



Spitsbergen – East Greenland

on board the

m/v Plancius

September 06 to September 18, 2016



MV *Plancius* was named after the Dutch astronomer, cartographer, geologist and vicar Petrus Plancius (1552-1622). *Plancius* was built in 1976 as an oceanographic research vessel for the Royal Dutch Navy and was named *Hr. Ms. Tydeman*. The ship sailed for the Royal Dutch Navy until June 2004 when she was purchased by Oceanwide Expeditions and completely refit in 2007, being converted into a 114-passenger expedition vessel. *Plancius* is 89 m (267 feet) long, 14.5 m (43 feet) wide and has a maximum draft of 5 m, with an Ice Strength rating of 1D, top speed of 12+ knots and three diesel engines generating 1230 hp each.

Captain Alexey Nazarov

and his international crew of 44

including

Chief Officer:	Jaanus Hannes	[Estonia]
Second Officer:	Matei Mocanu	[Romania]
Third Officer:	John Williams	[Wales]
Chief Engineer:	Sebastian Alexandru	[Romania]
Hotel Manager:	André van der Haak	[Netherlands]
Assist. Hotel Manager:	Dejan Nikolic	[Serbia]
Head Chef:	Ralf Barthel	[Germany]
Sous Chef:	Ivan Yuriychuk	[Ukraine]
Ship's Physician:	Veronique Verhoeven	[Belgium]

and

Expedition Leader:	Andrew Bishop	[Australia]
Assist. Expedition Leader:	Katja Riedel	[Germany/New Zealand]
Expedition Guide:	Sandra Petrowitz	[Germany]
Expedition Guide:	Irene Kastner	[Germany/Svalbard]
Expedition Guide:	Beau Pruneau	[Canada/Germany]
Expedition Guide:	Michelle van Dijk	[Netherlands]
Expedition Guide:	Gérard Bodineau	[France]
Expedition Guide:	Shelli Ogilvy	[Alaska]

We welcome you on board!

6. September 2016 (Day 1) Longyearbyen

GPS position at 1600 hrs: 78°14.0'N / 015°37.0'E

Wind: S 2 Sea: smooth Weather: partly cloudy Temperature: 5°C



Longyearbyen! Spitsbergen!
Greenland! The Arctic! – While some of us had just arrived from the airport, others had had a few hours or even days to explore the archipelago's small main city. All of us were very excited to finally make our way to the pier and to our home for the next week or so: m/v *Plancius*. Our adventures began quite quickly as our first experience would be transporting to the ship via zodiac! We had anticipated this way of travel as part of

expedition excursions, but it was a very exciting way to first come on-board. We were greeted by the expedition team at the pier, the staff and crew had already taken care of our big luggage, and at 16.00 hrs loosely it was time for us to make the first steps up the gangway.

Once on board, Hotel Manager André and Dejan welcomed us, and with the help of the hotel team we were shown to our cabins. We used the time to wander around and get acquainted with the ship until all passengers were on-board. Once the manifest was complete we hauled the anchor and headed out to sea for our future days of excursions exploring this great landscape—we are on our way!



© SANDRA PETROWITZ

Soon we were gathered in the Observation Lounge to be briefed about safety and life on board the ship. Our Expedition Leader Andrew Bishop welcomed us yet and again and we engaged in a short yet informative briefing by First Officer Jaanus on ship safety and how to prepare for the worst. André introduced us to the layout of the ship and to hotel operations.



A drill of the General Alarm (seven short blasts followed by one long blast) was made, and we all went to our cabins, put on warm clothing, grabbed the huge orange life jackets and mustered in the Lounge guided by crew and staff. It was made sure everyone was present, and upon hearing the Abandon Ship Alarm followed by an announcement of the Captain we went out to the lifeboats hoping to never actually have to use them.



We returned to our cabins briefly before regrouping with Captain Alexey in the lounge for a welcoming toast of champagne or juice. We came to know the members of our expedition team and were introduced to tomorrow's plans by Expedition Leader Andrew. We soon headed down to the Dining Room for our first scrumptious dinner prepared by Chef Ralf and his staff.

The evening light was delightful, the waters were calm, and only a slight swell was felt when we made our way out of Isfjorden and towards the North. Many of us were a bit tired after a long day of traveling. Thus *Plancius'* gently rocking us to sleep was very welcome!

7. September 2016 (Day 2)

Raudfjorden: Hamiltonbukta and Alicehamna

GPS position at 0800 hrs: 79°48.0'N / 011°06.9'E

Wind: SSW 6 Sea: slight Weather: overcast Temperature: 4°C



Patches of clouds swept the sky. Northern Fulmars patrolled the water surface, gliding along like watchers of the deep. The *Planctus* gracefully sailed along, the gentle swell of the sea lapping at her sides. A new day in the high Arctic had arrived.

As the sleepy-eyed passengers rolled out of bed to the gentle tone of our expedition leader Andrew's voice, announcing the



