



OCEANWIDE
30 YEARS OF EXPEDITIONS

Around Spitsbergen, In the Realm
of Polar Bear & Ice
13th July – 22nd July 2024



M/V Plancius

M/V 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. She underwent a complete 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 Kalaria**

2nd Officer: **Don Buren**

3rd Officer: **Anar Babaiev**

Chief Engineer: **Sebastian Alexandru**

Hotel Manager: **Oleksandr Lyebedyev**

Assist. Hotel Manager: **Lilianna Teresa Van**

Head Chef: **Khabir Moraes**

Ships Doctor: **Anotonie De Winter**

Expedition Leader: **Christophe Bouchoux**

Assist. Expedition Leader: **Michelle van Dijk**

Expedition Guide: **Emily Clarke**

Paolo Bellezze

Ross Wheeler

Jakub Matecki

Andrea Schwetz

Pierre Gallego

Day 1: 13th July

Longyearbyen - Embarkation Day

12:00 GPS Position: 78°14.5'N / 015°32.5'E

Wind: S 5, **Sea State:** Smooth, **Weather:** Overcast, **Air Temp:** 7°C, **Sea Temp:** 6°C

Today is the day! It's finally time for us to embark upon our Arctic adventure! In the late afternoon, we arrived at our ship, m/v *Plancius*, which was to be our new home for the next 10 days. She rocked gently against the pier as we climbed the gangway onto the decks. The day was suitably Arctic, cloudy with a chilly wind – but we were warm and comfortable aboard. We checked in and were escorted to our respective cabins. After this, we could begin to explore the ship, wandering the decks and getting familiar with our new home.



Once we were all aboard, we were invited to the lounge to take part in a mandatory briefing and an abandon ship drill. Not too long after our initial briefing we were invited back to the lounge by our expedition leader, Christophe, ready for the captain's cocktails. Here we met our captain, Ernesto Barria, and the expedition team. We celebrated our expedition with some bubbles and canapes before we all enjoyed our first dinner on board!

We all filed down to the restaurant for a delicious buffet and an opportunity to meet some of our fellow

travelers. At the same time, we set sail from Longyearbyen, ready for our upcoming adventure. The day was not yet complete! After dinner, we located the boot room and collected our rubber 'muck' boots. We were one step closer to being able to start our off-ship activities.

The rest of the evening was spent enjoying our first evening cruise and the never-ending daylight before returning to our cabins to rest in preparation for tomorrow's adventure!



Day 2: 14th July

Kongsfjord & Ny-Ålesund

12:00 GPS Position: 78°52.6'N / 012°31.2'E

Wind: NW 2, Sea State: Smooth, Weather: Overcast, Air Temp: 4°C, Sea Temp: 3°C

Today, we were woken up for the first time by our expedition leader, Christophe, as we had already entered the Kongsfjorden and were approaching Kronebreen, our first stop for a Zodiac cruise. Before commencing our outdoor activities, we had to attend some important mandatory briefings. After breakfast, we all headed to the lecture lounge, where Christophe first talked about our Zodiac procedures and how to wear our life vests. He then proceeded with the polar bear safety briefing to make our landings as safe as possible for us and the polar bears. We also watched the AECO briefing which gave us an overview of the do's and don'ts here in Svalbard.



We were finally ready for our first Zodiac cruise! We boarded nine different Zodiacs which took us all along the Kronebreen. Right next to *Plancius* there was a bearded seal on an ice floe. The seal was very relaxed, every single Zodiac was able to have a good look and observe the rusty red face and the characteristic long and dense whiskers. Our expedition guides took us all along the glacier front where we saw several bird species, as well as beautiful blue bergy bits.

It was then time to return to *Plancius* for a delicious lunch prepared by our top chef Khabir, and also to reposition the ship to Ny-Ålesund, the international research station. Whilst in the vicinity, we had to switch the Bluetooth and Wi-Fi settings off on all of our devices in order to not interfere with the research carried out on plate tectonics.

We were shuttled by Zodiacs to the pier and we were then free to roam inside the town limits. We had enough time to explore the small but interesting settlement before joining Michelle at the Amundsen monument to go to the balloon mast, escorted by Paolo and Andi who were carrying rifles for polar bear safety. Once Michelle was finished with her story telling and explanations, we were approached by a local researcher informing us that a polar bear had been spotted 1km from us and that they had sent their rifle patrol to rescue a group who had found themselves close to the bear with no possibility for shelter. Our guides escorted us back to the pier where we boarded our Zodiacs to head back to the ship. Everything which had been explained during the polar bear safety briefing in the morning now made absolute sense.

Back on the ship, it was time for our first recap where Christophe took the time to explain all of the maritime concepts and units to us such as, nautical miles, and our glaciologist Jakub gave us a short introduction about glaciers and his work in Svalbard, hopefully to be extended into a full lecture, if we have the time for it.

It was then time for dinner, after which many of us met in the lounge for a drink and to share our impressions of the first day.



Day 3: 15th July

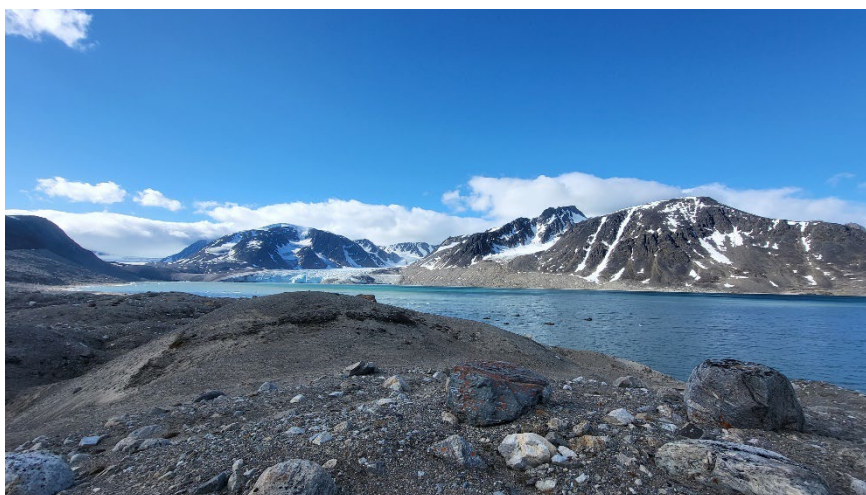
Ayerfjorden & Hamiltonbukta

12:00 GPS Position: 79°40.6'N / 012°05.6'E

Wind: S 3, **Sea State:** Calm, **Weather:** Cloudy, **Air Temp:** 9°C, **Sea Temp:** 5°C

