfjorden

12:00 GPS Position: 78°26.0'N / 011°56.3'E

Wind: NW 2, **Sea State:** Calm, **Weather:** Overcast, **Air Temp:** 4°C, **Sea Temp:** 2°C

Good morning, M/V Plancius, today was already our last day. Time does really fly when you're having fun!

Today we planned a landing at Poolepynten. A beautiful sandy stretch of land formed by tidal movements and influences from the currents. The shape is almost triangular and despite it being a made up of sand there is still a lot to see. The first thing that seems to be out of place is the sheer amount of wood that lies spread all over the place. Knowing that trees don't grow in Svalbard the



question that was quickly raised was; "Where does all this wood originate from"? Expedition Leader Jan explained that this drift wood mainly comes from the Russian continent. The trees are cut in the dense forests of the Taiga and once the branches and leaves have been removed, they're sent to processing factories through rivers

such as the Lena. Most trees are *caught*, but some aren't and they end up in the ocean. Transported by the currents it takes 2-3 years before they reach the beaches of places such as Svalbard. The beaches are full with this drift wood, so for early explorers, but also current trappers and hunters this wood offers easy opportunities to build shelter cabins and trapper huts.

Aside all the driftwood, Poolepynten also offers a large variety of wildlife. We saw many Arctic terns, Purple Sandpipers and some Snow Buntings. And before we forget it, Poolepynten also is a popular haul out for the impressive walrus. Today we had a nice group of walrus on the beach and others looked like they were posing especially for us in the water. The tusks of the walrus can be up to 1 meter in length and males can weigh up to 1500KG. That is a lot of blubber! They are the second largest seal species after the Antarctic Elephant seals.



After visiting the walrus we spent more time exploring this vast stretch of land. We encountered some reindeer which allowed us to come quite close, offering us great photo opportunities and we saw beautiful colored little flowers. What a beautiful morning!

After lunch we planned another landing. This time the plan was to hike at St. Jonsfjorden with a possible view of Gaffelbreen, a beautiful glacier just around the corner.

Our last zodiac shuttle was a proper expedition ride. Bumpy with some splashes coming over the bow, but it was a lot of fun as usual. On land the groups were divided in several hiking categories. From leisurely to a bit more sportive. During the hikes we had some close encounters with more reindeer and also ptarmigans were spotted. One of the medium hikes ended at the far most point of the beach where the glacier became partially visible.



However, there wasn't more time to get closer as some guests had set their minds on doing a *polar plunge*. This is tradition during our trips as people really want to experience a dive in the ice-cold arctic waters. With a water temperature close to 0°C it was a real polar plunge and the brave ones who did it let some ooh's and aaaaah's escape when they entered the icy waters. But they all did it and they received a well-deserved applause from the less brave spectators ;).

At night a special dinner was served. The dining room was buzzing with chatter and laughter while we enjoyed our last dinner together. After our main course, Hotel Manager Aleks took the microphone and introduced to us his entire hotel team. Behind the scenes many of our crew are working hard to make the expedition a success and it is always great when they receive the appreciation they deserve.

Then it was time for dessert and yet more prosecco. At 21:00 Jan expressed his thanks one more time to the crew members and the captain spoke inspiring words before raising his glass. In the meantime, Sasha's slide show had finally been exported. His beautiful images and videos of the trip made us realize once more how wonderful and special our trip had been.

Some of us went to bed after, some went out on deck and others decided to enjoy Raquels' services one more time ;).

Good night M/V Plancius, it was an intense but fantastic day!

Day 8 – 13th June

Disembarkation

12:00 GPS Position: 78°10.12'N / 014°19.28'E

Wind: NW 3, **Sea State:** Calm, **Weather:** Light showers, **Air Temp:** 8°C, **Sea Temp:** 8°C

All too soon we arrived back in Longyearbyen and it was time to say our goodbyes. The staff and crew took care of our luggage placing it carefully on the dock. We had our last breakfast aboard the Plancius then gathered the last of our things and headed for the gangway. We said goodbye to the whole team onboard and alighted the bus waiting for us to start the long journey home.



