



# Spitsbergen

Triplog - September 21-29, 2012

## SV Antigua



The SV *Antigua* was built in 1957 in Thorne (UK) and served for many years as a fishing vessels, until it was completely re-built in the early 1990s in the Netherlands as a barkentine and equipped as a passenger ship. A barkentine has three masts with square sails on the foremast.

With

Captain – Joachim Schiel  
First Mate – Maarten van der Duijn Schouten  
Second Mate/Engineer – Dan Fisher  
Chef – Sascha Huhn  
Service – Katrin Völker  
Service – Nicole Petresic  
Service – Yvonne Burkhard Williams

and

Expedition Leader – Rolf Stange  
Guide – Michelle van Dijk  
Photography guide – Arjan Bronkhorst

### **Friday, September 21 – Longyearbyen, Isfjord**

*14.00 hours (local time = UTC+2): 78°14'N/15°36'E, port of Longyearbyen.*

Most of us had arrived today with the flight from Norway, others had already had some time to explore the high-arctic metropolis of Longyearbyen before we boarded the *Antigua*, our home for the week to come, at 1400. After we had all settled in, we came together in the lounge to be welcomed officially by Captain Joachim, who introduced the crew, including expedition leader Rolf Stange, guide Michelle van Dijk and photographer Arjan Bronkhorst, along with the bridge, deck and service departments, totalling 11. To make most of the fading light of the season, we changed ship time by putting our clocks one hour forward.



We went through mandatory safety instructions and then left the pier to sail out into Isfjord. Passing the camping site under the airport, we had an exciting sighting of a very rare creature that only occurs sporadically and locally at exactly this place, the arctic mermaid.

After our first delicious dinner, Arjan invited us to the lounge that was now turned into the *Antigua* lecture hall for a first presentation with slides from last year's trip, to give us some impressions of what we might see during the days to come and to give some first ideas and suggestions for successful photography.

### **Saturday, September 22 – St. Jonsfjord: Gjertsenodden. Forlandsund: Hermansenøya, Dahlbreen.**

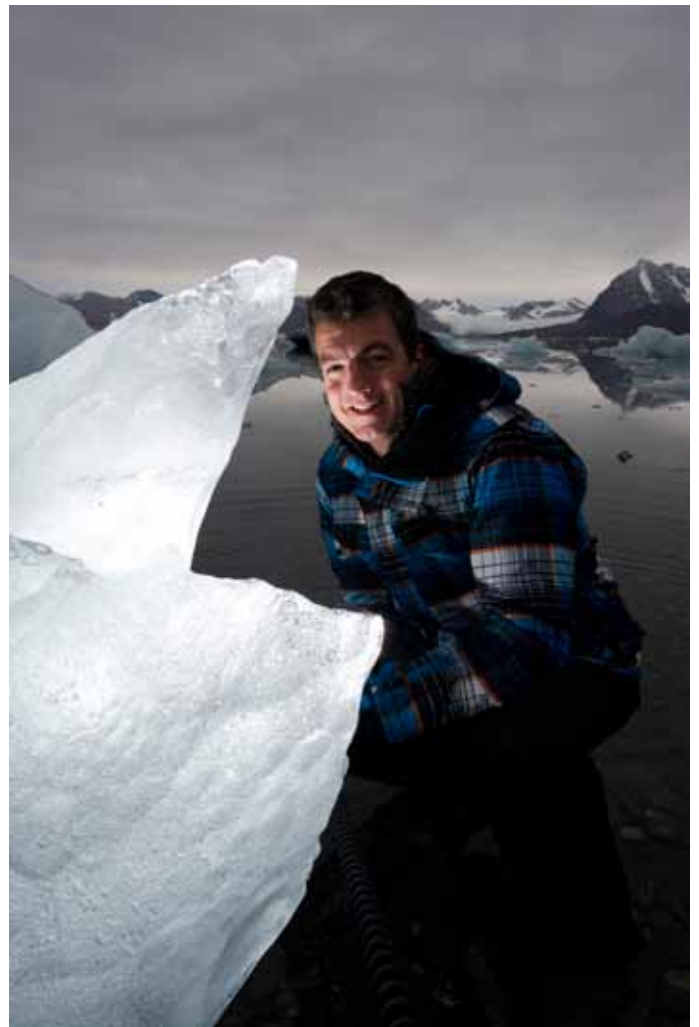
*08.00 hours (ship time = UTC+3): 78°31'N/12°51'E, at anchor at Gjertsenodden. Overcast, calm, 5°C, 1006 hPa. Sunrise 07.39 (ship time), sunset 20.22 (sun above the horizon: 12 hours 39 minutes)*

After a quiet night with a good sleep we woke up in St Jonsfjord which is a beautiful fjord at the west side of Spitsbergen. At the end of breakfast Rolf gave us an introduction to this site explaining what we could expect. Michelle told about safety on land and how to behave with Polar bears. Then it was time to get dressed and go outside where our Captain Joachim explained how to get in and out the dinghy when we want to go ashore.



