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NORTH SPITSBERGEN EXPEDITION CRUISE - IN PURSUIT OF THE BOWHEAD WHALE

This expedition focuses on the versatility of north Spitsbergen's visually stunning landscapes, vast spans of sea ice, and the many opportunities to spot wildlife like whales, polar bears, seabirds, and walruses.



ITINERARY

Day 1: Largest town, biggest island

You touch down in Longyearbyen, the administrative center of Spitsbergen, the largest island of the Svalbard archipelago. Enjoy strolling around this former mining town, whose parish church and Svalbard Museum make for fascinating attractions. Though the countryside appears stark, more than a hundred species of plant have been recorded in it. In the early evening the ship sails out of Isfjorden, where you might spot the first



minke whale of your voyage.

Day 2 - 9: North Spitsbergen's natural beauty, wildlife, and pack-ice

This voyage will take you into the pack ice and along the remote shorelines of rugged north Spitsbergen. Our landings are subject to change due to sea ice, weather conditions, and wildlife sightings. The expedition leader determines the final plan. Places you might visit include:

Raudfjord

On the north coast of Spitsbergen, you can enjoy this expansive fjord spilling with glaciers - and maybe even visited by ringed and bearded seals. The cliffs and shoreline at Hamiltonbukta support thriving seabird colonies with Brunnich's guillemots, rich vegetation, and the possibility of polar bears. We will try to land at Alicehamna or Buchananhalvøya.

Ytre Norskøya

This small island was used for many years as a lookout point for Dutch whalers, and in fact we can still follow their tracks to the summit of the island. The remains of 17th-century blubber ovens can also be seen near about 200 graves. The north side of the island offers the rare opportunity to see puffins near their breeding places, and there is even a small colony of kittiwakes.

Monaco Glacier

Depending on the weather and sea ice, you could sail into

Liefdefjorden, land at Texas Bar and cruise within sight of the 5-kilometer-long (3.1 miles) face of Monaco Glacier. The waters in front of this precipitous glacier are a favorite feeding spot for thousands of kittiwakes, and the base of the ice is a popular polar bear hunting ground. If ice conditions prevent us from sailing here early in the season, we can implement an alternate route along the west coast of Spitsbergen.

Northwest of Raudfjord

We aim to sail into the pack ice outside the territorial waters of Svalbard, watching for polar bears and elusive Greenland (bowhead) whales. As we sail from 80 N to 76 N along and in the outer fringes of the ice edge, we will also look for harp seals, hooded seals, polar bears, and migrating seabirds like little auks, Brunnich's guillemots, and kittiwakes. On previous voyages in this area, we have sometimes seen up to hundred bowhead whales. We also have the chance to see northern bottlenose whales and the first fin whales of the season. The pack ice sailing will be a highlight of this voyage and may take up to three days.

Sailing in the pack ice

We aim to sail into the pack ice at quite some distance from the coast of Spitsbergen, watching for polar bears and other animals at the edges of the pack. Our voyage through the pack ice may be a multi-day affair, depending on the position of the ice and local sea and weather conditions. Regardless of how long we spend in the ice, these days at sea will be a highlight of the trip. Note that while the ship navigates the pack ice, we will not make any shore landings or excursions from the ship.



However, wildlife encounters are the main draw here, with good chances to encounter many species that thrive in this icy habitat, including polar bears, seals, and whales.

After our time on the ice, we will retrace our route west, keeping watch for polar bears, ringed seals, and elusive Greenland (bowhead) whales. This is also the habitat of ivory gulls. About 40 nautical miles (74 km) west of Spitsbergen, we will sail along the edge of the continental shelf. Here, fin whales forage during the summer in the upwelling zones (where cold, nutrient-rich water wells up from below the sea's surface) that run along the Spitsbergen banks. At the mouth of Kongsfjorden, you will have a good chance of sighting minke whales.

Forlandsundet, St. Johns Fjord, or Alkhornet

Walrus sometimes haul out in Forlandsundet at Poolepynten. Alternatively, we might sail into St. Johns Fjord or south to the mouth of Isfjorden, landing at Alkhornet. Seabirds nest on these cliffs, Arctic foxes search below for fallen eggs and chicks, and reindeer graze the sparse vegetation.

Day 10: There and back again

The vessel will arrive back in Longyearbyen in the early morning. Bus transportation to the airport will be provided.

