



# LOGBOOK



## *To the Kingdom of the Polar Bear*

*Svalbard, July 16<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> 2010*

Written by Simon Cook

**FRIDAY, July 16<sup>th</sup> 2010**

**Spitsbergen**

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

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

**Weather:** overcast and windy

**Temperature:** 8° C/46° 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 from Expedition Leader Steffen Biersack, the Captain, Jacek Majer the Hotel Manager Janet 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 Green Fjord (Grønfyorden) and is a Russian coal mining community. The 400 workers (from Russia and Ukraine) have 22 children, 100 pigs, a church and a fortress-like 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. But first there were 241 steps to ascend! The tour was followed by a folklore show in the theatre, which is in the large cultural and sports centre. It was a dazzling display with elaborate costumes and it was 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 17<sup>th</sup>**

**London - 78° 50' N, 012° 00' E**

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

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

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

**Temperature:** 8° C/46° F

In the early morning we awoke and found that although it was still windy, the sun was trying to break through the cloud. Later on it succeeded!

After a briefing and the collection of rubber boots we were ready to go ashore. Our landing site was on the north shore of Kings Bay (Kongsfjord), at a place called London. It is the site of an old marble quarry, which dates from the early twentieth century. The marble was said, after its discovery in 1906, to be extremely beautiful and of high quality. As a consequence, a lot of time and money was invested to extract it. Efforts were led by an Englishman called Mansfield whose Northern Exploration Company was behind the scheme. However, due to frost damage the marble crumbled after being extracted so the whole enterprise was abandoned. What we see today are the remains, which include buildings and much rusting machinery.

The zodiacs dropped us to the east of the site so that we could hike across the tundra towards it. The ground was wet in places but the going was easy. On the way some of the history of the area was explained to us and we were surrounded by natural history. This included reindeer (one by the houses was eating flowers), Barnacle Geese with goslings, several female Long-tailed Duck, Snow Bunting and a pair of Red-throated Divers, which were on a small lake. The most exciting bird species was Long-tailed Skua, which is rarely seen on land in Svalbard. There were at least three different birds and one of them was very approachable. Two very similar Arctic Skuas flew overhead. There was a profusion of flowers, both on the tundra and around the buildings. Most of them were pale yellow Mountain Avens but there was also Arctic Bell Heather (white) and Moss Campion (pink).

Once the two big cruise ships (*Albatros* and *Princess Danae*) had left the dock area we moved in. Ny Ålesund is said to be the world's northernmost 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. The shop here is perhaps the northernmost one in the world so we had to pay it 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 very 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 that were being incubated in scrapes in the ground have now hatched and an empty shell was seen. The adults are very protective but there were a few chicks out in the open, where we could see them. If we came too close to the young ones we found ourselves being dive-bombed. Sometimes the terns draw blood when they hit heads with their beaks. Scattered around on the sea were some 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 so 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 afternoon. 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! However, after one unsuccessful chase the female dashed out again and caught no less than three goslings before they could reach the safety of the water. It was an astonishing display of intelligence and speed. The food was carried back to the house and two cubs could be seen with a gosling in their mouth. This was the first time that some of the guides had ever seen a fox making a kill so we were very lucky to be in the right place at the right time.

Our adventure then 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 land Spitsbergen (peaked mountains) after them.

On the way to the Waggonway Glacier we passed a small peninsula that stuck out from the southern shore. Gravneset (the grave-yard 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 graves on top of the mound. Down on the beach there are remains of three blubber ovens where blubber from whales was rendered (boiled down) for the oil. At the end of the beach lies a small cabin where the Sysselmannen (governor) has officers during the summer.

The glacier was very impressive, especially since we were able to get so close to it on the ship. After a while the ship headed out of Magdalenefjorden. Our route to the north took us through a channel called South Gate and into another large fjord, Smeerenburg Fjord. Once here we turned to the north and eventually got out to the open sea, where we set course for the island called Moffen.

