



East Greenland Basecamp

on board the

M/V Plancius



MV *Plancius* was named after the Dutch astronomer, cartographer, geologist and minister 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*. She sailed for the Royal Dutch Navy until June 2004 when she was purchased by Oceanwide Expeditions and completely refitted in 2007. She was converted into a 114-passenger expedition vessel with an Ice Strength rating of 1D, top speed of 12+ knots and 3 diesel engines generating 1230 hp each. *Plancius* is 89 m (267 feet) long, 14.5 m (43 feet) wide and has a maximum draft of 5m.

Captain Evgeny Levakov

and his international crew of 44

including

Chief Officer:	Vladimir Plotnikov	[Russia]
Second Officer:	Anika Albrecht	[Germany]
Third Officer:	Luis Oroceo	[Philippines]
Chief Engineer:	Sebastian Alexandru	[Rumania]
Hotel Manager:	Robert McGillivray	[Netherlands]
Chief Steward:	Thijs de Lint	[Netherlands]
Head Chef:	Heinz Hacker	[Austria]
Sous Chef:	Sean Steele	[Canada]
Ship's Physician:	Ninette van Es	[Netherlands]

and

Expedition Team Leader:	Rinie van Meurs	[Netherlands]
Assist. Expedition Leader:	Katja Riedel	[Germany/New Zealand]
Expedition Guide:	Tobias Brehm	[Germany]
Expedition Guide:	Sandra Petrowitz	[Germany]
Expedition Guide:	Peter Gwatkin	[United Kingdom]
Expedition Guide:	Michelle van Dijk	[Netherlands]
Expedition Guide:	James Cresswell	[United Kingdom]
Expedition Guide:	Victoria Salem	[United Kingdom]

welcome you on board!

Day 1 – Tuesday September 15, 2015

Akureyri, Iceland: Embarkation

1600 GPS position: 65°41.1'N / 018°14.7'W

Most of us arrived in Akureyri by bus from Reykjavik and boarded the *Plancius* directly, while crew and staff took care of our luggage. For some of us, this was the start of a once-in-a-life-time experience! After checking in at reception, we were able to go to our cabins and settle in. We then had some time to explore the ship or enjoy a coffee in the lounge. After a welcome by expedition leader Rinie, hotel manager Robert told us more about the routines on the *Plancius*, which would be our home for the next seven days.



However, before we could sail we had to attend the mandatory safety briefing by second officer Anika, which included the lifeboat drill. Part of this drill was also a practical training, where we donned our bright orange life jackets as the ship's alarm was sounded. We all met in the Observation Lounge for a roll call and then walked up to the life boats to get a glimpse of what would happen in case of an emergency. Let's hope we don't need to do this again!



Then it was time to leave the pier in Akureyri; the lines were cast off and our big adventure had begun. By the time we had picked up a pair of very fashionable rubber boots from the boot room we already felt like apprentice explorers.

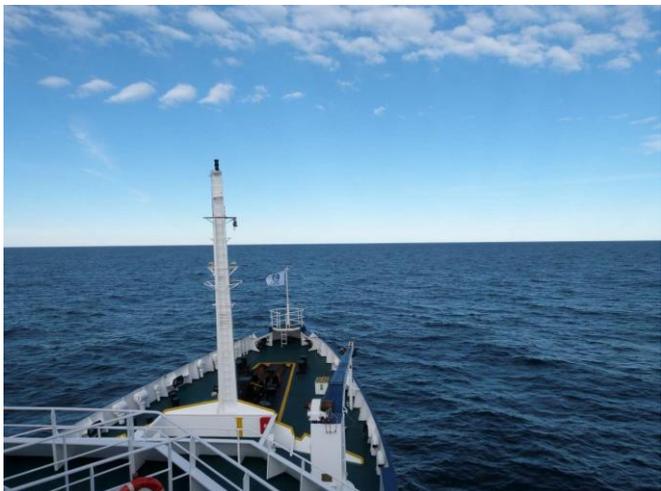
At the Welcome Cocktail we met Captain Evgeny Levakov for the first time and Rinie told us more about the journey. Also, the members of the expedition team introduced themselves. While it was getting darker, we enjoyed our first dinner on board and soon left the shelter of the fjord behind us. The movement of the ship increased and we felt that we were now in the open sea on our way to East Greenland.