arrival of morning. The Expedition guides scanned the nearby beaches in search of wildlife. Breakfast! Shouted Andre over the speaker system, our ever eager Dutch hotel manager. Time to stuff our little tummies with tasty goodness fresh from Chef Ralph's kitchen! Afterwards, the English speaking guests had their safety briefings while the German speaking guests collected their rubber boots, affectionately known as 'Gummistiefel'. Then vice versa! Soon enough we had arrived at our morning destination, a small bay known as Hamiltonbukta. Given the steep cliffs and rocky terrain around we opted for a zodiac cruise among the small bits of ice leading to a lovely glacier. Before we could even arrive at said glacier, an arctic fox showed up at the shoreline and strolled along, hardly giving the zodiacs and passengers the time of day. A fantastic sighting it was, as the boats came quite close and the fox barely batted an eye, although it kept a keen and hungry look at a pair of lounging Glaucous gulls. The fox was mid-way into changing into its white winter coat and stood out nicely against the dark rocks along the shoreline. As we moved on letting the fox continue on its morning mission of mischief and breakfast, we quickly met with yet another fox, this one an extremely rare melanistic fox, noticeably smaller and spritlier. Blue foxes they are called, simply arctic foxes that have a dark pigmentation in their fur, making them look dark blue or nearly black. Beautiful creature it was, as we left it in peace to drive closer to the glacier. Alas, another arctic fox was spotted along a nearby beach! Soon followed by two smaller melanistic blue foxes. And such is a puzzle solved! A family of foxes. Two normal colour variation arctic foxes, with their three melanistic blue fox kits, playing along the sandy beach the drizzle and fog. Such a sighting is rare indeed. The zodiac drivers then took the passengers glacier in to the ice, observing the cracks and groans of the glacier, but no large calving was observed. As we returned to the ship to warm up with mugs of



hot tea, many shook their heads in disbelief as to have such a lucky first excursion in the arctic. Lunch was provided and the ship slowly sailed further into the bay, towards the afternoon's activity spot. Alicehamna it was named, with a small trapper hut built by a Swedish man by the nickname of Stockholm Sven. There, the guides organized three various hikes, of varying levels of difficulty and



speed. As the ninja "turtles" combed the beachline, the middle group headed up the hill to a cairn with a lovely lookout point! What about the fast group you ask? They headed up a larger hillside, with a mountain peak set in their sights. However, as the fog closed in, a small snow storm built its way up, and the peak was not to be. Heading down to safer conditions a wonderful point was reached and admired by all. On the way back to the zodiac pickup point, several guests had the gumption to collect rubbish from the shoreline. As Arctic Skua shrieked their approval overhead, terns squawked their annoyance with the world in general. The day wound to its end, *Plancius* headed northward out of the fjord, and navigating slowly west towards Greenland and greener pastures. Andrew regaled us all with tales of storms at sea, Beau impressed with his generous knowledge of foxes at the daily evening recap. Dinner was called and we dined to the mummings of our days adventures and got to know a few new faces. Outside a fog bank swept out to sea, gently pushing *Plancius* along with it. Passengers slowly made their way to their cabins, some staying up for a night cap, others heading off to for some evening rest and dreams of things not yet imagined....

8. September 2016 (Day 3) En-route to Greenland

GPS position at 0800 hrs: 78°33.6'N / 001°30.8'E

Wind: NNW 3 Sea: slight Weather: fog patches Temperature: -1°C



All night long, we were rocked by a gentle and long swell coming from South. After breakfast, Shelli gave us a lecture entitled "What to see in Greenland". She showed the main species of birds and mammals we hope see during the crossing and ashore in Greenland. As sailing conditions were very good, André decided to open the "ship shop" to allow us to purchase some one of kind *Plancius*/Oceanwide embellished souvenirs, clothes, books, games or other articles.

During lunch, the weather conditions improved and we got a pure blue sky. Numerous Northern fulmars were observed flying around *Plancius*. Many of us were interested in photographing them, as they were gliding very close to the water only mildly troubled by a very rounded ocean swell. This slight movement of the water made for very nice reflections of the birds in air; like a perfect mirror. Shortly after, we arrived in an ice belt. On the floes, many Harp seals were observed having a sun bathe in small groups of two to six. Among them, some very big males were



easy to recognise with their distinct black head and black mark on their back. This design illustrates a kind of harp, thus giving the seal its name.

Following this interesting observation, Gérard gave us a lecture about ice at sea. He explained the difference between the sea ice (frozen sea water) and the icebergs (made from snow and coming from land). He continued on explaining the different ways an iceberg can melt (sun-cupping, cracking, air grooves and currents) He also clarified how the pack ice is formed in winter time, also explaining the difference between first year ice and multiyear pack ice.

Shortly after, *Plancius* arrived once more along an additional belt of sea ice. Those out on deck spotted a Sei whale close to the ship, and it was quickly announced over the ship's PA system so all had the opportunity to catch a view of the third largest whale in the sea. Captain manoeuvred slowly and carefully to allow us to observe it several times before resuming our course.

At the evening briefing, Sandra regaled us with tales of trappers and hunters from a bygone era, following this Andrew informed us that a low pressure is headed our coming from the Denmark Strait between Iceland and Greenland. It is predicted that this weather would reach us during night, so he warned us for taking precautions: "one hand for the ship" was one of the main advises given.

As the evening progressed, we encountered another band of ice slowing our progress only slightly. Captain sailed along carefully due to a large and elongated swell causing the floes to move up and down quickly. The soft evening light, soft rocking of the ship and overcast skies called us gently to our bunks for a night of rest, gearing up for an active day of sailing the Greenland Sea.



9. September 2016 (Day 4)

En-route to Greenland

GPS position at 0800 hrs: 75°55.5'N / 008°37.2'W

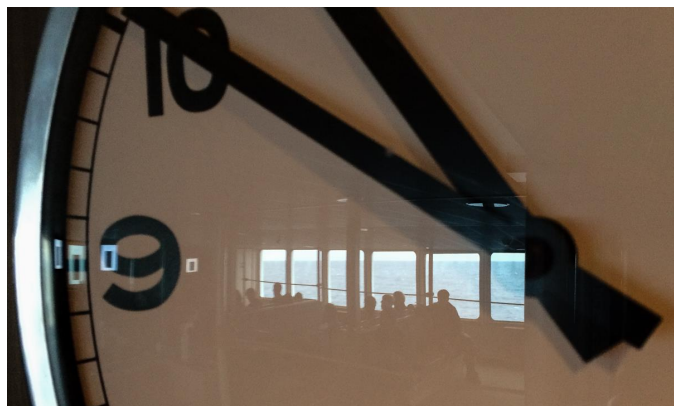
Wind: S 4 Sea: slight Weather: overcast Temperature: 2°C

After a quiet night at sea, we woke up surrounded by pieces of ice. This view added something to the already good selection of food that we had at the breakfast buffet.

