



OCEANWIDE
EXPEDITIONS

Around Spitsbergen

17th August – 26th August 2019

M/V Plancius



M/V 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.



OCEANWIDE

EXPEDITIONS

Captain Artur Iakovlev

and his international crew

of 45

Including:

Hotel Manager:	Siegfried Penzenleitner	Austria
Assist. Hotel Manager:	Melanie Penzenleitner	Austria
Head Chef:	Heinz Hacker	Austria
Sous Chef:	Ivan Ivanovic	Serbia
Ship's Physician:	Bruno De Geeter	Belgium
Expedition Leader:	Philipp Schaudy	Austria
Assist. Expedition Leader:	Ali Liddle	UK
Expedition Guide:	Gerard Bodineau	France
Expedition Guide:	Daniels Karin Amby	Sweden
Expedition Guide:	Chloe Marechal	France
Expedition Guide:	Michelle van Dijk	Netherlands
Expedition Guide:	Johanne Skrefsrud	Norway
Expedition Guide:	Ross Wheeler	UK
Expedition Guide:	Benjamin Koster	Germany
Expedition Guide:	Andreas Alexander	Bavaria!

Welcome on board!

Day 1 – Saturday 17th August 2019

Embarkation in Longyearbyen

GPS Position at 8:00am: 78°16'N - 015°18'E

Wind: SSE 4 **Sea State:** In Port **Weather:** Overcast **Air Temp:** +5°C **Sea Temp:** +7°C



Longyearbyen is situated at 78° north and, as such is one of the world's most northerly settlements. It grew up as a coal mining town but now is home to around 2,000 residents who live and work here all year round. This number temporarily swells during the summer months with the arrival of thousands of visitors on cruise ships.

Some of us had arrived a day earlier than our departure day on board Plancius and had time to explore the town and maybe take a day trip but many of us arrived at the airport during

the afternoon and only had a short time to visit the town before making our way to the port to join our ship for the coming trip.

We were met by members of the expedition team at the floating pontoons who helped us into lifejackets and onto the zodiacs for the short ride to the ship. From here we were shown to our cabins by the very welcoming hotel staff and found our luggage already there.

We had some time to familiarise ourselves with our cabin before we were called to the Lounge to meet Philipp, our Expedition Leader, Captain Artur and the rest of the team. We had a glass of champagne to toast our voyage and Sigi, the Hotel Manager also gave us a briefing about life on board Plancius.

This was followed by the mandatory safety briefing which was given by our Chief Officer Francois, which outlined aspects of safety on board and the abandon ship procedures.

We then gathered at the muster station, the Lounge, wearing our big orange life jackets, the only time we hope to be wearing them. We were shown to the lifeboats on deck and by this time for dinner, which was a chance to meet with our fellow passengers before our last task of the day which was to collect our rubber boots from the boot room.

With 24 hours of daylight many of us enjoyed some time out on deck during the evening spotting Fulmars, Guillemots, Kittiwakes and the tiny Little auks. It was a very pleasant evening on board.



