



# LOGBOOK



## *To the Kingdom of the Polar Bear*

*Svalbard, July 9<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> 2010*

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**FRIDAY, July 9<sup>th</sup> 2010**

**Spitsbergen**

**Longyearbyen - 78° 10' North, 015° 20' East**

**Barentsburg – 78° 03.8' N, 014° 11.9' E**

**Weather:** sunshine!

**Temperature:** 10° C/50° F

After lunch and a bus tour of Longyearbyen we boarded our new home for the next few days, the *Polar Star*. After checking-in, welcome cocktails and snacks were served in the observation lounge. This was followed by a brief introduction and a welcoming message by Expedition Leader Steffen Biersack, the Captain Leszek Slawski, the Hotel Manager Natasha and the guide team. Afterwards there was a safety briefing from the Chief Officer, followed by an outside drill near the lifeboats.

Barentsburg lies not far from Longyearbyen in Grønfjorden and is a Russian coal mining community. The 400 workers (from Russia and Ukraine) have 22 children, 100 pigs, a church and a consulate. Just as our ship docked, another bigger cruise ship entered the fjord. It was the *Balmoral*, which we had seen at the dock in Longyearbyen. Once we were down on the Russian's dock we were introduced to our local guides, who showed us around their town. This was followed by a folklore show in the theatre, which is in the large cultural and sports centre. It was a dazzling display and all performed by people from the community, rather than a professional troupe.

Soon after the show finished, the ship left Barentsburg and headed north, past the island of Prins Karls Forland. We went to bed in anticipation of all the adventures that lay ahead of us.

**SATURDAY, July 10<sup>th</sup>**

**Ny-Alesund - 78° 50' N, 011° 30', E**

**Magdalenefjorden - 79° 30' N, 010° 30' E**

**Weather:** overcast, some sun, no wind

**Temperature:** 10° C/50° F

During breakfast the ship turned into Kongsfjorden and headed for Ny Ålesund, which is said to be the world's northern-most community. It is a former coal mining settlement that has become an important international research centre. Work is mainly on the atmosphere and ozone layer, but geological,

biological and glacial research is also carried out here by many different countries. During our time here we had guided walking tours in town, where we divided into different groups for a cultural and historical overview. Some went bird hunting (armed with a telescope only!). The shop here is perhaps the northernmost one in the world so we had to pay it and a visit and spend some money!

The old train that was in use in the mining period was a good photographic subject, especially with the mountains and glaciers behind it. Among everything else here holding the title "northernmost", this train worked on the northernmost railway in the world. We walked through this small settlement, with colorful wooden houses from before World War II. Some of us even went inside one of them – where they have made a museum – and we could see how people were living in the early 1960's.

Next to the Amundsen bust we heard about the many people starting their expeditions from this remote settlement. But the most interesting story was the one about the Norwegian Roald Amundsen and the Italian, Umberto Nobile. They flew over the North Pole in an airship in 1926. Some of us walked over to the mooring mast that is still there.

There was some wildlife here too. The most obvious species was Arctic Tern, which may have spent the winter in Antarctica! The greeny-brown eggs are being incubated in scrapes in the ground, which seem to suit the birds just fine. Some of the eggs have just hatched and there were a few chicks near their parents. The adults were very protective and dive-bombed anyone who ventured too close. Scattered around on the sea were quite a few eider ducks, which mostly nest on nearby islands to avoid predation by the local foxes. Other interesting wildlife included Barnacle Geese with goslings, an Ivory Gull and Snow Buntings.

The best wildlife that we saw here were the foxes. The Arctic Fox is common and widespread in the islands but it is not easy to see. At Ny Ålesund a pair usually has a family underneath one of the old houses and we were lucky enough to see them this morning. Initially we only saw the female but then three small cubs appeared out in the open. They were very curious and playful but stayed close to the den. The female was watching the Barnacle Geese and wanted to catch some for her family but they were watching her too!

Our journey next took us out of Kongsfjord and northwards, up towards the northwestern corner of Spitsbergen. Passing towering, jagged, snow-capped mountains and glistening glaciers, the captain soon turned into the entrance of Magdalenefjorden. This is the best-known fjord in Spitsbergen and it is also one of the few places where big cruise ships are allowed to come. It is a lovely fjord with peaked mountains on both sides and an impressive glacier at the end. These are the mountains Willem Barents first saw when he discovered the islands in 1596, naming the biggest island Spitsbergen (peaked mountains) after them.

