



# LOGBOOK



*In the realm of the Polar Bear*

*Svalbard, June/July 2009*

## FRIDAY, June 26<sup>th</sup>

### Longyearbyen - 78° 10' North, 015° 20' East & Barentsburg - 78° 00' N, 014° 00' E

**Weather:** overcast and a little windy  
**Temperature:** 7° C/45° F

After a sightseeing tour to the Svalbard Museum and around Longyearbyen we boarded the Polar Star. After check-in, welcoming cocktails and snacks were served in the observation lounge. This was followed by an introduction and a presentation by Expedition Leader Anja Fleig, the Captain Jacek Majer, the Hotel Manager Natasha and all the guides. We got a lot of practical information and had a lifeboat drill as we sailed away from the town. Dinner was served while we sailed west along Isfjorden to the Russian town of Barentsburg.

Barentsburg is located in Green Fjord and is a Russian coal mining community with around 500 inhabitants from Russia and Ukraine. It is a family community with around 15 children. We had a guided tour around the city with two local guides and were entertained by an entrancing folklore show in the theatre.

Later on, after everyone had embarked Polar Star we sailed out of Isfjorden and passed the island of Prins Karls Forland on our way north to many anticipated adventures.

## SATURDAY, June 27<sup>th</sup>

### Ny-Alesund - 78° 50' N, 011° 30', Magdalenefjorden - 79° 30' N, 010° 30' E & N, 80° 00' N, 013° 18' E

**Weather:** overcast and foggy in the morning, clear and sunny in the afternoon  
**Temperature:** 6° C/43° F

In the early morning we came into Kongsfjord and arrived at Ny Ålesund, the world's northernmost community. It is a former mining settlement that has become an important international research centre - mainly on the

atmosphere and ozone layer, but geological, biological and glacial research is also carried out here by many different countries. We had guides in town, where we divided into different groups and some went bird hunting (armed with a telescope only!). The rest of us had a cultural and historical overview. During our time here we looked at the old train that was in use in the mining period. Among everything else "northernmost" here, this was the northernmost railway in the world. We walked through this small town, 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 all those 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 flying over the North Pole in an airship in 1926. Some of us walked over to the airship-mast that is still there. After that we enjoyed some time for ourselves and some shopping, in this peaceful place.

From the dock the ship headed north, past the seven glaciers, towards Magdalenefjorden. This is the most well known fjord in Spitsbergen and 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 supposed to be the mountains Willem Barents first saw when he discovered Svalbard in 1596, naming the biggest island Spitsbergen (peaked mountains) after them.

Entering the fjord, a snow-covered peninsula stuck out from the southern shore; this is where we landed. This is Gravneset ("the grave-yard peninsula") where Dutch and English whalers from northwestern Spitsbergen came to bury their dead in the 17th and 18th centuries. There are 150 men buried here. Down on the beach but hidden under snow there are remains from two blubber ovens where blubber from whales was rendered. At the end of the beach lies a small cabin where the Sysselmannen (Governor) has officers during the summer.

After dinner we headed further north and east and reached the walrus haul at Moffen at approximately 00.30 in the morning, where we spotted 15-20 walrus ashore and on an iceberg. 80 degrees north was reached at approximately 00.00 hours at 80°00.0' N, 013°54.5' E.

## SUNDAY, June 28<sup>th</sup>

### Krossøya 79° 57.7' N, 0.18° 03.1' E, Alkefjellet 79° 36.7' N, 018° 20.5' E & Wahlenbergfjorden

**Weather:** Overcast and foggy in the morning, clearing up in the afternoon.  
**Temperature:** 6° C/43° F

The first landing of the day was at Krossøya, where an authentic cross from the time of the Pomors overlooked the island. We walked around the island and spotted lots of nesting common eiders, skuas, arctic terns, and grey phalaropes.

After lunch we approached Alkefjellet (the Auk Cliff), and, even though it was a little foggy, weather conditions were favourable for a zodiac cruise beneath the bird cliff. We got close into the impressive cliff face – the home to thousands of nesting Brünnich's Guillemots—densely populated as such colonies usually are, with black-and-white birds shoulder-to-shoulder on every ledge. There was a constant whirr of birds around the zodiacs as adults came to and fro, some visibly ferrying fish back to the cliff. Here and there were kittiwakes nesting in niches and corners. Glaucous gulls, with large fledged speckled dull brown chicks, and the adults were patrolling the colony, looking for chances to take eggs from the colony. We also saw Black Guillemots and Fulmars. The cliffs themselves are very impressive – vertical columns of basalt, intruded into an area of sedimentary rock, stained white and pink with the accumulated generations of guano. With the waves crashing at their base and the cacophony of birds - it was a spectacular start to the day.

In the evening Polarstar entered the ice at 79° 41.1' N, 020° 09.5' E. The first bear was spotted in the ice in a distance, and later in the evening another three bears could be seen in Wahlenbergfjorden.