Day 2 – Sunday 18th August 2019

Blomstrand & Ny-Ålesund

GPS Position at 8:00am: 78°31'N - 011°33'E

Wind: W 3 Sea State: Slight Weather: Overcast Air Temp: +2 C Sea Temp: +5°C



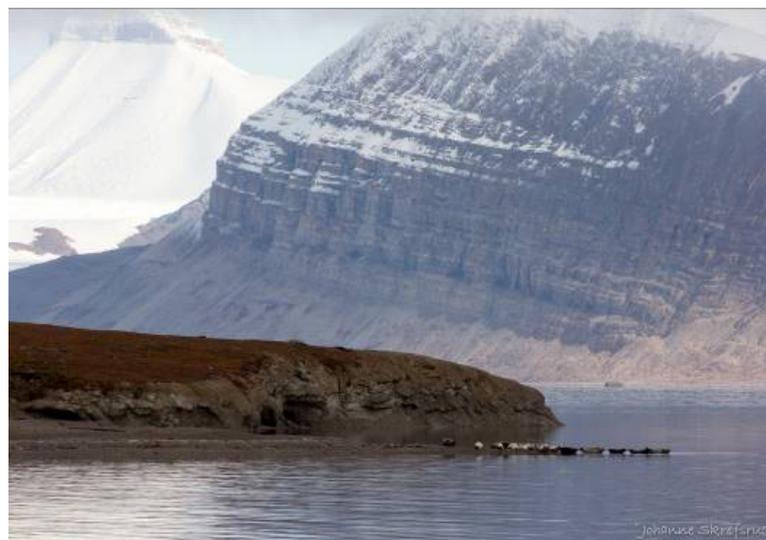
Our first morning waking up on board Plancius started with a wakeup call from our Expedition Leader Philipp. Some of us were already up, enjoying the outer decks and breathing in the fresh Arctic air. We had entered Kongsfjorden where we would spend the day. After breakfast we attended the mandatory briefing about zodiac operations and polar bear safety. Our guides were then ready to take us ashore in Ny-London on Blomstrandhalvøya. Close to the landing site there

were two old huts, Camp Mansfield, foundations and remains of railway lines with old steam boilers and drills, all built between the years 1910-1913 by a company owned by Ernest Mansfield.

The area was used to exploit marble, but this quickly proved to fail as the quality of the marble was very poor. We were all split into hiking groups of various speed and distance. Some of us headed up the slopes to the highlands of the island, others took a loop around the lower areas with the guides telling us about the plants we could see, we even found Svalbard's only tree. We passed a small fresh water pond where we could observe several Arctic birds such as



Longtailed skuas, Longtailed ducks and Arctic terns. Some of us were also lucky to see a Redthroated diver flying back from the coast with some food for its little chick waiting in the pond.



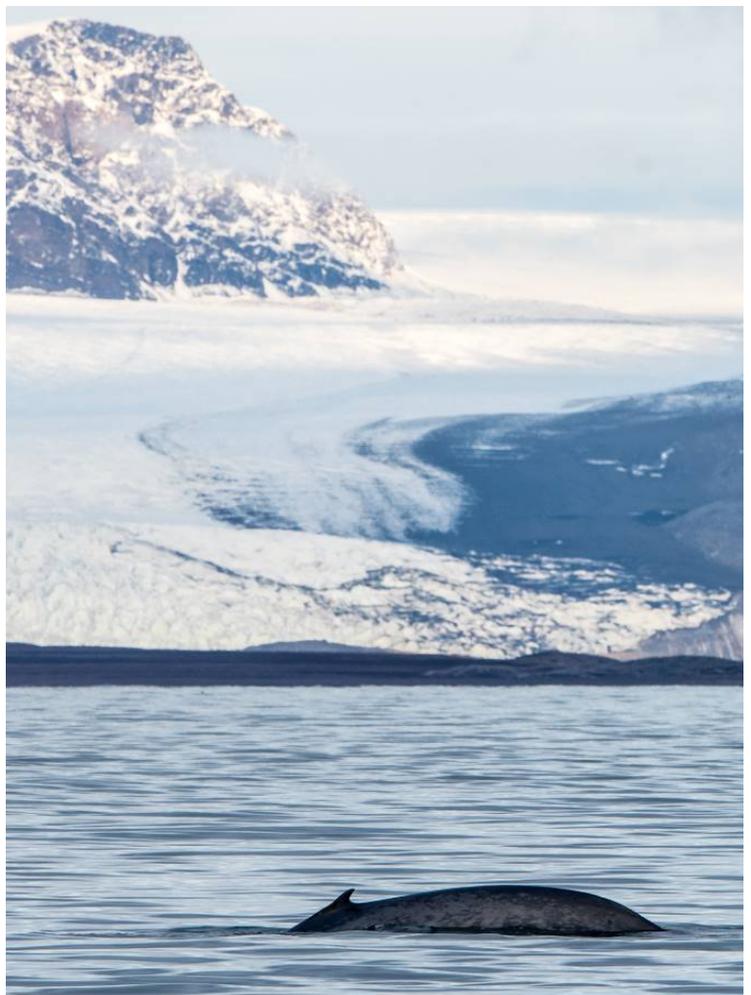
After lunch we made our way further into Kongsfjorden to get a better view of the glacier fronts of Kronebreen and Kongsvegen. The water was calm making beautiful reflections of glaciers and the surrounding mountains.