Our destination was a small peninsula that stuck out from the southern shore; this is where we landed with the zodiacs. Gravneset (the graveyard peninsula) is where Dutch and English whalers based in northwestern Spitsbergen came to bury their dead in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. There are 130 men buried here. Down on the beach there are remains of three blubber ovens where blubber from whales was rendered or boiled down for the oil. At the end of the beach lies a small cabin where the Sysselmannen (governor) has officers during the summer and there were two yachts in the bay.

Once we were ashore there was a lot of information from the guides about the history of the area. Then there was a chance to walk along the beach towards the glacial moraine or, for the hikers, a little bit further towards the glacier in the nearby side fjord. We were surrounded by glaciers and snowy mountains and around the tops above us there were numerous flocks of Little Auks. Although we are beyond midsummer's day now, there were still very few flowers to be seen. The only two numerous species were Alpine Saxifrage and Tufted Saxifrage.

Our route to the north took us through a channel called South Gate and into another large fjord, Smeerenburg Fjord. Instead of turning left, to the north, we turned to the south so that we could see Smeerenburg Glacier. It is a very impressive river of ice and was also very wide. Another, smaller ship was also here but they were at anchor. It made a good subject for photographs because it provided scale for our pictures. The *Polar Star* paused for a short time before turning around and heading away.

**SUNDAY, July 11<sup>th</sup>**

**Moffen - 80° 00' N, 014° 27.8' E**  
**Nelsonøya - 80° 38.1' N, 020° 27.5' E**  
**Furthest north - 81° 01.05' N, 020° 00.62' E**

**And in the ice!**

**Weather:** sunny & overcast, no wind

**Temperature:** 8° C/46° F

We reached the walrus haul-out on the island of Moffen at approximately 01.00 in the morning. Moffen is very unusual because it resembles a tropical atoll – it is low-lying and made of shingle with a large lagoon in the middle, which was still frozen over. It was very bright and sunny and from some distance away we could see the island very clearly. As we drew closer to the southern tip of the island, there on the shore were two groups of Walrus and there were a few in the water too. In all there were approximately 150 animals present. The island is protected so we were not able to approach closer than 300 yards but even at that distance the ivory tusks on the fat, blubbery creatures could easily be seen. For the eagle-eyed there were also Brent Geese, hundreds of Arctic terns and a Great Skua.

Due to the middle of the night activity, we had a late breakfast this morning. When we finished eating and after we had been briefed, the zodiacs took us to the landing place on Nelsonøya. It is a small island with a dramatic, central, flat-topped tower. We landed on some gently sloping rocks, right underneath some towering bird cliffs. It was an easy walk in the sunshine to the top of the nearby ridge. From here we could look out across the sea to the north coast of Nordaustlandet; in between were some huge sheets of ice. In the winter the sea here is frozen over and the ice that we saw will soon break up and melt. Looking in the other direction, we found ourselves looking down on the ship, which was not far away.

On the cliff above us there were nesting Brunnich's Guillemots and Black-legged Kittiwakes. On the ground below the nesting areas were some broken eggs, which showed that the first chicks have hatched. There was a constant stream of birds flying backwards and forwards and their droppings had fertilised the ground. The vegetation was very soft, green and lush. It mostly consisted of grass, flowering Scurvy Grass and moss. Snow Buntings were singing and flying around and two female Eider ducks were seen. One had eggs in a nest and the other had five very small ducklings. Some Puffins flew around the bird colony and some also landed on the cliff, giving us a better chance to look at them.

The island is named after Admiral Lord Nelson, who was a midshipman (junior officer) on *HMS Carrass* under Captain Lutwidge. He in turn was

second in command of the Phipps expedition to this part of the world in 1773. Nelson and a companion became famous for leaving their ship without permission and nearly being killed by a bear when their musket misfired. Our visit was uneventful and soon it was lunchtime. Just as the meal was coming to an end we were told that Ross Island was in sight. This is the northernmost point in Europe and the ship slowed down as we passed by so that we were able to get a good look at it. The sky had clouded over a little but the sea was still flat calm. This island is also named after a famous English naval officer – Sir James Clark Ross, Arctic and Antarctic explorer, although he was only a lieutenant when he was up here.

