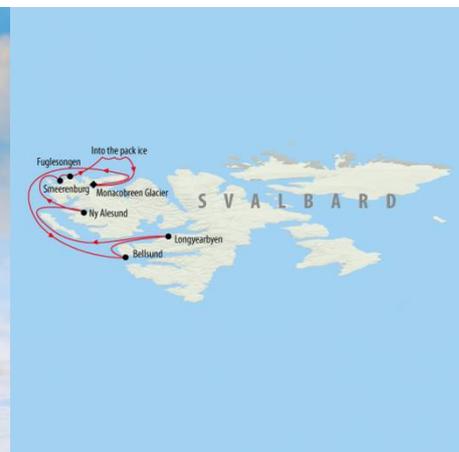


Svalbard Explorer

8 Days | Longyearbyen to Longyearbyen



Take in the most northern town in the world on this 8-day expedition cruise to the remote Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard. Spot polar bears hunting for seals on the ice floes, navigate the northern pack ice and explore the abandoned whaling station of Smeerenburg. Marvel at jaw-dropping glaciers and colossal icebergs, see ruined mining communities and cruise along shimmering fjords.

HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights

- Longyearbyen - begin your adventure in the capital of Svalbard which is also the most northern town in the world
- Svalbard pack ice - look out for polar bears on the floating ice floes and weave amongst the pack ice on a Zodiac cruise (weather permitting)
- Smeerenburg - visit this abandoned whaling station where more than 200 hardy men once lived - and often died in the process of blubber production
- Blomstrand Peninsula - climb to the top of Irgensfjellet Mountain for incredible views over the archipelago as far as Ny Alesund

- Ny Alesund - stroll around this tiny scientific station which is further north than Longyearbyen but doesn't count as a town
- Monacobreen Glacier - pass along the front of this impressive wall of ice and watch icebergs calve from the glacier
- Fuglesongen - watch the largest colony of Little auks on Svalbard swooping over the cliffs and spot Arctic foxes stalking the birds
- Calypsobyen - see abandoned buildings where mining communities once thrived and explore the wintry tundra environment

What's Included

- 7 breakfasts, 6 lunches and 7 dinners
- 7 nights aboard the Ocean Atlantic expedition cruise ship in a shared outside double cabin with private facilities
- Services of the ship captain and crew and an English-speaking expedition team
- All guided sightseeing and excursions as per itinerary
- Full board on the ship, afternoon snacks, free tea and coffee daily
- Lectures from the expedition team onboard
- Special photo workshop and a digital visual journey to remember your trip
- Welcome and farewell cocktails
- Taxes and port fees

What's Not Included

- International flights and visas
- Tipping - an entirely personal gesture
- Any meals not onboard the ship & any drinks (excluding tea and coffee)
- Pre and post tour accommodation

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : Welcome to Svalbard



Welcome to Svalbard. You'll arrive in Longyearbyen, capital of Svalbard and possibly the northernmost 'real' town in the world.

Our vessel, Ocean Atlantic, is docked close to the town centre. After boarding and a welcome drink, the Expedition Leader will provide information about the voyage, the ship's daily routines and the various security and safety procedures. Before sailing, there will be a mandatory safety drill. The Captain then takes the ship out of Advent Fjord and our Arctic adventure commences.

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Svalbard Explorer

Please note: All the outings and landings rely on weather, sea and ice conditions being favourable both for the ship to access the areas, as for the zodiacs and kayaks to maneuver under adequate conditions, ensuring the safety of all our passengers and staff.

For this reason, during moments of harsh weather and throughout the entire trip, Ocean Atlantic has excellent public areas, such as wellness/sauna, restaurant, bar and a library for our passengers to spend their spare time. Our ship is staffed by experts in the field who will also share great lectures along the way, ranging from exploration history to biology, geology, ice and wildlife. **Overnight - Ocean Atlantic ship (D)**

Day 2 : Polar bears & Ny Alesund



During the 'night' (what is night, when the sun never sets?), we pass Prins Karls Forland and arrive in the magnificent Kongsfjord. Our visit to Svalbard is in the early summer and this is both the challenge and gift of this special voyage. Winter ice will possibly block the inner waters of many fjords, but this will give us the best opportunities to observe the omnipresent – but still elusive – polar bear, hunting for seals in its prime habitat. At this time of year the migrating birds have just arrived. They are all eager to settle and feed to get the best start for the coming hectic summer months.