#### **SUNDAY, July 18<sup>th</sup>**

**Moffen - 80° 00' N, 014° 27.8' E**  
**Chermsideøya - 80° 29.7' N, 020° 07.4' E**  
**Phippsøya - 80° 40.4' N, 020° 45' E**  
**Furthest north - 81° 06' N, 021° 09.6' E**  
**And in the ice!**

**Weather:** overcast, no wind, some rain  
**Temperature:** 7° C/45° F

We reached the walrus haul-out on the island of Moffen just before 02.00 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 used to be open to the sea. It was overcast but calm so 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 was a large group of Walrus and there were a few in the water too. In all there were approximately 60 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, a Great Skua and a single, rare Sabine's Gull.

During breakfast today there was an announcement on the bing-bong system to say that bears had been spotted from the bridge. It was a female with a very small cub and they were on the edge of the fast ice, approximately 1.5 nautical miles away. They were not easy to see so our planned landed on Chermiside Island was abandoned. Instead, we all boarded the zodiacs and set off to see if we could find the bears. By the time we arrived they had disappeared but another one was found instead! It came right to the edge of the ice to look at us and wasn't concerned at all. The bear spent a long time watching us, as well as sitting, lying down, rolling in the snow and walking around a little. With our engines off we were able to watch in silence and appreciate being able to see the "King of the Arctic" at close range.

Quite a long time was spent with the bear but there was still time left for more cruising. The boats had different options and did different things. For example, some of us landed on the Arctic pack ice, some landed on a gravelly beach and others saw the swastika symbol on Chermiside Island. Once all the boats were back at the ship the engine was fired up and we refuelled in the dining room on Norwegian meat balls. Yummy!

Our next excursion was at nearby Phipps Island, named after the Royal Navy captain who led an expedition here in 1773. One of the junior officers was a certain 14-year old, Horatio Nelson, later to become an admiral, a lord and the scourge of the French and Spanish fleets. Nelson was almost killed by a bear and has a small, nearby island named after him.

Once we were ashore we divided into different groups. The long, strong hikers surged across the plain and sprinted up the very steep hill, Hogberget. The top (1,338 feet/408 metres) was in the cloud but when the group arrived it suddenly parted, giving jaw-dropping views down to the sea – far, far below. Another bonus came in the form of one of the high Arctic's most enigmatic residents, the Ivory Gull. This species nests on both flat area and cliffs although the birds can change from one site to another, seemingly at random. The hill-climb was an excellent way of burning off some calories and

there was even time at the bottom to visit the resident walrus on the beach.

The other walkers ('mediums' and strollers) had also seen them at close range. After the somewhat distant views at Moffen it was exciting to get close to this group on land. In among the huge, blubbery males were a couple of smaller ones with very small tusks that may have been females. Some of the males had very long tusks and one big animal only had one. Although they were mostly asleep there was a lot of jostling for the best position. There were lots of rude-sounding noises too but it was difficult to tell from which end of the perpetrators they came.

It was just to the north of Ross Island where we touched the line at 81° north. We stopped the ship to celebrate our achievement as we were only 540 nautical miles or 620 statute miles or 1,000 kilometres from the North Pole. Our celebratory toast was out on the bow and took the form of a Norwegian drink called Aquavit. Ross Island was still visible behind us. It is small but special – it is the northernmost point in Europe. Then several puffins flew around the bow – joining in with our party! Soon it was time to head off east towards the distant ice. In the middle of some very open drift ice we reached our furthest north position: 81° 06' N, 021° 09.6' E. Waiting here for us was some more wildlife; this time a big Bearded Seal, which didn't mind us coming over for a closer look. We then turned towards the south so for many of us it was time for bed.

## **MONDAY, July 19<sup>th</sup>**

### **Hinlopen Strait**

**Kinnvika - 80 02.5' N, 018 13.3' E**

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

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

**In heavy drift ice!**

**Weather:** overcast & windy, rain later

**Temperature:** 6° C/43° F

When we awoke this morning the ship was already at anchor at Kinnvika. Once we were ashore we walked the short distance to the mightily impressive, magnificent collection of old sheds. Designed in the post-modern, neoclassical high-Arctic, gothic style, they were built as part of the global scientific programme for the 1957/58 International Geophysical Year. Allison had spent some time here in the recent past and gave us a vivid and exciting explanation

of what life was like in those days. The sheds were so interesting and fascinating that we spent a long time soaking up every minute detail of them. However, all good things come to an end and before we realised what was happening, we were back on the ship. In the lounge there was a presentation about the birds of Spitsbergen and it must have been pretty good because even Simon managed to stay awake!