At 9 o'clock there was a PA announcement that several whale blows had been sighted and we would try to approach closer with the ship. We gulped our last bits of coffee and tea, quickly grabbed our jackets and cameras, and headed outside. It turned out to be a friendly fin whale! We all enjoyed the sighting. Not much later after leaving this whale, there came another call. This time two whales were seen, also fin whales. When we encountered them, they similarly seemed to be curious. Again our Captain did the best he could to keep the ship close to the animals, moreover we were lucky the animals stayed close to the ship. Another great experience!



At 10.15h it was lecture time. Beau gave a talk on photography, explaining about focus, aperture, shutter speed and HDR. He showed examples from his own stock and that much of the skill of photography is about 'learning by doing' and trying what will work for you. Most important is to know that photography is very personal, and so is the choice of what to frame and how to picture it for yourself.



The second lecture of today the day was mid-afternoon at 15.00h. 'Sled Dogs – hard workers, elite sport stars & true companions' by Irene.

It gave us a new perspective on Huskies, as husky means dirty & rugged and usually lives outdoors. It can be a mixed breed of dogs, keeping in mind purpose before beauty. Therefore also training is very important. There are two ways to set up your dogs. The Alaskan way of putting pairs in line after each other, with lead dog in the front – perfect to avoid trees. VS the Greenlandic of having them run next to each other – perfect on sea ice.

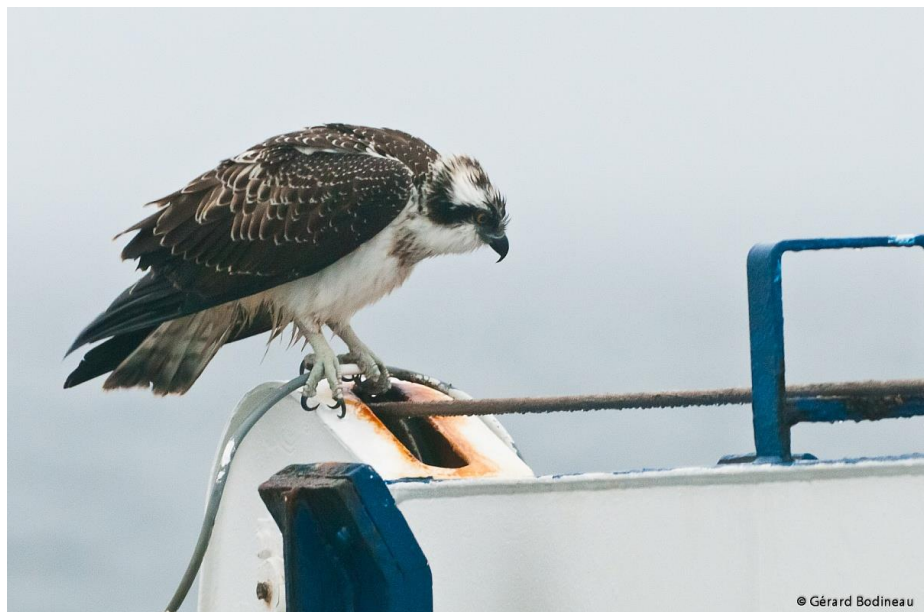


Later in the afternoon, Beau gave another talk. This time mostly about baleen whales, the majestic creatures of the sea. He finished the talk with: "I swear, I just saw an Osprey!"

All expedition staff ran outside, as Osprey do not live in Arctic regions. Nonetheless it was an Osprey indeed! The bird must have been blown here by a storm and was very tired and wet. It tried to land on the ship, but that wasn't very easy for him, as his

claws are made for trees and not for steel. It finally found a place to rest at our life boat. We left the animal in peace, and hoped for the best.

Later in the evening the wind picked up to wind force 9 with a wave height of 5-6 meters. It was good that we were safe in bed by that time. We had tried our best to sea proof both ourselves and our cabins, but the night would only tell what kind of rest we would really have ...



© Gérard Bodineau

10. September 2016 (Day 5)

Myggbukta & Kejser Franz Joseph Fjord

GPS position at 0800 hrs: 73°28.7'N / 021°30.2'W

Wind: NE 3 Sea: smooth Weather: overcast Temperature: 2°C



After a rocky night on the ship we welcomed the protection of Myggbukta (Mosquito Bay). Only a gentle roll of the ocean swell was felt when we were given the proper wake-up call. However, many of us had a sleepless night as we rode out the storm that had worked its way up from the south. The waves and wind caused the ship to roll some 22+ degrees at times. Luckily the worst came at night and we were all tucked into our bunks the best we could.

Morning sunshine and a plan to take a few guided hikes were intended on this slightly overcast yet sunshine filled morning. A scout boat was set out to assess conditions ashore, but before it even hit the water a Polar bear was spotted resting 20mt up the beach..

The morning landing was postponed slightly and upon further investigation more Polar Bears were spotted!





This time a mother and two cubs! The trio were walking farther along the northwest side of the valley headed slowly towards the huts we had planned to visit. A zodiac cruise it would be!

Such a lucky sighting to have four individual bears all at one place; in Greenland none the less.