Just to the north of Ross Island was where we reached our furthest north position: 81° 01.05' N, & 020° 00.62' E. We stopped the ship to celebrate our achievement as we were only 539 nautical miles or 620 statute miles or 998 kilometres from the North Pole. Our celebratory toast was out on the bow and took the form of a Norwegian drink called Aquavit. Soon it was time to head off east towards the distant ice.

It didn't take too long to reach it and one of the first things that we saw was a very close Bearded Seal. Soon there was Arctic pack or drift ice as far as the eye could see in every direction. What little open water there was was flat calm – just like a mirror. All eyes were on the lookout for more wildlife so it wasn't a surprise when, at 16.55, Simon announced that he had spotted our first Polar Bear. There was great excitement but because the bear was so far away it was another 30 minutes before the ship got close enough for the rest of us to see it! It was a huge, fat male and nearby was all that was left of its last meal – the backbone and the ribs of a seal. The bear wasn't interested in us and slowly ambled away.

Not long afterwards two more bears were seen; one was a long way away but the other was closer. The ship headed for the nearer one and then stopped so that we could see what would happen. Well, the bear came to us! As it advanced it sniffed the air and also tasted it with its tongue – dinner was being cooked! After only a few minutes it came well within 100 yards of the ship so we all got wonderful views. To see an animal of this size and power at such close range on its natural habitat, the sea ice, was a great privilege. It was also a great way to end our day (although two more distant bears were seen before dinner ended).

**MONDAY, July 12<sup>th</sup>**

### Hinlopen Strait

**Alkefjellet - 79° 36.7' N, 018° 20.5' E**

**Torellneset - 79° 21.7' N, 020° 44' E**

**Bråsvellbreen - 79° 17' N, 020° 20' E**

**Weather:** sunny, calm, sea like a mirror

**Temperature:** 8° C/46° F

Just before breakfast this morning there was a call on the speakers saying that there was a whale on the starboard side. The sea was flat calm and not far away a black shape broke the surface. It was a Northern Minke Whale and, at 30 feet long, it is one of the smallest of the baleen whales. Just after an announcement about this morning's zodiac cruise more whales were spotted. This time they were huge Fin Whales, the second largest species after the Blue Whale. Fins can be up to 85 feet (25 metres) in length and they occur worldwide. It is quite unusual to see them in the Hinlopen Strait so we were very lucky.

They were feeding in the deep water near the bird cliffs and were spending about four minutes underwater at a time. There were seven altogether: four, two and one. After surfacing from a dive they took several breaths before submerging again. The spout is very high and columnar, sometimes bushy, if it is windy. The back was strongly arched prior to diving and on several occasions the tail flukes were nearly lifted out of the water. Nearly but not quite! After watching them for 40 minutes the ship turned towards land.

A little later on we approached Alkefjellet (the Auk Cliff) and got ready for an excursion in the zodiacs. Conditions were perfect – flat calm with warm sunshine. The cliffs are home to perhaps 100,000 pairs of Brünnich's Guillemots and a similar number of Black-legged Kittiwakes. The sight of all these birds was stunning. The guillemots are members of the same family as puffins (the auk family) and, being black-and-white, look just like penguins but they are not related. From the ship we could see that the sea was covered with a living carpet of birds. There weren't many pieces of ice around but some, including a blue piece, had both guillemots and kittiwakes sitting on it.

From the boats we could see that the nesting ledges were packed with birds, which were standing shoulder-to-shoulder. They do not have a nest but lay the single egg onto the rock. Both the male and the female take turns to incubate

the single egg and look after the chick. The chicks are encouraged by adults to paraglide off the cliffs (before they can fly) but it is invariably the male that leads the chick away from the colony and looks after it until it can fend for itself.