Thank you for your enthusiasm and support, but most of all for joining us on this exploratory North Atlantic voyage. We hope to see you again in the future, wherever that might be!

Total distance sailed: 932.5 nautical miles
Farthest north: 80°51'14.21N / 019°26'33.65E

On behalf of Oceanwide Expeditions, Captain Ernesto Barria, Expedition Leader Jan Belgers, Hotel Manager Oleksandr Lyebyedyev, and all the crew and staff of M/V Plancius, it has been a pleasure traveling with you!

Trip map PLA02-24

Day 1: Leave Longyearbyen

Day 2: Raudfjorden

Day 3: Woodfjord

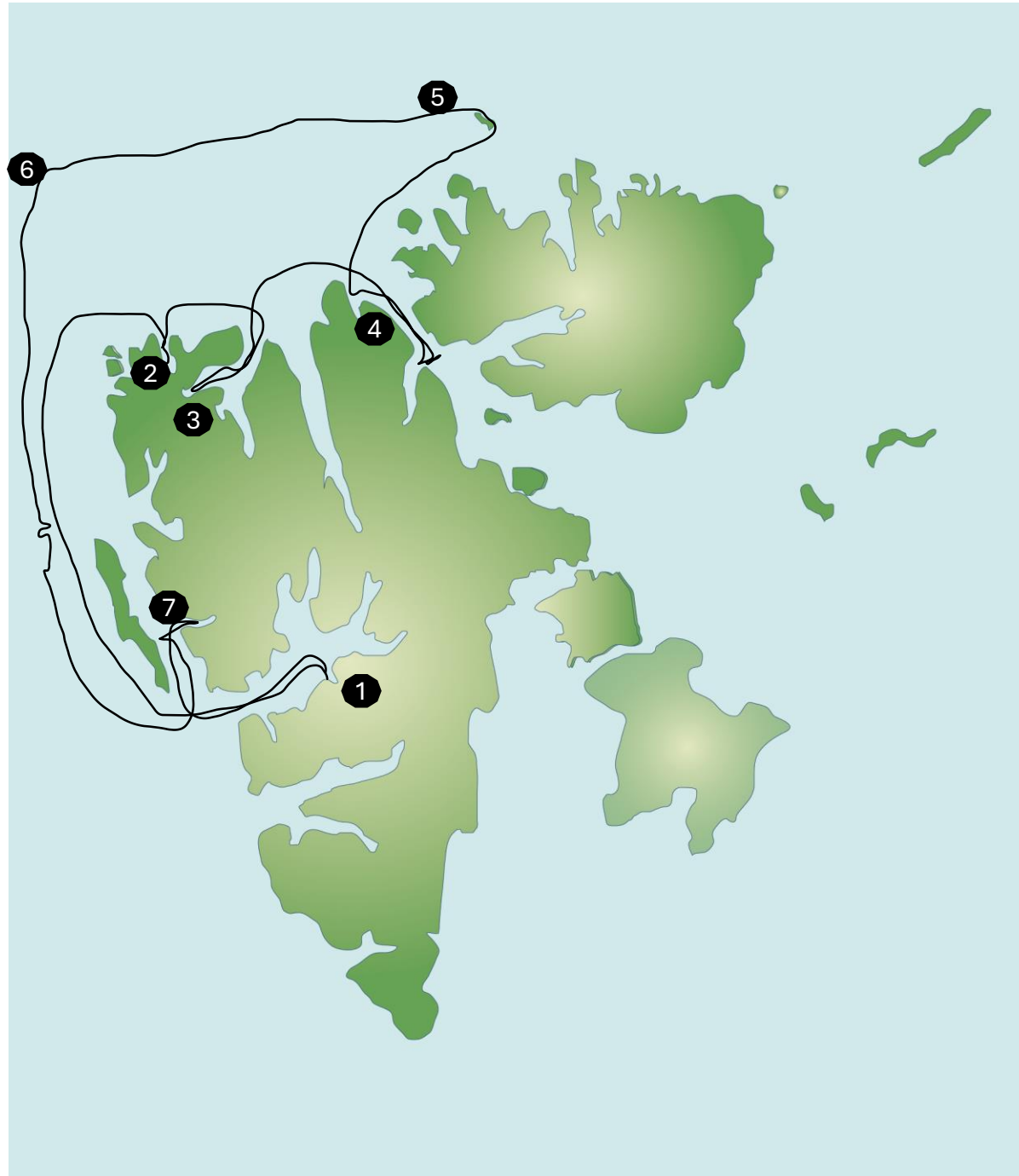
Day 4: Hinlopenstretet /
Sorgfjord

Day 5: Sjuøyane & Pack Ice

Day 6: Pack Ice &
Continental Shelf

Day 7: Forlandsund &
St.Jonsfjord

Day 8: Longyearbyen



Dunlin	<i>Calidris alpina</i>	Alpenstrandläufer	Bonte strandloper	B								
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	Regenbrachvogel	Regenwulp	T								
Common Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i>	Rotschenkel	Tureluur	V								
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	Steinwälder	Steenloper	B							X	
Grey Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i>	Thorsühnchen	Rosse franjepoot	B								
Red-necked Phalarope	<i>Phalaropus lobatus</i>	Odinshühnchen	Grauwe franjepoot	B								
Pomarine Skua	<i>Stercorarius pomarinus</i>	Spatelraubmöwe	Middelste jager	T								
Arctic Skua	<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	Schmarotzerraub-möwe	Kleine jager	B	X	X	X	X				
Long-tailed Skua	<i>Stercorarius longicaudus</i>	Falkenraubmöwe	Kleinste jager	B			X					
Great Skua	<i>Stercorarius skua</i>	Skua	Grote jager	B						X		
Sabine's Gull	<i>Xema sabini</i>	Schwalbenmöwe	Vorkstaartmeeuw	B								
Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i>	Lachmöwe	Kokmeeuw	V								
Common/Mew Gull	<i>Larus canus</i>	Sturmmöwe	Stormmeeuw	V								
Glaucous Gull	<i>Larus hyperboreus</i>	Eismöwe	Grote Burgemeester	B	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Iceland gull	<i>Larus glaucoides</i>	Polarmöwe	Kleine burgemeester	T								