During lunch there was a call on the speakers saying that there were whales! 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 not far from the bird cliffs and were spending about four minutes underwater at a time. There were ten altogether: six, three 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!

We had been watching the whales for some time when a group of them accelerated and lunged at the surface, repeatedly. This kind of behaviour is common in the much smaller Minke Whale but it is very unusual for the colossal Fin. Whatever it was that they were feeding on must have been at the surface, right in front of them. Finally, after we had had very close views, the ship turned towards land. However, not long afterwards another black shape broke the surface. This time it was a Northern Minke Whale and, at 'only' 30 feet long, it is one of the smallest of the baleen whales.

A little later on we approached Alkefjellet (the Auk Cliff) and got ready for an excursion in the zodiacs. Conditions were pretty good – flat calm but a little rain. The cliffs are home to perhaps 100,000 pairs of Brünnich's Guillemots and a similar number of Black-legged Kittiwakes. The sight and sound 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 birds were using them as a place to rest.

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 and many came close to the boats to get a better look at us. It was like looking at a living carpet. 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 southern end of the colony, near the big waterfall, a flock of 22 flightless Pink-footed Geese was seen. Their camouflage against the stones was superb but their movements gave them away. By the middle section of the colony a very big, brown jellyfish was seen near the surface. 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. Our cruise ended near the ice wall (there had been a recent collapse of part of it). There is no doubt that the sight, sound and smell of the birds on the cliffs will last for a long time.

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. The ship was followed by many kittiwakes, which were catching polar cod as the ice was turned aside and over. Other interesting birds included both Great and Pomarine Skuas and a few Ivory Gulls. Many pairs of eyes were on the lookout for larger forms of wildlife and, finally, a very distant bear was spotted. It took a long time for us to get

closer but in the meantime it had disappeared. It was relocated in the water not far away so the ship was stopped and the bear came even closer to us! By a combination of swimming and crossing ice floes it soon ended up on ice right below the bow of the ship. At one point it even stood up on its hind legs in a pool of blue water. The views of this young animal were tremendous and completely unexpected – who would ever have thought that a bear would come so close? It swam away once its curiosity had been satisfied so we continued towards the nearby ice cliffs.

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”, especially when the fog closed in. To celebrate this unique event the catering crew had made a huge quantity of hot chocolate, which, together with some rum, was eagerly consumed.

Turning to the south, we went straight back into the ice that we had earlier negotiated. This time there was much less open water. What sea there was was like a mirror and the reflections were remarkable. It had been quite foggy at the ice wall but it began to clear, giving us very good visibility and a chance to spot yet more bears. In an astonishing run of sightings no less than 13 were seen between 22.40 and 00.04. Some of them were far away but some of them were really close, including some that “popped up out of nowhere”. We kept going to bed and then getting up again, as yet another ‘bing-bong’ told us about an even better sighting. The best was saved for last though and it was what we were all hoping for - a female with two small cubs. They suddenly appeared not far in front of the ship so we stopped immediately. Luckily she was not concerned and came towards us so we had unbelievable views! How lucky we were! After they continued on their way it was a good time to go to bed, again. Some diehards stayed up and finally only left the bridge at 01.00.

Today was quite a day – calm weather, uncountable numbers of birds, ten huge Fin Whales, a mammoth jellyfish, many Walrus (three lucky people saw one giving birth!) and no less than fourteen more bears, including a female

with her cubs. We were lucky not to be charged extra for all this!