Here and there on the cliffs was the Glaucous Gull, a predator that takes both eggs and chicks. The sky near the cliffs was full of birds, which looked like clouds of swarming insects and the noise was terrific. There were also thousands of guillemots resting on the sea near the cliffs too and many came close to the boats to get a better look at us. The sea by the cliffs is over 200 m deep and the cliffs themselves are very impressive too. There are vertical columns of basalt, intruded into an area of sedimentary rock, stained white and pink with the accumulated generations of guano. The nesting kittiwakes are mostly high up on the cliffs, above the guillemots.

At the northern end of the colony an Arctic Fox was seen; it was high up on the slopes below the nesting birds. It was so small that, with its camouflage colours, it was difficult to see, until it crossed patches of snow. The fox would be looking for any eggs or chicks that had fallen from the nesting areas, as well as trying to catch the adults themselves. Conditions for the cruise were perfect and the people in one boat even forced their driver to let them make a short landing near the ice wall at the northern end of the bird cliffs. There is no doubt that the sight, sound and smell of the cliffs will last for a long time.

The scent of the birds made us hungry so we returned to the ship for some food. The birds eat fish and so did we today but it came with chips! During lunch the ship went into fog on the way to our next destination, Torellneset. Our landing place was some way to the north of the shingle point so we were divided into three groups. The very long and the very medium groups set off hopefully, whilst the strollers didn't stroll at all. Rather they were shuttled to the point by boat. The walkers found a strange landscape and one that was very different from anything that we had seen thus far. It consisted entirely of shingle and fine gravel, which in many places was bare, even of vegetation. A few flowers were seen though, including Purple Saxifrage and Svalbard Poppy; a few pieces of whalebone were seen (of especial interest to radiographers and those of a medical persuasion) and a Purple Sandpiper tried to divert attention away from its nest. The views over the sea were breathtaking.

At the end of the walk/boat ride there was a big surprise; actually, about 15 big surprises – Walrus! They had hauled themselves out of the water and onto the gravel, where they lay sleeping. Every now and then one would scratch itself or lift a flipper into the air but that was about all the “action” that there was. We were split into groups of about 20 and taken close to the somnolent snorers for a better look. Their bodies were huge and their ivory tusks were equally impressive. It was with some reluctance that we withdrew and returned to the ship for dinner.

Later in the evening the ship approached the great ice wall of Brasvellbreen. There was a lot of ice in the water, including some distant icebergs and the sea was like a mirror under the sun. The large island of Nordaustlandet is mostly covered by two huge icecaps and we were sailing towards the southern edge of one of them. The vertical wall was very impressive and in places there were melt water streams cascading over the lip of the ice and into the sea. The water was deep enough close to the ice wall for us to sail along it so we did, for a long way. We are used to seeing cliffs of rock so to see one composed of glistening ice was a little “Harry Potter-ish”. To celebrate this unique event the catering crew had made a huge quantity of hot chocolate, which, together with some rum, we eagerly consumed.

Soon after turning towards the south we came to the edge of the huge ice field. There were still areas of open water and the pattern made by the light on the ripples from the wake of the ship was mesmerising. Many more pictures were taken as we continued to look for any wildlife. A few kittiwakes followed us and then several pure white Ivory Gulls came close to the ship. Larger animals came in the form of Ringed and Bearded Seals, which were on the ice. At 22.55 one guide spotted a big bear and soon after another guide spotted its cub – that's teamwork! However, the female was not comfortable about seeing the ship and moved quickly away so we did the same but in the opposite direction. Shortly before midnight another bear was seen but it was a little further away. It disappeared when the fog rolled in so that made it a good time for us to roll in – to bed.

Today was quite a day – fabulous weather, uncountable numbers of birds, seven huge Fin Whales, hives and Walrus ashore and no less than three more bears, including a small cub. We were lucky not to be charged extra for all this!

**TUESDAY, July 13<sup>th</sup>**

**Barentsøya**

**Kapp Waldburg - 78° 15.2' N, 021° 57.4' E**

**Edgeøya**

**Dolerittneset - 78° 05' N, 020° 49' E**

**Weather:** low cloud, drizzle, breezy

**Temperature:** 5° C/41° F

This morning was more like the weather we thought we would be normal for the trip – grey and drizzly with a stiff breeze. The weather may have been damp but our spirits weren't so we set off after breakfast to visit the nearby 'Kittiwake Canyon'. Once ashore we set off in groups to walk the short distance to the impressive kittiwake colony. Along the way we saw many flowers; the most numerous were Tufted Saxifrage and Spider Plant, another species in the saxifrage group. It gets its name from the (red) tendrils that radiate over the ground from the red and green centre of the plant. By way of a contrast, the flowers are bright yellow.