Day 2 – Wednesday September 16, 2015

En route to East Greenland

0800 GPS position: 67°56.3'N / 019°54.8'W

Wind: NE 4. Sea: 4. Weather: cloudy. Temperature: +3°C



When Rinie woke us up in the morning for the first time on our voyage, we knew right away that we were out on the open ocean. The ship was moving up and down with every wave. For some of us, the way to breakfast was easier than for others as we were still in the process of developing our sea legs.

Some time after breakfast, James invited us to the Lounge for an introduction to the Geology of the Earth, and in particular to that of East Greenland. This

was an excursion not only into rocks, but into different scales of time and space.

After lunch, our Dutch guest lecturer Ramsey Nasr gave a talk on “De Eerste Doorkruising van Groenland door Fridtjof Nansen” to our Dutch guests in the dining room, while Victoria introduced our English-speaking guests to “Three amazing Greenland explorers: Kane, Nansen, and Peary” in the Lounge. These tales of men pushing themselves to their very limits in order to achieve what had never been done before were inspiring – also humbling, considering the comfort of our own trip to East



Greenland on *Plancius*!

Three AMAZING Greenland explorers

–
Kane (1820– 57),
Nansen (1861– 1930) &
Peary (1856– 1920)



In the meantime, the weather had improved significantly. The waves had flattened and the clouds were replaced by sun and blue sky as we gradually approached Scoresby Sund in East Greenland.

At 5 pm Sandra, our Photo Guide, invited us to the Lounge in her turn, to help us improve our photographs. She gave us straightforward, easy tips that can make photos a lot better. Sometimes, we only need to move the main object off-centre of the picture; it can be that easy.

In between talks we spent as much time out on deck as possible, enjoying the ever-changing sky scape (complete with close-flying fulmars) and the splendid sight of East Greenland's mountains coming ever nearer.



At 7 pm we got together in the Lounge with the expedition team to have our first Recap



& Briefing of the trip. These recaps summarize a few things we have seen during the day, which can now be explained in a bit more detail. Victoria spoke on the naming of Iceland and Greenland, and Tobias told us about the locations of potentially-exploitable mineral

deposits. Rinie, our expedition leader, also gave us an idea of what was planned for the following day.

During dinner, there was a glorious sunset and darkness took over. Kayaking Guide, Pete, asked his kayaking group to join him in the Lounge for a briefing on the upcoming days' kayaking options after we'd finished dinner.



You know there might be something special about to happen if guides are restlessly going from one window to the next to look out towards the night sky. And there they were! The Aurora Borealis (or Northern Lights)! We got dressed nice and warmly, and got ready for a long night

on the outer decks. The sun had already put on quite a show when it set and now demonstrated more of its activity, with an almost unlimited variety of northern lights – waves, rays, and blankets. Some were stationary, while others were flying and flickering across the heavens. One moment they were very faint and the next moment, bright as daylight, stretching across the entire sky. They were mainly green and white at the beginning, but more colours came into play as the night progressed. Just after midnight, we also had yellows, purples and reds. What a fantastic display!



Day 3 – Thursday September 17, 2015

Nordvestfjord: Fredericksdal

0800 GPS position: 71°16.9'N / 025°10.8'W

Wind: SE 2. Sea: 1. Weather: clear. Temperature: +4°C



Today we awoke (some of us after a short night's sleep due to the amazing Northern Lights) deep inside the Scoresby Sund Fjord system. We were at Sydkap, where three fjords - Hall Brenning, Ofjord and Nordvest Fjord - all meet. The first thing that happened after breakfast, as the ship started to sail up the Nordvest Fjord, was the mandatory AECO briefing (which dealt with how we should conduct ourselves on shore in the Arctic) and an introduction to using zodiacs efficiently and safely, both presented by our

expedition leader, Rinie. This was followed by a lecture on geology for the Dutch group, by Prof. Kroonenberg. Meanwhile, the ship sailed further and further up Nordvest Fjord, past stunning icebergs and towering cliffs made up of one billion year-old metamorphic rocks.