When all this was done it was time for the real experience. The first thing we got to see was an old trapper hut from the early 20. century.

There we split up in two groups. Michelle took the group up the moraines of Gaffelbreen to enjoy the view on it and its surroundings. But the glacier was not the only impressive thing, we also enjoyed a moment of Arctic silence. Rolf and Arjan were with the other group that spend more time setting up cameras to take the perfect picture.





Coming back, lunch was already waiting for us, a delicious baked potato with beans.

In the afternoon we landed on Hermansenøya. This island is a bird sanctuary which is closed for visitors until August 15. Now that most birds are gone we can visit the place and look at their empty nests. Still a few birds were left, such as young Glaucous gulls, Kittiwakes and Great skuas. Walking on the island we could hear some thundering noise created by the glacier at the other side of the water. Back on board with a cup of coffee or tea and Kati's lovely cherry pie we sailed towards it. The name of the stunning glacier is Dahlbreen, named after Thor Dahl, businessman and whaling shipowner from Norway. Bre means glacier, and -en is 'the'.

After dinner Michelle talked about the early whaling history including the whale war between the Dutch and the British.



### **Sunday, September 23 – Northwestern Spitsbergen: Amsterdamøya: Smeerenburg. Fuglefjord.**

*08.00: 79°44'N/10°50'E, approaching Smeerenburg. Overcast, some fresh snow. Calm, 3°C, 1015 hPa.*

*Sunrise 07.53, sunset 20.24 (12 hours 31 minutes)*

We had spent the night calmly sailing up Spitsbergen's west coast up to the northwestern corner, where we were just approaching an anchor position near the southeastern corner of Amsterdamøya during breakfast. Here, we wanted to explore the remains of the famous Dutch whaling station Smeerenburg, a busy place in the early 17th century.

A small group of 5 lazy walruses was resting near the beach, so it all looked very promising when we went ashore shortly after breakfast. We were greeted by a friendly Harbour seal that was curiously swimming around near the beach. We went around some of the old blubber oven foundations, admired the driftwood and a huge metal ball from a fishing net (basically rubbish, but it looked nice anyway) and young Arctic terns that were flying around near the lagoon. A huge whalebone was lying there as a silent witness from the 17th century slaughtery.

We were just about to start our approach towards the walruses when excitement went through the group: a polar bear had suddenly appeared and was walking around on the other side of the lagoon, less than 200 metres away from us.



Time to retreat to the beach and subsequently the safety of the ship, so we were soon picked up by Joachim and Marten. The bear went his way without paying too much attention to us, but who could know the steps of such an unpredictable animal for sure? The thing to do was to go closer to the walruses with the small boats for some close-up views of those mighty animals. Then, we took off with the *Antigua* and the small boats to get some more glimpses of the polar bear, who was walking westwards above the rocky shoreline. We managed to get some very nice views of the king of the arctic, before he went into the water, where we kept a careful distance in order not to stress the bear too much. It was deemed to be a sub-adult male, obviously in good shape, certainly not suffering from any lack of food at the time being. He went back ashore once again, and Joachim was able to get the *Antigua* quite close to the shore so we managed to get some more very good views and photos, a perfect, safe, enjoyable and respectful encounter!



During lunch, we went eastwards across Smeerenburgfjord and into Fuglefjord, a little-known but extremely scenic bay on the northwestern corner of Spitsbergen. We had to go slowly and carefully, as large amounts of smaller and larger pieces of glacier ice were drifting in the water, covering it to such a degree that it was almost invisible at times.





Once we had reached a position near the mighty glacier Svidtjodtbreen, the engine and generator were turned off to enjoy complete silence in the middle this breathtaking scenery. The ice cliff was towering up to a good 40 metres above the ice-filled waters, and every once in a while bits and pieces were breaking off and falling down with roaring thunder.

We spent most of the afternoon enjoying this spectacle until it was time to leave the place behind. Rianne kindly offered a presentation with slides from historical books of polar exploration, while we were sailing through waters that were amongst the historically most important passages of Spitsbergen, known since Barents' famous voyage of 1596-97.