**TUESDAY, July 20<sup>th</sup>**

**Edgeøya**

**Ryke Yseøyane Isles - 77° 50' N, 025° 00' E**

**Andréetangen - 77° 20' N, 022° 30' E**

**Weather:** overcast, bright, breezy

**Temperature:** 3.5° C/38° F

Today, when we woke up, there was more ice in sight; it was also foggy. Soon though, the fog cleared and the small Ryke Yseøyane Islands became visible ahead of us. Our plan was to go out in the boats and perhaps make a landing but there was far too much ice for that. Before we could devise ‘Plan B’ another bear was spotted. It quickly backed off a floe into the water and, as the ship turned, it disappeared. It was some time before it came into view again but it was closer and, still in the water, was on the lookout for seals. It eventually came back up onto ice and continued ‘overland’. This bear was very yellow and showed up really well against the ice.

Our next idea was to find some open water and do a zodiac cruise but that too was foiled, by a big swell. Instead, as we sailed towards the south, Steffen gave a very informative presentation on ice; this followed a previous one (in German) by Martin. Towards the end of the talk there was a practical demonstration, when the ship slowed and turned around a large, tabular iceberg. More characteristic of the Weddell Sea in Antarctica than the Arctic, it was very impressive, especially since it was on its own in the sea. The waves were breaking against the sides and fountains of spray shot up into the air. A deep cave at sea level acted as a horizontal blowhole, with spectacular results.

Andréetangen, on Edge Island, was reached late in the afternoon and we were soon on our (long) way to the beach. The ride was a bit bouncier than usual but we all arrived safely and dry. The ‘long’ walkers set off from the hut and followed the coast to the north. Here, in addition to the views, they discovered no rocks of note but many flowers and some interesting birds. Species included Purple and Tufted Saxifrage, Tufted Cinquefoil, Arctic Willow, Red-throated Diver, Arctic Skua, Sanderling and, best of all, a male Grey (or Red) Phalarope, which allowed a close approach. The ‘medium’ walkers got as far as the

first good flower garden and the 'strollers' just strolled around.

All of us had the chance to get a good look at the Walrus, of which there were approximately 100. Most of them were in a big huddle ashore but others were close by, in the water. Walrus are often very curious so it wasn't a surprise when some of them came over to see us. By sitting down near the water we were in a good position to see and photograph what happened. Soon a small group swam towards us and very slowly they started to emerge from the sea. They were not quite sure of us though so they only came halfway out. Every now and then something would appear to spook them and they withdrew a short distance. It was very exciting to see such large animals at such close quarters. This encounter brought our visit to an end so we returned to the ship for dinner.

### **WEDNESDAY, July 21<sup>st</sup>**

#### **Hornsund**

**Gåshamna - 76° 56.6' N, 015° 49.6' E**

**Brepollen - 77° 04' N, 016° 24' E**

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

**Weather:** overcast, light snow, breezy

**Temperature:** 4° C/39° 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 Gåshamna, on the south coast. There was a lot of fresh snow on the nearby mountains and there was some in the air as well but it is still summertime! Once again, there were three options – long, medium and strollers. Niklas led the hikers up into the hills and far away, Steffen led the walkers up into the valley and Ingrid led the rest around in circles.

This place was, in the 1600's, one of the main whaling stations on the west coast of Spitsbergen. The Dutch were here and Dutch archaeologists once told one of the guides that excavations of the blubber oven mounds (cookers for getting oil from fat) had revealed many items of interest. Perhaps the most exciting was fragments of clothing, which showed what the ordinary people wore in those days. From archive research back in the Netherlands and elsewhere it was estimated that some 46,000 Bowhead Whales were killed in the first 50 years of whaling. Holland and England were the main whaling nations but it was the

Dutch who were ultimately more successful. This was because when all the whales in the fjords had been killed the Dutch went out to sea to kill them while the English remained tied to the shore. Around the blubber ovens there were many whale bones and some flowers too, which used the bones for shelter. On the way back to the ship there was a chance to have a close look at a beautiful piece of blue ice.

Not long after getting back onto the ship a bear was spotted on land. It was some way away but the ship was turned and we watched as the bear walked purposefully along, looking for something to eat. It should have been with the one we saw later on, which emerged from the water with a seal in its mouth! The ship anchored and we went out in the boats to see what we could find.