We had an early lunch as the ship pulled off the main fjord into Northern Harbour for our landing at Frederick's Dal. After a briefing from Rinie we went ashore and divided into four groups: one group went with James and Michelle on a long hike deep into Frederick's Dal, and were rewarded not only by spectacular scenery, but also by the sight of several Arctic hares, standing out white against the rocky backdrop. Another group, led by Rinie and Katja, (which later subdivided again into 'more leisurely' and 'less leisurely') came across a quantity of Musk ox



skulls/bones and some old reindeer antler, enjoyed taking photos of the tundra vegetation/ice crystals covering small ponds, and had the good fortune to see an Arctic



fox run by. Prof. Kroonenberg was a member of this group also, and he enthused on and enlightened us about the rocks we were walking over. A third group went with Sandra





and Tobias on a photography 'workshop' walk and zodiac cruise, while Pete took the fourth group kayaking. How tiny the kayaks (and even *Plancius*) looked in the huge bay, with mountain peaks looming over them and icebergs reflected back by the still water. A great afternoon was had by all; and once we were back on board the evening light, as we cruised back down Nordvest Fjord, was so

spectacular that we cancelled Recap in order to be at liberty to enjoy the scenery – and colourful sunset - to the full. Finally it was dinner time and the end to an amazing first day in Greenland.



Day 4 – Friday September 18, 2015

Ø Fjord and Rypefjord

0800 GPS position: 71°16.6'N / 025°11.2'W

Wind: NW 5. Sea: 3. Weather: cloudy. Temperature: +3°C



We woke up after a calm and quiet night, because the ship had anchored overnight at Sydkap (South Cape). After breakfast the Dutch were invited to the dining room to hear the story of Amundsen's first attempt to fly over the North Pole. Every now and then they were distracted by stunning geology and big icebergs, as we sailed through Ø fjord. Øfjord is a long fjord between Renland and Milne Land, discovered and named by Carl Ryder in September 1891. Most of these icebergs come from the Daugaard-Jensen Gletscher, which is

one of the main iceberg producers; it produces 10 km² icebergs annually. Those who did not attend the lecture stood out on deck taking it all in, in the sunshine.

In the afternoon, the ship anchored in Rypefjord (Ptarmigan-fjord). After lunch we landed and split up into four groups: energetic hiking with Katja & Victoria, medium hiking with Tobias and leisurely walking with Rinie. James escorted Prof. Salomon Kroonenberg on a geological tour and Michelle guarded Sandra's photo workshop – not forgetting the kayaking group with Pete, where doctor Ninette kept lookout. To keep all the kayakers warm and



happy, at one stage Ninette served them tea & cookies, which (as with most hiking groups) was followed by a few moments of Arctic silence. It is not easy to be silent, but the groups appreciated the experience, being rewarded by a sighting of two seals (on water)



and a number of Muskox and Arctic hares (on land).

We all enjoyed our outing and the lovely weather a lot! Whether our focus was on the ground (vegetation, rocks, animal remains, frozen ponds) or upwards and outwards towards the majestic, snow-crowned



mountains, glaciers and icebergs outlined against the blue, blue sea and sky, the beauty of Eastern Greenland once experienced is not easily forgotten.



At recap, Katja explained the scientific process behind the mystical Aurora Borealis, and Prof. Salomon Kroonenberg talked about the geological features that we have seen so far – ending with a practical demonstration involving sand and a magnet!

Then it was time for an Arctic BBQ. We were welcomed onto the back deck, where a delicious buffet had been prepared. As the programme said, we had to wear our dancing gumboots; the Hotel team, led by Robert and Thijs, were there to serve us food and complimentary drinks – they soon got the partying underway and the dancing continued through the dusk long after the food was all consumed.