Later we dropped anchor in Holmiabukta, a calm, scenic bay, which was to be our northernmost anchor position. Arjan invited us for a lecture where he talked about technical aspects of photography, showing very inspiring photos from yesterday and today.





### **Monday, September 24 – The northern west coast.**

*08.00: 79°48'N/11°34'E, at anchor in Holmiabukta. Overcast, snowfall. Calm, 6°C, 1017 hPa.  
Sunrise 07.50, sunset 20.21 (12 hours 31 minutes)*

Like yesterday morning it was snowing when we got up and outside. A true Arctic atmosphere. Only 1°C, clouds low above the sea, strong winds and the ship leaning over. Because of the strong winds it was not possible to go ashore. But a good thing about wind when you are on a sailing ship is that when it comes from the right direction, you can use it. So it was! Maarten gave us all an introduction to sailing and afterwards we could use it in practice setting some square and some stay sails and the main sail.

At 4 o' clock Rolf gave a lecture on Andrée and Wellman, two people who wanted to cross the pole by air, starting from Virgohamna on Danskøya.

Slowly the weather brightened up while we sailed down the coast with its snow covered mountains and dramatic skies.

At 6.30 PM Rolf gave another lecture on Polar bears. At that time the temperature had dropped to -1,5°C.





**Tuesday, September 25 – Krossfjord: Signehamna, Lloyd's Hotel, Kollerfjord**

*08.00: 79°16'N/11°32'E, at anchor in Signehamna. Overcast, light snowfall. Gentle breeze from W, -1°C, 1016 hPa. Sunrise 08.07, sunset 20.04 (11 hours 57 minutes)*

We had spent the night safely anchored in Signehamna, a small natural harbour on the western shore of inner Krossfjord. During the night, the bay froze over and the wind pushed the thin layer of new ice against the ship, making for some quite unusual and rather dramatic sounds (but completely harmless).

We were happy to touch solid ground again shortly after breakfast, after a full day without landings yesterday. To begin with, we went altogether to the remains of a German weather station from the darkest years of Spitsbergen's history, the Second World War. Not much but scrap metal was still lying around, but this provided some interesting objects



for the photographers. The hikers took off to walk the snow-covered tundra around a lake, observing some reindeer who came quite close. Meanwhile, the walkers had reached a 650 decimetre peak and enjoyed some very nice views over the two near-by bays of Signehamna and Nilspollen together with some of the central parts of Krossfjord.

As soon as we were all back on board, we repositioned into the eastern branch of Krossfjord, named Möllerfjord (with a German “ö”). On the passage, we found an impressive walrus bull hauled out on a piece of glacier ice, an amazing observation! The mighty animal could hardly have cared less about our presence, so we managed to come within quite close distance, leaving it undisturbed when we finally left.

We continued into Möllerfjord to drop anchor near Lloyd’s Hotel, built in 1912 (or 1925, depending on source) and since then a popular stop for cruise ships who have left their mark there. The hut itself is painted with bright orange colour, making for a nice colourful spot in the otherwise rather grey scenery. The hotel had 5 stars but not a single bed!

Two brave (or crazy?) men were even seen to go for a swim in the water. Certainly a refreshing experience, consid-



ering the air temperature just below zero and the water temperature near 2 degrees above.

We still had time to continue into the innermost branch of Möllerfjord called Kollerfjord, to have a closer look at the wild pointed mountains of crystalline rocks and the glacier at the end. Several pieces of ice broke off and fell down from the roof of an ice cave in the calving front. Finally, the clouds lifted and it started to clear up. More and more sunlight got through, a very delightful view after the rather grey weather we had had so far. The late afternoon sun cast an amazing orange light on mountain tops that were towering high above blue glacier fronts. We enjoyed the scenic cruise and later gathered for another presenta-





tion from Arjan who went deeper into the secrets of his photography, showing beautiful images from the last days.

**Wednesday, September 26 – Kongsfjord: Ny Ålesund, Storholmen, Kongsvegen**

*08.00: 78°56'N/11°56'E, alongside in Ny Ålesund. Mostly clear sky. Calm, -5°C, 1010 hPa.*

*Sunrise 08.12, sunset 19.54 (11 hours 42 minutes)*

A very special day, because it is the birthday of our expedition leader Rolf. It all started when we woke up in Ny Alesund. Despite the freezing cold (-10°C) everyone walked upon the quay to enjoy a beautiful sunrise. After breakfast there was some time to explore the town on our own or together with one of the guides. At half past eleven we gathered with Rolf at Amundsen's bust where he told us the associated story about different attempts to fly to the North Pole.

