

Spitsbergen, North-East Greenland

02 – 10 September 2023

On board *m/v Plancius*



M/v Plancius was built in 1976 as an oceanographic research vessel for the Royal Dutch Navy and was named "Hr. Ms. Tydeman". The vessel was completely rebuilt as a passenger vessel in 2009 and complies with the latest SOLAS-regulations (Safety Of Life At Sea). M/v Plancius is 89 m long, 14.5 m wide and has a maximum draft of 5 m, ice class 1D, 10,5 knots average cruising speed and has 3 Diesel- Electric engines.

Captain Artur Iakovlev

And his international crew of 50 sailors

Chief Officer:	Romanas Vicas	[Lithuania]
Second Officer:	Nino Cizmic	[Croatia]
Third Officer:	Eline Schuurman	[The Netherlands]
Hotel Manager:	Ingrid van de Loo	[The Netherlands]
Asst. Hotel Manager:	Karolina Guziejko	[Poland]
Head Chef:	Khabir Moraes	[India]
Sous Chef:	Sachin Anant	[India]
Ships doctor:	Ninnette van Es	[The Netherlands]
Expedition Leader:	Rinie van Meurs	[The Netherlands]
Ass. Expedition Leader:	Michelle van Dijk	[The Netherlands]
Expedition Guide:	Chloe Marechal	[France]
Expedition Guide:	Irene Kastner	[Germany]
Expedition Guide:	Martin Anstee	[United Kingdom]
Expedition Guide:	Frigga Kruse	[Germany]
Expedition Guide:	Ross Wheeler	[United Kingdom]
Expedition Guide:	Pierre Gallego	[Luxembourg]

We welcome you on board!

Day 1 – Saturday 2nd of September, Akureyri, Embarkation Day

17h00 GPS Position: 65°41.1'N / 018°04.4E

Wind: SSE6 • **Sea:** Moderate • **Weather:** Overcast • **Air temperature:** +16°C • **Sea temperature:** +8°C

We began our expedition in Akureyri, having travelled from all over the world to reach the spectacularly scenic island of Iceland. Once safely on board MV Plancius, our new home for the next week, we familiarised ourselves with our new surroundings and undertook all the required mandatory safety briefings. As our mooring lines were let go and we said goodbye to a blustery Akureyri, we toasted our forthcoming adventure with Captain Artur, Expedition Leader Rinie and the rest of the expedition team in the observation lounge. We then set off to the restaurant for a relaxed first buffet dinner amongst new friends. Our first evening onboard was spent relaxing and socialising in the lounge or on the open decks as we sailed North through the Akureyri Fjord and into the open waters of the Denmark Strait.