We loaded into the zodiacs armed with warm hats, fleece, cameras and binoculars, and headed out to the first bear. Still resting and with good views. Our drivers had to maintain a safe distance

from the beach due to the crashing surge of waves. Occasionally the bear would lift its head, but other than that it seemed to be committed to conserving its energy and sleeping the morning away. We thus commenced to cruise along the shoreline towards the Myggbukta hut from 1922. A bearded seal was seen making the rounds for a morning meal.

The huts were originally used as a Norwegian weather and radio station, yet present day the Danish navy sledge dog patrol use it and maintain the facility.

With the aid of eyes on the bridge as well as all Expedition guides keeping constant vigil for bear activity. We landed the zodiacs and had a chance to wander around the facilities. Some went inside,



others were happy to investigate the flora around the site. An arctic fox was spotted in the distance as well as a few Barnacle geese. The way in and out of the sheltered lagoon we were accompanied by both Eider and Long tailed ducks. A great start to the day.

Back on board we had a little time to warm up with tea before heading to the outer decks for a ship's cruise down Kejser Franz Joseph Fjord. A little lunch and back out we were again. Beautiful sunlight on the red rock formations contrasted nicely with the white and blue of the ice. Out of the wind the sun felt quite warm even though air temperature was only 7° C. A very enjoyable experience to take in the vast views while enjoying the comfort of the ship. Captain was obviously enjoying himself taking the ship *Plancius* through the strait tagging each iceberg on the way for 360° views of the ice-formations and landscape behind. The afternoon progressed with ever changing light, we headed in for a small re-cap on the day's events and what to expect for tomorrow. A bit of Geology from Andrew and Irene translated some history about the Danish Sirius dog patrol. We again bundled up for an outdoor BBQ on the stern deck!





11. September 2016 (Day 6)

Blomsterbugten & Maria Ø

GPS position at 0800 hrs: 73°21.1'N / 025°21.8'W

Wind: various 2 Sea: smooth Weather: rain Temperature: 5°C



Rain. Rain pounded against the *Plancius* as she cruised through Franz Joseph fjord system westward. The gentle tones of Andrew and Sandra's voice oozed through the speaker system announcing that a new day had arrived. Welcome to a fresh day in Greenland.

As the guests filed their way into the dining room for a fantastical breakfast, the expedition staff met in their office to crunch numbers and arrange the day of destruction. Satisfied with the result, zodiacs were dropped for a scout boat to head off and secure the landing site, Blomsterbugten. Ahoy Flower Bay! This time of year it was a hard stretch to find these colourful blossoms, hardly a flower was to be found unless you had a close eye to the ground. As one by one the zodiacs dropped off soggy but willing passengers on shore for the various hikes, the groups headed off one by one in search of near mythological creatures and far off visions of geology. As the fast hikers wound their way up ridgeline after ridgeline, the medium group split off right away into two splinter factions, the middle adventurous and middle photogenic. Slowly the turtles turtled their way across the beach and up the shoreline.

Upon passing by an old musk ox skull, a cry was heard by the long hikers. Musk ox! Screamed the arctic flower guide Michelle. As the medium groups wound their way upward in search of the ancient craggy creatures, several arctic hare were spotted. Their winter white coats glistening in the morning mist and made them stand out against the autumn colours of birch and willow. As the hiking groups made their





way upward, soon enough several musk ox were spotted off in the distance. Shaggy animals, with rugs of fur hanging down to their ankles. The two medium groups made a half circle and started working their way back down the mountain side towards the beach and the zodiacs, another cry was heard. Gyrfalcon! Shouted the little Canadian lumberjack guide BeauBear. Sure enough, a pure white Gyrfalcon, a beautiful bird of prey, swooped overhead and made for the hares scrambling around in the haze. Success for the hare not for the falcon, some of us were fortunate enough to catch a glimpse as it rode the air currents up and over the rocky ridges in search of an easier meal perhaps. Soaked to the bone, it was time to head back to the ship and stuff our bellies with warm soup served up piping hot and fresh from the galley. As *Plancius* sailed deeper into the fjord, craggy mountains reared their heads as squiggly lines of geology features flashed past. The ship headed southwest towards the afternoon landing spot, Marie Ø as know, just between Ruth and Ella Ø.



Katja Riedel Snowmad Photography

What an island it is, jutting out in the middle of King Oscar fjord, a perfect spot for an afternoon tea.

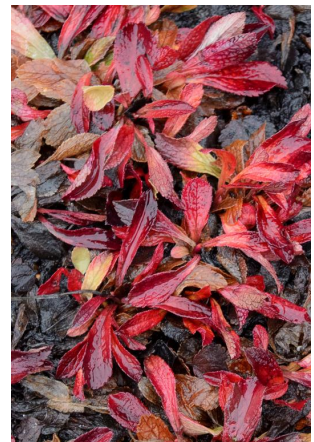
Or an afternoon stroll along the beach! As the zodiacs ran the passengers to shore, the rain poured down from the heavens as if from biblical times. However we were prepared in wet weather gear and positive attitudes.

As the different groups slowly made their various ways along the beach, large polar bear tracks were seen in the mud, a grim reminder of the fate one could expect if they didn't stay close to their chosen group. "But this group is too fast!" Shouted one. "The other group is too slow!" Shouted another. With options given and the number of guides everyone was able to make it around the tundra in his or her comfort and fashion. Back on board Andrew and Katja gave the world's quickest



Katja Riedel Snowmad Photography

and shortest expedition briefing in the lounge, shortly thereafter it was time for dinner and goodness from the galley. As the cloudy skies closed in, so did the passengers blankets as they tucked each other in, drifting off to a well-deserved sleep.