Our first landing will be at Ny Alesund. This settlement is in fact further north than Longyearbyen, making it THE northernmost town. But is a group of scientific stations, a post office and a single shop open for a few hours a real town? You will have to judge for yourself. The setting is nice, the

scientific projects are very interesting, and so is the town history. The Captain will try to get alongside, so we can enjoy an easy walk through the area. **Overnight - Ocean Atlantic ship (B, L, D)**

Day 3 : Exploring Northwest Svalbard



Cruising onwards, we reach Northwest Svalbard, which was declared a national park in 1973. The day could begin with a Zodiac cruise in Danskerfjorden, looking for seals in Virgohamna. We then plan to cross from Danskøya to Amsterdamøya, where we make a landing at Smeerenburg, the legendary whaling town of the 17th century. 200-plus men were living – and quite often dying – here in the heyday of blubber production.

There are several interesting places to visit in this northwestern corner of Spitsbergen. If conditions allow we'll make a landing on Fuglesongen, the largest colony of little auks in Svalbard. The arctic fox has noticed this as well and can often be seen roaming the base of the bird cliffs. Due to weather conditions, our itinerary must be flexible today, the Captain and crew will ensure we see and do as much as possible in North West Svalbard. **Overnight - Ocean Atlantic ship (B, L, D)**

Day 4 : Into the pack ice



Steering north towards the edge of the polar pack ice, we will go as far north as the

ice permits us. How far north only time and weather will tell, but the main target for us is just the 'edge', possibly at 80 degrees north! This is the kingdom of the polar bear! As the pack ice retreats during summer, polar bears ride the floes north, as this is where their prey - the seals - reside. Bears who for unfortunate reasons do not 'catch' the ice moving north, are stranded on Svalbard all summer, and will have to sustain on berries, eggs and whatever whale cadavers they can find.

During the day, lectures on polar mammals, environment and/or culture can be enjoyed on board in the Viking Theatre. Should we get into the pack ice where the sea usually is calm, a Zodiac cruise will be arranged. **Overnight - Ocean Atlantic ship (B, L, D)**

Day 5 : Monacobreen Glacier



Most likely the northeastern coast of Spitsbergen Island and Hinlopen Strait are still locked in by coastal ice. We will try our luck and sail as far east as possible. Should this fail, Wood Fjord and Liefde Fjord could be excellent alternatives for the day. In this case, we will circumvent the bird rich Andøya in Zodiacs, and make a landing on Reindyrfløya. Other interesting landings in this fantastic fjord system could be Mushamna and the oddly named 'Texas Bar'. In the afternoon, a Zodiac cruise along the broad glacier front of Monacobreen gives a unique insight of the glacial forces and the unlimited forms of icebergs. **Overnight - Ocean Atlantic ship (B, L, D)**

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Day 6 : Blomstrand Peninsula & Lilliehook Glacier



This morning we reach the west coast of Spitsbergen and Kongsfjorden. Ocean Atlantic will anchor behind Blomstrand Peninsula. As we will immediately see, the name is a bit misleading. Blomstrand is now an island - the Blomstrand Glacier has receded, revealing a shallow water strait. We will cruise through this on our Zodiacs and make a landing on the island. Strong hikers might want to scale Irgensfjellet (385m) for a nice view of 'The Three Sisters', the Nunatak Mountains and Ny Ålesund.

After lunch, we continue further north into the fjord system, and depending on the ice situation, we may do a Zodiac cruise along the Lilliehöök Glacier front. **Overnight - Ocean Atlantic ship** (B, L, D)

Day 7 : Bellsund & Calypsobyen



The west coast enjoys the warmer water coming up through the Atlantic, so winter ice should now have melted. This allows us to enter the southern fjord of Bellsund on this last full day of exploration.

Bellsund has some of the richest coal layers in Svalbard, and Svea Mine, far into the fjord, was formerly one of the biggest communities on the island. But prices went down, and the coal mine is currently being dismantled.

We will stay in the fjord entrance and make landings at Vårsol Bay. The biggest attraction here is the little auk cliff. Tundra is richly fertilized by hundreds of thousands of little auks, and Svalbard reindeer can be seen grazing in the area. We enjoy a nice walk along the beach and can spot the ruins left over from early industrial eras.

During lunch, we'll cross the fjord along the 4 km long (but quite narrow) island of Akseloya. We make a Zodiac landing at Calypsobyen in Recherche Fjord. Coal was extracted here in the early 1900s, but the enterprise never attained full production. Today, Calypsobyen offers an exciting landing that gives visitors a glimpse of the era of Neo-Industrialism, when all opportunities for profit were tried out. A pleasant walk can be made on the tundra behind the buildings. **Overnight - Ocean Atlantic ship** (B, L, D)

Day 8 : Longyearbyen



Early in the morning the ship returns to our starting point in Longyearbyen. After breakfast it's time to say farewell to the expedition team and crew. After disembarkation, you'll be transferred to the airport.