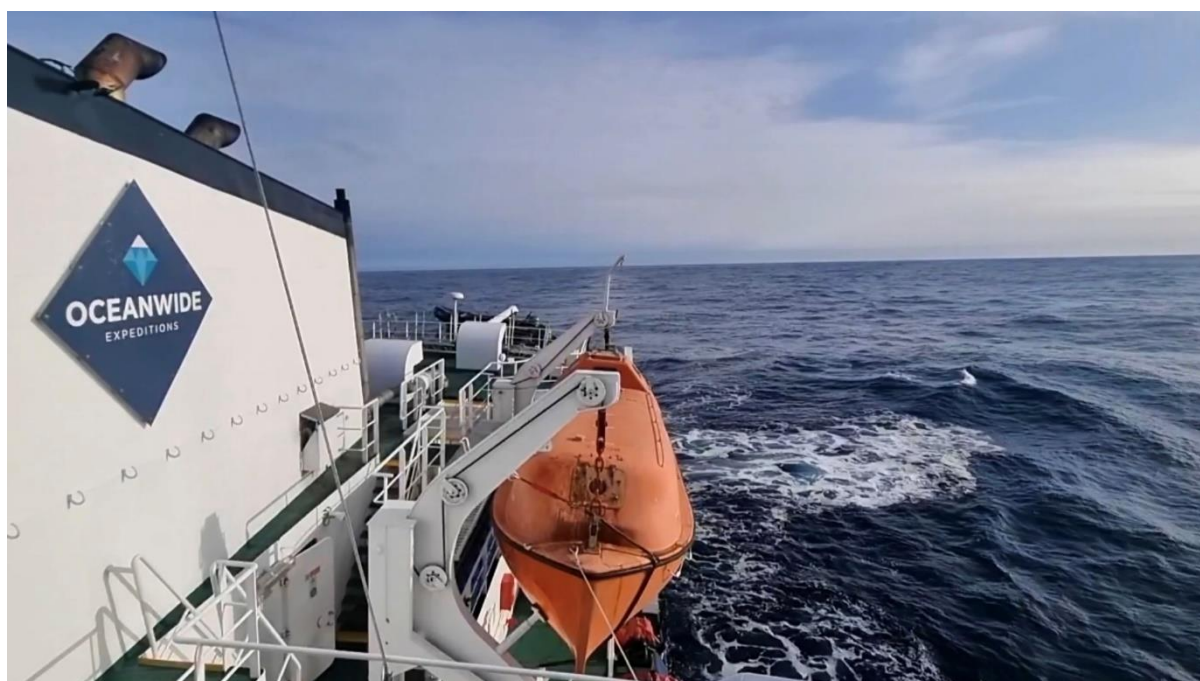


Day 2 – Sunday 3rd of September, at sea towards Greenland

12h00 GPS Position: 68°40.5'N / 020°32.0E

Wind: SE4 • **Sea:** Moderate • **Weather:** Overcast • **Air temperature:** +6°C • **Sea temperature:** +7°C

As the distance from Akureyri in Iceland to the mouth of Scoresby Sund in Greenland is approximately 300 nautical miles (ca. 560 km), a whole day at sea was inevitable. The ship had already started to move significantly during the night. By morning, most of us had reached for our seasickness pills or plasters. We did not actually experience a storm; there was in fact hardly any wind. Instead, we were feeling the effects of an old storm that blew south of Iceland that had whipped up the sea into three-metre-high swell. Nonetheless, the educational program would proceed as planned for those who still wished to attend it.



Lectures are offered that fit the situation the best, so it was Ross who kicked off, with an introduction to polar photography and how to make the most of the sights and sightings that we were likely to encounter on our voyage. As visibility was good throughout the day, we then kept a lookout for whales and seabirds on the open ocean, and some of us put into practice what we had just learned about image composition. With seabirds gracefully gliding around the ship the whole morning, it seemed fitting that Chloe's plankton lecture would be postponed in favour of Martin speaking about the birds of Greenland (well, a common fraction of them as we would by no means see all 55 to 60 annually breeding species!). Afterwards, we were better able to appreciate the company which the Great Shearwaters and Sooty Shearwaters had given us until about dinner time – these birds nest in the Falkland Islands in the southern hemisphere before migrating to their North Atlantic feeding grounds in winter.

They usually stick to the latitudes of France, but the same storm that caused the swell seemed to have blown them in the Arctic, where we were now able to marvel at them. The mandatory briefings and the collection of the rubber boots bore no surprises – how well we all listened would show during our first disembarkation on the following day (but I can write with hindsight that the group did exceedingly well getting out of the Zodiacs, dividing into hiking groups, getting back into the Zodiacs... and turning *all* the cards on the tag board back to green on the first attempt.

During the first daily recap of several to come the topics covered were a short biography of Petrus Plancius by Michelle and an overview of fin whales and a comparison to blue whales by Pierre.

We were happy to note that around midnight, we reached the mouth of Scoresby Sund and the swell was finally losing its grip on the ship.



Day 3 – Monday 4th of September, Hurry Inlet

12h00 GPS Position: 70°41.2'N / 22°34.6E

Wind: NE2 • **Sea:** Calm • **Weather:** Overcast • **Air temperature:** +6°C • **Sea temperature:** +6°C

Today, we kicked off our adventure in Greenland, right in the heart of the stunning Hurry Inlet. This fjord earned its name back in 1822 when William Scoresby Jr. paid tribute to Mr. Nicholas Hurry, the managing-owner of their vessel, the BAFFIN.

In the morning, our expedition set foot on the eastern shores of the inlet. The hikers embarked on a journey to appreciate the breathtaking views of the lagoon. Meanwhile, those opting for a medium-level hike ascended slightly to enjoy panoramic scenes. The leisurely group, in contrast, delighted in the picturesque scenery from the comfort of a Zodiac.

