

# Spitsbergen

## Triplog



# s/v Antigua

September 10 - 21. 2011

*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 – Bram Oudhuis*

*Second Mate – Philip Grözing*

*Chef – Mario Schulze*

*Chief Service – Katrin Völker*

*Service – Nicole Petresic*

*Service – Inga Kirsch*

*Expedition leader – Michelle van Dijk*

*Guide – Charlotte Caffrey*

September 10.

## Longyearbyen

Position at 14 o'clock: 78°14' N 15°36' E

Temperature: 8,5 °C

Shortly before 2 p.m. most of the passengers arrive at s/v Antigua, a blue sailing vessel that was going to be our home for the upcoming ten days. We all had to visit our captain Joachim at the wheel house. After that we were welcomed inside with coffee or tea and cake. Joachim gave a brief introduction, then our expedition leader Michelle took over, so captain & mates could get the ship off the quay. Michelle told about the do's and don'ts on land. By the time she was finished, Captain Joachim gave us a board-safety briefing, telling us that we are not allowed to fall overboard or make bonfires on the ship. At around 5 all of a sudden a big dorsal fin was seen. It turned out to be an orca. And he was not alone, a whole family of 6 animals including a baby were swimming around in Isfjorden. We felt very lucky, because orca's are a rare sighting in Spitsbergen.



September 11.

## Ny Ålesund – Blomstrand(halv)øya

Position at 8 o'clock: 78°56,1' N 011°56' E

Temperature: 8,5 °C



We awoke, this our first morning to a blanket of thick fog and a calm and quiet sea. It was clear that our original plan of first visiting Blomstrand would need to be revised, as such a visit would be fruitless in these conditions. Instead we decided to swap our schedule around and visit Ny Ålesund. We moored up against the harbour wall and walked together through this international research village. We met at the anchor mast used by Roald Amundsen and Umberto Nobile for their (second) attempt to cross the North pole by air. Michelle related the story to a captivated audience of how the explorer and his navigator had been successful in their quest onboard Norge. Everyone then divided into two groups, the longer walk around the coast with Michelle and the shorter group with Charlotte back into town. The ancient long drop toilet proved a highlight and Michelle and John proved that it still functioned well! Back in the town we passed by the working dogs - who howled a chorus in celebration of our visit. After looking a little around the small museum we admired the view of the old steam engine against a back drop of glaciers bathed in sunlight. Back to our ship and after lunch, time was available to buy the world's most expensive, and indeed most unreliable postcards from the most Northern post office in the World.

With the cloud still blanketing the mountain tops we moved the ship to the nearby bay at Blomstrand. At Camp Mansfield Charlotte told all about the failure of her fellow countryman, Ernest Mansfield, and his doomed marble mining enterprise. The exploits of his Northern Exploring Company came to an end when they discovered that the marble was of very low quality and was prone to cracking in warmer climes. The remains of the industry are still visible here including the steam boilers, tracks and abandoned huts. Once more we split into two groups. Charlottes group took a leisurely stroll along the riverbed, past the grazing reindeers to the waterfall. As the cloud began to lift from Kongsfjord we took to higher ground and enjoyed some fine panoramic views of the surrounding landscape: complete with sweeping glaciers and a fjord full of bergy bits, sparkling in the early evening sunshine. Meanwhile, the mountain gazelles took to the hills and followed Michelle towards the peak. Their objective was to be rewarded with a great view of Kongsfjord and a healthy appetite in time for dinner. Our after dinner treat this evening was one to remember : a circumnavigation of Blomstrand Island. Antigua gently pushed through the pack ice providing us with a platform for excellent glacier viewing. We passed a lazy bearded seal on the floe and watched in awe as the glacier face cracked and calved before an army of our awaiting camera lenses! It had been a full day and few left this wonderful scene before 11 pm...ships time of course!



September 12.

## Magdalenefjorden

Position at 8 o'clock: 78°56,1' N 011°56' E

Temperature: 5,5 °C – Fog – Windstill

We woke up in Trinityhamna, where even before breakfast we had our first highlight. The king of the Arctic was walking along the beach of Gravneset. Breakfast was no longer important, we all went out to see him. Unfortunately it didn't take long before he went out of sight behind the 130 whalers that are buried there around 400 years ago. According to historical sources, Magdalenefjorden was first used by the English in the early days of the whaling era. They erected a land station on the headland and named the area Trinity Harbour. The station was closed in 1623, but the cemetery remained in use. It is known that the first tourists visit it in 1838, the cemetery must have been a gloomy scenery, strewn with whale and walrus bones, like eerie, white remains of enormous extinct species in a far away land. Several of the coffins had made their way through the snow, heaved up to the surface by the permafrost, half open and empty on account of polar bears. Other coffins remain untouched, covered in rocks. In 1979 Gravneset was said to look more like a campsite than a cemetery. The graves have been opened by curious tourists and remains of bones have been taken home as souvenirs. So in 2002 a fence was put around the graves.