Please note:

All itineraries are for guidance only. Programs may vary depending on ice, weather, and wildlife conditions. Landings are

subject to site availabilities, permissions, and environmental concerns per AECO regulations. Official sailing plans and landing slots are scheduled with AECO prior to the start of the season, but the expedition leader determines the final plan. Flexibility is paramount for expedition cruises. The average cruising speed of our vessel is 10.5 knots.



YOUR SHIP: PLACIUS

YOUR SHIP:	Plancius
VESSEL TYPE:	Expedition
LENGTH:	
PASSENGER CAPACITY:	
BUILT/REFURBISHED:	

M/V "Plancius" was built in 1976 as an oceanographic research vessel for the Royal Dutch Navy and was named "Hr. Ms. Tydeman". The ship sailed for the Dutch Navy until June 2004 when she was converted into an expedition cruise ship..The vessel was completely rebuilt as a 114-passenger vessel in 2009 and complies with the latest SOLAS-regulations (Safety Of Life At Sea). M/v "Plancius" is classed by Lloyd's Register in London and flies the Dutch flag. "Plancius" accommodates 114 passengers in 53 passenger cabins with private toilet and shower in 4 quadruple private cabins, 39 twin private cabins (ca. 15 square meters) and 10 twin superior cabins (ca. 21 square meters).All cabins offer lower berths (either two single beds or one queen-size bed), except for the 4 quadruple cabins (for 4 persons in 2x upper and lower beds).The vessel offers a restaurant/lecture room on deck 3 and a spacious observation lounge (with bar) on deck 5 with large windows, offering full panorama view. Plancius has large open deck spaces (with full walk-around possibilities on deck 3), giving excellent opportunities to enjoy the scenery and wildlife. She is furthermore equipped with 10 Mark V zodiacs, including 40 HP 4-stroke outboard engines and 2 gangways on the starboard

side, guaranteeing a swift zodiac operation.M/v "Plancius" is comfortable and nicely decorated, but is not a luxury vessel. Our voyages in the Arctic and Antarctic regions are and will still be primarily defined by an exploratory educational travel programme, spending as much time ashore as possible. The vessel is equipped with a diesel-electric propulsion system which reduces the noise and vibration of the engines considerably. The 3 diesel engines generate 1.230 horse-power each, giving the vessel a speed of 10 - 12 knots. The vessel is ice-strengthened and was specially built for oceanographic voyages.M/v "Plancius" is manned by 17 nautical crew, 19 hotel staff (6 chefs, 1 hotel manager, 1 steward-barman and 11 stewards / cabin cleaners), 8 expedition staff (1 expedition leader and 7 guides-lecturers)



and 1 doctor.



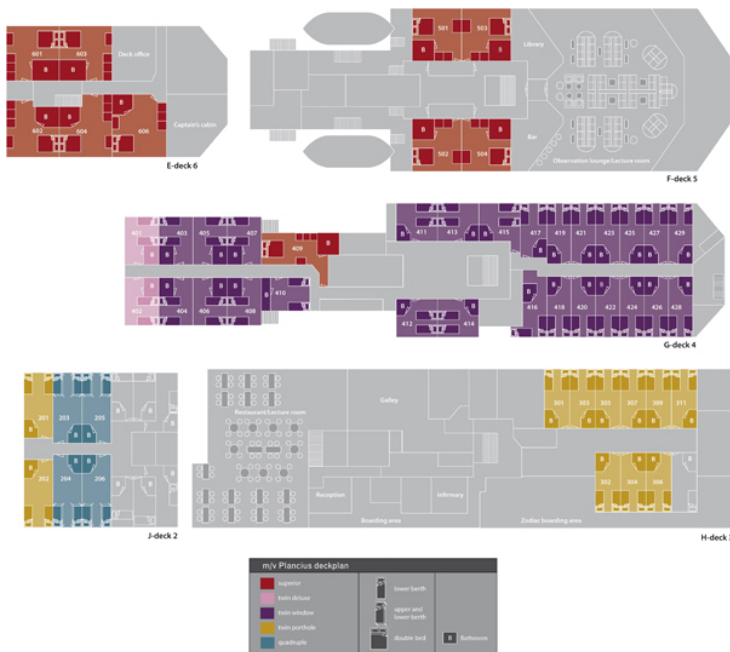
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Twin Window



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