Upon reaching the afternoon, our destination was Dumbrava, an area nestled on the eastern coastline of Hurry Inlet. Here, in 1930, Constantin Dumbrava, a Romanian scientist, audaciously erected a dwelling with the ambition of engaging in trade with the locals. However, his ambitions were short-lived, as he was apprehended and returned to Europe in 1931. Subsequently, the house fell under the purview of the Scoresbysund municipality, where it served as a base for hunting expeditions. Our journey took us on a walk through the tundra, affording us panoramic views of a valley and its receding glacier. During this exploration, both the medium and long-hike groups had an enchanting encounter with a blue morph Arctic fox. These rare creatures exhibit dark blue, brown, or grey fur year-round, comprising just 1% of the total Arctic fox population. Meanwhile, the leisurely group enjoyed the opportunity to observe Ringed plovers, which were easily recognizable by their distinctive broad black breast bands. Furthermore, they conducted observations of lichens, plants, and microscopic life aided by handheld magnifiers.



Day 4 – Tuesday 5th of September, Sydkap & Rypefjord

11h00 GPS Position: 71°17.6'N / 25°00.9E

Wind: ENE2 • **Sea:** Calm • **Weather:** Fog • **Air temperature:** +4°C • **Sea temperature:** +5°C

We awoke at 0745 to our wakeup call from Rinie and to a thick blanket of fog. Overnight we had sailed to Sydkap, an area used by hunters since 1934. The anchor was dropped, and we went to breakfast to wait for the fog to clear.

Following another fine breakfast, we ventured out on deck to take in the morning air and wait for the fog to clear, we had tantalizing views of the mountains around us as the fog cleared for a minute and then rolled back in, icebergs loomed out of the fog and then were enveloped once again by a thick blanket.



At 1030 Frygga entertained and educated us with a lecture on Arctic archeological cultures.

During the lecture the fog cleared once again to give us another tantalizing view of the landing site only for the fog to roll in once again.

Chloe ventured out into the fog to fish for Plankton and came back with some fascinating examples of copepods which we were lucky enough to view through a microscope.

It then became too late to land at Sydkap and with the afternoons ships cruise to look forward to it was time to heave anchor and make our way towards Øfjord, a 60-mile-long ships cruise through one of the most spectacular stretches of scenery in Greenland.

We enjoyed another wonderful lunch as we travelled towards the start of the fjord and as lunch finished, we entered the mouth of the fjord. Øfjord lies between Milne Land and Renland with stunning peaks of up to almost 2900 meters.

Part way into the journey we travelled past a spectacular mountain that resembles a cathedral. The mountain is called Grundtvigskirken and was named after one of the most famous churches in Copenhagen.

The ship was steered around the many impressive icebergs, giving us a truly memorable afternoon, towards Rypefjord, a 30-Kilometre-long beautiful fjord with the Eielson Glacier at its head.

As the ship came to a halt inside the fjord we settled down to another great dinner, as dinner came to an end the sun set and with that the light on the surrounding mountains was sublime. What an end to a wonderful day, full of memories (and lots of photos) of spectacular scenery.



Day 5 – Wednesday 6th of September, Rypefjord and Harefjord

12h00 GPS Position: 70°59.6'N / 27°43.3W

Wind: Light air • **Sea:** Calm • **Weather:** Clear sky • **Air temperature:** +8°C • **Sea temperature:** +5°C

In the morning, we touched down in Rypefjord, a place where the name itself, "Rype," pays homage to the Ptarmigan, a common bird in the region. This fjord was given its name by the 1891-92 Den Østgrønlandske expedition, led by Carl Ryder, who stumbled upon it during a sled journey in April 1892. The Greenlandic name for this location has also been recorded as Aqissit Kangersuat.

The day welcomed us with abundant sunshine and warmth. During the morning, we embarked on a hike through the red and orange tundra. Here, we were fortunate to spot snow buntings, the northernmost breeders of any land-based bird. These "snowflakes" inhabit pockets of tundra not cloaked in ice. Additionally, we had the privilege of encountering some shy muskoxen.



Later in the day, we made landfall in Harefjord, another place named by the 1891-92 Den Østgrønlandske expedition, led by Carl Ryder, in honor of the Arctic hares that inhabit the area. The Greenlandic version of the name is Ukattit Kangersuat.