Apparently the bear did not know that you are not allowed to enter the grave side, because when we went to look for him, we found him sitting on a grave at the other side chewing something bloody. We observed him for a while, but then he disappeared again. On our way to the glacier at the end of Magdalenefjorden, we saw the bear walking along the coast. This gave us another chance of taking good pictures. Specially when Joachim managed to get the Antigua only 50 meter away from the shore. Now even the guests with compact camera's could make good shot of him. Then we continued our way to Wagonwaybreen, which is called so because of the median morraines that look like a wagon way. Again we were very lucky, because the sun came out and gave the glacier an extra glance. Even an ice-dragon was seen in front of it. We heard a crack and a part of the glacier front came down. Ice and water splashed up, much higher than the glacier front it self. Incredible! The galcier remained active for a while, so we could see more calvings. Joachim measured the glacier front and compared it with the results of last year. The glacier had retreated 50 metres in one year. But still we hadn't got of the ship, so everyone got ready to do the landing at the north side. All of sudden Sylvia spotted another polar bear, again at our landing site. So also this landing was cancelled and we went sailing instead. Second mate Philip gave us an introduction to the boat and the sails, so we all could give him a hand with sail setting. Once we came out of Magdalenefjord, the wind changed and the sails could be taken down again. Because of the big swell in the north, ginger was used in the food, and Kati supplied some more against sea sickness.



September 13.

## Raudfjorden

Position at 8 o'clock: 78°56,1' N 011°56' E

Temperature: 0,5 °C – Sunny – Windstill



Overnight we had entered the 20km Raudfjord, lined with glaciers along both sides and terminated by the beautiful Raudfjordbreen. This spectacular glacier was to be our first destination and after breakfast everyone kitted up in preparation for a glacier walk. We carefully scanned the coast for polar bears before landing, then formed one group ready for our ascent. The ice was firm and remarkably our wellingtons gripped with ease. We strolled in one group parallel with the west lateral moraine and then spilt, with the long walkers heading towards the centre of the

glacier for a view. Meanwhile the shorter group remained with Charlotte. She found some splendid antlers and various members of the group performed some amusing animal antics before we took a few moments to sit and enjoy the arctic silence. Our return journey afforded excellent views of the Raudfjordbreen before us. Those awaiting the dingy shuttle entertained themselves by dreaming animals up from the elaborately carved iceblocks which straddled the shore and watching the calving of the nearby icefront.

We were late for the chef –a lesson we learnt from! After lunch the short walk group would explore the shoreline, abandoned trappers hut and the hill (50m) at the end of the bay....

For the longer hikers, an ascent of the 350m high Solanderfjell was planned. Charlotte would lead the mountain goats and together with advice from John & John-the mountaineers, we planned a route avoiding the ice fields and steep scree slopes on its face. Our reward we knew would be impressive panoramic views of the fjord, but as a bonus we would enjoy lemon drizzle cake and a flask of hot tea.

We paced our ascent and at one of our viewing stops were greeted by a mature pair of rock Ptarmigans. They were perfectly camouflaged for their rock strewn snowy environment, with fluffy white feathers on the bottom half and black patch markings to the top. They ignored our presence and at one point actually ambled our way. Everyone was delighted with the sighting. All made the ascent with ease although the last section required more concentration with hands used as well as feet. A cairn marked the summit and we celebrated with a well earned rest, photographs, more photographs and of course tea and delicious cake!

We kept a good pace for our route down and skirted the log-strewn lake before once more returning to Antigua-just in time for dinner.

After dinner we left the fjord and hit a 2-3m swell sufficient movement for Antiguas bow to dip underwater- a phenomenon even the captain Joachim had not before witnessed! In these wild waters Michelle made a commendable attempt at her excellent polar bear talk-enjoyed by all who could tolerate the bounce!

September 14.