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	Silbermöwe	Zilvermeeuw	V								
Lesser black-backed Gull	<i>Larus fuscus</i>	Heringsmöwe	Kleine mantelmeeuw	V								
Great black-backed Gull	<i>Larus marinus</i>	Mantelmöwe	Grote mantelmeeuw	B								
Kittiwake	<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	Dreizehnmöwe	Drieteenmeeuw	B	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Ross' Gull	<i>Rhodostethia rosea</i>	Rosenmöwe	Rossmeeuw	T								
Ivory Gull	<i>Pagophila eburnea</i>	Elfenbeinmöwe	Ivoormeeuw	B			X		X	X		
Arctic Tern	<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	Küstenseeschwalbe	Noordse stern	B	X	X	X	X	X			
Common Guillemot	<i>Uria aalge</i>	Trottellumme	Zeekoet	B								
Brunnich's Guillemot	<i>Uria lomvia</i>	Dickschnabellumme	Dikbekzeekoet	B	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Black Guillemot	<i>Cepphus grylle</i>	Gryllteiste	Zwarte zeekoet	B			X	X	X	X	X	
Little Auk	<i>Alle alle</i>	Krabbentaucher	Kleine alk	B	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Puffin	<i>Fratercula arctica</i>	Papageitaucher	Papegaaiduiker	B	X					X	X	
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	Rauchschwalbe	Boerenzwaluw	V								
White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i>	Bachstelze	Witte Kwikstaart	V								
Meadow Pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	Wiesenieper	Graspieper	V								
Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i>	Steinschmätzer	Tapuit	B								
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>	Amsel	Merel	V								
Snow Bunting	<i>Plectrophenax nivalis</i>	Schneeammer	Sneeuwgorst	B	X		X				X	X
Redpoll	<i>Carduelis flammea</i>	Birkenzeisig	Barmsijs	V								
Lapland longspur	<i>Calcarius lapponicus</i>	Spornammer	Ijsgors	V								
Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	Wacholderdrossel	Kramsvogel	V								
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	Rotdrossel	Kopenwiek	V								