During our exploration, hikers conquered a hill to enjoy a breathtaking view of the fjord, which was packed with icebergs. They also had the privilege of spotting an Arctic hare, a creature known for its remarkable speed, capable of reaching up to 64 km/h (40 mph) to evade predators like Arctic wolves, Arctic foxes, Gyrfalcons, and Snowy owls. The medium hiking group had an awe-inspiring encounter with a herd of eight muskoxen. These herds typically consist of females and young, led by one dominant mature bull. Instead of hiking extensively, the group chose to sit in silence, observing this remarkable spectacle without disturbing the animals.

Meanwhile, the leisurely group embarked on a Zodiac cruise to observe the muskoxen. Along the way, they also had the chance to encounter seals and get up close to icebergs.

To wrap up the day, the galley and the hotel department arranged a BBQ on the deck. We delighted in delectable food, warm glühwein, and outdoor dancing, all while savoring the picturesque Greenlandic landscapes.

Day 6 – Thursday 7th of September, Røde fjord and Røde O

12h00 GPS Position: 70°30.5'N / 28°07.1W

Wind: W4 • **Sea:** Calm • **Weather:** Overcast • **Air temperature:** +3°C • **Sea temperature:** +4°C

After a calm night in Rypefjord, we did not linger there but lifted the anchor to leave for a ship's cruise through the long Rødefjord, the red fjord. The name was given by Carl Ryder's East Greenland Expedition in 1891-92 and calls attention to the red rocks that make up the mountains on the west side of the fjord. The red rocks are so-called Old Red Sandstone of Devonian age. Sand and conglomerate layers as thick as 8 km were deposited in large, submerged basins over a time span of no less than 30 million years. The deposits were lithified and later uplifted to form the scenery surrounding us.



Geology, however, was not the main attraction of Rødefjord. Most of us took innumerable photos of the huge icebergs all around the ship. Most of these were derived from the enormous Daugaard Jensen Gletscher a far distance away. While this glacier's iceberg mostly drift into the open sea, some get caught in Øfjord and Rødefjord, where they get stuck behind Rødeö and slowly melt away.

Just as we reached the small Rødeö, also named after the geology, the sun broke through. It got unexpectedly warm on the zodiac cruise around the island, and the ice shone in a marvellous array of blue hues. The layers of the large red cliff on the back of the island were disrupted by a conspicuous dyke. A dyke is a geological formation, whereby molten rock (magma) from deep within the Earth's crust rise into cracks in the already existent sandstone and later harden to the grey basalt sheet we observed. The basalt is very hard, so when the sandstone erodes away, the dyke remains behind.



© Martin Anstee

We were also able to land in a small bay of Rødeö, from where we walked up the side of the island to look down on the “iceberg graveyard”. On several occasions, there was a loud noise like rumbling thunder when a nearby iceberg would begin to partly collapse.

In bright sunshine, we went back to the Plancius and continued our journey through the Fönfjord. Unfortunately, the clouds soon closed in on us and we were again not able to see any northern lights.

Day 7 – Friday 8th of September, Ittoqqortoormiit

12h00 GPS Position: 70°28.5'N / 21°50.2W

Wind: NE5 • **Sea:** Smooth • **Weather:** Overcast

Air temperature: +3°C • **Sea temperature:** +2°C

After so many days of exploring wilderness and remote areas, we would need to carefully adapt to civilisation again. A visit to Ittoqqortoormiit, a little village of roughly 350 souls at the entrance of Scoresby Sound and one of the world's most isolated settlements served that purpose well. After breakfast, we boarded the Zodiacs for our last landing and spent the morning walking streets again! Ittoqqortoormiit was founded only roughly 100 years ago in 1925, when a group of settlers set out from Tasiilaq further south to look for new hunting grounds. The fjords of Scoresby Sound were rich in seals, polar bears and narwhals, and the ned wettlement project was actively supported by colonial Denmark as supportive of the Danish sovereignty.



A little museum displayed a few historic photographs, the little but very beautiful church was open for us to visit, and we could buy traditional handicraft souvenirs at the workshop by the harbor and in the tourist information. A few puppies were roaming the streets and willing to be cuddled and soon, loud howling and barking announced the breakfast for the grown up four-legged workers by the river. Ittoqqortoormiit has its own weather station. We were able so observe the preparations and launch of the 11 o'clock release to collect data for the regional forcast. Walking gravel streets in our own tempo and desired direction was quite nice, although we had to be careful, as the locals were driving quite fast on their ATVs. On the way up the hill we passed a bright green soccer field and the local helipad. The harbour of Ittoqqortoormiit is blocked by ice mot of the year and the flight connections via Constable Point Airfield in Hurry Inlet provide the only reliable connection to the rest of the world.