12. September 2016 (Day 7) Alpefjord & Segelsällskapet Fjord

GPS position at 0800 hrs: 72°09.4'N / 025°26.1'W

Wind: S 3/4 Sea: slight Weather: overcast Temperature: 3°C



After a calm and quiet night in the fjords, Andrew woke up at 7:00 am. *Plancius* was in a very deep fjord between high mountainous peaks, their summits hidden by dense clouds. This fjord is named Alpefjord, from the surrounding mountain range called the Stauning Alps. This range resembled very much aspects of the European Alps, hence the name. Soon after breakfast, we were invited to board the zodiacs for a cruise along the front of Gullygletscher and Sefstrøms Gletscher. The ship's crew lowered the 10 zodiacs so we could all cruise at once. The weather was quite respectable with a light breeze and soft drizzle. On the way to the glacier front, we stopped by some nice portions of ice, some as transparent as a plate of glass, others white-bluish and some additional having stones



and dust encompassed therein. We slowly sailed at a safe distance from the actual face of the glacier for almost one hour before reaching the other end of this very long glacier front. A bearded seal and some harp seals were spotted by some of zodiacs. We returned back on board after this long but interesting ride, for a bit of tea and moment to rejuvenate as the ship sailed to our afternoon destination.





During lunch, *Plancius* moved to the entrance of Alpefjord, to a very special place. The name is almost impossible to pronounce: Segelsällskapet in Swedish. To articulate it more easily it was changed in "Seagull Sells Carpet", more understandable in English. We landed on a nice pebble beach, close to a very strange geological formation. The rocks were made of many layers of red, yellow or brown limestone, polished by the huge glaciers there were here during the last ice age.

As an alternative to the walking groups, the staff defined a perimeter where we were allowed to walk freely at our own rhythm. Some of us enjoyed a bit of privacy and contemplation by sequestering away from the large group for a moment. We had a lot of time to have observe and take photos of these very unique rocks. Many of the ship's crew members joined us on this so unique place, including the Captain!





As we were back on board early, it was time for an educational moment. Gérard gave us a lecture on Greenland's human history. He described the different waves of people coming from West or South to "invade" this unoccupied land: the ancient Eskimos, the Vikings, the Inuit, the Danish colonisation and finishing by explaining what the modern-day demographic of Greenland is.

During the evening, as we were sailed southward out of the protection of Kong

Oscar Fjord, *Plancius* started to pinch and roll due to strong wind coming from North. For most of us, it was respectable moment to lie down and rest for the following days activities.

13. September 2016 (Day 8)

Vikingebugt

GPS position at 0800 hrs: 70°23.8'N / 023°09.0'W

Wind: NW 6 Sea: moderate Weather: rain Temperature: 2°C



Overnight we'd sailed south, towards Scoresbysund. It was another rocky night, but not as bad as expected. Regardless, we were all glad that we had entered the fjord by the time breakfast was served.

At 10.15 h Katja gave a lecture on Polar bears. It was very interesting to get to know these majestic animals a bit better and hear some more details about their behaviour on land and ice. It was also

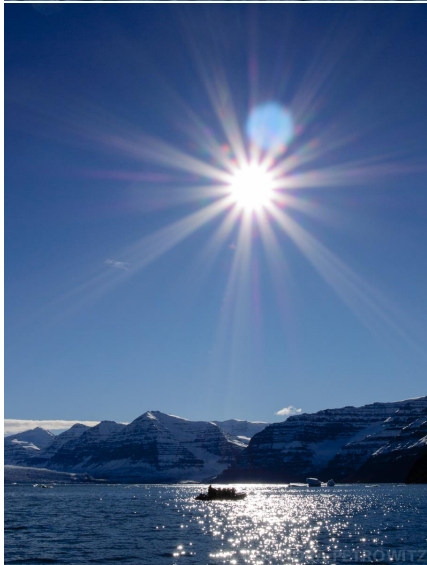




interesting to find out that all polar bears are born around New Year's Eve, after a very short pregnancy of only 4-5 months. Usually, two cubs are born, but the survival rate is low, only one third survives the first two years. In Greenland, polar bears are still hunted, and therefore the chance of seeing them is also low. We have been very lucky to see them at our first day in Myggbukta.

In the afternoon, the plan was to cruise Vikingebugt by Zodiac. Upon scouting the area from the ship three bears were spotted on the plateau of a mountain, so that is where we headed first. The polar bears, mother with two cubs, did not like us too much, and proceeded up the hill. Opposite of the bay there was a nice little waterfall with scenic surroundings. We were able to commence a short landing in front of it, and walk up to where the water plunged into the rocky terrain. On the way we saw the national flower, the Broad-leaved Fireweed (*Chamaenerion latifolium*), still in bloom. It is probably the most photographed plant of Greenland.





Then it was time to head off to the glacier and have a gaze towards the stunning icebergs and basalt intrusions in the rocks. At some places these intrusions looked like organ pipes.

The light was fantastic and so was the view. We took the maximum out of it, and when it was time to head back to the ship, Irene spotted the Polar bears swimming across the fjord. Some of us were able to take a last view before leaving them in peace.

The sky was still blue and promising! At recap Gerard explained how to prepare for photographing Northern Lights. Later this evening our wish came true! :-) Around 22.00h the first glim of Aurora Borealis was visible and as it got darker by the minute, the Aurora became more beautiful. At about one hour later, she danced along the sky, all over the ship. While some of us tried to catch her with cameras, others just sat back and enjoyed.

What a way to end the day.....



14. September 2016 (Day 9)

Sydkap & Skillebugt

GPS position at 0800 hrs: 71°17.2'N / 025°03.2'W

Wind: WNW 7 Sea: rough Weather: clear Temperature: 6°C



The day greeted us with stunning alpine glow sunrise. For those that had stayed up late into the night capturing views of the aurora it was a hard pull to get out of bed. Once on deck, between the pink hued icebergs and magnificent mountains it was hard to know which way to look or photograph. The official wake up was announced at quarter past seven, but most of us had already been up an hour or more.