Jan Belgers - Expedition Leader



Jan Belgers, from the Netherlands, has been working as a professional outdoor guide and expedition leader in the Polar regions for many years now. Travelling and guiding in wildernesses all over the world are his passion. His work as a guide brought him from the high mountain ranges of the Himalayas and Andes to the extreme latitudes of Spitsbergen and Antarctica.

His first experience with the Polar Regions was in 1990 when he joined a scientific expedition from Iceland to Kapp Farvell in Greenland for the “World Ocean Circulation Experiment” (WOCE). In 1992 he joined the “Winter Weddell Gyre Study” (WWGS) with the German scientific icebreaker Polarstern into the remote Weddell Sea, in the Antarctic and wintered there. During these expeditions Jan got bitten by the Polar Bug and therefore he has been returning to the Polar regions frequently, joining in more than 180 Polar expeditions.

Jan's professional background is marine ecology, but he quitted science a long time ago. Since 1998 he works full-time as a professional guide and expedition leader for Oceanwide Expeditions, in the high northern and southern latitudes.

Jan is a keen nature and outdoor enthusiast and feels at home on the sea, due to his background in marine biology. He lectures on natural history, biology and polar history and is a polar literature fanatic.

Eduardo Rubio - Expedition Guide



I describe myself as an astronomer by profession with a passion for sharing nature's wonders. I aim to help to better understanding what scientists do with the public. Born in Guatemala (1978), I live in Switzerland since 2017. I speak English, Spanish and German.

After studying physics, I got my PhD in Astronomy from the University of Amsterdam in 2010. After a postdoctoral position I became a lecturer of physics and Astronomy as well as a guide in expedition cruise ships. Since 2018 I have worked for Oceanwide Expeditions in various roles such as guide, assistant expedition leader and expedition leader in the Antarctic and in the Arctic. Today I enjoy these trips as well as teaching undergraduate/graduate students and doing science outreach at the Planetarium of the Museum of Transport in Switzerland.

My interests vary from the history of exploration to the intricacies of astronomy. During the trips I have undertaken, I offer lectures about polar explorers, the science carried out in Antarctica (astronomy in particular), about our Universe, and the mysteries of our ocean's depths, to mention some. At sea, besides being an engaged guide and lecturer, I love to show constellations to people, pointing out their names and their lore. In every trip I made, I always aim to raise the enthusiasm of guests towards science, and their awareness towards the unique and fragile planet where we live.

Paolo Bellezze – Expedition Guide



Born in Argentina (Dec 80') and raised in Italy, Paolo finally moved to Scotland where he settled in 2006. Nowadays, when not at sea, he splits his time between Argentina and Scotland.

Before expedition cruises Paolo spent 12 years working shoreside in merchant shipping. He was a Product Manager for a Norwegian company developing Voyage Planning and Marine Weather Forecasting Systems for merchant ships.

He also started Paragliding at the age of 14 and has been very involved in the sport as a school owner instructing both beginners and advanced courses for over 20 years. When not paragliding, Paolo likes to sea kayak and he mixes Field Guide with Kayak Guide roles onboard.