As we awoke to Christophe's French tones with his wake-up call at 07:15 AM, we knew it would be a good day! The sun was shining with a partly overcast sky at the southeastern branch of the beautiful Raudfjorden, and everyone was looking forward to stretching their legs. The expedition team prepared for departure to land the Zodiacs on the beach and half-load their rifles to scout for polar bears. The relentless wind, however, reached over 30 knots, so the decision was made to try to find a more sheltered spot on the southwestern end of Raudfjorden.

It soon turned out to be a brilliant idea. As soon as we changed location, the wind weakened and we received a green light to go from the expedition leader and the bridge. The first guests arrived at the beach at 09:30 am, all geared up and wrapped up warmly. We split into three groups – the leisurely, medium and long hikers, all exploring the area at their optimal pace. Long hikers went to the top of a ridge covered in boulders to see the panoramic views over the entire fjord system. Raudfjorden is where Willem Barents discovered Svalbard, giving it the name Spitsbergen, i.e. spiky mountains. Our expedition team introduced us to everything interesting they could spot – from stones and plants to glaciers and old fox traps.



At 11:30, we started to make our way back to the vessel for some much-needed tea and lunch made by the wonderful galley team.

After lunch, we prepared to arrive at 2:30 pm at Hamiltonbukta, a spectacular bay in the north part of the fjord. Here we embarked Zodiacs and cruised along the shores of the bay. The first attraction was a steep rock face occupied by a colony of common guillemots and kittiwakes. With calm and sunny weather, we then admired five glaciers, one next to another, descending down to the sea level from the valleys surrounding the



bay.

Once back onboard, just before dinner, we gathered again in the lounge for a recap introducing the plans for tomorrow by Christophe and short presentations by our guides about some of the things we had observed today. Subsequently we went to the dining room for another delicious feast.

This was a fantastic day, and we are happy there are many more days left of

our arctic adventure.

Day 4: 16th July

Cruising the Pack Ice

12:00 GPS Position: 80°35.1'N / 015°12.1'E

Wind: W 4, **Sea State:** Smooth, **Weather:** Overcast, **Air Temp:** -2°C, **Sea Temp:** 0°C



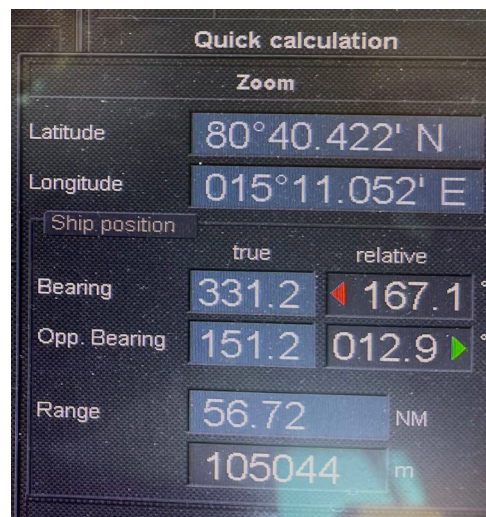
Today, our expedition leader Christophe allowed us to sleep a little longer, delivering our daily wakeup call at 7:45am. *Plancius* was positioned at the edge of the pack ice, an incredible sight to start our day. The weather was a little overcast and outside temperatures dropped down to -2 degrees Celsius. After a hearty breakfast, we headed out on deck to be mesmerized by the beauty of this remote area. We slowly started making our way into the ice and between floes, which increased in numbers. Both guests and the expedition team scouted for wildlife around the ship. We observed birds flying past the ship including, fulmars, guillemots, and kittiwakes.

We headed further north, during which time Jakub presented us with a lecture in the observation lounge about the state and fate of the sea ice. The lecture was well

attended and was extremely informative and interesting. Soon after we had lunch and after a short rest, scouting for wildlife continued. Every once in a while fog rolled in, but this underlined the uniqueness of these surreal surroundings. The team eventually spotted a juvenile hooded seal that we could observe resting on an ice floe. To warm us all up and to take in the surroundings together, the crew prepared an afternoon hot chocolate party on the upper deck behind the bridge. For those that wanted a little extra warmth there was the option to have some rum with the hot chocolate, What a nice treat!

Eventually, the wall of fog became so thick that we had to sail out of it heading southwards again. To keep us entertained, Paolo gave us a lecture about the history of the North Pole exploration which was enjoyed by many of us warming up in the lounge. Later that evening Christophe delivered his daily recap, and guides Pierre and Emily introduced us to the seal species we had seen today, the hooded seal, and to the Arctic tern which makes a huge annual migration from the Arctic to Antarctica! After our delicious dinner we relaxed in the warmth of the lounge with some hot drinks before heading to bed for some well-deserved rest after all of our scouting.

The highest latitude we reached today was 80°40.422`North.