Up at the canyon the birds were everywhere. On one side was a vertical rock face and on the other was a 45° slope. The cliff was covered with nests, which are made from grass, moss and sometimes seaweed. The materials are glued together with guano and the birds will often come back to the same nest site. Two or three eggs are normal and both male and female take turns to incubate the eggs and brood the chicks. The young are fed on partly digested fish, which is regurgitated by the adults. This food is also enjoyed by the Arctic Skua, of which we saw three. The skuas chase kittiwakes with the aim of stressing them so much that the food is vomitted into the air. Skuas are so fast that they can often catch it before it hits the ground or sea. We saw this behaviour ourselves when we were on the beach waiting for the shuttle back to the ship.

Many of the nests opposite us had chicks in them. Some were very small and had only recently hatched while others were much older and bigger. There was a lot of activity and the noise was deafening. Quite a strong breeze was coming down the canyon so all the chicks were being protected from it by one of the parents. The wind also caused some impressive aerobatics, as birds returning to the colony wiggled and jiggled and dipped in the air as they approached their nests. From our anchorage the ship headed west down Freemansundet

(Freeman Sound) towards our next landing on Edge Island.

At Dolerittneset it was a little windy but we were soon ashore on the beach near the old huts and the small group of Walrus. Once again we divided ourselves into different groups and we were soon on our way. A small group walked all the way up to the top of the hill, another group walked along the coast and the amblers ambled and rambled and shambled near the walrus. The views from the top of the hill were outstanding and on the way there were numerous fossils to admire, courtesy of Steffen.

On the lower areas the walkers were also able to admire the views. The 'medium' group ended at a vantage point at the top of a cliff and there were dramatic views over the river valley below them. Grazing on the lush grass were a few reindeer and some Pink-footed geese. This time of the year is perfect for flowers and among the species that we saw and photographed were Svalbard Poppy, Nodding Lychnis, Hairy Lousewort, Fringed Sandwort and numerous beds of Mountain Avens. Everyone saw the walrus on the beach but this small group was very smelly; smellier even than the cabin shared by Heiko and Niklas!

**WEDNESDAY, July 14<sup>th</sup>**

**Hornsund**

**Vestre Burgerbukta - 77° 3.5' N, 015° 51' E**

**Samarinvågen - 76° 55.2' N, 016° 17.1' E**

**Brepollen - 77° 04' N, 016° 24' E**

**Krykkjestupet - 76° 58.2' N, 016° 01' E**

**Weather:** sunny + some overcast, calm

**Temperature:** 8° C/46° F

The whole day was spent in Hornsund and there was plenty to do and see! We went out in the zodiacs after breakfast at a place called Vestre Burgerbukta. This fjord had high, snowy mountains on either side, a large glacier at the end and a huge amount of ice floating in the water. The ship anchored in the entrance and the boats made their way to the north, towards the glacier. Amongst the ice in the water were several big, blue pieces and these made wonderful subjects for our cameras. Some of us landed on a small rock that was not much bigger than the zodiac itself and others landed on a small piece of floating ice. Close to the ship were some true icebergs and they were covered with hundreds of kittiwakes. The birds nest on nearby cliffs but why they chose to perch on the ice was a

mystery. However, they too made very good photographic subjects, as did the ice itself.

Our next destination was Samarinvågen, just across the fjord. It was meant to be just a quick visit to see the glacier from the ship but it turned into something completely different. As the *Polar Star* approached the ice wall one of us beat the guides and was the first to spot a swimming bear behind us. Then the guides caught up and spotted another one on the land eating a seal! The captain stopped the ship and we had very good views of the swimming bear. After a while it emerged from the water and ended up climbing up and over a hill, which was covered in bear footprints.