In 2021 he started working full time in expedition cruises, since then he has guide in several expeditions such as Antarctica, South Georgia, Falklands, Greenland West coast, Greenland East coast, Iceland, Faroes Islands and British Isles.

Aside from sea kayaking and flying he is into hiking, motorbikes and spending time with friends. He is passionate about polar regions and sharing the experience with our guests.

“Happiness is only real when shared” (Chris McCandless)

Languages: English, Spanish, Italian.

Koen Jongerling - Expedition Guide



Having grown up in the Netherlands Koen always knew he wanted to live in a more rugged landscape than the rather flat lowlands that surrounded him. That is why after finishing his outdoor education in 2011, he chose to move to Patagonia, Chile to find the mountains he was longing for.

Combining his love for nature and the desire to learn more, he started guiding expeditions through the mountain ranges of Patagonia. Travelling back and forth to Europe for additional mountain courses - every time feeling more at home in the rough conditions of Patagonia. In 2017 he started his own guide company, introducing travelers to the beauty of Southern Chile.

Living in Puerto Natales he came to love the cold and extreme weather and after years of working in one of the most southern mountain ranges in the world, he could not stop looking further south to the great white continent, Antarctica.

Koen Hoekemeijer – Expedition Guide



Koen Hoekemeijer was born in 1974 in The Netherlands. When it comes to nature and wildlife Koen was quite a late bloomer as he had always been more into nightlife and sunny beaches. But that all changed when he discovered his passion for wildlife and photography in 2009 in Costa Rica. It was during this trip that Koen saw his first humpback whales and he fell in love with them instantly. Not only did it make him eager to see more and different types of whales in locations all over the world, but he also wanted to learn to take better photos of these amazing creatures. And with the love for whales

and photography, came a broader passion for all sorts of wildlife.

Since that memorable vacation in 2009, Koen has been travelling the planet to see and photograph the world's most beautiful places. Usually from boats, jeeps or simply face down in the mud, but since 2016 also underwater. Snorkeling in the presence of whales and orcas is bringing Koen pure happiness.

Among his favourite animals are whales, orcas, penguins, tigers and jaguars. But in between safaris, he also likes to do street photography and capture life and portraits of people all over the world.

Koen believes that travelling does not only enrich your life, it also makes you more humble, more appreciative and it provides new levels of perspective and understanding. Koen has won the prestigious WWF Frans Lanting Photo contest, and in 2020 he won the Ellen Fitzgibbon Memorial Photography competition. It's Koen's dream to one day have a Vizsla dog and own a small cabin somewhere in northern Norway surrounded by snow and trees ;).

Matthias Kopp – Expedition Guide



Matthias live most of the year in Thuringia/ Germany. After school he started an apprenticeship to become a wholesale dealer but decided after a couple of years settled work right next to the home village, to do a great step in direction uncertainty. He started studying biology at the University in Jena. Matthias' main interests were Ecology and Ornithology. He wrote a diploma thesis about the breeding biology of Antarctic Skuas in the area of the Antarctic Peninsula. But also after that degree,

Matthias kept on studying those impressive animals for a couple of years. While studying both, his interest and his network brought Matthias all over the world. Thereby most impressive for him were the Polar Regions. Matthias stayed for his studies with the Skuas in total 5 summer seasons at Antarctic bases and meanwhile 10 seasons in the high Arctic as a Tour guide onboard vessels.

Currently Matthias is predominantly settled, based again in the village of his childhood, but now with wife, 3 young girls, 2 cats, a couple of bee colonies and a wide-ranging garden, who all need him. However, his wife knows that for Matthias the high summer in Germany is much too warm. For that reason, he is together with you in the high north – also to escape the heat.

Tiphanie May - Expedition Guide



Tiphanie is an 8th generation Falkland Islander living in Stanley. She was raised on a small group of islands called Speedwell Island Group, owned and worked by her parents as a sheep farm and family crab business.