After lunch we went ashore in Ny-Ålesund across the fjord from Ny London. The original reason for the foundation of the settlement was coal mining, which resulted in construction of the northernmost railway, as we could see when walking into the settlement. The company setting up the mining village had its headquarters in the coastal town of Ålesund in Norway, and therefore named the settlement Ny Ålesund (New Ålesund). Since the mining activity stopped in the 1960s, Ny Ålesund has developed as an international research centre with scientific research stations from a variety of different countries. In the museum we got some insight into the history of the town, especially the aviation history of the settlement. A short walk away from the settlement we gathered around the mast where Gerard and Michelle told us about Amundsen and the story behind his explorations and his expedition on the airship Norge, which became the first to fly over the North Pole in 1926.

From the mast we could also enjoy the beautiful scenery of the King's Bay with the glaciers in the distance and some seals resting nearby.

Back in board we started our navigation out of Kongsfjord and were called to the lounge for our daily re-cap. Philipp had just outlined plans for tomorrow and Karin had started to talk about her time living in Ny Ålesund when a call came over the PA system that a Blue whale had been seen near the ship. We all went out on deck to enjoy watching the biggest animal to have ever lived on earth lunge feeding, breathing at the surface and diving once more, showing its impressive tail fluke. It was a wonderful experience.



Day 3 – Monday 19th August 2019

Raudfjorden & Hamiltonbukta

GPS Position at 8:00am: 79°45'N - 012°01'E

Wind: Var 1 **Sea State:** Calm **Weather:** Overcast **Air Temp:** +4°C **Sea Temp:** +3°C



On our third day we were woken by expedition leader Philipp at 07:00 to a mirror calm Raudfjord; which is located in the North West corner of Spitsbergen. It wasn't our Plan A as the ice conditions during the night had slowed us down so much that we wouldn't have made it to Liefdefjord in time for the morning.

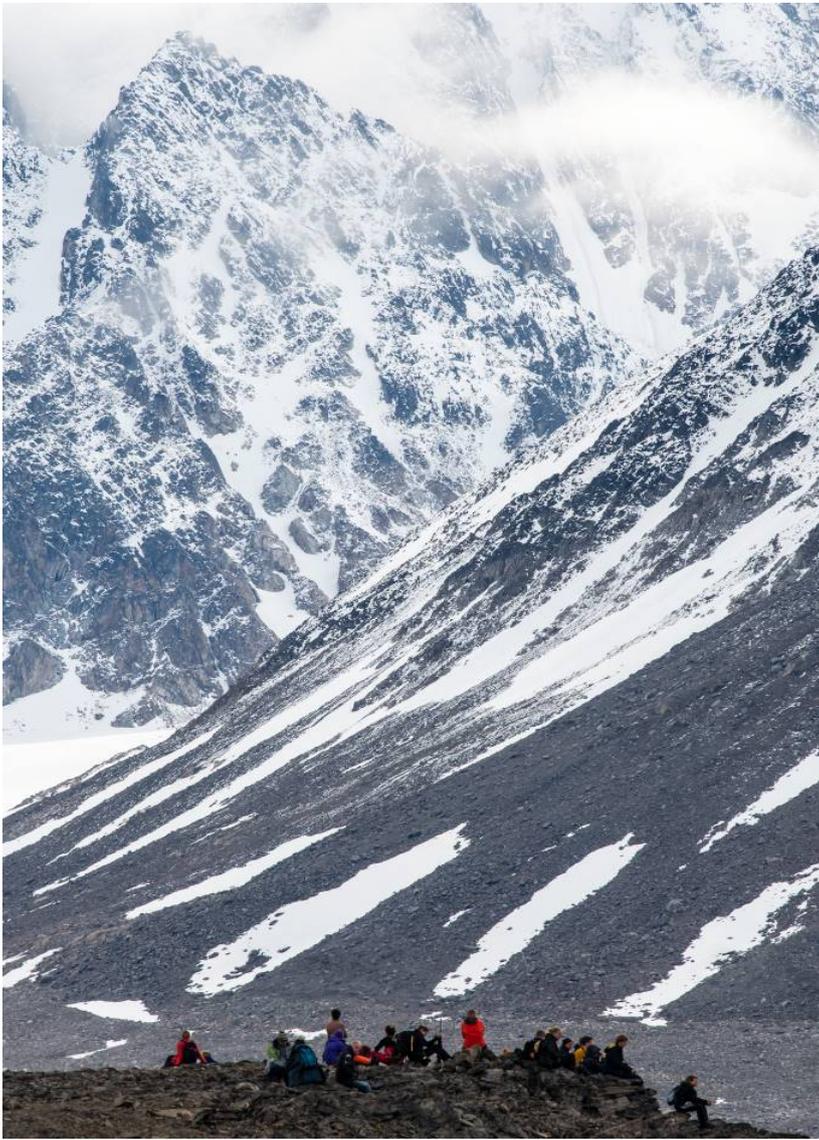
So with Plan B in place we were to enjoy the glassy waters of Hamiltonbukta and to admire the many glaciers and diverse