The ship then slowly approached the other bear, which was on a snow bank close to the water. This too was a big, fat one and as we drew closer we could see that most of the seal had already been eaten. Some of the intestines stretched down to the water, like a red rope. The bear spent a lot of time lying down but it did get up every now and then and move around a little. At one point it also carried the carcass a little way before settling down again in the snow for a good old chew. After watching for some time we left the bear behind us and headed deeper into Hornsund. However, we had hardly gone around the corner before yet another bear was seen. Yet again, it was a big one and it was walking around and lying down (watching us) on a small island.

Finally, we arrived at Brepollen, home to huge glaciers. There was lots of ice in the water again and in one of the distant glaciers there was a huge, blue cave. The ship slowed down to enable us to enjoy the close views of Körber Glacier. The sight was very impressive and near the ice wall those of us with binoculars could see thousands of kittiwakes; mostly on the water. A river of fresh water runs under the glacier and when it reaches the end, it rises to the surface. This upwelling carries much food with it (from the sea water) and enables the birds to get easy pickings.

There were still more things for us to do so the ship then sailed the short distance to Krykkjestupet. The mountains behind the beach had one section that was perfect for the kittiwakes to nest on. A steep climb from the beach brought us up to their level, where they were much easier to see. Continuing up the moraine we eventually reached the top and, in bright sunshine, found ourselves looking down on a glacier! The view of Hornsund was both sweeping and breathtaking – from the entrance in the west and the mountains and glaciers to the

north to similar scenery in the east. In addition to the many kittiwakes from the nesting cliff beside us, a few puffins flew by too. Some of us were up on the top when a single, tiny-looking boat approached the glacier, which gave us a very good appreciation of the vastness of the seascape, icescape and landscape before us.

In the other direction it was possible to walk along the water's edge for a few hundred yards. Our destination was a spot where there were several large and impressive springs. A huge volume of water 'sprang' from the ground and rushed the short distance to the sea. Mountains towered above us and the geology was described by Steffen. "All aboard" was called and the ship then set off again, for the open sea.

Once dinner had been consumed there was a presentation about the birds of Spitsbergen. Even Simon managed to stay awake so it must have been pretty good. However, it was not just birds that took our fancy, it was whales too! The sea area to the west of Hornsund is quite shallow but then the seafloor drops away sharply to depths of 1,000 metres or more. In areas like this cetaceans (both whales and dolphins) can sometimes be found. But would we be lucky, especially since it was foggy?

At 22.30 there was an announcement that some Beluga had been spotted from the bridge. Unfortunately, they turned out to be something else but all eyes were now on the lookout. A few minutes later, close to the ship, a pod of White-beaked Dolphins appeared. They didn't stay around for long but, subsequently, there were sightings of more animals. Next to show up were two large Fin Whales, which came very close to the ship. They were feeding and regularly surfaced side-by-side before diving again. They were in sight for nearly 25 minutes.

Four minutes later another big whale was seen on the edge of the fog by Elisabeth. It was immediately identified by one of the guides as the largest animal ever to have lived on the planet – a **BLUE WHALE**! Unbelievable but true and with some skilful jiggling of the throttles we were able to watch it for an incredible 1½ hours. Apart from the tiny, stubby dorsal fin, everything about it was gargantuan, even the size of the spout. It made the fins look small but like them it too was feeding. Fin Whales look black but blues really do look blue-grey in colour, with darker spots and flecks.

Unlike fins, they often lift their tail flukes in the air when they dive but this one didn't. This probably indicated that it didn't have to dive very

deep to get food, which was almost certainly krill. One of the blue whales' feeding techniques is to roll over just below the surface so that it actually emerges upside down. Then they roll over and we see one of the large pectoral fins coming out of the water and then disappearing below the surface. At times we also saw part of the flukes. This whale was feeding continuously and when it surfaced it spouted several times and took several breaths before arching its back and diving. Those of us who were lucky enough to be down on the bow couldn't believe our eyes when the whale passed right below us and almost touched the bow with its tail – what a sight!