Tiph was raised surrounded by Falkland's wildlife with her family island boasting rookeries of Magellanic penguins, Gentoo penguins as well as several other breeding birds. The islands also include haul outs of South American sealions and elephant seals. Surrounded by all this wildlife it was of no surprise that she found nature

fascinating. From the penguin couple that lived under her house to the wonderful variety of creatures found in the crab pots, marine life was a theme. This led to her to travel to the UK at 16 to study to be a marine biologist.

Tiph spent 6 years in the UK studying to get her BSc (HONS) Marine Biology and MSc in Marine Biology. Using her holidays to volunteer in the Falklands for various conservation projects to gain experience. Upon completing her studies, she joined the Government Fisheries Department, spending 200 days per year at sea monitoring seabird activity and collecting research material. The sea has been a big part of her life, from a young age she worked to haul crab pots with her father's boat. Later she went on to work for an experimental sustainable fish farm which allowed her to get her RYA qualifications in Power Boat. Tiph currently works full time operating a small boat in the Falklands.

Tiphanie started working in the tourist industry at the age of 23. Having grown up with no roads her whole life, 4X4 tour driving just made sense. Tiph has worked to provide a variety of tours such as hiking, 4X4 and penguin colony visits. In 2018, Tiphanie was offered the amazing opportunity to go to Antarctica and South Georgia with Oceanwide as guide. She fell in love with the scale of the landscape and has never looked back.

Alexander Romanovskiy

Expedition Guide



Alexander Romanovskiy comes from Saint-Petersburg, the Northern capital of Russia. He was born in 1981. After having graduated from the boarding school Alexander entered Saint-Petersburg State University, where he spent 5 years studying physical geography, ecology, regional geography and international tourism. Afterwards he was working on his PhD thesis in Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia, doing geocological researches.

In the year of 2011 however, Alexander decided to pause his scientific career and start doing something completely different, which means working in tourism and traveling the world. He spent 2 seasons working as a trekking guide in Fann mountains (Tajikistan), 1 season on Novolazarevskaya Antarctic scientific station (Queen Maud Land, Antarctica) working as a member of a guesthouse crew.

Since February of 2012 most part of the year he spends on Svalbard. For five seasons in a row Alexander has been living and working as a guide in a ghost town of Pyramiden. In 2016 a new page in Alexander's guiding career was opened: he started working as a naturalist guide on cruise ships in polar regions of the world – Svalbard and Antarctica.

3 to 4 months a year Alexander dedicates to his main passion – traveling the world. No public transport, no hotels, only hitch-hiking and staying overnight with locals or sleeping in a tent. This way he has already visited almost all Soviet republics, Middle East (Iran, Turkey), Asia (China), South America (Argentina, Chile, Paraguay), and it is hopefully far not the end! The world is big, friendly and interesting to explore!

Annelou Ubels – Ships Doctor



Annelou Ubels lives in the city of Utrecht in the Netherlands. She studied Medicine at the University of Groningen. For an academic internship, she lived in Southampton, United Kingdom, for a while. After she finished her studies she gained experience as a doctor in the emergency care department, elderly care, and psychiatry before deciding to pursue specialization studies to become a general practitioner. Upon completing these specialization studies she began working as a general practitioner in various practices in and around Utrecht.

Annelou enjoys outdoor activities and relishes being both on and in the water. She began sailing at a young age and worked as a sailing instructor for a couple of years. She is also fond of surfing, playing tennis, and padel. Furthermore she likes playing some funk music on her saxophone.

This was her first time in the polar region. She is passionate about places with awe-inspiring natural landscapes and enjoys multi-day hikes in remote areas to fully immerse herself in nature. She feels honoured to care for all the passengers at the m/v Plancius and to explore the polar region together!



DAILY PROGRAM

Welcome aboard!

Day 1, Thursday, June 6 Embarkation Longyearbyen

Your luggage will be delivered to your cabin as soon as possible. Please check to make sure you have received all your luggage!

