



Kayak Trip Log

Ortelius in search of Polar Bears and Pack Ice

Day 1:

After welcoming all passengers aboard the Ortelius and conducting safety briefings for potential ship evacuation scenarios, we present the kayak activity and specific safety measures for sea kayaking in this region, where dangers like polar bears and walruses await. Kayak equipment is distributed to everyone in the hangar on deck 6, which stores helicopters during certain southern hemisphere voyages.

Day 2:

After the AECO briefing specific to Svalbard, we embark in the morning in the fjord of 14th July Bukta for a first kayaking experience at the foot of a magnificent glacier. This fjord was named by the Prince of Monaco during his first expedition at the beginning of the 20th century in recognition of France and Bastille Day.

In the afternoon, we do not kayak as we visit Ny-Ålesund, the northernmost community in the hemisphere.

Day 3:

Morning: We head out to explore Texas Bar, beginning our morning kayak trip in a shallow lagoon. We paddle along the coast, surrounded by peaks and glaciers that deposit large amounts of sediment into the sea, giving the water a unique hue. We continue towards the small islands in the area, but low tide prevents us from circumnavigating them. We then turn back for a short hike above the Texas Bar cabin to enjoy the view before returning to the Ortelius.

Afternoon: The Ortelius drops us off at the foot of the immense Monaco Breen glacier. We paddle in front of this giant, hearing it vibrate. After encountering a bearded seal, we continue our journey, keeping a safe distance from the massive seracs that could collapse into the water at any moment. After weaving through icebergs and small ice blocks, it's time to return to the Ortelius to continue our expedition.

Day 4:

Morning: We are in the Seven Islands archipelago, providing an opportunity to paddle in the northernmost lands of the European continent. We cover 10 km and are fortunate to observe numerous jellyfish typical of the cold northern waters. We also experience some excitement navigating through waves after rounding the cape that opens towards the north and the open sea.

Afternoon: We do not kayak as we are in an area with many walrus, so we take a zodiac cruise to observe these iconic animals of the far north.



Day 5:

Morning: The Ortelius drops us off at the cliffs of Akjerfellet, an incredible place where tens of thousands of Brünnich's guillemots nest at this time of year. The weather is perfect with no wind, and we fully enjoy this intimate contact with the wildlife and elements. Waterfalls cascade down, carrying the meltwater from glaciers above the cliffs, and the sun's rays create rainbows at the base of the falls, accompanied by the calls of the guillemots.

Afternoon: The Ortelius heads south, and the entire team scans with binoculars in search of a bear. Simon spots one, and we set off in zodiacs for an exceptional encounter.



Day 6:

Morning: At Kapp Wald, we spot two bears on the cliffs where kittiwakes nest. Kayaking is canceled, and we set off in zodiacs for another encounter with the lord of the far north.

Afternoon: A hike is planned, but once again the team spots a bear during the site security check at Kapp Lee. The hike is canceled, and we head out in zodiacs to explore the area.

Day 7:

Morning: We are at Gnalodden, with clear blue skies and almost no wind. We set off in kayaks to explore the area, weaving around numerous rocky islets. Around one of the islets, we are lucky to glimpse belugas for a few moments. We continue towards the glacier, encountering many icebergs along the way. The sunlight creates an incredible display, with the varying shades of blue in the ice and waterfalls carrying iron oxide sediment, giving the impression that the mountain is bleeding in places. We then head back to the landing zone for a memorable polar plunge in the sunshine.



Afternoon: We prepare the kayaks with Juan to explore Samarinbreen. However, during his safety check, Slava spots a bear, so kayaking is canceled, and we set off in zodiacs to observe the bear napping on a snowfield. We then head to the glacier front for another immersion in the ice of Svalbard.

Day 8:

Upon waking, the fog is very dense. After some deliberation, we go with Plan B, but the fog persists, and kayaking is canceled. Instead, Charlotte gives a lecture on cetaceans. In the afternoon, we go for a hike in search of arctic foxes and reindeer.

Day 9

It is time to say good bye...

Thanks and see you soon for new adventures !

Julien