We were anticipating a landing with the usual array of walking options at a place called Sydkap. The wind had come up just as we were approaching our preferred landing site, gusting up to 35 knots at times.





Captain took the ship around farther to the south and after a bit of jostling we found both a safe gang way position and a good location for the ship, we were able to launch the zodiacs and head to shore. Although the wind was still strong, the sun shone brightly and we meandered the tundra. Remnants of an old Thule village were witnessed and we viewed both their winter homes as well as stone tent rings. Arctic cotton dotted the tundra like fresh snow. Very nice for photographs. Whilst we were out wandering, the wind had increased to over 30 knots again, Guides were taking notice



of this and keeping tabs on the time. All went well and with the skilled drivers and Captain we safely made it back on board to have a bit of lunch and then head for Jytte Havn for another landing/hiking option in the afternoon. Alas, the weather had other ideas, robust winds again drove us to option B. Captain found some nice shelter in Skillebugt and we headed out for a zodiac cruise with thoughts of a small landing at the glacier moraine. Shallow waters and long mud flats made the landing impossible so we cruised the large icebergs and hunted the shoreline with our binoculars for any possible ice bear. Returning to the ship we warmed up with mugs of tea and fresh brownies. Once all were back on board we headed out into the gentle evening light, cruising Ø Fjord and passing by the Bjørne Øer complex. Jagged knife edge rock structures jutting straight out of the sea, icebergs locked between the channels; a stunning little archipelago.

We headed in to recap for plans of the following day, a little education on Lichens from Sandra and miniature talk on tonight's Aurora dynamics. All was well as we tucked into our bunks in the calm water of the fjord system.





Katja Riedel Snowmad Photography



© Gérard Bodineau



Katja Riedel Snowmad Photography

15. September 2016 (Day 10)

Harefjord, Rødefjord & Rode Ø

GPS position at 0800 hrs: 70°54.0'N / 027°48.6'W

Wind: various 1 Sea: calm Weather: partly cloudy Temperature: 2°C



© Gérard Bodineau

As the sun rose across the bow of *Plancius*, shining on the many glaciers surrounding the ship, movement was seen inside. Passengers woke up, moving about the ship admiring the beautiful views and scenery as *Plancius* gently wove its way around the fjord, weaving its way around icebergs that calmly lay here and there. As breakfast was served, the sun rose higher in a near cloudless sky. As the guests prepared themselves for the morning activity; a landing at Harefjord. This site is a lovely gentle sloping hillside with walks that could go up along to a ridge viewpoint, but before this could happen a cry was heard. Narwhal! Unbelievable. Such a rare species to see, several swam their way through the waterways around the icebergs, slowly making their way out of the fjord and away from *Plancius*.

Soon enough the zodiacs were dropped, and passengers were ferried to the landing site for the mornings festivities. As per usual, 4 hikes were arranged and they all set off amid great fanfare.



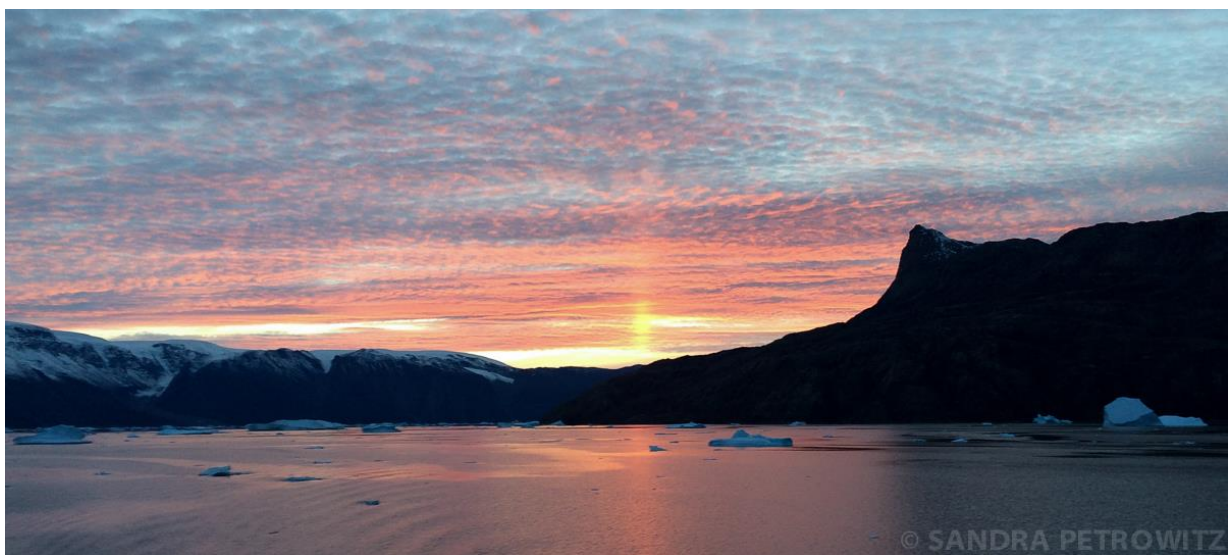
Eventually the long hikers spotted some musk ox in the distance. Using the wind and terrain features to their advantage, they were able to approach within 100 meters to these normally shy and reserved creatures. Unbelievable! Such skill and knowledge is appreciated indeed. As the musk ox had their fill of paparazzi, they eventually meandered up the hillside and disappeared over the ridgeline. Content with such, the various groups had their moments of silence to appreciate the arctic stillness and peace. Slowly they made their way back down to the beach, where another surprise awaited them. A polar plunge was offered, for those daring enough to strip down in the brisk arctic air and plunge their bodies into the cool water, exact temperature unfortunately unknown. Unbelievable! "Probably around just 2 degrees Celsius", the Canadian guide Beau ventured to say. Regardless of whether it was 1.9 or 2.1 degrees, several guests jumped into the admittedly frigid water and howled their approval to the world.