Before going back to the ship we got the possibility to spend some money in the local shop.







During lunch the ship moved to Storholmen. We split up in two groups but making the same walk. Rolf went to the highest top first where two very friendly reindeer walked by. Michelle and her group went first to the hut that was build by Ernest Mansfield. In front of it an harbour seal on a rock performed a complete show after it checked us out by swimming a little round. After a while both groups changed place and got to enjoy the other animal.

While watching the wildlife we could hear the noise of the glacier in the distance. Being back in time it left us enough time to sail a bit closer to the glacier called Kongsvegen. Maarten and Dan were standing at the front deck on the look out for ice to avoid the Titanic-effect. The stunning glacier and fresh formed pancake-ice in the fjord gave us the real Arctic experience. The icing on the cake was the late evening light that set the sugared mountains on fire.



**Thursday, September 27 – Isfjord. Trygghamna: Alkhornet. Kapp Thordsen.**

*08.00: 78°12'N/13°49'E, entering Isfjord. Clear sky. Calm, -1°C, 1008 hPa.*

*Sunrise 08.11, sunset 19.39 (11 hours 28 minutes)*

We had been sailing the night through and had entered Isfjord now. The majestic mountain Alkhornet was towering near us as we approached Trygghamna, the first side bay on the northern side of Isfjord, where we went ashore shortly after breakfast on a finely curved gravel beach, under snowy mountains and a sunny sky. We split up into our usual two groups as we followed the coast towards Isfjord. The Sysselmannen (governor) had a service hut on a small hill, that was currently occupied by someone who, as it turned out later, was a trapper who had recently taken over a hunting station on the west coast north of Isfjord.

While the mountain goats started to climb up the moraine hills, the tundra walkers enjoyed some splendid views of the *Antigua* in these beautiful surroundings. Joachim positioned her very nicely and the crew even put up the square sails to make for some real stunning photographs, that might well turn out to be a nice postcard later.

Meanwhile, the other group (Peter, to be precise) had found an Arctic fox that was enjoying the autumn sun while lying on some rocks. The animal was beautiful in its winter fur, and many photo-





graphs were taken by both groups. Finally, we went out to have some nice views of the coastal tundra under Alkhornet before we returned to the ship.

After lunch, we had some time to relax until we reach our afternoon destination at Kapp Thordsen, the southern point of the large peninsula of Dickson Land. Due to the distance, we had time to relax until 5 p.m., when we had the boats ready to go ashore under a little coastal cliff of dark Triassic shalestone, dissected by a small valley that was to provide access to the tundra plain. The fact that the ground was already snow-covered and mostly frozen made this actually quite difficult, so most opted for a beach walk with Michelle, following the narrow black beach under cliffs made of sediment layers that would have been a delight for any geologist. It was again Peter who with his sharp eyes actually discovered two pieces of fossilized dinosaur bones! And just as exciting were the curtains of icicles, almost little frozen waterfalls, that covered sections of the cliff.

Meanwhile, 8 crazy mountain goats climbed the slope up to the tundra to walk over to an old house, that turned out to be quite substantial. It was actually amongst Spitsbergen's oldest buildings, dating back to 1872 when it was built by the famous Swede Nordenskjöld (who soon thereafter discovered the Northeast Passage) to examine occurrences of koproliithe (fossilized dinosaur droppings) that were to be used as a raw material for fertilizers. This never made it beyond the



stage of an idea, but the house was used during the following winter by 17 marooned Norwegian sealers who all died. Since then, the house is known as “Spøkeshuset” (haunted house). Nevertheless, it was again used in 1882-83 by the Swedish party of the first International Polar Year, including amongst others Salomon August Andrée who later ventured on his famous balloon expedition from Danskøya – the world was small indeed. We had a good look around and then returned to the beach to meet the other group near the ice curtains.

Not much later we all repaired to the salong. Tonight, Sascha, Kati, Nicki and Yvonne had prepared a special dinner for us to celebrate our successful trip. Joachim pointed various highlights of the last days out and found appropriate word to thank everybody who was involved. This was, however, not yet the end, there was still another day left and later during the evening we went alongside in Pyramiden.

**Friday, September 28 – Isfjord, Billefjord: Pyramiden, Nordenskjöldbreen**

08.00: 78°39'N/16°33'E, alongside in Pyramiden. Overcast, calm, 1°C, 1007 hPa.