Day 5: 17th July

Claravågen & Eolusneset

12:00 GPS Position: 80°05.1`N / 018°02.1`E

Wind: SW 2, Sea State: Calm, Weather: Fog, Air Temp: 5°C, Sea Temp: 5°C

The morning started with a long, exploratory Zodiac cruise in Claravågen west of Nordauslandet. The day was very calm with almost no wind and clear skies to start. We sailed through a narrow entrance, Claravågsundet into the Claravågen, a vast area with pebbled beaches and perfectly calm waters inside. We observed many seabirds, primarily black guillemots, brent geese and a nesting arctic skua but it is the landscape that really steals the show here. As we continued moving deeper into the lagoons, we entered Arovika first and then, after sailing through a narrow river, we come out into Wärmelaguna. We travelled in the Zodiacs past a small glaucus gull colony, and everybody was amazed by the effective camouflage of the chicks! In some cases, we could be staring straight into a standing, apparently lonely adult, with two invisible chicks standing either side. The little birds perfectly faded into the cliff background, the ideal camouflage, with only their eyes giving them away when looking very carefully. We also found an old, small, abandoned rowing boat, we were not sure about the exact origin but it likely relates to scientific work carried out many decades ago.



As we sailed back out of this series of lagoons, the fog started to close in, by the time we are all out of the water and preparing ourselves ready for lunch, the flag on the bow of *Plancius* was no longer visible. After some consideration we changed our afternoon plans and travelled across the Hinlopenrenna to Eolusneset in the Sorgfjorden.

The name Sorgjorden or “Sorrow fjord” was used since the 17th century as a reminder of the troubles that whalers had faced in this area. Here we landed at a place called Eolusneset. Once on land we divided up in to three groups, offering different levels of hiking.

Right next to the landing site was a hill covered with huge rocks and a cross located 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 the cross are 30 graves, dating back from the 16th and 17th century, 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 used as burial grounds during the whaling era.



On the landing was an old trapper hut, which looked from a distance quite intact. However, on closer inspection, the side facing the shore was broken. It was amazing how tiny the hut was, however! For the trapper it was not the main winter hut, but one of many auxiliary huts related to a main trapper hut, used only for days and not for weeks. Huts like this were used as stepping stones for covering a bigger area. The sun was shining, and we all enjoyed our time on shore.

We also had our first observation of the Atlantic walrus with two hauled out and resting on the beach.

Day 6: 18th July

Alkefjellet & Nauck Hoffoya

12:00 GPS Position: 79°32.8'N / 018°52.4'E

Wind: S 1, **Sea State:** slight, **Weather:** Clear sky, **Air Temp:** 5°C, **Sea Temp:** 6°C

We had been at anchor for much of the night, but in the early morning the engine was started, and the anchor was hauled up. We woke up in Hinlopen strait and our outing this morning was a Zodiac cruise along the bird cliffs of Alkefjellet. The original name of this place was ‘Mount Guillemot’, for obvious reasons! About 65,000 breeding pairs of Brünnich’s guillemot use this dolerite intrusion to lay their cone-shaped egg on narrow ledges. Both parents sit for 32 days and feed the chick for three weeks, until the day arrives when



it has to jump down from the cliff. On these cliffs, the birds have found a natural fortress to help defend against predators. However, we could see a glaucous gull eating a guillemot. The rocky columns in the northern part of the cliff resemble skyscrapers making the entire bird colony an analogue for a vivid city where everyone is busy and noisy, as guillemots seemed to rush to their everyday duties. We continued our cruise along the base of the cliffs, then at the

end of the cliff we faced a spectacular glacier steeply descending from the highlands down to the sea. Around 11 AM we headed back to the ship where a well-prepared lunch was soon served. Sunny and calm weather with ideal visibility was a memorable experience, definitely one of the highlights of the expedition!

After our lunch *Plancius* turned south. Since we have not yet spotted a polar bear, our expedition leader Christophe and captain Ernesto decided to explore a group of small rocky islands further south in Hinlopen strait with hopes of showing us the king of the Arctic. The weather was absolutely terrific with clear sky, no wind and temperature of 12 degrees Celsius – far above the norm for July. The expedition team



patiently scanned the area with binoculars and their efforts were finally rewarded. At 1:30 PM Christophe announced they found a polar bear! We rushed to the outside decks with binoculars and the longest lenses we had to capture this magnificent animal. It was peacefully sleeping on top of a rocky ridge, raising its head once in a while. As we did not want to disturb its siesta, we stayed at a safe distance of some hundreds of meters and remained as quiet as possible. Then, to make this day even more special, just before 3 PM, our ship moved to another island where a second bear was spotted! This one had apparently finished its nap, as it vigorously explored its own stretch of land walking majestically up and down along a rocky ridge. Both of these sightings were like a dream come true for so many of us.



About 6 PM we abandoned the archipelago of small islands and soon afterwards gathered in the lounge for a recap. This evening's dinner was unlike any previous one. *Plancius* anchored in a glacial bay in east Spitsbergen for a polar barbeque on the outside decks! We laughed and danced until the late hours waiting for the sun to set...

But obviously, we sunbathed until 10:30 PM instead.

Day 7: 19th July

Sundneset & Kapp Lee

12:00 GPS Position: 78°12,2'N / 021°06.8'E

Wind: E 3, **Sea State:** Slight, **Weather:** Partly Cloudy, **Air Temp:** 6°C, **Sea Temp:** 4°C

Sundneset this morning, we landed by an old but well-preserved cabin Würzburger Hütte,

We received an early wakeup call today! It was unusual to hear Christophe on the PA at 06:45 but there was good reason for it. Another polar bear sighting, it feels like bears have been raining on us over the last couple of days. The bear was roaming around the black legged kittiwake bird cliffs we were intending to visit. Surely, he/she was trying to get some food from the bird nests - eggs and chicks if there was any opportunity. However, the bear decided it was time to swim and went into the water to cross the fjord. New polar bear observation guidelines mean we are requested to retreat and leave the area if we see a swimming bear and that is exactly what we did. Aside from these rules, it is not safe (for either the bear or us) to land in a place with a bear on land or swimming nearby.