After this wild activity we returned to the ship, and filled their stomachs with warm authentic borcht, served up piping hot and fresh from the source. The afternoon activities were plotted and planned out by the staff. A split activity it was to be, with the possibility to land on an island called Røde Ø, or Red Island, and make a short hike up a hillside to a fantastic view to the other side, stuffed full of icebergs. Of course the other

part was to zodiac cruise amongst said icebergs! As some made their way up the hillside struggling to catch up to the energetic BeauBear, others refused to exit their zodiac. "Cruise only please" they requested. Have no fear Irene was ready to take them on a photo tour of the ice.

All the other passengers also took to the zodiacs for a semi navigation of the island, looking at the ice, the rock formations and a few nests of Glaucous gulls. Eventually the last zodiac slowly left the iceberg graveyard, making its way back to *Plancius*, only stopping to pick up a perfect piece of glacial ice with absolutely no air bubbles inside, as only a Canadian can find. The ice was so beautiful we did not break it for our cocktails instead it was put in the bar on display for all to admire. As the charismatic Australian Andrew and the lovely German Katja talked about the following day's plans in the lounge, smells of various tasty things wafted their way up the stairs and into the dozens of nostrils sniffing air. Such a fantastic end to a fantastic day.



16. September 2016 (Day 11)

Constable Point & Ittoqqortoormiit

GPS position at 0800 hrs: 70°42.9'N / 022°35.1'W

Wind: N 6 Sea: moderate Weather: overcast Temperature: 3°C



As the skies were overcast during the night, there was no midnight or 2 am call to rug up and head outside to see northern lights, thus we had the opportunity to have a full nights rest uninterrupted by *Aurora Borealis*. Andrew ensured the normal wakeup call as planned at 7:15 am. *Plancius* arrived in Hurry Fjord during breakfast. The conditions were not at their best, winds blowing 20 knots or more and a heavy rain turning to sleet, then snow. Nevertheless, the landing was kept as planned. Half of us, approximately 53 passengers were courageous enough to brave the elements for our last tundra walk. We landed on a long shallow pebble beach where the waves broke strongly but it was not difficult to go ashore with the aid of the guides and skilled drivers. As usual, we divided in three groups of different speeds.

Some went to the nearby hills to get a better view over the small valley going inland. However, after half an hour, the visibility was so poor and the snow so dense that the guides decided to not to go further. The ambience was a true polar experience of the oncoming winter. The vegetation was almost completely covered with fresh snow and the wind was blowing the snow horizontally





quite a distance. On the way back to ship, the drivers did their best to keep us dry, but many of us were soaked by both the rain and the spray anyways. We warmed up quickly after arriving on board and got a good lunch to gain our energy back after walking in the cold. During this time *Plancius* went to the Rosenvinges Bugt our destination being the small village of Ittoqqortoormiit. This is the only settlement in North-East Greenland. By luck, the wind dropped just before arriving so the zodiac ride to the village was a piece of cake compared to the morning's outing.

Once in the village, everyone was able to wander and visit at his/her own rhythm, visiting the most notable places: the church, museum, Tourist office and the small handicraft shop or supermarket, and don't forget the dog yard. It was also a unique opportunity to buy some souvenirs from Greenland. After more or less two





hours, everyone was ready to come back on board. It was time to say goodbye to Greenland and to head to our third destination of the voyage: Iceland. For most of us this would mean homeward bound but for others perhaps further traveling and exploration in the north.

Andrew invited us to the lounge for a “super recap” and briefing, with different interesting subject as the geology we had seen during the last two days, Beau spoke of Musk ox biology, habitat, and evolution, and Katja presented a bit more science to how, when, where, and why we see Northern lights. As *Plancius* started to sail in open sea, she started to move a bit in the swell of the Denmark Strait. However, the “rock and roll”

was much less than our crossing from Svalbard to Greenland. Many of us looked around and noticed the absence of safety ropes constricting the lounge. This meant we were not expecting too rough of weather, a sigh of relief for most. In addition the bridge and expedition staff informed us that although we



should prepare both our cabins as well as ourselves for the open sea, nothing extreme was expected on the horizon. We still took good care moving about, always one hand for the ship! The voyage was not over yet, but our thoughts wandered as we drifted off to sleep, for dreams of new exciting destinations.

17. September 2016 (Day 12)

At Sea to Iceland

GPS position at 0800 hrs: 67°36.5'N / 022°38.2'W

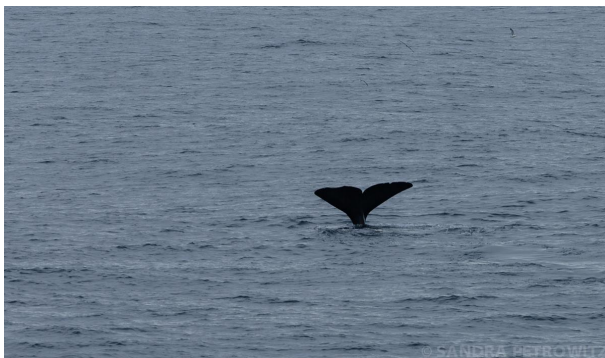
Wind: S 5 Sea: moderate Weather: partly cloudy Temperature: 8°C



A gentle swell from the ocean and soft sunrise welcomed us into the day. Early morning blue sky and constant companion of the Northern fulmar were also here to greet us. Some woke early and quietly sipped tea in the lounge, others took advantage of the opportunity to rest longer and rise later as we would not be making any expedition outside of the great ship *Plancius*. The morning activities included feeding ourselves, sorting our accounts, our photos, and prepare articles in the cabin ready to travel the next day.