Sunrise 08.09, sunset 19.20 (11 hours 11 minutes)

Pyramiden, once a blooming Russian settlement where families lived. About 1000 people in its heydays were proud of their mining town with its boulevard and imported grass to make it all even nicer. After the bankruptcy of Russia only one settlement could be kept in use, which happened to be Barentsburg. In 1998 Pyramiden was abandoned and when also the last people left, a ghost town remained. Nowadays two men live in Pyramiden again to clean up and refurbish





the hotel for use in the nearby future. We went as one group for a city walk guided by Michelle. A lot of interesting things to see, such as the old walkway, gas stations in a state you only find in old western movies, apartments old and even older, and of course a bust of Lenin. Not only these things made in all worth while, but the friendly Russians opened the cultural centre for us, so we could take a look inside. After half an hour we split up, Rolf and Arjan spend some more time inside where Michelle took the rest of the group to the famous bottle house.

After lunch we sailed closer to the very scenic Nordenskjöldbreen. All of a sudden Sacha came up to the wheelhouse because he spotted two polar bears, a mother and cub feeding on a carcass on an island in front of the glacier. Unfortunately they were afraid of us and disappeared. Because we did not want to disturb the bears we changed plan and set sail. Driving with the dinghies around the ship everybody could get the opportunity to photograph the ship in her full splendor, a majestic view indeed!

We then continued to steam towards Longyearbyen, where we arrived later in the evening. Arjan invited us another time to share some more of his fantastic photos with us, following by a presentation that he had compiled using images provided by us – stunning impressions from an exciting week.





### **Saturday, September 29 – Longyearbyen.**

08.00: 78°14'N/15°36'E, alongside in Longyearbyen. Mostly overcast. Calm, 3°C, 1009 hPa.

Sunrise (now on local time again) 07.19, sunset 19.16 (11 hours 57 minutes)

After a nice sunrise with gentle pink and blue colours and a final *Antigua*-breakfast, it was time to get ready for disembarkation. It was hard to believe that our arctic adventure was over, but on the other hand we still had time to explore the high arctic metropolis of Longyearbyen, as we went back home again on the Sunday flight (there was no flight today). So we could look forward to a relaxed day as we said goodbye to the ship and her crew. Many of us knew already now that this was not to be our last visit to the arctic.

**The crew of *SV Antigua* thank you for joining us during an exciting week in Spitsbergen!  
We wish you all the best and hope to see you again, somewhere between the poles!**

Triplog written by Michelle and Rolf. Layout, map & final mistakes by Rolf. Arjan provided all photographs except those on front page, page 18 (bottom), page 22 and 23, which were taken by Rolf, and the second group photo which is taken by Dan..

This triplog and the group photos can be found on <http://www.spitsbergen-svalbard.com>

The *SV Antigua* will continue to sail in Spitsbergen's waters in the years to come; the other sailing ships of the Tallship Company fleet, *Mare Frisium*, *Artemis*, *Elisabeth* and *Atlantis*, sail the North Sea, the Baltic Sea, the Ijsselmeer and the Canary Islands.

More information:

Tallship Company

Wieuwens 2

NL-8835 KX Easterlittens

Tel +31 (0)517 – 342 8-10, fax -08

Email [info@tallship-company.com](mailto:info@tallship-company.com)

Web <http://www.tallship-company.com>

### **Lectures and presentations:**

September 21: Photographic highlights from 2011 (Arjan)

September 22: 17th century whaling (Michelle)

September 23: Polar exploration based on historical books (Rianne)

September 23: Photo theory (Arjan)

September 24: Andrée and Wellman. The Virgohamna-stories (Rolf)

September 24: Polar bears (Rolf)

September 25: Photography (Arjan)

September 28: Photography (Arjan)

September 28: Our voyages in our own photographs (various contributors, compiled by Arjan)



1. Longyearbyen
2. St. Jonsfjord: Gjertsenodden
3. Forlandsund: Hermansenøya, Dahlbreen
4. Amsterdamøya: Smeerenburg
5. Fuglefjord
6. Krossfjord: Signehamna
7. Krossfjord: Walrus on ice
8. Möllerfjord: Lloyd's Hotel, Kollerfjord
9. Kongsfjord: Ny Ålesund
10. Kongsfjord: Storholmen, Kongsvegen
11. Isfjord, Trygghamna: Alkhornet
12. Isfjord: Kapp Thordsen/Svenskehuset
13. Isfjord, Billefjord: Pyramiden
14. Isfjord, Billefjord: Nordenskjöldbreen