## MONDAY, June 29<sup>th</sup>

### Bråsvellbreen & Torellneset 79° 21.5' N, 020° 44.6' E

**Weather:** Overcast but still airs, foggy, and a little bit sunny at times  
**Temperature:** 6° C/43° F

Monday morning was spent sailing from Wahlenbergfjorden towards Bråsvell glacier, situated on the remote north area of Nordaustlandet. Monday morning revealed a dramatic approach to the glacier face, with swirling mist that lifted to reveal a 20-m vertical wall of pale-blue ice, looking as though it was cut with a knife. The ice terminus is approximately 200 km long, and it is said to be the second largest ice cap in Europe (Vatnajökull on Iceland is allegedly larger). However, unfortunately, the mist turned into heavy fog and we left the glacier and headed towards Torellneset on Nordaustlandet, named after the famous Swedish geologist Otto Torell. We found a howl out of approximately 25 walrus on the beach and were able to approach them to a distance of 30 meters, in separate groups. We also did three hikes, a long, a medium and a short. On the long hike, after thorough investigations, discovered that the yellow flower we saw was actually was an Arctic Cinquefoil.

## TUESDAY, June 30<sup>th</sup>

### Fast ice, 80° 34.0' N, 018° 18.2'

#### E

**Weather:** overcast and foggy, light snow

**Temperature:** 3° C/37° F

Our plan for this day was to reach the seven islands north of Nordaustlandet. However, because of heavy and impenetrable ice we had to cancel and instead head south west towards Raudfjorden. We spent many exciting hours in the ice, enjoying the ever changing scene of ice floes, with melt water pools and pressure ridges, while the captain navigated with a steady hand towards open waters. We parked the ship in the ice at 80° 34.0' N, 018° 18.2' E, embarked and had a toast of aquavit to celebrate the achievements of the trip so far.

On the program of the day there were also lectures, about dog sledging from Arne L and about ice from Anja. After dinner a National Geographic polar bear DVD was displayed in the observation lounge.

Guides were up spotting for wildlife all day and evening; however none was seen, probably partly because of fog and low visibility.

## WEDNESDAY, July 1<sup>th</sup>

### Hamiltonbukta, 79° 47.7' N, 011° 55.1' E & Fuglesangen, 79° 50.3' N, 011° 55.1' E

**Weather:** overcast later with low visibility and some wind. Clearing up in the evening

**Temperature:** 3° C/37° F

Polar Star, having done an amazing job maneuvering through the ice, found herself in open waters on this day. We headed for Hamilton Bay, where a zodiac cruise was on the agenda. After only a short time onboard the rubber boats, a polar bear was spotted in the entrance of the bay, walking calmly next to the sea. We spent some time with the bear, talking pictures and admiring the king of the Arctic. Suddenly a reindeer approached the bear some

meters up the mountain side. The bear made the decision to chase after the reindeer, but gave up as the reindeer, with good reason, became nervous and started running. A few moments later a polar fox was spotted running up the mountain side, and while all this was going on, a pink-footed goose and a greenish chick was sitting on a rock in the water. One could definitely say that there was some exciting wildlife spotting on that particular zodiac cruise!

After lunch we had a landing at Fuglesangen, an island with an impressive colony of little auks. We walked a little bit up the mountain and sat and listened to the many voices of all the "Tromsøværinger". After leaving Fuglesangen we headed into Smeerenburgfjorden and cruised with the ship in front of the Smeerenburg glacier, where hot chocolate with rum was enjoyed together with biscuits and the spectacular view of one of the most beautiful glaciers on Svalbard.

## THURSDAY, June 2<sup>nd</sup>

### Trygghamna, 78° 14.5' N, 013° 51.0' E & Skansebukta

**Weather:** overcast and partly sunny; calm

**Temperature:** 6° C/43° F

We had good fortune with the weather today, and the first landing of the day was in Trygghamna (in Norwegian - safe harbour). As in other places that we visited, purple saxifrage was much in evidence, as were good numbers of both Pink-footed and Barnacle Geese as well as Great Skua, Little Auks, Fulmars, and Kittiwakes. Walking conditions were very good so everyone was able to do as much or as little as they liked.

Back aboard, we sailed southwards back into Isfjorden and round the corner eastwards to the entrance of Billefjorden. On the way, other activities to keep us busy included more information on packing and disembarkation. Soon we arrived at Skansebukta, with its immense fortress-like cliff where fulmars nest by the thousand. Here we had the opportunity to just wander around on our own between guides placed out in the landscape. Of interest were the beached boat, the old gypsum mine with its railway track still to be seen, lots of flowers and an old trappers hut now used by a local club.

On the way back to Polarstar we detoured round the corner to a small cliff where puffins can be seen at breeding sites where they are sheltered by a roof over their heads; there were also a few Black Guillemots and Brünnich's Guillemots, and further down a colony of Kittiwakes. Time on our last landing flew by and before we knew it we were back aboard for the Captain's farewell cocktail party, a slide-show of our voyage and a splendid Arctic barbecue on the stern deck outside the observation lounge. Then it was time to pack!

During the cruise 5 polar bears were seen, plus colonies of kittiwakes, Brünnich's guillemots, and little auks; we saw fox and reindeer, walrus and seals. We also broke through ice with the ship and sailed past stunning and dramatic scenery.

In all we were 102 guests and guides onboard from 12 different countries:

Norway	6
France	4
Switzerland	9
Germany	41
Australia	4
Ireland	2
Great Britain	18
Denmark	2
Italy	5

USA	2
Luxembourg	1

***On behalf of Spitsbergen Travel, the guide team and lecturers, ships crew and officers we thank you for choosing us as your companions throughout this adventurous journey in the most beautiful parts of Spitsbergen.***

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

***Anja Fleig, Expedition Leader  
Trude Mørkved  
Arne Liaklev  
Tim Walker  
Kirsti Lund Vik  
Niklas Gerhardsson  
Olof Selander  
Arne Kelterhein***

***& with help from Dr. Kjersti!***



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.