Plan B! We continued sailing west along the Freemansundet to a place called Sundneset and the Würszburger Hütte. The hut was built by Julius Büdel's Stauferland Expedition in 1959-1967 dedicated to natural history, especially Geomorphology.

We divided into different hiking groups and had beautiful, quiet, and very photo friendly reindeer encounters.

We also found ancient, 5000+ years old whale bones in places where they should not have been, we learnt isostatic rebound had raised these beaches from the sea level and that's why we were finding so many seashells and whale bones higher up than would be expected.

We also observed red throated divers, long tailed ducks, red phalarope, and other beautiful species of Arctic birds.

In the afternoon we sailed out of Freemansund to the NW tip of Edgeøya, here our intention was to land at Kapp Lee. In the 18th and 19th century many walrus were slaughtered here with over 400 skulls littering the shoreline, missing their tusks laying piled up to one side. More happily, today, the walrus have reclaimed the place as theirs and haul out peacefully in numbers at the very same beach on which they once suffered. Unfortunately, or fortunately! Our landing had to be cancelled due to yet more polar bear sightings! This time two individuals were roaming around on the tundra, a very large, likely male bear and a slightly smaller one. We suspected from our observations that the reason for these two otherwise lonely animals to be together was most likely linked to mating, it appeared that the larger male was being extremely patient and following the female. We launched our Zodiacs and approached closer to get a good look at both the bears



and walrus to distances that complied with wildlife observations and non-disturbance rules. It was a beautiful time, especially with the walrus.

We return to the ship and then with warm drinks gather in the lounge to listen to Christoph's interesting polar bear lecture as we begin to make our way south. We have a long transit before our next destination, Hornsund.

Day 8: 20th July

Hyrneodden & Burgerbukta

12:00 GPS Position: 77°02.0'N / 016°01.8'E

Wind: SE 2, **Sea State:** Slight, **Weather:** Overcast, **Air Temp:** 9°C, **Sea Temp:** 4°C

On the eighth day of our trip, as usual our expedition leader Christophe woke us up at 7.15am. Outside the temperature was 1 degree Celsius and the fog was dense. After breakfast we received the message that our planned landing site was clear, so we were excited for another day of adventure! Our first landing should be Hyrneodden in the Hornsund. Hornsund is the southernmost fjord of the Spitsbergen Archipelago and is 30km deep. Again we were lucky with nice weather, sunshine and no wind at the landing beach. Soon after we chose our preferred hiking groups we began our walks. The surrounding landscape was spectacular with beautiful mountain ranges, some of them caressed by clouds. The guides spotted a few lunge feeding humpback whales in the fjords ahead of us. We observed some nesting Arctic skua. Afterwards for those that were brave, there was the possibility for the polar plunge in the cold Arctic waters. Some of us thoroughly enjoyed the cold dip in the water! After we returned to *Plancius*, a few lucky



ones even spotted some beluga whales close to the shoreline. After our hearty lunch we still had the possibility to observe the feeding humpback whales and one of those gave us a whale of a time by performing some acrobatics such as pectoral fin slaps and breaching. We enjoyed that very much! Our afternoon activity was a zodiac cruise at the Paierlbreen in Burgerbukta. The glacier was embedded in between two steep mountain ranges and we could easily observe the many waterfalls coming down from the glaciers. Some of them created vivid orange lines in the rocks due to a high amount of iron and sulfur. We continued our way through the ice and bigger icebergs slowly to the edge where the ice was very dense and a little challenging to maneuver through with the zodiacs. Here we were very lucky and many of us



observed two ivory gulls. Very popular amongst birders and an aesthetically beautiful bird to watch. We observed the ivory gulls for a while until we started to explore more of the surrounding brash ice and bergs. Once back onboard, Christophe awaited us with an extended recap where we listened to talks from Jakub about the glacier we just visited, and from Ross about the ivory gull and Andi learning more about humpback whales. Christophe himself gave us a briefing about our final day of activities and then we headed to the dining room for another delicious dinner. What a beautiful day we had!

Day 9: 21st July

Bamsebu & Ingeborgfjellet

12:00 GPS Position: 77°33.3'N / 015°05.7'E

Wind: E 3, Sea State: Calm, Weather: Overcast, Air Temp: 7°C, Sea Temp: 4°C



Christophe woke us up this morning to a beautiful view of an area of tundra called Bamsebu. Right after breakfast we all embarked the Zodiacs for our landing. This place was a beluga whale hunting station and the beach next to the cabin is filled with the remains of approximately 550 belugas which were slaughtered here. We divided in the three usual hiking groups. The only difference was that the long hikers walked from the landing beach in Bamsebu to the very opposite area called Fleur de Lys. Along our hikes we learned about the past hunting history and about belugas. We observed reindeer along the way, a couple of harbor seals hauled out on rocks, some eider ducks and two red-throated divers flew over us. The landscape was also very interesting, ranging from polar desert to Arctic

tundra, with all the characteristic plants and flowers associated with it.

As we repositioned the ship, it was time for lunch, but just minutes before the dining room opened, Christophe announced on the PA system that one of our guests had spotted yet another polar bear. Our captain Ernesto positioned *Plancius* so that we could observe the bear from a safe distance without disturbing it. It was first sitting on an island, then it started walking around, grabbing a piece of skin, and chewing on it. It was difficult to tell exactly what kind of skin the bear had found. Then it decided to lay down and we all had time for a quick lunch. After lunch, the bear was still there, and we could observe it for another 10 minutes before departing. We had to leave because the bear was spotted in a bird sanctuary, and we were not allowed to get closer to the Zodiacs.