Some **BLUE** facts and figures:

The largest animal on the planet

Occurs worldwide but

Population estimated to be only a few thousand

Up to 110 feet/33 metres long

Head is very broad & up to ¼ total body length

Spout can be over 40 feet/12 metres high

Heart is the size of a small car

Birth weight 2.5 – 4 tons

Adult weight up to 110 tons

Can reach speeds of 20 mph/30 kmph

## **THURSDAY, 15<sup>th</sup> July**

### **Prins Karls Forland**

**Poolepynten - 78° 26.7' N, 011° 52.4' E**

### **Isfjord**

**Skansbukta - 78° 31.6' N, 016° 02.9' E**

**Weather:** overcast, calm

**Temperature:** 6° C/43° F

(We watched the Blue Whale until 01.02 this morning so we saw it two days running!)

Today was our last day on the *Polar Star*. Our morning excursion was to a new island for us – Prince Charles Foreland and our destination was Poolepynten. It is a triangular, shingle point that sticks a long way out from land into the sea. The beach area was full of driftwood and not far away was a large lagoon. Before walking along to see the walrus we noted four adult Red-throated Divers and a lot of Arctic Terns. A pair near the beach had two small, fluffy chicks so, as usual, we had to be careful about not disturbing the adults.

The walrus were in a small group right on the water's edge and spent most of their time snoozing. One or two occasionally lifted their heads and looked around or waved a flipper in the air. Most of the animals that we could see well had very large tusks and they were very impressive indeed. There was enough time to

watch and take all the pictures we wanted before moving quietly away. Meanwhile, on the lagoon, a very rare bird had been seen! It was an adult Sabine's Gull, a species which only breeds in the high arctic and has a total world population of perhaps only 10,000 pairs. In Spitsbergen there are probably fewer than 10 pairs so we were very fortunate to see this particular bird here. They have very distinctive grey, black and white wings, a grey head with a black necklace, a red ring around the eye and a black bill with a yellow tip. The gull spent some time on the lagoon before flying away over the shingle bank and out of sight.

The ship left the anchorage at 11.00 and headed off towards Skansbukta in Isfjorden. This was our afternoon and our final landing. Here there were very high cliffs but the nesting fulmars at the top were almost invisible. On the flat plain around the abandoned gypsum mine and on the slopes above it there was much plant life. The most interesting species was the blue Boreal Jacob's Ladder, which is found mainly in the Isfjorden area. At one end of the beach was an old, wooden boat and in the middle was a hut, which is still used today. When we were ready, there was a chance to go around the corner by zodiac to a cliff to search for Puffins and other interesting seabirds.

From here we returned to the ship so that we could get ready for the captain's farewell cocktail party. The senior officers of the ship introduced all of the crew (except the ones on duty on the bridge and in the engine room) and the guides were also presented to us. After taking pictures of the team there was a superb presentation by Linda. This took the form of photographs and footage, all of which had been taken during our voyage. Finally, there came the barbecue, which was cooked for us on the deck outside the observation lounge. It was a fitting way to end our voyage and some of us even ate outside too!

In all we were 92 guests and guides onboard from 13 different countries:

Great Britain	13
Sweden	4
Norway	8
Denmark	4
Netherlands	2
France	3
Germany	40
Switzerland	2
Austria	1
Italy	9
Australia	2
Canada	1

And the total distance that we sailed during our expedition cruise was 1,120 nautical miles/1,288 statute miles/2,074 kilometres.

*On behalf of Spitsbergen Travel, the guide team and the ship's crew would like to thank you for choosing us as your companions for this adventurous journey to some of the most beautiful parts of Spitsbergen.*

*We hope this logbook will make you remember this adventure, again and again...*

USA

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*Steffen Biersack, Expedition Leader  
Heiko Kubr, Assistant Exp. Ldr.  
Linda Drake, Photographer  
Niklas Gerhardsson  
Little Mo, Ice Pilot  
Ingunn Løyning  
Gerit Birnbaum  
Ingrid Kårstad  
Samuel Blanc  
Simon Cook*

*☞ with help from Dr. Paul Stubbing!*



Man's five senses are sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. Spitsbergen Travel's vision is to create joy by stimulating your senses in a way that you never forget. We hope that this last week has alerted all five senses... FOREVER!

Are you sad to leave Svalbard? Interested in knowing more about trips during the winter? You can find more information on our website [www.spitsbergentravel.com](http://www.spitsbergentravel.com) or in our catalogue.