## Raudfjorden & Reinsdyrflya

Position at 8 o'clock: 79°46' N 012°09' E

Temperature: 2,5 °C – Sunny – Windforce 1



When we went out of our cabins to look what the view and the weather was like, we found ourselves sunbathing in a fjord which was just as scenic as the day before. Even the moon was still at starboard and the sun still at port side. It turned out that our calm night had been so calm because we went back to Raudfjord after an unsuccessful attempt to leave it. This morning we gave it another try. We hoist the square sails and sailed out of the fjord. There we were welcomed by the swell again, but the wind had decreased a bit, so this time it worked out well.



Now it was perfect timing to read the book we brought from home or organise our pictures.

At dinner time Michelle announced that we would arrive at Worselyneset between 9 - 10 p.m., and because we had been at sea the whole sea, a landing was planned. Around 10 o'clock we anchored and the dinghy was prepared for the landing at Reinsdyrflya. Because it was already getting dark, we did not divide into two groups, but stayed all together with Michelle in front and Charlotte closing the line to protect us

against polar bears, who don't mind the twilight with their sense of smell. We walked ourselves warm towards a big rock which was left behind by a glacier something around 20.000 years ago. Then we visited Villa Oxford, where candles were lit and hot chocolate with rum was served. Trapper Joachim had brought it to the hut. We all went inside and with Michelle as a storyteller the temperature inside the hut rose.

The group was picked up from the hut and some continued story telling in the bar on board.



September 15.

## Liefdefjorden: Texas bar & Monacobreen

Position at 8 o'clock: 79°36' N 012°42' E

Temperature: 3,5 °C – overskyed – Windforce 1



This morning after breakfast we took on the challenge of another peak: Wulffberget, just south of Ben Nevis as marked on the map!. Charlotte lead the long walk and we made our ascent in the hope of a good view of the Monacobreen tucked in at the end of the fjord. We celebrated reaching our peak with a group photo and a full view of this magnificent glacier and its 5km calving front. We took a different route down, admiring the views of Liefdefjord along the way and managed to get back to Antigua in time for lunch.

This afternoon was set aside for a very memorable encounter with the glacial ice-the constantly calving ice front of the Monaco Glacier. For several hours Michelle skippered the zodiac through blocks of ice of all shapes and sizes and gave people a truly magical journey through the arctic landscape. Throughout our zodiac journey we were surrounded by majestic glaciers, reflections of snow capped mountains and the scattered frozen ice blocks which littered the fjord. We took time to cut the engine and listen to the sounds of the water and ice around us cracking. After all had enjoyed their excursion Antigua herself pushed close to the glacier front. The blue ice front was a fitting backdrop to the ship, making the scene even more impressive and placing all fairly back to the pioneering era of Shackleton with his ship locked in the ice.

When all were again onboard the ship, we enjoyed our last view of Monacobreen before setting course towards the sea. Before dinner Charlotte gave a talk on Polar ice above and below the water. After dinner we all enjoyed (some more than most!) the movie 'When the light comes' about a young girl who over-wintered in a trappers hut on Spitsbergen.



September 16.

## Woodfjorden: Mushamna & Gråhuken + Moffen

Position at 8 o'clock: 79°40' N 014°15' E

Temperature: 4,5 °C – foggy – No Wind

We woke up after a quiet night in the sheltered bay Mushamna. This is the place where the German professor Hauke Trinks overwintered on a small sailing yard last winter. On shore we split up in two groups, Charlotte was walking the short way to the trapper station of Mushamna, Michelle's group took a big loop. Because of the fog, we had to look for beauty in the small things around us, such as plants, mushrooms and lichens. Ofcourse the birders could find something to look at as well. An egg, eider nests, geese, a pair of red-throated divers and an arctic skua-family.

At the trapper station we recognised a lot of things that we had seen in yesterday's movie '*When the light comes*'. When the fast group came back on board we lifted anchor and sailed to the trapper station to pick up Charlotte with her group.



Dreaming about living life as a trapper in such a cabin which has even a sauna, we enjoyed our lunch. To get rid of all calories, a 6 Km long hike was offered from Vårfluesjøen to Gråhuken, it was quite a walk and we had to stay close together, because of the fog and the view (the lack of, that is). When we were half way, Antigua passed us and blew the horn. The second part was easier terrain, so it didn't take long before we arrived at the cabin where the story '*a woman in the polar night*' took place. Author Christiane Ritter spent one winter with her husband and a norwegian trapper in this small cabin.

During dinner we sailed towards the north, direction Moffen. This was gonna be our northernmost landing side at 80°00,639' N!