As we arrived at our afternoon destination, the beach was lined with belugas swimming along the shoreline. Unfortunately, they had mysteriously disappeared by the time we had lowered the Zodiacs. We all went ashore for our last landing in Ingeborgfjellet. A TV crew was on site, and our expedition leader, Christophe, communicated with them to avoid interfering with their work. We then went to the little auk cliff, which harbors thousands of these cute birds. Michelle led the way and went up on the side of the colony to mark the highest point to which we could distribute ourselves. We then sat very quietly to avoid disturbing them, and we all observed their flights in huge groups as they were all producing their characteristic sounds, which resembled laughs. After about an hour, we detected a large male reindeer behind us. This magnificent reindeer had huge antlers, and Christophe took a group to look at it.

Michelle then found an arctic fox which was running on the edge of the little auk colony, probably looking for an easy meal. We were all able to observe this little predator as it made its way to its den.

It was then time to go back to *Plancius* for our captain's farewell cocktail, and Ross showed us the slideshow he had been working on during the entire trip. We all got very emotional seeing all of the places we had been to, and all the wonders we had witnessed. We were then all called for our last plated dinner prepared by our chef Khabir and his galley team. It was excellent as usual.

What an amazing expedition trip this has been, and our brains are still processing all the beautiful experiences we have had!



Day 10: 22nd July

Disembarkation

09:00 GPS Position: 78°13.8'N / 015°36.1'E

Wind: ENE 2, Sea State: Calm, Weather: P. Cloudy, Air Temp: 7°C, Sea Temp: 5°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 *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 or to our next adventure.



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: 1054.6 nautical miles
Farthest north: 80°40.42'N

On behalf of Oceanwide Expeditions, Captain Ernesto Barria, Expedition Leader Christophe Bouchoux, Hotel Manager Oleksandr Lyebyedyev, and all the crew and staff of m/v *Plancius*, it has been a pleasure traveling with you!

Trip Map PLA07 – 24

No.	Time	Location	Activity
1	PM	Longyearbyen	Boarding
2	AM	Kronebreen	Zodiac cruise
3	PM	Ny Álesund	Landing
4	AM	Ayerfjorden	
5	PM	Hamiltonbukta	Landing
6	AM/ PM	Sea Ice	Ship cruise
7	AM	Claravågen	Zodiac cruise
8	PM	Eolusneset	Landing
9	AM	Alkefjellet	Zodiac cruise
10	AM	Sundneset	Landing
11	PM	Kapp Lee	Zodiac cruise
12	AM	Hyrneodden	Landing
13	PM	West Burgerbukta	Zodiac cruise
14	AM	Bamsebu	Landing
15	PM	Ingeborgfjellet	Landing
16	AM	Longyearbyen	Disimbark



Christophe Bouchoux

Expedition Leader



Christophe Bouchoux is French. His background is sixteen years of backpacking as a naturalist around the world on the five continents. He is a big lover of our planet, nature and wildlife. He worked (and still does sometimes) as a guide in India and Nepal and as a trilingual guide in Finnish Lapland between reindeer herders, frozen lakes and river, northern lights and snowmobiles. He still guides groups of naturalists in search of whales, moose and musk ox in Scandinavia and particularly in Norway.

He recently started to work in polar region and worked as a guide in the Arctic: Svalbard, Franz Joseph land, and East Greenland; and Antarctic zone: Falklands, South Georgia, and Antarctic peninsula. His main subject is the history of polar conquest. When he is not in « cold » regions, Christophe spends his time in his jungle lodge in south Nepal near Bardia National park, home of the Bengal tiger.

Michelle van Dijk

Assistant Expedition Leader



Is nearly a local, since she is the owner of Longyearbyen Camping, world's northernmost camping site. Working as a guide, this campsite has been her home base since 2004.

Living in a tent, she spends four months a year on Spitsbergen guiding day trips, trekking tours & expedition cruises. These days she mainly works on ships, as guide or expedition leader.

She believes that there is no better way to get closer to a place than to work there, she also lived in Sweden & Iceland.

Her first visit of Spitsbergen was back in 2001 and instantly she fell in love with this remote archipelago.

Although she picked plants as her specialism, Michelle is a generalist. She took the course Arctic & Antarctic studies at Groningen University. Michelle published a book about Sjef van Dongen, who took part in the rescue operation after Nobile's airship crashed in 1928 and the Dutch Spitsbergen guidebook on which she worked together with Rolf Stange.

Michelle has been working as a guide in Antarctica, the Falklands, Faroe Islands, Greenland, Hebrides, Iceland, Jan Mayen, Norway, South Georgia, Spitsbergen and Sweden.

You can speak to her any language you like, but she will only reply in Dutch, English, German or Swedish.

Emily Clarke – Expedition Guide



Emily grew up by the ocean and has always found it a source of inspiration and wonder. She has a strong sense of adventure and embraces opportunities whenever they arise, which has resulted in some amazing journeys.

A passion for wildlife conservation, travel and working with people has led her to work onboard expedition vessels.

Familiar with life at sea, Emily divides her time between two fairly different roles. The first as an expedition guide, and the second as a Marine Mammal Observer in the oil and gas industry, working onboard seismic vessels; protecting marine mammals from anthropogenic sound sources in the ocean.

Emily has over 15 years' experience working with wildlife, both in natural habitats and in rehabilitation. She has spent over ten years working with gorillas, which saw her travel to remote parts of Africa collecting data on wild gorillas, and taking part in conservation and community development projects addressing human-wildlife conflicts.

During her time off, Emily enjoys paddle boarding, kayaking and diving, in-between preparing her latest lectures and planning her next adventure.

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.

Ross Wheeler - Expedition Guide



Ross lives in a small town in Cornwall, which is located in the south western corner of the UK. As he grew up in a coastal town he has always been fascinated by marine wildlife and the marine environment.

Having completed an undergraduate degree and master's degree in environmental sciences / conservation biology at Plymouth University he then went on to use his passion and education to work as an environmental consultant and researcher in the coastal

and marine field.

