

# LOG BOOK

Svalbard, August 13<sup>th</sup> – August 17<sup>th</sup> 2009





Map of Svalbard with possible landing locations. In the log book you will find numbers on the sections. Those numbers refer to the locations on this map.

August 13<sup>th</sup> 18:00, 78°10'N

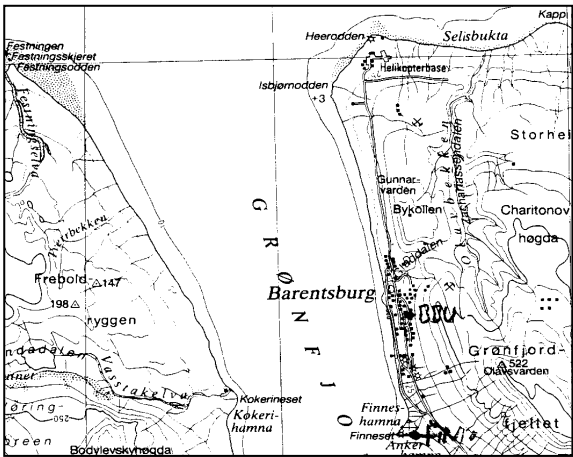
### Longyearbyen

This is a Norwegian settlement and the 'capital' of Svalbard. It's named after an American, John Munroe Longyear, who started the first coal production in the Longyear valley in 1906. It was bought by a Norwegian mine company in 1916. Today, the town is a modern town with almost every civilised facility you can imagine. The population is app. 2000 and increasing.

Longyearbyen was originally a mining community, but now science and tourism are slowly taking over. After breakfast at the hotel we went sight-seeing in "town". We visited the museum and the gallery. At 17:00 we embarked on board the MS Expedition and the Spitsbergen Adventure Cruise started. The ship sailed out of Adventfjorden and west towards Barentsburg, passing the former coal mining settlement Grumant and Colesbay.

21:00, 78°14'N

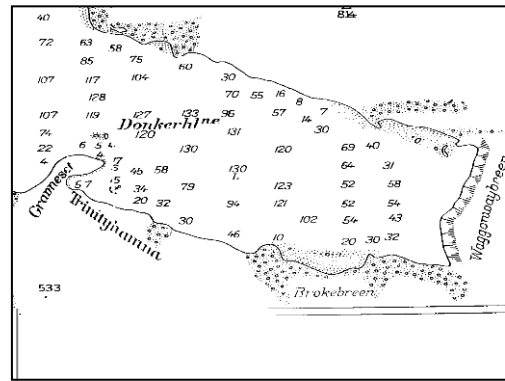
### Barentsburg



Barentsburg is currently the only Russian settlement on Svalbard – it used to be two more: Grumant which closed down in the 1960's and Pyramiden which closed down in 1998. Barentsburg is a mining settlement on the east side of Grønfjorden. The first house was built in 1912 by a Norwegian company and then sold to a Dutch company; The N.V. Nederlandsche Spitsbergen Compagnie. It was bought by the Russians – from the Dutch – in 1932. In Barentsburg there are currently app. 500 inhabitants. We went on a guided tour with 2 Russian guides, and some joined a genuine and entertaining Russian folklore show, which the mine workers perform in their spare time. We also visited the hotel, and some of us tried the Russian Vodka.

August 14<sup>th</sup> 10:00, 79°30'N

### Magdalenefjorden



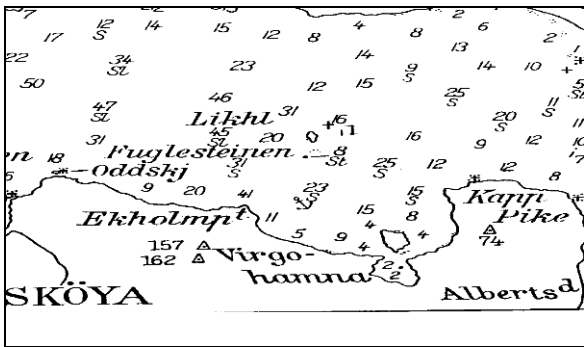
Today we woke up on the way into Magdalenefjorden which is one of the best known fjords on Spitsbergen – it is a beautiful fjord with jagged mountains. These are said to be the mountains Wilhelm Barents first saw when he discovered Svalbard in 1596 and named the biggest island Spitzbergen (Pointed Mountains) after them.

In the Magdalenefjord, a peninsula reaches out on the south side. The outer part of the peninsula is a small hill, called Grønneset. Here the Dutch whalers from NW Spitsbergen came to bury their dead in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. Today stone gatherings and wooden coffins remain from the around 130 graves. We all went ashore at Grønneset this foggy morning and did a walk in the area. The guides told the whaling history of Svalbard and everyone got a close look at the old blubber ovens situated on the beach. These were used in distilling oil from the blubber of the whales in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. During the landing, the fog lifted, and we had a walk towards the Gully glacier.