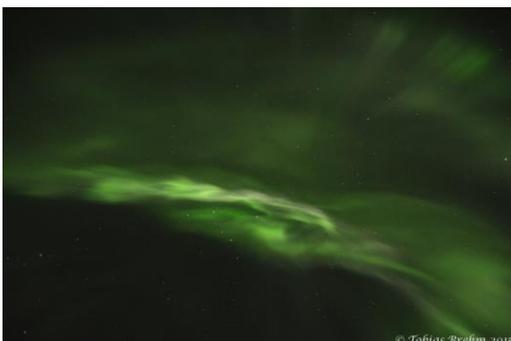
When we were tired of dancing, the Northern Lights took over and danced for us in the sky.





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Standing on the back deck or lying on the top deck, we watched this spectacle for a long time - until we were cold and needed hot chocolate to warm us up. Pete and Ninette did not want to go in, but did 'jumping jacks' to get warm again; and a miracle happened - they seemed to energize the Aurora, whose lights and flickering gauzy curtain across the firmament became stronger than ever.



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Sleep came late to the Aurora-watchers, but it was well worth being a little sleepy at breakfast tomorrow...



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Day 5 – Saturday September 19, 2015

Rødefjord and Røde Ø

0800 GPS position: 70°59.6'N / 027°43.4'W

Wind: S 2. Sea: 1. Weather: cloudy. Temperature: +1°C



A gentle morning followed the night's spectacular light show. While we were slowly waking up and making our way to breakfast, *Plancius* left her anchorage at Rypefjord and turned first into Harefjord, then into Rødefjord, the Red Fjord. The origin of the name was obvious as the red sandstone mountains contrasted beautifully with a myriad of icebergs, big and small. The sun was trying to find a way through the clouds, and small pieces of ice came floating past

the ship – a feast for the photographers who had a hard time deciding whether to concentrate on the reflections of the mountains, or on the ice sculptures, or on the water ripples for more abstract images. The outer decks were the place to be!



As we progressed down the fjord, the density of icebergs increased. At the same time, freshly formed sea ice cracked into a thousand pieces when *Plancius* pushed through the thin layer. At one stage we began

to wonder whether we would actually be able to make it to Røde Ø, the Red Island. But Captain Evgeny was driving the ship almost like a zodiac, dodging in and out of the iceberg chicane.



By the time we reached the island, we were marvelling at the stunning array of icebergs surrounding it, that looked like the ultimate ice labyrinth. After Rinie's briefing, we all boarded the zodiacs for an incredible cruise around the icebergs and Røde Ø, which is indeed red, and cut by huge basaltic

dykes. The intense colour comes from sediments of Carboniferous and Permian age, which were laid down in desert conditions, thus allowing the development of haematite. The brilliant red of the rock and some strange and magnificent rock formations, together with the huge concentration of icebergs grounded by the shallow water round the island, made for a very special zodiac cruise. There were photographic opportunities galore in the wondrous world of white, blue and clear ice, and some of us clicked the shutter of our cameras more often this afternoon than any other day on the whole trip!



After we had thoroughly enjoyed zipping back and forth between the icebergs, the zodiacs came to land in a small bay on the north of the island, and we were able to climb to the top of a high (and steep!) ridge. From this viewpoint we gazed out over the iceberg graveyard we had just cruised through, seeing it from a bird's-

eye view, which gave us quite a different perspective on Røde Fjord. Meanwhile, the long hikers set off towards the highest point of the island, enjoying the spectacular views en route.

We were reluctant to descend to normality after this, but eventually had to go back to our beloved *Plancius* for Recap & Briefing (before yet another delicious dinner). Katja talked about blue, striped, dimpled, dirty and rolling icebergs, and Michelle and Rinie provided us with information about the not-so-secret-anymore lives of the Arctic hare and the Muskox. The odd snowflake had started to tumble down, and by the time



we reached Föhnfjord, the steep mountains to either side of *Plancius* were covered with a delicate layer of white. We have now had the full range of weather experience possible on this trip!

This evening we were able to order a nightcap from Rosi at the bar complete with real Arctic ice, plucked from the sea for us to enjoy by Tobias.