But this was not the only highlight of Moffen, September 16. is the first day that you can do a landing. Earlier in the season you are not allowed to come closer than 300 meters distance. So we were most likely the first to visit the colony of walruses that were laying on the beach. We line ourselves up side-to-side, so everyone could have a good view at the walruses. We could approach them until we were only 30 meters away. They were very cute to watch, but we will never forget the sounds and the smell they produced. When we got cold, we returned to the ship.

Back at the beach Jürgen wanted to use this opportunity to take a dip in the Arctic ocean with the temperature of 3,5°C and became our polar hero! Coming back on board Kati gave him a herb liquor to drink.





September 17.

## Ytre Norskøya & Smeerenburg

Position at 8 o'clock: 79°45' N 011°38' E

Temperature: 1,5 °C – some clouds – Wind force 2, West



After a few days absence we were happy to see the sun trying to break through a thinning cloud. We were moored near Ytre Norskøya, an area steeped in the history of Dutch whaling during 1600's. After breakfast Charlotte lead the mountain goats to climb the peak Zeeusche Uytkyck. This was an important look out for the whalers giving clear distant views over the surrounding islands and waters. The mountain at just over 150m did not at first appear much of a challenge, but its steep

slope of scree and thin covering of snow at times made going a little tricky. Our initial ascent was steep at times and hands were called upon as well as feet. The cairns at the summit marked our final destination from which we had wonderful views over the islands and mountains, all covered with a fresh sprinkling of arctic snow. Despite our best efforts regardless of what the history books say, we could not see a single whale in the bay, nor indeed glimpse the north pole from our vantage point. The short walkers lead by Michelle took a stroll along the shoreline to the headland. The group enjoyed wonderful views of the islands bathed in sunlight and cast their minds back to when whalers lived upon these shores and whaling activities were at their industrious peak. Both groups had to walk through the territory of the Arctic tern on their way back to the ship. Although the breeding season has long passed, the terns were still highly territorial and defended their patch by swooping down on passing heads and screeching warnings in anger of our trespass.

After lunch the sun began to shine and the blue skies welcomed us to Smeerenburg-Blubber town. We left as one group and were shown around the remnants of this historical settlement. Bathed in sunlight, we strolled along the sandy beach observing the blubber ovens and whalers graves of the early 1600's. Although at its peak of activity over 200 people lived on this site, there are few tangible remnants of their life left behind. The graves themselves were a sombre sight with planks of the 400 year old coffins lifted by permafrost. Human bones were evident on the ground where bodies lay in shallow graves. Michelle explained how early tourism had shown little respect for the state of the whalers graves and how subsequent measures including relocation to a marked mass grave had been implemented to try and mitigate this erosion of cultural heritage. Some of the group wished to return to the ship early allowing the long walkers to continue to the mass grave on the horizon. Eider ducks passed us on our return along the shoreline, whilst arctic terns again screeched against trespass above our heads.

Our final challenge was to photograph our elegant vessel through a small hole in the blubber cement! After dinner we enjoyed a talk on early Dutch whaling activity of the 17<sup>th</sup> century from Michelle. A fitting end to a thought provoking day!



September 18.

## Möllerfjorden & Tinayrebukta

Position at 8 o'clock: 79°11' N 011°53' E

Temperature: 0,5 °C – Sun peeking through mountain peaks – No wind



While we woke up, the Antigua made its way to Möllerhamna. When we arrived there we landed at Regnardneset and visited Lloyd's Hotel. A bright orange cabin, the inside decorated with placques of cruise ships that belong to Hapag Lloyd's fleet.

When everyone had the possibility to look around in the cabin, we went in one group for a Sunday morning walk around Kronprinshallet. There we found a few reindeer, of which one younger and braver came towards us. So everybody

froze and observed the animal which came closer and closer. In the distance we spotted some more reindeer and also at the other side of the bay at Kong Haakons Havøy. In between at a sandbank we saw our first arctic fox, which was running around, scavaging. In the sunny weather like this, we could spend hours, but we had to get back to the ship where our chef Mario had prepared wraps for lunch.

Around 2 p.m. the group of long hikers were brought to Fanciullipynten near Camp Zoey. Camp Zoey was built in 1911 for Ernest Mansfield and his Northern Exploring Company and named after his daughter. These days it is still in use by the people of Ny Ålesund. That was illustrated by the warm stove and the smouldering campfire. The walk went over some 220 meter high mountains and a frozen river. We saw about 12 reindeer of which two very nearby. The other half of the passengers sailed with Antigua into Tinayrebukta and went through the new sea-ice a little closer towards the Tinayreglacier. On the ice was a bearded seal posing. So Charlotte took some good photographs and film for her talk on seals after dinner. She explained the difference between 'true seals' and 'eared seals'. Now we know that in the Arctic you can only find true seals and that also wallruses are seals. All seals belong to the order *Pinnipedia*.