(B)

HOTELS

Highlighted below are some of the hotels which we frequently use on this tour, though we reserve the right to substitute these hotels to ones of a similar standard.

Please refer to your Tour Voucher for your confirmed arrival hotel and further arrival information.

Ocean Atlantic

Newly renovated in 2016, the Ocean Atlantic is the perfect vessel for exploring the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans. With an international ice class-rating of 1B, this cruise ship is one of the strongest operating in this region. At 140-metres in length, a total of 198 passengers are accommodated across multiple decks. Each cabin features an ensuite bathroom, individual temperature controls and a TV, with either portholes or windows. Indoor lounges offer large panel windows, where you can easily look out for passing whales and other sights. Passengers can enjoy shore landings, with a fleet of 20 motorized rubber 'Zodiac' boats, taking you to exciting areas that the larger vessel can't reach. Upon your return, perhaps enjoy a dip in the pool or sauna, or curl up with a book in the onboard library. There's also a spacious restaurant serving 4-star international cuisine and a bar offering an assortment of beverages.



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Norway Country Guide

Please note

This tour is operated in conjunction with our trusted partner and you will join travellers who booked through different operators, not solely On The Go

This itinerary should be used as a guide only and may vary from day to day depending on road & weather conditions.

Wi-Fi

Norway offers good internet access across its cities and larger towns with WiFi found in cafes and public spaces across the country. Many hotels provide free WiFi access to their guests and there is often free WiFi on board buses and trains though registration is usually required and access limited by time. Cruise ships that operate through Norway's fjords

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usually charge for WiFi and prices can be expensive

Visas

Please be advised that visa requirements are subject to change and that visa procurement is the responsibility of the traveller and not On The Go Tours, therefore it is essential that you check current visa requirements with the embassy before travel. Please also ensure that your passport is valid for at least 3 months from your planned date of departure from Norway.

UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and USA passport holders do not require a visa for a stay of less than 90 days

Norway is part of the borderless region known as the Schengen Area and South African residents require a Schengen visa in order to enter Norway. A passport valid for at least three months from your departure is required and a visa will only be issued if blank pages are available and if the passport has been issued in the last 10 years. Requirements for the procurement of a Norway visa are subject to change but application requirements include round-trip travel itinerary specifying entry and exit dates from the Schengen state and proof of funds to support yourself during your stay, along with a copy of your travel insurance policy. Visas are issued by the Norwegian embassy in Pretoria.

Currency

The official currency in Norway is Norwegian krone, written as NOK. Banknotes come in denominations of 50kr, 100kr, 200kr, 500kr and 1000kr. Check OANDA for the latest exchange rates.

Pound Sterling, US Dollars, Euro and other major currencies can be easily exchanged in Norway with banks and bureau de changes offering the better exchange rates once in destination. It's advisable to request bank notes in smaller denominations, as it can sometimes be hard to get change from large notes and smaller notes are handy for smaller purchases. Debit and credit cards are widely accepted in restaurants, shops, hotels and even taxis across Norway and you'll find ATMs throughout the country, even in smaller towns,

though withdrawal fees may be charged. Traveller's Cheques are not recommended as they're often difficult to exchange and incur high fees.

Time & Voltage

Norway works on Central European Time (CET) which is one hour ahead of Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). Daylight Saving Time is observed in Norway with the clocks turning forward one hour at the end of March and one hour backwards at the end of October each year.

The standard voltage in Norway is 230 volts, 50Hz AC. Primary sockets generally require Continental or European plugs of the two round pin variety. We recommend that you pack a universal travel adaptor. You will need a voltage converter and plug adaptor in order to use U.S. appliances.

Tipping

Salaries are really good in Norway with waiters and bar staff earning a decent wage, which means tipping is not required nor expected. Restaurants and bars include the service charge in your bill though in upmarket restaurants where table service is an important part of the experience, a tip is appreciated. It's also uncommon to tip taxi drivers or hotel staff.

Food & Drink

Norwegian cuisine primarily focuses on game and fish, resources that are found in abundance in the country's pristine woodlands and surrounding seas. Traditionally meat would feature in every main meal whether it's slow-cured lamb's leg (fenalår) served with vegetables for dinner or smoked salmon (røkt laks) served with scrambled eggs, dill, mustard sauce and bread for lunch. Norway's long winters meant that preserving food was necessary to last the season, which gave rise to a fondness for cured fish (tørrfisk), often eaten at breakfast with lefse, the national flatbread, and Jarlsberg cheese.