wildlife that can be found within this fjord. Within fifteen minutes of boarding the zodiacs and heading to our first glacier Philipp called through the radio "We have a large white animal onshore". As all zodiacs proceeded to see this mystery white animal it was quickly apparent that we had found the first polar bear of our expedition, albeit a rather sleepy one that decided it would continue to rest throughout our time with it and tease us all with its occasional stretches and unphased looks into our cameras.

After a close watch of the resting bear the zodiacs continued to slowly move along the shoreline of Raudfjord where we were provided excellent views of kittiwakes and black guillemots both in the water and on the surrounding rocks. As the zodiacs neared the entrance to Hamiltonbukta we were all provided another great sighting with our first Arctic foxes that were busy scouting the grounds beneath the towering bird cliffs above.



In total four foxes were seen in this small area, including the rare blue fox which has year-round dark fur instead of the usual summer grey and winter white coloured fur that this species usually has. We then entered the bay of Hamiltonbukta where we sat amongst the ice and enjoyed the spectacular views of the sheer size and beauty of the Hamiltonbreen glacier around us.



As we returned to Plancius for lunch the ship was repositioned further South in Raudfjord to Ayerfjorden on the West side of Buchananhalvøya. It is here that we all landed ashore for an afternoon of hiking along this peninsula to observe the breath-taking views of the glaciers that could be seen from both sides when we reached the top. Offering different levels of hikes to our more leisurely, slow paced and eager hikers we enjoyed an afternoon of near perfect conditions of light winds and intermittent sun. With over three hours ashore we were all able to appreciate the vastness of the fjord and its many glaciers whilst also taking a moment to sit down and take in the 'Arctic silence'. As we looked North from the top of Buchananhalvøya we could already see the white glow of pack ice on the horizon which would be our next destination as we continue the expedition in search of more stunning

landscapes and Arctic wildlife such as our still much desired polar bear in its natural habitat.

Before the journey went on, Karin gave us insights into the life in Ny-Ålesund. Gerard gave a short talk about the migration of animals in the arctic, Michelle informed about the polar foxes and Ali presented how to spot polar bears in the ice from a far distance.



Day 4 – Tuesday 20th August 2019

Pack Ice

GPS Position at 8:00am: 80°37'N - 015°47'E

Wind: ENE 4 Sea State: Ice Weather: Overcast Air Temp: +0°C Sea Temp: +0°C



In the early morning just after 0700 we entered the pack ice. The ice floes were covered with fresh snow and the air temperature 0°C. Many people had already been up for a while to enjoy the approach to the ice and there was plenty to see. The weather was clear and sunny and the ice was sparkling far into the distance.