Finally, it is important to mention that some of the bravest tourists went for a cold swim in the beautiful Magdalenefjorden this morning.

13:00-17:30, 79°40'N

### Sørgattet, Smeerenburgfjorden, Bjørnefjorden



After lunch we sailed through Sørgattet - a narrow strait connected to Smeerenburgfjorden. We watched the spectacular mountains and glaciers around us while cruising up the fjord - this fjord that once was crowded with huge bowhead whales and hundreds of whale hunters.

In Sallyhamna we did a zodiac cruise. On the beach we spotted a dead Finwhale lying on the beach. Upon this dead whale, there were 6 polar bears and several different species of birds feeding on top of it. Two other bears were relaxing and chillin' on the small hill, stuffed and happy.

This was an amazing occurrence and not a common sight in Svalbard waters! It occasionally happens that carcasses floats ashore, and Polar Bears, foxes and scavenging birds feed on it, however, there is no doubt: we were EXTREMELY lucky this day!!!

But, this wasn't the end of the lucky spree...

18:30, 80°N

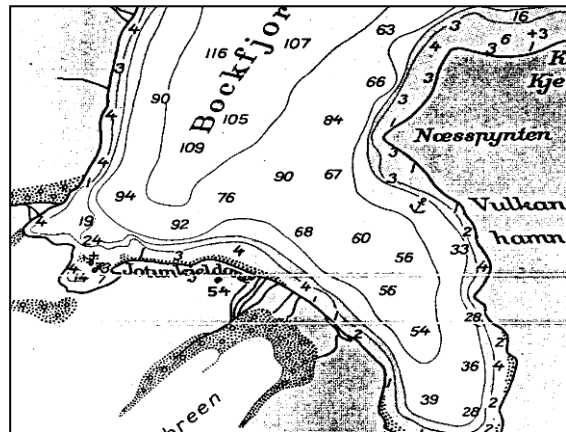
As we sailed out of Schmeerenburgfjorden, we set course north towards the 80<sup>th</sup> parallel. There was no drift ice present so we managed to pass the 80°N parallel before dinner. We celebrated this happening with a toast of champagne on the aft deck. The North Atlantic is in fact the only place on the planet where you can be almost certain to pass the 80<sup>th</sup> parallel with a ship - as this far North in the northern hemisphere is mostly ice-covered and at 80°S you will hit a continent. An interesting thought is that there were hardly any other people between M/S Expedition and the North Pole at this time!

After celebrating the 80<sup>th</sup> parallel, we sailed south-east towards Woodfjorden and finally Bockfjorden. In the entrance of Woodfjorden, we spotted two Polar Bears. One big, fat and dirty male eating a reindeer, and one clean and sparkling white female just waked a bit around and looking at the

male bear. Some guests spotted two polar bears swimming in the water. Just in the end, after we speeded up the engines, we spotted two cute minkie whales on each side of the ship in the calm water.

In late night we anchored up in Bockfjorden, a small fjord in the inner parts of the big Woodfjorden.

August 15<sup>th</sup> 09:30  
Bockfjorden, 79°27'N



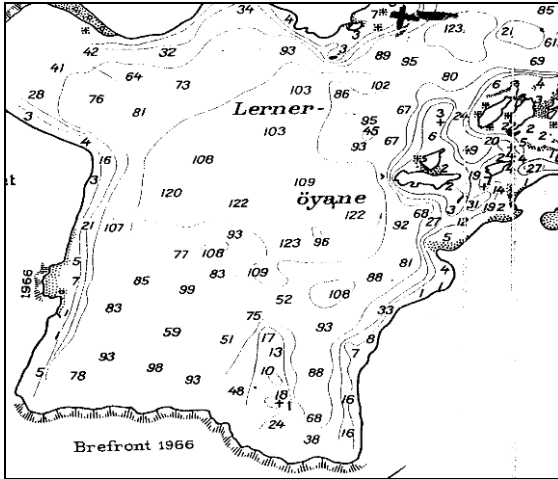
After breakfast this morning, we had a landing at the hot springs, in Bockfjorden. In this special fjord there is an extinct volcano located on the southern shore of the fjord. It is called Sverrefjellet.

The guides explained about the geological history of Svalbard, before we went to see the hot springs, which contains sulphuric water with a temperature around 12-15°C. The ground around the springs is covered by so-called "evaporites" - i.e. minerals like calcium etc. which are spread from the warm water when it is cooled of by the ambient air.