*** Tea and coffee are always available in the observation lounge bar on deck 5 ***

- ±17.15 When all are on, board first meeting in the observation lounge on deck 5. Introduction to the ship & mandatory Safety and Lifeboat Drill.
- ±18.00 Departure of the Plancius. Please stay off the bridge during these operations.
- 19.30 Dinner is served in the dining room (deck 3).
- ±21.15 Welcome meeting in the observation lounge on deck 5. Have a toast with the captain, learn to know your expedition guides and hear about our plans.

After the meeting, rubber boots will be distributed at the boot room on deck 3. Take thick socks with you to find the good size! You will be called deck by deck.

The first part of the evening we will sail through the large Isfjord towards the open sea. Then we head north, along the outer coast of Spitsbergen, towards the far north-west. We stay on the outside of the long and narrow island of Prins Karls Forland, as the passage between this island and Spitsbergen is too shallow. The total distance will be around 180 nautical miles (1 nm. is around 1,9 kilometres so about 330 km) and it will take us approximately 15 hours to reach our destination: Raudfjorden.

Please note that tonight we will be sailing into the open sea. Take your seasickness medication before you really feel the movements of the vessel. Make sure that all your belongings are put away safely and that doors and drawers in your cabin are tightly closed. Walk slowly on the ship, always use one hand for yourself and one for the ship and beware of your fingers because of doors jamming!



DAILY PROGRAM

Day 2, Friday, June 7

Raudfjorden

07.00	Wake-up call.
07.30	Breakfast buffet in the dining room (Deck 3).
08.30	Mandatory meeting in the observation lounge: guidelines, zodiac operations and our plans for today!
TBA*	zodiac cruise at Hamiltonbukta in the Raudfjord.
13.00	Lunch is served in the dining room. (Deck 3).
14.00	Landing in Raudfjorden at the Buchananhelvøya.
17.30	Last zodiac back to the ship.
18.30	Recap in the bar.
19.00	Dinner is served.

In the morning, we arrive in the Raudfjorden, where we plan to go on the zodiacs for a cruise along Hamiltonbukta. During the zodiac cruise, we pass some bird-cliffs where large numbers of Kittiwakes and Brünnich's Guillemots nest. Under these cliffs fertile green slopes have developed with a colourful variety of flowers, where often Reindeer graze and Arctic fox roam around.

In the afternoon, we plan to land at the Buchananhelvøya, a hilly peninsula that heads out from the glacier at the base of Raudfjorden. The hikes offer beautiful views, nice Arctic plants and possibly Ptarmigan and Reindeer.

After the landing we will sail out of Raudfjorden and head towards Liefdefjorden.

TBA* is To Be Announced



DAILY PROGRAM

Day 3, Saturday, June 8 Liefdefjorden

07.00	Wake-up call.
07.30	Breakfast.
08.30	Short meeting in the bar on the landing.
09.00	Landing at "Texas Bar"
12.00	Last zodiac back to the ship
13.00	Lunch is served.
14.30	Zodiac cruise and ships cruise near the Monacobreen.
19.00	Dinner

We want to spend the whole day in the beautiful Liefdefjorden. This is not only a fjord of outstanding beauty, but it is also a place which has abundant wildlife.

In the morning, we plan to land at "Texas Bar". This area has beautiful landscape and a historic hut that was used by Trappers that hunted for Polar Bears and Foxes. We will offer two shorter and a longer walk. For this, we split up into 3 groups. The keen photographers and botanists will have more time in the leisurely walking group. Please note, once the groups have started, you cannot change anymore!

After lunch, we sail into deeper into the Liefdefjorden. Here we will cruise with the zodiacs near the impressive Monacobreen. The waters of the glacier front are a favourite feeding spot for thousands of Kittiwakes. Ivory gulls, Beluga's and polar bears are sometimes seen here.

Then we head of again, towards the north of Spitsbergen.