We saw and heard the Brünnich Guillemot chicks and fathers calling for each other while swimming between the ice floes. Several Ivory gulls were flying by and the first

Polar bear tracks were visible in the fresh snow, and we also had a visit from a female hooded seal swimming in front of the ship.

At breakfast we could all enjoy the beautiful view on the ice from the windows in the restaurant. During the morning we continued to navigate further north and we entered an area of fog, and got to experience true Arctic mystique gliding through the ice. It made it difficult to scout for bears but the staff persevered and checked all the ice we were sailing past. With blue sky up above us but fog and mist at sea it was a strange almost fairy tale feeling as we sailed through the ice.

During the lunch buffet we got the call we had all been waiting for, a Polar bear had been spotted on the ice close to the ship. It had originally been sleeping in the shelter of a pressure ridge but as we all got dressed and went out on deck, we could see this big male walking around on the ice. It was on a large ice floe and the Captain did a great job of getting Plancius into position so that we could view it as it sniffed the air in search of seals. It was completely



unconcerned by us being there but clearly didn't want to come for a closer look. We stayed around the Polar bear for quite a while and it was a magnificent experience to see this big animal in its right habitat. We could see its big footprints in the snow and see its white breath as it sniffed the air. After some time, we decided to leave the bear to its travels and hunting and continued on our way. It was an amazing encounter for us all.

Later in the afternoon Michelle gave a lecture about Polar bears and we learned a lot of interesting facts about these fascinating animals. Just as Michelle finished her lecture, there was an announcement that a second Polar bear had been spotted and it was again sleeping in the shelter of an ice ridge. We took a closer look and, using the information that Michelle had told us in the lecture we tried to figure out ourselves if it was a male or a female. It wasn't easy as the bear just carried on sleeping and we didn't get the close views we had enjoyed in the morning.

We spent the rest of the day in the ice. In the recap Andreas told us about fog, how it is formed and what it actually is and Johanne explained what sea ice really is, how it is formed and why it is so important.



Day 5 – Wednesday 21st August 2019

Wahlenbergfjord & Palanderbukta

GPS Position at 8:00am: 79°45'N - 027°31'E

Wind: N 5 **Sea State:** Slight **Weather:** Snow **Air Temp:** 0°C **Sea Temp:** +5°C



After a night of gentle rocking of the ship, we now found ourselves in a very different place. We had left the sea ice and travelled into Wahlenbergfjord, part of Nordaustlandet. The landscape here was quite different from what we had seen so far. This barren and cold landscape is called Polar desert. We went ashore Oxfordhalvøya where we were met by winter, cold, chilly wind and snow on the ground,

but with warm clothes on the Arctic air is just refreshing and probably the cleanest air you can breathe. The landscape in this part of Svalbard is spectacular. Rocks of a variety of colours and the blue colours of the glaciers stood out with the snow-covered mountains in the background. With five minutes of “Arctic silence” we could all take in and enjoy the sight and sound of the barren landscape of Nordaustlandet. Sitting still also made us a little cold and it was soon time to get moving again. The ground was quite slippery a walk on, but everyone managed to get back without falling.

During lunch we sailed around into one of the side fjords of Wahlenbergfjord, Palanderbukta where we hoped to spend the afternoon on shore exploring the Polar desert once more. As Plancius approached the Plan A landing site on the north side of the fjord it was clear that the wind was blowing straight into the fjord and creating swell that would make conditions unsafe at the gangway. We sailed further into the fjord hoping to find



more shelter from the wind but with speeds of over 28 knots it wasn't looking very promising. Plan B wasn't an option and so we continued to Plan C and D but everywhere we went there the wind and swell made the plans change, and instead of another landing we had to stay on the ship. We spent some time by the glacier and then turned and headed back into the main fjord of Wahlenbergfjord, where we found better conditions and we continued to enjoy the scenery from the ship, and with the sun coming out it turned out to be quite a nice PlanF or maybe G.