This progressed into the offshore sector where he worked as a marine mammal observer and passive acoustic monitoring operator in the offshore seismic and renewable industry sectors. This role took him to a wide range of areas throughout the North Atlantic, Central Africa and Southern Africa where he conducted marine mammal and sea bird surveys aboard various survey vessels. After a few years in this industry he then moved into the environmental compliance side of the cruise ship industry where he continues to work for six months of the year today. Whether he is working on ships around the world, volunteering for conservation based organisations or travelling in his 'time off' he is constantly seeking opportunities to photograph wildlife in their natural environment.

Feel free to ask him any questions about marine mammals, seabirds or anything environmentally related with the shipping industry.

Jakub Małecki - Expedition Guide



Jakub was born in Poland in 1985. As a kid, he dreamed of becoming an astronaut, but later his focus shifted towards astronomy. Eventually, he obtained a masters and doctoral degree in Earth Sciences and became a glaciologist. As he puts it, researching remote, glacier-covered regions is almost like landing on another planet, so the childhood dream has partly come true.

Since 2007 Jakub has been studying glaciers across the world, either directly or remotely, i.e., using satellite or aerial images. His main interest is how glaciers respond to changing climate in different environmental settings. Most of his glaciology work Jakub carries out on Svalbard, the arctic archipelago located midway between Norway and the north pole, where he fell in love with ice. Since then, Jakub joins expeditions to remote regions on an every-year basis.

Jakub considers public education by the science community at least as important as delivering new knowledge, so he is a keen glaciology communicator, book author and a frequent guest to the Polish media outlets and science festivals where he comments on polar and mountain affairs. Apart from glaciology, Jakub is a huge enthusiast of planetary sciences and space exploration and tries to play the ukulele.

Andi Schwetz – Expedition Guide



Andi was born in Budapest and grew up in Germany. Andi has always been fascinated by animals and nature, especially marine mammals ever since she was a child. She wanted to be a whale researcher, became a whale expert, without studying at a university, but through passion. She initially graduated in sociology, but then ran her own cocktail bar for 10 years. However, her enthusiasm for sea creatures never left her and she began to travel the world to be close to these fascinating animals and to observe them.

As a scuba and freediver, she was able to get particularly close to many whale species and experience adventures. For example, she has already swum with orcas three times in Arctic Norway. She came to Oceanwide because she wanted to share her passion with heart and enthusiasm. She was already able to gain experience as a trainee in Antarctica in the spring of 2023. The polar regions with their special fauna exert a very special attraction on her. She is also interested in landscape photography and has great tips for successful mobile phone photography. Another passion of hers is yoga, which she also practices as a yoga instructor. She speaks English, German, Hungarian, and a little bit of Spanish and French. Andi is looking forward to more great adventures as a team member of Oceanwide!

Pierre Gallego – Expedition Guide



Pierre is a veterinarian specialized in marine mammal medicine. He has been working in the field of marine biology for 18 years, and has been organizing marine mammal research internships around the world since 2004. He represents the Government of Luxembourg at the International Whaling Commission and CCAMLR, and works with numerous international NGOs to promote marine mammal conservation and to fight cetacean captivity.

He is currently carrying out his PhD with the Oceanology Lab of the University of Liege, Belgium. His PhD thesis deals with pollutants and stable isotopes in humpback

whales off Ecuador and Mozambique.

He is a keen birdwatcher and enjoys photography. The ocean is his passion, and water is his element!

De Winter Antoine – Medical doctor



I'm Antoine de Winter, your ship's doctor, bringing 13 years of medical experience across diverse environments. From bustling urban centres to remote outposts, I've tended to a wide array of patients, all while immersing myself in various cultures and societies through my background in anthropology.

Beyond my medical and anthropological pursuits, I possess a profound appreciation for nature's silent landscapes and the allure of adventure. Whether it's the serene beauty of untouched wilderness or the thrill of exploring uncharted territories, I find solace and inspiration in the great outdoors.

I've been working from Bruxelles to Canada, up to Mayotte and the Indian ocean. From social to emergency. I do appreciate the company of others and go to meet other people and culture.

Can't wait to navigate the challenges and wonders that lie ahead, fostering camaraderie and forging memories that will endure beyond the bounds of this expedition. Here's to a successful voyage filled with discovery and meaningful experiences.

German

Ich bin Antoine de Winter, Ihr Schiffsarzt, und bringe 13 Jahre medizinische Erfahrung in unterschiedlichsten Umgebungen mit. Von geschäftigen Stadtzentren bis zu abgelegenen Außenposten habe ich mich um eine Vielzahl von Patienten gekümmert und dabei durch meinen anthropologischen Hintergrund in verschiedene Kulturen und Gesellschaften eingetaucht.

Über meine medizinischen und anthropologischen Aktivitäten hinaus hege ich eine tiefe Wertschätzung für die stillen Landschaften der Natur und den Reiz des Abenteuers. Ob es die ruhige Schönheit unberührter Wildnis oder der Nervenkitzel ist, unerforschte Gebiete zu erkunden, ich finde Trost und Inspiration in der freien Natur.

Ich habe von Brüssel bis Kanada, bis Mayotte und dem Indischen Ozean gearbeitet. Von gesellig bis Notfall. Ich schätze die Gesellschaft anderer und gehe, um andere Menschen und Kulturen kennenzulernen.

Ich kann es kaum erwarten, die Herausforderungen und Wunder zu meistern, die vor uns liegen, Kameradschaft zu fördern und Erinnerungen zu schaffen, die über die Grenzen dieser Expedition hinaus Bestand haben werden. Auf eine erfolgreiche Reise voller Entdeckungen und bedeutsamer Erfahrungen.



DAILY PROGRAM

Welcome aboard!

Day 1 / Thursday 13th July 2024

16.00 **Embarkation.** Once you have found your cabin, please feel free to explore the ship.

When all are on board

Please listen to announcements for timings:

Introduction to the ship by our hotel manager Aleks and **mandatory safety briefing and lifeboat drill** in the Lounge/Bar – Deck 5.