All groups went for a nice walk, some for a short walk and some for a longer one. The terrain was kind of stony, so we had to concentrate a bit by walking. For a beginning, the weather was foggy, but still very nice, with no wind. During the landing the sky cleared up a bit, and in the end we could see spots of blue sky.

14:00, 79°35' N

### Liefdefjorden-Monaco glacier



During lunch we sailed in direction of Liefdefjorden, which also is a part of the huge Woodfjorden system. "Liefde" is a dutch word meaning "love" and the name of the fjord is therefore thought to be given by the dutch whalers in the 16-17' century. In the entrance of this fjord, we spotted many whales swimming around, on all sides of the ship. They were all over the place!! Incredible! There was one big Finwhale, and many small Minkewhales.

At the front of Monaco Glacier we had a cruise with MS Expedition between the icebergs. Everyone could enjoy the spectacular view of this 6km wide glacier from the ship. The height of this glacier varies between 30-60meters, and the name of the glacier is given by Prince Albert II of Monacos' expedition to Spitsbergen in the late 1890's. The distance from the ship to the glacier was too big, but in the front of the glacier there were a lot of arctic terns and kittiwakes feeding on zooplankton and the small fishes of the arctic ocean, which surface in this area. This is due to freshwater coming out from underneath the glacier and the calving activity of the glacier (i.e. circulation in the water column makes the plankton come higher up in the water column).

As we sailed out of Liefdefjorden we spotted a Polar Bear sleeping at Lernerøyane. We turned the ship and had a look at this sleepy Polar Bear for some minutes. Afterwards we sailed towards Worsleyhamna in the outer part of Woodfjorden.

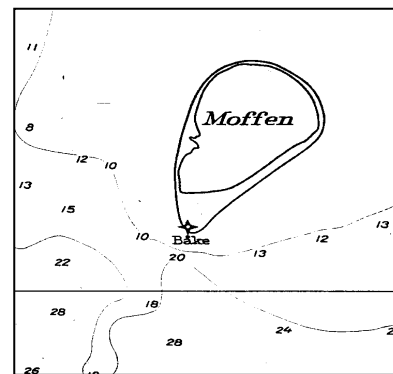
### Worsleyhamna 16:30, 79°35' N

On our way to Worsleyhamna several people were out on deck enjoying the beautiful sunshine.

Further on, we arrived at Worsleyhamna in the afternoon and the zodiacs drove us to the old trapper cabin where the guides told us a bit about the trapper history in the achipelago. This cabin, which is called "Villa Oxford" was built by the famous norwegian trapper, Hilmar Nøis in 1924. It was made from left-overs of crates containing an airplane which was used during a research-expedition on Svalbard, by Mr. Binney. The period of trapping is mostly related to the periode from mid 1800's to 1973, the year the Polar Bear get protected by law. However, there is still some trappers in Spitsbergen today, although the benefit/pay-off is not as it used to be in the earlier days. After the guiding we went for a little walk up towards some small lakes and ponds.

Once everyone was back on board we headed north, out of Woodfjorden and towards Moffen Island. After the landing we all enjoyed a nice dinner on board.

### 21:00, Moffen



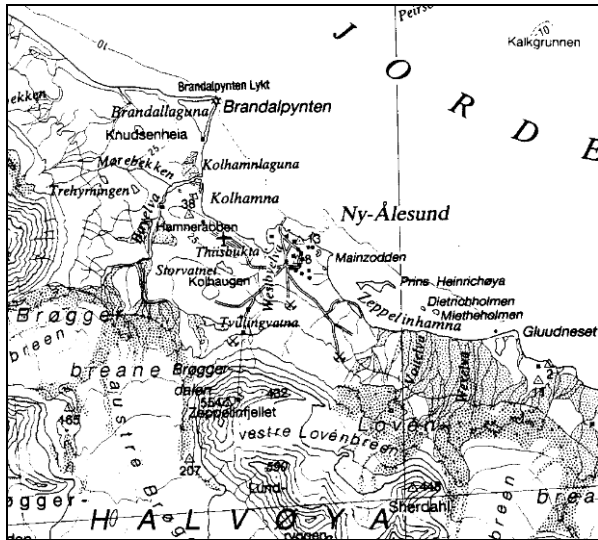
Moffen is a 'lagoon', slightly north of 80°N latitude. It is a very flat and peculiar ringshaped island and its maximum altitude is about five meters. This small island is mostly known for heaps of male walrus chilling out on the beach, and appr. 25 of them were luckily present this nice evening. We had some drift ice, brought down by the notherly wind. Because of this, we use a bit more time than planned, but it made the journey more exiting and spectacular!

The Moffen island is classified as a protected nature reserve and no ships are allowed closer than 300 metres from the shore. The reason for this is that Moffen is a reserve for the walrus, the flora and some seldom bird species that are nesting there. It is interesting to know that the walrus is the largest seal specie in the Arctic and weights up to two metric tons (calfs weight approx. 80 kilos when born). Characteristics for this massive marine

animal is its impressive tusks, absence of beauty, lack of charm and a rather unpleasant smell.