A day of beautiful polar landscape ended with sunshine on the aft deck where Chef Heinz and his kitchen team had prepared a proper Arctic barbeque for us. With music and delicious food, we could continue to enjoy the beautiful scenery from the outside decks. Afterwards the night continued with music turned up, and some of us were showing our moves on the dancefloor!



Day 6 – Thursday 22nd August 2019

Alkefjellet & Ardnaset, Wahlbergøya

GPS Position at 8:00am: 79°34'N - 018°40'E

Wind: N 2 Sea State: Calm Weather: Cloudy Air Temp: +0°C Sea Temp: +5°C



Our day started at 06:00 with an announcement from our Expedition Leader that both a Blue whale and Fin whale were feeding close to the ship. Those who braved the open decks in freezing conditions were rewarded with fantastic views of both the largest and second largest animals on earth feeding side by side for close to an hour.

After breakfast we arrived at Alkefjellet for the second zodiac cruise of our expedition, famous for its towering

bird cliffs and 65,000 strong Brünnichs guillemot population we were in for quite a treat during this cruise. As the zodiacs approached the cliffs the sights, sounds and smells of thousands of Brünnichs guillemots filled our senses. This was a perfect time to visit the site as the three-week-old chicks were still jumping from the cliffs, some landing directly next to the zodiacs. As thousands of guillemots filled every ledge possible on the cliffs and the sky above us, we were provided great views of nature taking its course as glaucous gulls and Arctic foxes took advantage of this food bonanza. We finished our zodiac cruise at a glacier located at the North end of the cliffs and the glacier before heading back to Plancius for lunch.



In the afternoon our focus was to observe the walrus at a popular haul out sight called Torellneset, located in the Hinlopen straight. This, however, did not go quite as planned as there were only three hauled out at this sight. Our expedition leader therefore decided to continue heading south where another popular walrus site called Ardnaset is located on Wahlbergøya Island. On arrival it was clear that the gamble had paid off as there were far more walrus resting on the beach. After a short zodiac ride to shore we split into two groups, one to take a hike then observe the walrus and the other to see the walrus then take a short hike. The walrus were doing what walrus do best – sleeping,

relaxing and arguing amongst themselves for space as they lay awkwardly on top of each other within a small section of the vast open beach. After having some great views of the walrus and taking a short hike to see the surrounding geological features of the island we head back to Plancius for dinner.



At approximately 22:00 we reached the Bräsvellbreen glacier front for a scenic sail-by. This glacier front, which is located at the southern section of the Austfonna Ice cap, is just a small section of the 160 Kilometre front. This offered some spectacular scenery and photo opportunities as we slowly moved through the ice flows and along the largest glacier front in the northern hemisphere. On many of the ice floes we could see walrus, mostly females and many of them with young calves. It was incredible to see them in this icy environment after our experience on land with them during the afternoon. What a great end to the day.



Day 7 – Friday 23rd August 2019

Isbjørnodden

GPS Position at 8:00am: 78°29'N - 022°33'E

Wind: Var 2 **Sea State:** Calm **Weather:** Fog **Air Temp:** -1°C **Sea Temp:** -1°C



When we woke up, the ship was surrounded by sea ice... and fog. Some of us went outside to look at the spectacular white landscape. Our progress had been slowed a little during the early hours of the morning and Plancius did not make it around to Freemansundet during the night as it was initially planned. The bad weather condition and the ice had slowed us down quite dramatically. We could hear the sound of the ice cracking against the ship and it was impressive.

While the Plancius was carefully making its way through the ice, our guide Gérard offered us a lecture on glaciers in the observatory lounge. Formation, colours, surges... 50 min later we knew everything we always wanted to know about ice!

During our wonderful lunch-buffet we finally got to sail through Freemansundet and the rumours there had been bears spotted in front on Isbjørnodden beach seemed to be true. As soon as our lunch was done, we got picked up by the zodiacs and tried to get closer. What a sight!