Day 6 – Sunday September 20, 2015

Ittoqqortoormiit & at sea to Iceland

0800 GPS position: 70°26.0'N / 022°07.2'W

Wind: NW 3. Sea: 2. Weather: overcast. Temperature: +2°C



This morning we woke up to a wintry landscape. Snow had fallen during the night and the mountains of Scoresby Sund were stark black and white. After breakfast we visited Ittoqqortoormiit, the only settlement in Scoresby Sound. Around 350 people live a traditional Inuit lifestyle here year-round, with hunting and fishing. From a distance the houses looked like doll houses painted very prettily, each in a different colour.

After our zodiacs had landed we were given a map to explore the settlement by ourselves. One of the main attractions was the gift shop, where postcards, local artwork and other souvenirs were purchased. Outside we had the chance to taste some Muskox meat and touch the skin of a Muskox with its coarse outer hair and thick, warm under-wool. The church, which was built in 1928, is a little gem with its blue and white paintwork and big chandeliers; a five-masted ship hangs from the ceiling. This tradition dates back to the days of the Vikings, who were seafaring people.



The little art shop and museum were also



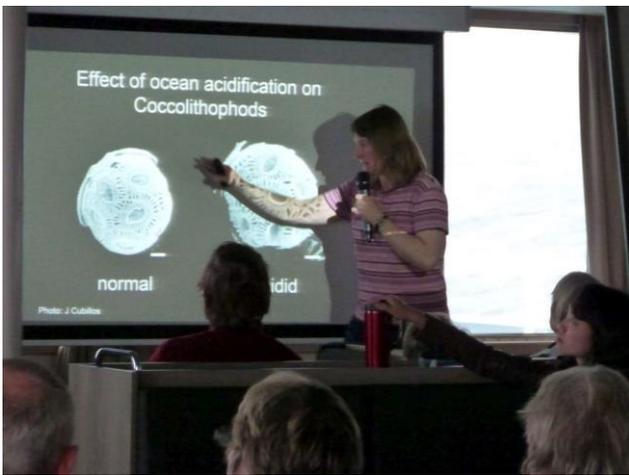


well worth a visit. At the museum a traditional Inuit kayak and trousers and mitts made from polar bear skin were exhibited. Maalia was wearing the pretty East Greenlandic outfit, with long boots adorned with beads. Many of us also walked up the hill to watch the launch of the weather balloon, but only the fastest got the picture when the balloon shot up in the air. Later it started to

rain and the pretty snow unfortunately disappeared, leaving the settlement's large population of sled dogs somewhat muddy and dispirited. Our time in the village soon came to an end and we returned to the ship.



This also meant farewell to Greenland because we were heading for the open sea, on our way to Iceland.



In the afternoon Katja gave a presentation about climate change and its effects on the Arctic. She showed how sea and glacier ice is fast disappearing.

Soon after the talk, a change in course meant that the ship started to roll. Ropes were put up in the bar to prevent people from being tossed around, but Ninette the doctor had done good work with her seasick medications, and most people were up and about. At Recap & Briefing we heard more about the Dorset and Thule people in Greenland, the geology of Røde Ø and the pressure on polar bears due to climate change and

hunting. A nice dinner in the restaurant and maybe a glass of wine at the bar finished off our last day in Greenland very pleasantly.



Dorset Art

- Varied & sophisticated
- Used antler, bone, ivory
- Animal/human; realistic/stylized
- Dorset "darkness"



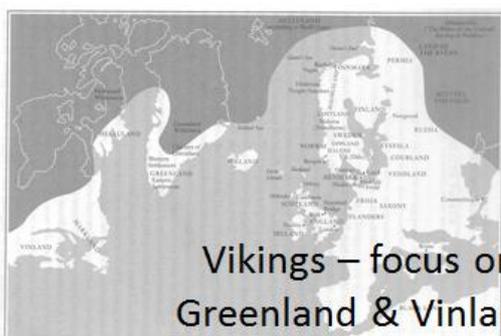
Day 7 – Monday September 21, 2015

En route to Iceland

0800 GPS position: 66°56.6'N / 020°47.2'W

Wind: SW 4. Sea: 3. Weather: clear. Temperature: +7°C

The lively ocean calmed down somewhat in the night and by breakfast time (NO WAKEUP CALL!) it was easy to walk around the ship once more. Today dawned bright and sunny again. We had made excellent progress while we slumbered, and by 10 am the coast of Northern Iceland was already in sight on the horizon.