By lunchtime it was time for us to return to our ship. A last zodiac ride later, everyone was back on board in time for lunch as the ship set course for the Denmark Strait. For the afternoon, Cloé had prepared a lecture on plankton, and of course she had not missed the opportunity to take some samples from the Scoresby Sound! Through the microscope, we were able to take a good look at the copepods, whereas the sea butterflies were big enough to be admired by the eye as they were flapping their wings. Alas, also this evening was cloudy and we were not able to search the skies for northern lights. Maybe, maybe...tomorrow?



Day 8 – Saturday 9th of September, At sea towards Iceland

12h00 GPS Position: 67°21.1'N / 19°25.1W

Wind: NNE6 • **Sea:** Moderate • **Weather:** Overcast • **Air temperature:** +4°C •

Sea temperature: +6°C

Today, Rinie woke us up to a sea that was still a little rough. The crossing overnight had been a little bit shaky as well. A lot of fulmars were flying around the ship, and we even saw a couple of gannets. After a hearty breakfast, the bridge spotted killer whales in the rough sea. After hearing the announcement on the PA system, we all ran to the outer decks to get a glimpse of these magnificent animals. It was very difficult to spot them as they were surfacing only once and spending 5 minutes under water. The large waves did not make things easier. After about one hour of the captain's efforts to follow the killer whales, Plancius eventually went back to its course towards Iceland. Ross then gave us another workshop on photography where he taught us how to edit pictures.

Right after lunch we could still not see Iceland. In the afternoon Irene gave us a lecture on her activities in Longyearbyen, where she looks after dogs for her dog sledging activities. It was very interesting to learn about her experiences, and how she works with these kinds of dogs. At 4:30 PM the time arrived to say goodbye to our rubber boots, and we brought them back to the boot room.

We were then all called deck by deck to go to reception to settle our bar bills. Some of us had quite a surprise. At 6 PM. It was time to go to the observation lounge for the captain's cocktail where our captain addressed us for the last time. Rinie also thanked us all for choosing Oceanwide expeditions, thanked the entire staff and crew for this incredible voyage, and took us through all the memories of the different steps of this expedition. Ross then showed us the slideshow of the trip, with all the beauties that we had experience during these past days. But then a sperm whale appeared right next to the ship, and we could all observe it until it fluked up and disappeared.



It was then time to go for our last plated dinner in the dining room, where our chef Kabir spoiled us again with his delicious creations. At the end of the dinner, the entire crew from the kitchen, hotel department and laundry came through the dining room to say goodbye, and it was wonderful to be able to see all the faces again. We then all gathered at the bar for a couple of drinks. We all could not believe that our fantastic trip had come to an end.

Day 9 – Saturday 10th of September, Arrived in Akureyri

09h00 GPS Position: 65°41.1'N / 18°04.4E

Wind: SSE2 • **Sea:** Calm • **Weather:** Overcast • **Air temperature:** +14°C • **Sea temperature:** +6°C

Late last evening, we arrived in Akureyri. While we enjoyed a last breakfast on board, our suitcases were taken off the ship. It is a sad moment to disembark from Plancius, which has been a comfortable and cozy home during this unforgettable journey. We have shared many unique moments, seen a range of rarely sighted wildlife, and made new friends. Loaded with fond memories we now must head home.

Our wildlife encounters and the landscapes we saw on this trip were truly spectacular. For the most part the weather has been fantastic, and we have loved sharing our love for the Arctic with you.

Thank you all for travelling with us on this voyage, for your enthusiasm, support, and good company. We very much hope to see you again in the future, wherever that might be!

Thank you from
your expedition
team



Total distance sailed on our voyage: 1049 nautical miles

On behalf of Oceanwide Expeditions, Captain Artur Iakovlev, Expedition Leader Rinie van Meurs, Hotel Manager Ingrid Van de Loo, and all the crew and staff of M/V Plancius, it has been a pleasure travelling with you.