We had the chance to observe a female and her two cubs! They were resting peacefully up on the hillside and were not disturbed by our presence. They had been attracted here by a walrus carcass, the remains of which could still be seen on the beach. From time to time one of the cubs was stretching its legs and standing up while the other one could be seen chewing on what appeared to be a bone. Polar bear cubs at birth are extremely small with a cub weighing about 700g while its mother can easily top 300kg. The cubs we observed were already quite big and were probably around 18 months old. Young bears are normally weaned at 2.5 years old. during this time they stay with their mother who will teach them the skills they need to hunt out on the pack ice.



Once they have survived to this stage, they have a good chance to leave up to 25 year. We continued the cruise along the beach to look at a 4th polar bear! This bear was observed wearing a collar and so it had to be a female. She was also resting and did not move at all other than to lift her head and sniff in our direction every now and again.

After a rewarding zodiac cruise, Melanie and Sigi welcomed us back on board at the gangway with a wonderful hot chocolate. Then, once we warmed up again, it was time to go to the lounge and

listen to Chloé's lecture about Plankton. Any living creature carried along by ocean currents is classified as plankton. It ranges in size from the tiniest virus to siphonophores, the longest animals in the world, and also includes microscopic algae, copepods or fish larvae.

During recap, Philip told us the plans for tomorrow. Ali held a short presentation on walrus and Karin told us a little more about the plants around Svalbard. Another day had passed in the Arctic with some wonderful memories of sleeping, resting Polar bears.



Day 8 – Saturday 24th August 2019

Gåshamna & Burgerbukta

GPS Position at 8:00am: 76°56'N - 015°49'E

Wind: NW 3 **Sea State:** Slight **Weather:** Partly Cloudy **Air Temp:** +4°C **Sea Temp:** +5°C



In the morning we rounded the south tip of Svalbard and sailed into Hornsund. Today's first landing was in Gåshamna, the "Goose Bay" in Norwegian, a historical site with remains of whaling activity and Pomor huts as well as stunning views and geological diversity. We gathered around some old whale skeletons to hear Michelle talk about the times when this was the site of a whaling station. The bones and blubber oil had formed small islands of nutrient rich

soil where vegetation could grow and we had to be careful not to step on it as the plants, together with the bones, are protected. We were offered a variety of different hikes. Some challenged themselves with following Philip up the steep slopes of Wurnbrandegga, others stayed in the lowlands closer to the landing site, while the rest of us followed along the coast where we would enjoy some fascinating geological formations and Pomor remains.



We also noticed remains of some dead reindeer in their winter coats. Due to fluctuations in temperature in the winter, layers of ice make it hard for the reindeer to dig through, and this year many died of starvation in Svalbard. A reminder of what effects the changing climate in the Arctic can have on the majestic animals living here. At some point, the sun peaked out and the long hikers could take in some stunning scenery from the top. With the landscape of steep mountain peaks, there is not hard to understand where the name Spitsbergen came from.

After lunch we found ourselves near the impressive Brepollen glacier where we enjoyed views of the ice and surrounding mountains from the outside decks of the ship. From here we sailed around to our next destination of Burgerbukta.



We were taken out on a zodiac cruise in Burgerbukta where we could enjoy a spectacular scenery of Paierlbreen in the end of the bay, surrounded by impressive mountain walls with hanging glaciers further up on each side. The bay was full of smaller and larger icebergs in a spectre of blue colours and we could hear the cracking sound of air bubbles as the ice was slowly melting. The smaller pieces of ice made some good practice for the

zodiac drivers to navigate around. By the glacier front we all gathered and turned our engines off to enjoy some “Arctic silence” and take in the surroundings. After being out in a zodiac for quite some time, we were all getting a bit chilly, and once again we were taken good care of by the hotel team. As we finally made our way back to the ship, we were welcomed back with some hot white wine Gluwein by the gangway.