In the mean time, outside the wind picked up, and so did the swell. The ship was rocking and rolling at the rough sea, but once we came at Kvadehukken, she refused to go any further. With windforce 9 against us, we had to turn the ship around and try to find a sheltered place to stay overnight. The nearest by possibility was to try at Kvadehukken, so we did. At half past midnight we dropped anchor, but after a few hours we were blown away by the strong wind. So the second anchor had to be dropped as well.

September 19.

## Forelandsund: Hermansenøya & Dahlbreen

Position at 8 o'clock: 79°11' N 011°53' E

Temperature: 6,5 °C – Overskyed – Windforce 4, South

After a night of trying to fight both swell and currents we tried to again head South. We were entertained and educated by Michelle's talk on Geopolitics and the origins of Svalbard as we know it today. A fish and chip lunch was warmly welcomed by all- but eaten with relish by the English onboard! The captain and crew has made a cake and card in celebration of Roses birthday and this was presented by the Captain amid a hearty rendition of Happy Birthday by all. The cake was delicious and Katie has surpassed herself this time with a beautifully sculpted Orca proudly decorating its surface.



In order to walk off this delight and indeed sweep off the cobwebs, we all disembarked at Hermans. Island (Hermansenøya). The two groups as usual split and everyone enjoyed the fresh air, the crashing of the waves on the cliff shoreline, the colony of Kittiwakes on the rocky headland and the rafts of black common eiders on the sea below.

The short walk lead by Charlotte were delighted with our first sighting of the usually common Purple saxifrage, tufted saxifrage and abandoned goose nests in their many forms. We met up with the longer group at a shoreline where Purple sandpipers foraged for food along the strandline, seeking the last of the food before their Winter migration in a few weeks time.



As the icing on the cake, the ship was parked in front of Dahlbreen for a while, where we could experience some major glacier calvings.



September 20.

## Barentsburg & Colesbukta

Position at 8 o'clock: 78°04' N 014°12' E

Temperature: 6 °C – Overskyed – No wind

As requested, we went to visit Barentsburg. Michelle offered a city walk, showing us daily life of this mining settlement. Of course we ended our tour in the hotel bar, drinking coffee & vodka, eating Russian chocolate. It turned out that the bar is also a good place to purchase souvenirs. A can of Russian Polar bear-beer, 2 bottles of Russian Vodka and quite some chocolate bars were bought. Ronald & Tineke were invited by locals to come over for coffee, and also the museum was worth visiting.



When we came out of Greenharbour, we hoisted all the sails and even without any wind it looked good, so Bram took us in the dinghy and drove us around to take pictures. Coffee and again delicious cake was served and we went to Colesbukta to do our afternoon landing. This old Russian mining settlement was closed down in 1962. Charlotte took her group up hill and enjoyed the view over the bay. Michelle's group went city exploring. A kantine, habitation buildings and sauna were found.



When we came back to the ship, Joachim called us to say that there were a group of beluga's on the way. So we all rushed to the shoreline where we had a good view. When the belugas were a bit further in the bay, we were picked up and our captain took us close again with the ship. We experienced an amazing sighting of the animals. They were so close, we could even hear them sing.

A surprise when we came back to the ship, all tables were set. Captains dinner!

It started with a drink and speech of captain Joachim, then we got to know the best side of the service crew. No complains about the food and service we had before on this trip, but this was absolutely superb!

Unfortunately this also meant this is the end of the trip, but we all can look back to a great holiday.

September 21.

## Longyearbyen

Position at 8 o'clock: 78°14' N 15°36' E

Temperature: 7 °C – Sunny – No wind

After a final, good Antigua-style breakfast it was finally time to say goodbye during the morning. Hard to believe that the trip had come to an end and that so much beautiful arctic experience could fit into a mere 11 days!

Most of us had another couple of hours to explore Longyearbyen and to go shopping before a bus would take us to the airport, others spent another night or two in town. Many of us knew already now that this was not our last visit to the arctic.



Triplog is by Michelle and Charlotte.

Photographs by Michelle, Charlotte & Freek.

This triplog can be found on <http://www.spitsbergen-svalbard.nl> & <http://www.aqua-firma.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.

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