Thereafter we invite you to our Welcome Aboard Briefing in the Lounge/Bar – Deck 5.

19.30 **Dinner** is served in the Dining Room. Enjoy your meal.

thereafter You will get your **rubber boots** in the boot-room (Deck 3 forward). Listen to **announcements** – we will call you by deck.

IMPORTANT: Before you go to bed tonight.

For all transmitting devices in Kongsfjord tomorrow morning (Mobile phone, cameras, laptops, ear pods ...),

turn off bluetooth

turn off wifi



DAILY PROGRAM

Kongsfjord

Day 2 | Sunday 14th July 2024

IMPORTANT: For all transmitting devices in Kongsfjord today:

turn off bluetooth

turn off wifi

(Mobile phone, cameras, laptops, ear pods ...)

- 07.15** **Wake up call.** A wonderful good morning!
- 07.30** **Breakfast** buffet for **one hour** in the Dining Room.
We will get to the pier of Ny Ålesund.
- 8.30** **Mandatory** briefing in the lounge on how to behave in **Polar Bear country** and how to get ashore (and back) safely with our **rubber boats** (Zodiacs).
- Followed by our first zodiac cruise in Kongsfjord
- 12.30** **Lunch-Buffer** for one hour in the Dining Room.
- 13.30** Mandatory briefing about Ny Ålesund

When the gangway is prepared

Landing: Ny Ålesund. The northernmost permanent settlement in the world was established in 1917 as a mining settlement. Today, Ny Ålesund is a centre for Arctic research and a famous historical site. From here Amundsen, Ellsworth & Nobile flew over 90°N in the airship *Norge*.

- **Feel free** to leave (and come back to) the ship any time.
- Please stay on the **gravel roads** at all times.
- The souvenir shop will be open for us from 13.30 until 14.30.
- **15.00** we meet at the **bust of Roald Amundsen** (in the middle of the village) to walk to the anchoring mast of the *Norge and Italia* and Michelle will tell the story of Amundsen.
- **17.00** be **back on board**, we are leaving Ny Ålesund

18.30 **Recap of today and briefing** for tomorrow.

19.00 **Dinner** is served. Bon Appetite!

"I am prepared to go anywhere, provided it be forward."

David Livingstone (1813-1873)



DAILY PROGRAM

RAUDFJORD

Day 2 | Monday 15th of July 2024

- 07.15** **Wake up call.** A wonderful good morning!
- 07.30** **Breakfast** buffet for **one hour** in the Dining Room.
- 09.00** **Landing: Hironnellehamna.** Today we will be in the harsh northwest-corner of Spitzbergen. We will sail into Raudfjord, where our morning-landing will be on the peninsular Buchananhalvøya to get an impression of Spitsbergen's wild northwest. We plan to explore the area in different groups. The beach is easy, but besides that there will be also blocks and boulders on our hikes.
- 12.30** **Lunch-Buffer** for one hour in the Dining Room.
- 14.30** **Zodiac cruise in Hamiltonbukta.** This bay is very rich of different landscapes (tundra, Ice, Islands...) and there is a good probability for wildlife, especially birds.
- 18.30** **Recap of today and briefing** for tomorrow.
- 19.00** **Dinner** is served. Bon Appetite!
- 20:30** **Lecture** in the lounge: 'Discovery of Spitsbergen and the situation today'

*A journey is a person in itself; no two are alike.
And all plans, safeguards, policies and coercion are fruitless. We find after
years of struggle that we do not take a trip;
a trip takes us.*

John Steinbeck (1902 - 1968)



DAILY PROGRAM

A DAY IN THE PACK ICE

Day 4 | Tuesday 16th July 2024

Expedition day in the pack ice! North of the Spitsbergen we will encounter the pack ice, a spectacular Arctic Wonderland. Please join us on deck in the search of wildlife – it is a brilliant experience unto itself to navigate in the polar pack.

If we have the luck to encounter wildlife, please **keep noise levels low** (voices down; close doors gently) for the best opportunities of finding and remaining with it.

- 07.45** **Pack-ice-sleep-in** 😊.
- 08.00** **Breakfast** buffet for **one hour** in the Dining Room.
- 12.30** The **lunch-buffet** is waiting for us in the Dining Room. Enjoy your meal.
- 18.30** **Recap** of today and **briefing** for tomorrow in the lounge.
- 19.00** Enjoy your meal. **Dinner** is served!

"We need the tonic of wildness... At the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplorable, that land and sea be indefinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomed by us because unfathomable. We can never have enough of nature."

Henry David Thoreau (Walden: Or, Life in the Woods)



DAILY PROGRAM

Murchison Fjord

Day 5 | Wednesday 17th July 2024

Today we will explore Nordaustlandet. The land of the North-East, the most remote arctic corner of Svalbard. We will discover a new landscape: the polar desert. Nature and history combined.

- 07.15** **Good Morning,** good morning.
- 7.30 **Breakfast** buffet for **one hour** in the Dining Room.
- 9.00 Zodiac cruise in the hidden bay of Claravågen
- 12.30 The **lunch-buffet** is waiting for us in the Dining Room. Enjoy your meal.
- 14:30 Landing in Kinnvika an abandoned settlement built by Swedish Scientists for the International Geophysical Year 1957-59. Once again, we will organise 3 walking groups to discover the surroundings.
- 18.30** **Recap** of today and **briefing** for tomorrow in the lounge.
- 19.00 Enjoy your meal. **Dinner** is served!

"We need the tonic of wildness... At the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplorable, that land and sea be indefinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomed by us because unfathomable. We can never have enough of nature."