Day 9 – Sunday 25th August 2019

Ingeborgfjellet & Recherchefjord

GPS Position at 8:00am: 77°44'N - 014°26'E

Wind: SSE4 Sea State: Slight Weather: Overcast Air Temp: +4°C Sea Temp: +5°C



As we were woken by Philipp at 0700 we found ourselves entering Bellsund, one of the large fjord systems to the south of Isfjord. Our plan for the morning was to land at Ingeborgfjellet, a beautiful area with rich tundra backed by high bird cliffs. After breakfast we headed ashore to a rocky beach and while we were waiting on shore we could already see reindeer feeding on the green slopes beyond and we even got a view of a white Arctic fox high up on the cliffs, foraging for seabird any seabird remains.

Soon we were on our way in our usual hiking groups but today was all relaxed with plenty of time to enjoy the reindeer and views along the way. The long and medium hikers made it over to the huts known as Camp Miller, perfect examples of trapper huts here in Spitsbergen. They enjoyed reindeer along the way and had a good leg stretch over the tundra.

The leisurely hikers spent more time with the reindeer, watching a male scraping the velvet off its antlers on another old antler and marvelling at the mature male with huge antlers. It is a wonder it can lift its head with such a weight on top of its head! They also had a close encounter with an Arctic fox, already in its white winter coat. It was constantly moving, sniffing the ground and running from place to place in search of food.

It was a wonderful morning for everyone and the zodiac ride back to the ship was also memorable as the ocean swells came into the fjord. The ride was like a roller coaster and the gangway was a challenge for drivers and passengers alike as the zodiacs went up almost 2 metres at times when the larger swells came through.



For our final landing we crossed Bellsund and made our way to Recherchefjord where we went ashore on a gravel beach and spit close to the Recherchebreen. For this location we had a perimeter landing which meant we could free roam in the area safely guarded by the guides that were on Polar bear watch. Just as we were ashore and enjoying the views of the ice on the beach, we heard some crashing at the ice front and saw some small pieces of ice falling from the glacier. Minutes later a large slab of ice calved from the front! What an impressive sight and sound! The ice fall caused waves to wash onto the beach where we were standing and pieces of ice started to float over the lagoon.

The final activity on offer was the chance to take a Polar Plunge, a swim in the Arctic Ocean to feel the final chill during our voyage around Svalbard. With plenty of shouts and screams, enough to scare any polar bear away from the area, 24 people braved the chilly waters before heading back to the ship to warm up once more. It had been a lovely landing to finish the cruise with time to watch, enjoy and reflect on the last 9 days. All too soon we were making our way back to Longyearbyen.



At 1800 we were invited to the Lounge for Captain's Cocktails, a chance to meet with our Captain, Artur Iakovlev who has navigated Plancius through the ice and around Svalbard with the help of his skilled Officers on the Bridge. It wasn't always easy but he did an amazing job.

Our final dinner on board was a chance to share memories with new found friends and as we enjoyed an after dinner drink in the bar we sailed towards Longyearbyen and our little blue ship, Plancius anchored in the bay for the night in order for some guests to leave on the 2 am flight.

Day 10 – Monday 26th August 2019

Longyearbyen

Some people had left the ship at midnight in order to catch the 2am flight to Oslo but for the rest of us we enjoyed a final wakeup call on board from Philipp and our last breakfast served by our lovely Philipino crew.

After breakfast we had our final zodiac ride to shore at the floating pontoon where we had embarked only 9 days earlier. It feels like we have been away for much longer on our Arctic voyage. During our trip we have seen Polar bears on the pack ice and on shore, watched walrus on the beach and on the ice. We have seen countless seabirds and walked the tundra and Polar Desert. It has been an amazing journey and one we will remember for many years to come.



Your Expedition Team!

Northern most position:

80° 42.6'N

016° 14.9'E

Total distance sailed on our voyage:

Nautical miles: 1145 nm

Kilometres: 2120 km

**On behalf of everyone on board we thank you for travelling with us
and wish you a safe journey home**



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