DAILY PROGRAM

Day 4, Sunday, June 9 Hinlopenstretet

Alkefjellet and Palanderbukta

07.00	Wake-up call.
07.30	Breakfast.
08.30	Short meeting in the bar.
09.00	Zodiac cruise at Alkefjellet.
12.00	Last zodiac back to the ship.
13.00	Lunch is served.
14.30	Landing at Torellneset
17.30	Last zodiac back to the ship.
18.00	Recap in the bar
18.30	Dinner is served.

In the morning, we plan to cruise with the zodiacs along the spectacular bird cliff of Alkefjellet (Auk Mountain). Here thousands of Kittiwakes and Guillemot's breed on the steep ice-capped cliffs.

In the afternoon we plan to land at Torellneset, on the second largest island of the Svalbard archipelago, Nordaustlandet. At the beach of this polar desert often walrus haul-out.

After the landing we will sail out of Hinlopen again, and head north, towards the Sjuøyane islands and the pack ice.



DAILY PROGRAM

Day 5, Monday, June 10 Sjuøyane – Phippsøya - Pack ice

- 07.00 Wake-up call.
- 07.30 Breakfast.
- 08.30 Meeting on the upcoming landing
- 09.00 We plan to go ashore at Phippsøya, in the Sjuøyane islands.
- 12.30 Last zodiac back to the ship
- 13.00 Lunch is served.

In the afternoon we will explore the pack ice

- 18.30 Recap and briefing in the bar.
- 19.00 Dinner is served.

Today we will reach our northernmost point at Phippsøya, in the Seven Islands archipelago, north of Nordaustlandet. Here we will be at 81 degrees north, just 540 miles (about 900 kilometres) from the geographic North Pole. Polar bears inhabit this region, along with Walruses and ivory gulls.

The island is named after C. J. Phipps, an English navigator who tried to reach the North Pole here in 1773. He only got as far as 80°48'N. One of the members of this expedition was the then just 14 years old Horatio Nelson, who, as the story goes, landed on one of the islands because he wanted to get a Polar bear skin as a present for his parents. He was discovered while fighting a bear. Fortunately, the bear was then killed and that saved Nelson's life and changed European history.

After the landing we will head towards the east, into the pack ice. As we do not know what this will bring us, no further plans have been made so far.



DAILY PROGRAM

Day 6, Tuesday, June 11 Pack ice – the Continental Shelve

07.00	Wake-up call.
07.30	Breakfast buffet.
08.30	
13.00	Lunch.
TBA*	Please meet Jan in the Bar/Lounge for an introduction to our visit to
19.30	Dinner.



DAILY PROGRAM

Day 7, Wednesday, June 12 Poolepynten - Alkhornet

- | | |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 07.00 | Wake-up call. |
| 07.30 | Breakfast buffet. |
| 08.30 | Landing at Poolepynten |
| 12.30 | Last zodiac back to the ship |
| 13.00 | Lunch. |
| 14.30 | Landing at Alkhornet |
| 17.30 | Last zodiac back to the ship. |
| | After the landing we will announce how to deliver the rubber boots back in the boot room at deck 3. You will be called deck by deck. |
| TBA | Settlement of your account at the reception. Wait for announcements after your return on the ship. |
| 19.30 | Farewell dinner. |
| 21.00 | Please join Jan and the expedition staff in the bar for a disembarkation briefing and farewell drink. |



DAILY PROGRAM

Day 8, Thursday, June 13 Disembarkation – Farewell

07.30 - 08.30 Breakfast

Before going to breakfast, please put your heavy luggage in the corridor near your cabin. The crew and staff will carry it down to the pier.

Please leave your cabin keyrings at the reception.

09.00 Time to say goodbye! All passengers leave the ship.

Buses have been arranged to take you all into Longyearbyen. Those of you that have a flight today at daytime, you will be picked up again at 11.30 at the parking place in front of Svalbard Butikken (the supermarket). This bus will take you to the airport.