Henry David Thoreau (Walden: Or, Life in the Woods)



DAILY PROGRAM

HINLOPENSTRETET

Day 6 | Thursday 18th July 2024

- 07.15** **Rise and shine.** Wake up call.
- 07.30** **Breakfast.** Let's get a bite.
- 09.00** **Zodiac cruise: Alkefjellet.** This morning we would like to visit the "Auk Mountain", so named due to the enormous number of Brünnich's guillemots breeding along these 100m high basaltic cliffs. We intend to do a Zodiac cruise following the whole spectacular cliff. Please **dress warm**, we are not getting ashore.
- 12.30** **Lunch** is waiting for us.
- 15.00** **Landing: Torellneset or Ardneset** (depending on weather). In southern Hinlopen, both landings are very good places to see walrus. If our friends are at home, we will visit the animals in two groups. **Both groups will get the same amount of time with the walrus.**
- The first 5 boats:** We are **going for a short stroll first.** After that we visit the walrus.
- The second 5 boats:** We are **going to the walrus first.** After that we go for a short stroll. There will be the possibility to get back to the ship right after the walrus visit.
- 18.30** Daily **recap & briefing** for tomorrow.
- 19.00** Enjoy your meal. **Dinner** is served!

*Men wanted for hazardous journey.
Small wages. Bitter cold.
Long months of complete darkness.
Constant danger.
Safe return doubtful.
Honour and recognition in case of success.*

*Ernest Shackleton (1874–1922) newspaper announcement before his
Endurance Expedition*



DAILY PROGRAM


Barentsøya / Edgeøya

Day 7 | Friday 18th July 2024

- 07.15** **A wonderful good morning.** Wake up call.
- 07.30 Breakfast buffet for one hour.
- 09.00 **Landing: Freemansund.** If wind conditions permit, our intention is to spend today's morning in the southwestern end of Freemansund, the strait between Edgeøya and Barentsøya (Svalbards 3rd and 4th largest islands). Plateau mountains and gentle hills dominate the landscape. Landings in Freemansund are generally easy terrain to walk.
- 12.30 **Lunch** is waiting for us.
- 15.00** **Landing: Kapp Lee.** During lunch we will be sailing south and intend to land on southwestern Edgeøya, at Kapp Lee. It is one of the biggest walrus colonies and a historical place (Pomors trappers, science and oil industry...)
- 18.30** Daily **recap & briefing** for tomorrow.
- 19.00 Enjoy your meal. **Dinner** is served!

What is the urge to travel? I think it comes from the desire to see what is behind the next hill; a sense of adventure and restlessness.

Peter Schmidt Mikkelsen, Sirius man 1977 - 1979



DAILY PROGRAM

HORNSUND

Day 8 | Saturday 20th July 2024

- 07.15** **Good morning!**
- 07.30** **Breakfast** – enjoy!
- 09.00** **Landing: Gåshamna, Hornsund.** Today we will be exploring Hornsund, Spitsbergen’s most southerly and arguably one of the most beautiful fjords. We intend to land on the western side of Gåshamna, a wide bay that has been witness to different phases of Spitsbergen’s history. Remains of a 17th century English whaling station and foundations of Pomor houses (Russian hunters) are found in the area. In different hiking groups we invite you to explore the area.
- Bring your swimsuit.** If you ever wanted to take a swim in the Arctic-ocean, this is your chance at the end of our landing. We bring towels. Enjoy!
- 12.30** **Lunch** is waiting for us.
- 15.00** **Zodiac cruise: Burgerbukta Hornsund.** This afternoon we are going on a zodiac cruise in one of the most beautiful fjord of south Spitsbergen. With its high cliffs, this place gives a taste of Greenland... for a future cruise 😊
- 18.30** **Recap and briefing** for tomorrow.
- 19.00** **Dinner.** Bon Appetite!

Where does the white go when the snow melts?

Author unknown



DAILY PROGRAM

BELLSUND

Date: Sunday 21st July 2024

Day: Day 9

- 07.15** **Good morning! Wake up call!**
- 07.30** **Breakfast** buffet for **one hour** in the Dining Room.
- 09.00** **Landing: Bamsebu (Ahlstrandhalvøya), Van Keulenfjord.** This morning, we get ashore at the Beluga hunting cabin of Bamsebu. Beluga skeletons litter the area. The place is a unique cultural remain of Svalbard. Please take care not to step on or touch the bones.
From here we will start exploring the wide-open tundra in our well-known hiking groups.
- 12.30** Our **lunch-buffet** is waiting for us in the Dining Room. Enjoy your meal.
- 14.30** **Landing: Ingeborgfjellet,** for our last landing, we plan to go ashore at Ingeborgfjellet. This landing offers birdlife (little Auks) and tundra animals like Reindeers.
A nice place to finish the trip!
- 18.00** **Farewell Cocktail with Captain & last official meeting.** Please join us for a toast on our voyage!
- 19.00** **The Last Supper.** Bon Appetite!

"I am prepared to go anywhere, provided it be forward."

David Livingstone (1813-1873)



DAILY PROGRAM

LONGYEARBYEN

Day 10 | Monday 22nd July 2024

07.15 For a last time: **A wonderful good morning.**

Important: Please put your check-in luggage into the corridors before you go to breakfast! The crew will bring it on shore. Please **identify your luggage** on shore, to be sure it's off the vessel.

07.30 **Breakfast is available** in the restaurant.

09:00 Bus From Plancius to Town

From Town to airport :

12:30 Tag (SK4425), **TURKOISE**

14:45 Tag (SK4491), **ORANGE**

17:30 Tag (DY391), **BLUE**

If you stay in town. No tag and take your luggage with you in the bus to Town at 9:00

On behalf of Captain, Crew and Staff, have a safe journey home!

*Have you suffered, starved and
triumphed,
grovelled down, yet grasped at glory,
Grown bigger in the bigness of the
whole?*

*"Done things" just for the doing,
letting babblers tell the story,
Seeing through the nice veneer the
naked soul?*

*Have you seen God in His splendours
heard the text that nature renders?*

*The simple things, the true things,
the silent men who do things --
Then listen to the wild -- it's calling
you.*

*Robert William Service „Call of the
wild“*