Samarinvågen (fjord) had high, snowy mountains on either side, a large glacier at the end and a huge amount of ice floating in the water. Amongst this ice were several big, blue pieces and these made wonderful subjects for our cameras. There was a lot to see and do but the "A Team", driven by the Redhead and the Baldhead, saw the bear with the seal, some Beluga, curious Bearded Seals, some very close Fulmars and a glacial calving. The people in those two boats even made their drivers land them on a tiny island near the glacier, which came complete with its own small icecap. Muddy feet were a small price to pay for this extra-special bonus!

In between the bear sightings we had been to Brepollen, home to huge glaciers. There was lots of ice in the water, which was all from the glaciers. The sea ice, from the winter, disappeared some time ago. The ship slowed down to enable us to enjoy the close views of the glacier. The sight was very impressive and near the ice wall those of us with binoculars could see many 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. The captain told us that the glacier is retreating by 180 metres per year. He also said that when the Polish station near the entrance of Hornsund was established in 1957 the glacier front was very close to it; now it is miles away.

Once dinner had been consumed there was a fascinating presentation about the ecology of the Arctic, by Stine. However, it was not just

ecology that took our fancy, it was whales and dolphins 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? That was the question and the answer was yes. Conditions were perfect for seeing animals at the surface – excellent visibility and a sea surface like silk. However, despite only distant or brief views of Fin Whale and Northern Minke Whale, it was the dolphins that performed for us and stole the show.

During a 3½-hour period several dozen White-beaked Dolphins were seen. Many of them were distant but they were also very active and could be picked out by the big splashes they made after leaping clear of the water (breaching). The best encounter was with a group that was feeding close to a Fin Whale. The ship was slowed and stopped and eventually there were dolphins swimming slowly around right beside us. They also spun around tightly at times, as they fed on unseen prey items.

#### **THURSDAY, 22<sup>nd</sup> July**

##### **Isfjord**

**Alkhorneret - 78° 12.8' N, 013° 52.4' E**

**Hemsedalen - 78° 38' N, 014° 31' E**

**Weather:** bright & sunny, calm

**Temperature:** 8° C/46° F

After breakfast the zodiacs shuttled us to the beach near the 1,000-foot high bird cliffs at Alkhorneret. As usual, we had a choice of a long, medium or short walks. The sunshine made things very warm and some of us discovered that we had put too many clothes on! On the tundra there were many flowers of several different species. They included Purple, Tufted, Drooping, Bog, Alpine and Brook Saxifrage, Pygmy Buttercups and some uncommonly seen Nodding Lychnis and Polar Cress.

The local reindeer were here too and we got very good views of them. One male had a fine set of antlers. Other animals included foxes, which were seen by both the long and medium walkers. The 'long' group saw two meet each other and raise their tails in the air, whilst the 'mediums' had good views of a fox outside a den under some rocks. Birds included Snow Bunting, Arctic Skua with a chick, Glaucous Gull and Pink-footed Goose. High up on the spectacular,

triangular, bird cliff there were thousands of Brunnich's Guillemots and Black-legged Kittiwakes but they were little more than specks. Most of us climbed a little way up the hill below the bird colony and got sweeping views across the fjord, to our south.

The ship left just before lunch and headed off towards Hemsedalen. This was a multi-activity stop – old fossils, spectacular waterfall, many flowers, exciting zodiac cruising (a circumnavigation of the nearby island) and even a 'Polar Plunge' was offered.

From the beach or the zodiac cruise 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 wheeled out. 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	2
Norway	15
Denmark	4
Belgium	4
Netherlands	6
France	3
Germany	32
Switzerland	1
Austria	1
Italy	4
Canada	3
USA	4

And the total distance that we sailed during our expedition cruise was 1,133 nautical miles/1,303 statute miles/2,098 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...***

*Steffen Biersack, Expedition Leader*  
*Ingrid Kårstad, Assistant Exp. Ldr.*  
*Linda Drake, Photographer*  
*Niklas Gerhardsson*  
*Little Mo, Ice Pilot*  
*Martin Machiedo*

*Stine Skogland*  
*Allison Bailey*  
*Silje Mordal*  
*Simon Cook*  
*+ many*  
*Polar Bears!*

*AND 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.