

Circumnavigating Spitsbergen

Search for birdlife, Arctic foxes and the mighty polar bear on this 10-day expedition cruise around Spitsbergen.



This 10-day cruise will see you circumnavigate the island of Spitsbergen in the Svalbard Archipelago. Travelling north from Longyearbyen, Spitsbergen's de facto capital, you'll journey through Krossfjorden and to the Seven Islands, in northernmost Svalbard, before returning to Longyearbyen via Barents Island. Along the way, you can hope to see fascinating wildlife and stunningly beautiful ice floes.

The wildlife you may encounter during this voyage is incredibly varied, from flocks of kittiwakes who nest high on the cliff-faces amid pink-footed geese – the largest of Svalbard's nesting geese – to Arctic foxes, reindeer, bearded seals and walrus. With luck, you can also hope to spot minke and beluga whales, and, of course, the polar bear.

Please note: a full circumnavigation of Svalbard is dependent on levels of sea ice, and as such the itinerary may have to be re-routed depending on the conditions. Voyages towards the middle of the season (mid-summer) have a higher success rate, but earlier in the season is ideal if you are hoping to see vast ice floes and a greater variety of sea birds, meaning both times of year have their advantages.

Day 1: Set sail from Longyearbyen

You will be met on arrival at Longyearbyen Airport and transferred to the ship (if overnighing in Longyearbyen prior to your cruise, we will arrange for you to be collected from your hotel/lodge). Your cruise does not depart until this evening, meaning much of the day is free for you to relax on

board or take a stroll around the former mining town of Longyearbyen, whose fascinating parish church and polar museum are well worth visiting.

In the early evening, the ship will sail out of Isfjorden where, in the mouth of the fjord, you may be lucky enough to spy Minke whale.

Day 2: Glacier cruise and birdwatching

You arrive this morning at Krossfjorden, where you have your first excursion aboard a zodiac, allowing you to get up close to the starkly beautiful Fourteenth of July Glacier. Given its name in the early 20th century by the Prince of Monaco, the glacier runs for 10 miles and its cliffs, tinged green in the summer months, provide a nesting ground for huge flocks of kittiwakes, guillemots and Arctic puffins. With a bit of luck, you may also spot an Arctic fox prowling for prey on the cliff tops, while bearded seals are often seen frolicking in the icy waters at the foot of the glacier.



In the afternoon the voyage continues to Ny Alesund. Formerly a mining village, Ny Alesund is now a research outpost with a breeding ground for barnacle geese and Arctic terns. It is also one of Svalbard's few historical sights of interest, having served in decades past as the starting point for many a polar expedition – to this day you can still see the anchoring mast used by polar explorers Amundsen and Nobile in their airships, Norge (1926) and Italia (1928).

Day 3: Monaco Glacier

Setting sail once more, your cruise continues through Liefdefjorden and alongside the long and impressive Monaco Glacier. The waters of the glacier front are a favourite feeding spot for kittiwake, which occur here in their thousands. Polar bears, too, are sometimes spotted on the glacier.



Days 4-5: Polar bear spotting

Your voyage arrives at the Seven Islands on day 4. 81 degrees north and approx. 540 miles from the geographic North Pole, this is the northernmost region of Svalbard that you will visit during your cruise.

The Seven Islands are remote and beautiful, and offer great opportunities for wildlife-viewing, with polar bears frequently sighted in the region. Depending on the level of pack ice and the quality of

the wildlife sightings, you may stay for some time here or continue to Sorgfjord, where walrus are often seen. Those with an interest in the history of the region may also like to make a short side trip to Eolusneset, a former trapper's outpost containing a small, isolated graveyard where the bodies of 17th-century whalers rest.

Day 6: Hinlopen Strait

Today you begin the journey south into the Hinlopen Strait and along the eastern coast of Spitsbergen. Here you have a good chance of seeing ringed and bearded seals, and on very rare

occasions blue whales are also sighted in these waters. During the day, you'll make trips by zodiac to get up close to the ice floes and the polar wildlife, exploring beneath the cliffs of Alkefjellet. If sea conditions allow, you'll land on the east side of the strait, where you can hopefully see reindeer, pink-footed geese and walrus. Near Torrelneset you may have the chance to visit the polar desert of Nordaustlandet, next to the world's third-largest ice cap.

Day 7: Barents Island

The plan for today may vary depending on the movements of the wildlife. Typically, the day will see you sail into the sound of Freemansundet and stop on the shores of Barents Island. Weather allowing, here you will be able to enjoy a hike onto the tundra at Rindedalen, visit the old trappers hut at Sundneset, and/or stop at Kapp Lee, a walrus haul-out where there are also good walking opportunities.



Day 8: Hornsund

Spitsbergen's most southerly fjord, Hornsund, is also often described as its most beautiful, and with good reason! The scenery here is simply fantastic, with huge peaks that rise out of the water to heights as great as 1,400m. While cruising in the fjord you will also witness dramatic glaciers and plentiful marine and birdlife.

Day 9: Bellsund

Today you arrive at the Sound of Bell, or Bellsund, entrance to Van Keulenfjorden and Van Mijenfjord. Bellsund was one of the first fjords in Spitsbergen to be used by whalers, a haunting reminder of which can be seen in the form of piles of whale bones at the mouth of Van Keulenfjorden. The belugas still return to this area and it is possible that you may see some during the voyage back to Longyearbyen. Weather-permitting, you will also have the opportunity to hike inland on tundra where reindeer are frequently seen.

Day 10: Arrive Longyearbyen

Your voyage disembarks in Longyearbyen this morning. A bus transfer will be arranged from the pier to the airport or to your hotel in Longyearbyen if overnighting in town.



Booking Information:

Please see the price guide on our [Circumnavigating Spitsbergen overview page](#) for a list of available departure dates and rates. Alternatively, please [contact us](#) for the latest availability, dates and information on any currently-available special offers.

Includes:

- 10-day Arctic cruise aboard the m/v Hondius, m/v Ortelius or m/v Plancius
- All meals while aboard the ship
- All shore excursions and activities by zodiac
- All service taxes and charges
- Program of lectures by noted naturalists and experienced expedition staff.
- Use of rubber boots and snowshoes

Excludes:

- International flights
- Pre- and post-travel arrangements
- Transfers to / from the vessel
- Passport and visa expenses
- Meals ashore
- Insurance
- All items of a personal nature
- Tips

This cruise is organised and operated by **Oceanwide Expeditions**, a leading specialist in Arctic and Antarctic cruises. As agents for Oceanwide, Gane and Marshall can help you secure the best rates on all Oceanwide cruises, taking advantage of any special offers available at the time of your booking. We strive to keep our rates as competitive as possible, so if you see this cruise available for a lower rate from another operator, please let us know and we'll do our best to match or beat them!

Please note: this itinerary is for guidance only. Your programme may vary depending on wildlife movements, local weather conditions, levels of sea ice, and access to landing sites. The final itinerary will be determined by the Expedition Leader on board your vessel.