Rather pleased to be able to see land again, we gathered in the Lounge for Victoria's tantalizingly entitled talk on 'Vikings – Blood, guts and exploration.' These consummate seamen ruled Europe from about 800 – 1100 and beyond. From pagan raiders to Christian traders and farmers, they discovered and colonized many of the lands we (as passengers) come from today. How they lived, their culture and daily life, and particularly their outlying colonies in Iceland, Greenland and even Vinland (America) were the focus of this talk, giving all of us food for thought. If we remember nothing else, we now know that they did not wear horned helmets!



After this talk, we had the joyful experience of settling our shipboard accounts at reception with Robert and Thijs. We were called deck by deck to speed the process, which was finished with by lunchtime at 12.30 pm. Just before lunch was announced, a cry of 'Dolphins at 3 o'clock!' went up. And there they were, racing *Plancius* through the water. The captain and officers obligingly turned the ship off its course temporarily so as to maximise our sighting of these delightful, agile creatures, some of which jumped right out of the



water as they splashed and swam past.



After lunch land was getting closer and closer, and our thoughts began to turn to packing. Yet there were still distractions, first of all in the form of a talk from Rinie at 2.30 pm about 'The Arctic ecosystem' – all about eating and being eaten, every level in the web of life being interconnected with others, whether plant or animal, on the scale of a microscopic organism or a top predator.

The Dutch group were kept particularly busy, as at 3.30 pm they were invited to a presentation in the dining room (in

Dutch) given by Ramsey Nasr, this time on the first man to the North Pole – ‘Robert Peary – als eerste op de Noordpool?’ Maybe he was, but probably he wasn’t...



After considerable thought, the afternoon’s movie - ‘Nanook of the North’, was NOT shown because the weather outside was so glorious and our views of Iceland so absorbing. This silent (apart from rather dated music!) black-and-white film is the first documentary ever made about the Inuit (in 1922). Sometimes funny, always atmospheric and often moving, this movie is deservedly famous, having become something of an Arctic institution. And it is readily available to purchase by mail-order, so no one need miss out. We were out on deck instead, looking eagerly for whale blows on the smooth ocean – Humpback whales seen by many of us, all round the ship.

We had our final get-together in the Lounge at 6.45 pm, where Captain Evgeny Levakov joined us again to toast our voyage’s success and bid us farewell. It was also our last formal meeting with Rinie and the



expedition team – a chance to reflect on what we have done, the photos we have taken, and the memories we have made together.

Then it was time for the ‘last supper’ – with the usual convivial atmosphere in the dining room and bar afterwards. Last-minute packing before bedtime was a final chore for those of us who had been spending time on deck earlier, and then we got into bed for the last time on *Plancius* for this trip at least. Tomorrow morning does not start too early, so we still have a few hours to gather energy for the journey home.

Day 8 – Tuesday September 22, 2015

Akureyri, Iceland: Disembarkation

0800 GPS position: 65°41.1'N / 018°14.7'W

This morning we heard our last wake-up call from Rinie. We will miss his daily pre-breakfast information!



We made sure to leave our luggage outside the cabin before we went down to breakfast, which was at the civilized time of 8 – 9 am. 9 am was departure time. First we identified our luggage on the pier and then the majority of us boarded buses for Reykjavik. We have plenty to think about during the six-hour journey through Iceland's spectacular scenery. Then the time will have come for us to say goodbye and start out on our individual journeys homeward. Maybe we will meet again on either *Plancius* or *Ortelius* – and perhaps in Antarctica next time?

Thank you all for such a great voyage, for your excellent company, good humour and enthusiasm!

We hope to see you again in the future, wherever that might be.

Total distance sailed on our voyage: 1035 nm /1917 km



World's Leading Polar Expedition Operator

On behalf of Oceanwide Expeditions, Captain Evgeny Levakov, Expedition Leader Rinie van Meurs, Hotel Manager Robert McGillivray and all the crew and staff, it has been a pleasure travelling with you.