Preserved meat and sausages are popular and eaten as part of a spread or served in hearty stews. Norway's meat specialties include moose - said to taste similar to

venison, reindeer - wonderfully lean meat, and grouse - tender with a mild gamey taste. These meats grace restaurant menus in autumn when hunting season begins. Often meat is accompanied by potatoes (mashed, boiled or pureed) and a cream-based sauce or thick gravy.

Like elsewhere in Europe, bread is an important staple in the Norwegian diet and tends to be coarse in texture and made with whole grain flour. Rye bread is typically used for open-sandwiches, known locally as smørbrød, a buttered slice of bread topped with a range of ingredients including cheese, caviar, hard boiled egg, herring, pâté, salad leaves, herbs, sliced cucumber, tomato and pickled beets.

Norway's climate and countryside are the ideal environment for wild fruits with strawberries, bilberries, lingonberries, raspberries and apples all particularly intense in flavour and used in desserts and sweet treats such as krumkake - a cross between a waffle and a pancake that's rolled up and filled with whipped cream.

The people of Norway love their coffee, so much so in fact that they are the second highest consumer of coffee in the world. This means you'll find quality barista-style coffee shops in all of Norway's cities and larger towns. As far as alcoholic beverages go, Norway produces a number of pilsners, red beers and malt beers with a rich flavour. With a long history, mjød (mead - a famous honey wine) is a very traditional Scandinavian drink and graces the shelves of many tourist shops though it's not a commonly-drunk beverage.

In recent decades Norway's dining scene has vastly improved with a much better selection of international cuisine and in the larger cities you'll find a respectable choice of dining options. Today, Norwegian chefs lean towards the use of locally produced organic ingredients, creating modern versions of traditional dishes.

Water: Tap water is safe to drink in Norway as it is of fantastic quality and unlikely to cause any stomach upsets. Avoid drinking from river streams when out in the countryside,

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however, as water may contain harmful parasites

Health Requirements

You should seek medical advice from your local health practitioner before travelling to Norway and ensure that you receive all of the appropriate vaccinations. Allow yourself 6-8 weeks to do so. As a guide, vaccinations against tetanus are recommended. The medical facilities and healthcare in Norway are excellent and available for free or at a reduced cost to European Union citizens with a valid EHIC form or its replacement ID card.

During winter in Norway the main health risk is hypothermia and frostbite. With temperatures reaching well below freezing across Norway, ensure you have packed enough warm clothing and thermal under layers, as well as good quality gloves, socks and hat to keep body extremities warm and covered. In summer mosquitoes and blackflies are a particular nuisance so take a DEET-based repellent and keep covered up.

Shopping

With a long tradition of knitting, Norway is an excellent place to pick up a wool sweater or scarf. Knitwear is of high quality and comes in a variety of timeless, practical designs and functional colours. Wool is also used for thermals and outdoor clothing, perfectly suited to the cold temperatures of Norway's winter so it's worth looking out for quality pieces while you're here.

High-end shoppers will find ample shopping opportunities for design pieces from furniture to lighting. Scandinavian design is particularly known for its use of traditional materials and contemporary styles.

In Norse mythology and Scandinavian folklore trolls are believed to be the very first inhabitants of the region and although you're unlikely to bump into a real-life troll, you can always bring home a miniature ceramic or plastic figurine. Another good souvenir option is a Viking drinking bowl made from wood and usually hand-painted or a Bjørklund cheese slicer, Norway's most famous invention.

Prices of goods in Norway are fixed though you may be able to bargain a little off the price for goods sold at markets.

Prices of goods

Norway has one of the highest price levels for personal goods and services in all of Europe and its reputation as an expensive travel destination is well-deserved. Norwegians are paid a good living wage and there's little disparity in income but for an international visitor, the exchange rate means that Norway is a costly holiday.

To put it in some perspective, a main course at an inexpensive restaurant costs around USD\$18 while a three-course meal at a nicer restaurant will set you back closer to USD \$50. A half litre bottle of locally produced beer purchased at a bar will cost around \$8 while a small bottle of water is around USD\$2.50 though you can save money here by drinking tap water instead.

While on a tour in which your accommodation, local transportation, breakfast and touring is included in the price, we recommend you budget USD\$50-80 per person per day for additional meals, drinks and items of a personal nature.

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