August 16<sup>th</sup> 09:30, 78°50'N

### Ny-Ålesund



Ny-Ålesund is the world's northernmost community. As we came on shore, we went on a guided tour in town. Ny-Ålesund is a former mining village which has become an important international research centre - mainly on the atmosphere and ozone layer but also geological, biological and glacial research is carried out here. "Down town", you will find a small centre with a shop, a post-office, and information centre and a museum.

The English whale hunter Jonas Poole discovered the first pieces of coal on the riverbank on the south side of the Kongsfjord in 1610. Another three hundred years were to pass before commercial exploitation of the coal deposits begun. The first mining period was 1910-1929 and the mines got closed down because of economical problems.

Ny-Ålesund was the focal point for the world's attention several times during the 1920's. In 1925 Roald Amundsen attempted to reach the North Pole from Ny-Ålesund with the seaplanes N24 and N25. In 1926 Amundsen returned to Ny-Ålesund, accompanied by the American Lincoln Elsworth and the Italian Umberto Nobile, to set out on a joint expedition with the airship "Norge". This expedition was a success. The airship flew over the North Pole as planned and landed in Teller, Alaska.

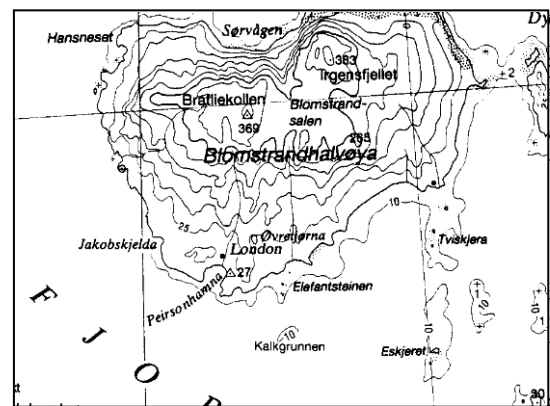
From 1945 until 1962 we experienced the second mining period. But the problem with the coal layers in Ny-Ålesund was that they are almost vertical and gases developed in the mines. 70 miners have

lost their life in the mines of Ny-Ålesund and the worse accident happened November 5<sup>th</sup> 1962. Late at night that day, there was a big explosion in the Esther Mine and 21 miners died. Since Kings Bay was a state enterprise, the public blamed the Norwegian government. A committee made an investigation and they concluded that the Norwegian state should have been more concerned about the safety in Ny-Ålesund. In August 1963, Prime Minister Gerhardsen and his government resigned, as a result of this tragedy.

Research started in Ny-Ålesund in 1964 and it increased during the 1990's from 4,100 man-days in 1990 to 10,031 in 2000. Each year, scientists from at least fifteen nations run more than 120 research projects.

During a delicious barbeque for lunch, we sailed across the fjord to Blomstrandhalvøya to do our last activity during this Adventure Cruise.

Blomstrandhalvøya 14:30, 78°58' N



At the north side of Blomstrandhalvøya, you can see the Blomstrand Glacier. In fact, "halvøya" means peninsula and people used to think it was one - but as the glacier retreated, it got obvious that this so called peninsula actually was an island.

After the barbeque for lunch, we went for a zodiac cruise in front of the Blomstrand glacier. Some of us get great pictures of the spectacular glacier front and of the "new-born" island in front of the retreating ice wall. Finally, we went into a small cave with the zodiacs. The sky went blue and the sun was shining.

Back on the ship, we gathered all guests in the Polar Bear Bar for a drink, "Polar Artic Blue", as we started the journey south towards Longyearbyen. We had a nice time in the Bar before the last dinner on board for this cruise.

**20:30 – on our way back to Longyearbyen**  
**Farewell gathering**

After dinner, we gathered the ship's crew and the guides for a farewell ceremony in the Expedition Lounge. Certificates for passing the 80°N latitude were handed out, and the true heroes among us received certificates proving that they took a swim in the cold arctic water! During the evening we sailed southwards. We reached Longyearbyen at approx. 01:30, and thereby completed this nice Svalbard summer adventure.

Are you sad to leave Svalbard? Are you curious about what it is like in the winter? Grab a copy of our catalogue or visit [www.spitsbergentravel.com](http://www.spitsbergentravel.com). We hope to see you back again for another arctic adventure.

The ship's crew, the guide team and Spitsbergen Travel wish you a safe and pleasant journey back home.

*Kind regards,*

***Cruise guides;***

*Heiko (EL), Susanne (AEL), Cecilie, Remi, Stephane and Thomas.*