The staff also put on a historical documentary in the lounge for those that wished to watch. This is the first film ever made about the Inuit, entitled **Nanook of the North**. It is a black and white film with back ground music, however no audible dialog. The filmmaker Robert Flaherty had lived among the Eskimos in Canada for many years as a prospector and explorer, and he had shot some footage of them on an informal basis before he decided to make a more formal record of their daily lives. Filming took place between August 1920, and August 1921, mostly on the Ungava Peninsula of Hudson Bay.

After lunch, a Sperm whale was sighted! The whale surfaced just 400m from the port side of the ship and Captain stayed with it for a second surfacing before we resumed our course. Sperm whales are known to dive for up to 20 minutes or longer so it was very fortunate to have the views we did. On the schedule for the afternoon was Sandra presenting informative Antarctica the other end of the world lecture. Before she could even begin, we were interrupted again by whales. This time Orca! At least 8-10 individuals swam around hunting for herring likely. A few opportunistic gulls also hovered nearby. It was as if the ocean did not want to let us go. And yet we must, after spending quality time with the whales we continued again on course for the harbour. Sandra then proceeded to swoon us with photos and tales of travels in Antarctica. Fanning the flames of future polar adventures, the “polar bug” digs in deeper.



This afternoon we reluctantly return our Muck boots or ‘Gummistiefel’ the footwear that made trekking in the tundra remarkably dry and comfortable. Many of us took to the decks to soak in the views as we approached Iceland. Captain again joined us for a toast of our voyage and at dinner we were finally introduced to the Masters of culinary goodness Chef Ralf and his talented staff. As well as all the complete hotel team: cabin stewards, dinning staff, the beautiful ladies of the laundry and in spirit also the engineers who were unable to attend as they were busy keeping us running accordingly. The entire ship crew and expedition staff have done an amazing job of making this voyage a true success.

18. September 2016 (Day 13)

Akureyri

GPS position at 0800 hrs: 65°41,3'N, 018°04,5'W

After one final wake-up call by Andrew, we headed down to our ultimate breakfast on board. We dutifully left our luggage outside our cabin, and the staff and stewards nicked it to the pier for us. We disembarked walking the gang way for the final time. This excursion we sadly did not need to bother turning our tag as we headed out into the mild Icelandic air. First we identified our luggage on the pier and then the majority of us boarded buses for Reykjavik. We had plenty of time to reminisce and digest our adventures from the last 13 days during the six-hour journey through Iceland's spectacular scenery. Then it was time to go our separate ways, some to hotels in the city others off to the airport, either homeward bound or on towards other adventures.

It was sad to say good-bye to all the beautiful places we had visited and to *Planicius*, the ship that had been our comfortable, cosy home for an unforgettable journey to the North. At the same time we were richer in memories and knowledge about the Arctic and its wildlife. We have had special and incredible experiences, taken hundreds of pictures and made new friends. We shared truly unique moments, we talked and we laughed with each other. This trip will last us a lifetime – in our memories, in our imaginations, and in our dreams.



*Thank you all for such a wonderful voyage, for your company,
good humour and enthusiasm. We hope to see you again
in the future, wherever that might be!*

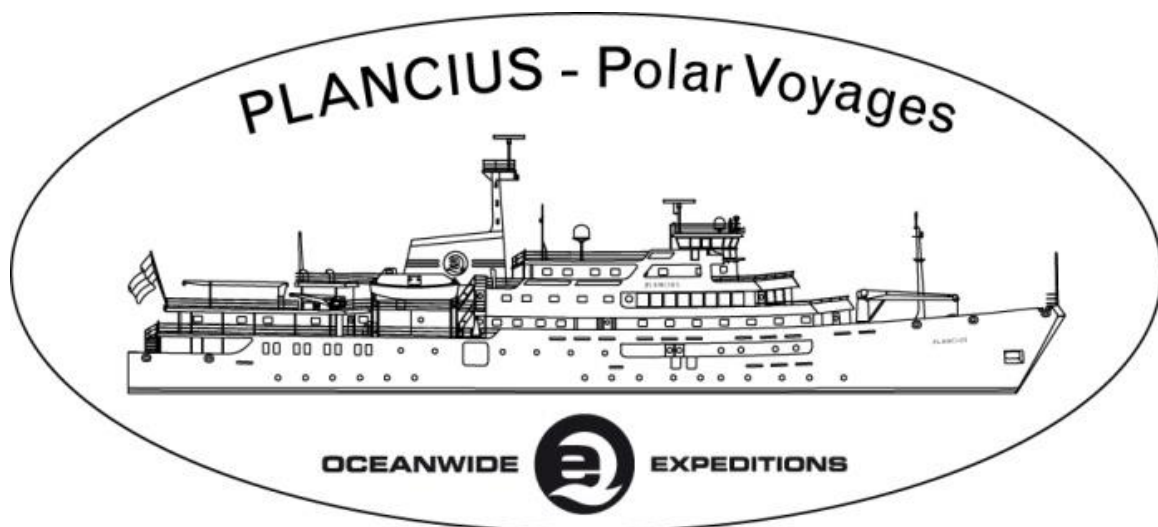
Total distance sailed on our voyage:

2076 nautical miles

3845 kilometres

Furthest North Point: 79°55.2'N, 011°43.2'E

**On behalf of Oceanwide Expeditions, Captain Alexey Nazarov, Expedition Leader
Andrew Bishop, Hotel Manager André van der Haak and all the crew and staff, it
has been a pleasure travelling with you.**



**World's Leading Polar
Expedition Operator**