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SPITSBERGEN AND POLAR BEARS - AN ARCTIC ADVENTURE (A)

This adventure voyage on MS Nordstjernen is the essential Spitsbergen experience. You spend one night on land and the rest at sea sailing along the west coast of Spitsbergen. Explore the extraordinary Arctic landscape, glaciers, fjords and magnificent Arctic Wildlife. If we are really lucky we might just see the King of the Arctic; the polar bear.



ITINERARY

Day 1: Coal mining history and Arctic nature

Your adventure starts with an overnight stay in Longyearbyen. This Norwegian settlement is a unique little town. While the arctic environment is dominant, it is also a surprisingly cosmopolitan place, with art galleries, pubs, long wine lists at restaurants, stores and a mini-mall. Longyearbyen is often called an antidote to the stress of modern day life and is a prime destination for adventure travellers. Reminders of the history and heritage of early coal miners can be seen everywhere. When Coal Mine number 1 was opened in the



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1930's, the miners moved into flimsy two-story barracks. When World War II ravaged Europe, Svalbard was also impacted when Nybyen was set on fire in 1943. After the war, the miners moved back and into the newly built barracks. These "barracks" have been completely renovated to offer our guests a high standard of comfort. Spitsbergen Hotel was originally built as an accommodation and dining area for employees of Store Norske Spitsbergen Coal Company. It was also the company's official representational building. Its interior and architecture made it Longyearbyen's grandest construction. The hotel is preserved and decorated using its history. It's well worth walking through the corridors and public areas to look at the historical photographs and pictures, old maps and newspaper stories. Situated on "The Hill", it gives you great views of Longyearbyen, the Lars- and Longyear glacier. The hotel was constructed in 1947, but has been extensively refurbished over the years. You spend the night in one of these hotels.

Day 2: Discover two very different settlements

After breakfast, you are invited to a guided sightseeing tour in Longyearbyen that includes visits to the Svalbard Museum and Gallery Svalbard. This fantastic museum is really worth a visit, as it will provide you with a great deal of background information on all that you will come to experience on your expedition. Then it's time to embark on the adventure and MS Nordstjernen. We sail south in Isfjorden until we reach the Russian settlement Barentsburg. This "company coal mining town" has been Russian since 1932, and is still home to about 500 people. Here you can explore the exotic collection of old Russian artefacts and architecture, join a folklore show or soak up the real Russian atmosphere in the local pub.

Day 3: Chances of seeing polar bears

The North West Spitsbergen National Park is a rich environment, with islands, fjords and beaches, all with a long history of exploration. When Willhelm Barentz first sighted Svalbard in 1596, this was the land he first saw. The name he gave to this new land was 'Spitzbergen', reflecting the sharp and steep mountains in the area. Look forward to exploring some of the most spectacular fjords of Northern Spitsbergen. Deep inside the giant Woodfjord system you will find the enormous and fast moving Monaco Glacier. In front of this crevassed glacier front there is always brash ice as well as larger pieces that have "calved off". Sometimes we also visit the Jotunkjeldane thermal springs, the northernmost documented thermal springs on Earth. These large fjords offer a strikingly varied landscape - from the largest flat plain on Svalbard; Reinsdyrflya (the reindeer plain), to the red stone of Devonian geology, to remnants of volcanoes. The day will be spent cruising towards the Monaco glacier, passing a number of small islets where eider ducks nest during the summer. If we are lucky, we may spot a polar bear searching for eggs here. Be on the lookout for the arched back of the occasional minke whale and bearded seals sunbathing on ice floes close to the glacier front. If the ice conditions are favourable, we will sail past 80° North and towards Moffen, an island which is often host to walrus.

Day 4: Fjords, glaciers and research

Kongsfjorden is the largest fjord in the Northwest coast of Spitsbergen. It is also known as King's Bay. There is also a very good chance that we will cruise into a large side fjord called

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Krossfjorden. The landscape varies from large tundra plains to alpine peaks with dramatic glaciers tumbling into the ocean. Be sure to sight for the mountain Mitra - named for a 'Mitre' or a catholic bishop's hat - located on the northern shore of the entrance to Kongsfjorden. At the end of the fjord you will see the majestic Kongsbreen (King's Glacier) with the three characteristic nunataks: Nora, Dana and Svea - named after the three Scandinavian countries. Later we dock at Ny-Ålesund. Situated at 78° 55' N, this is one of the world's northernmost year-round communities. Previously a coal mining centre, it is now an advanced High Arctic research station. A number of countries run their own national research stations here, and the activity is particularly high in the summer.

it's time for the flight back home.

Please Note:

This is an expedition where the elements rule, and the weather, wind and ice conditions will determine our final schedule. Safety is paramount and the captain will decide the sailing itinerary during the voyage.

Day 5: Cruising into Isfjorden

Located in central Spitsbergen, Isfjorden is the most prominent fjord system on Svalbard. We will spend the morning sailing towards Longyearbyen. One of the most noticeable mountains in this area is Alkhorner, where thousands of brunnich's guillemots nest during the summer season. As we sail into the outer parts of the fjord, the landscape changes. Marvel at the large U-shaped valleys, carved out of the mountains by the giant glaciers that covered the area some ten thousand years ago. After disembarkation in Longyearbyen you have the rest of the day at your disposal. Then there will be a farewell dinner in the hotel in the evening.

Day 6: Flying home from the Arctic

Your Spitsbergen adventure is over. After transfer to the airport



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YOUR SHIP: NORDSTJERNEN

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VESSEL TYPE:

LENGTH:

PASSENGER CAPACITY:

BUILT/REFURBISHED:

MS Nordstjernen is named after the North Star or Stella Polaris, famous for helping seafarers find their way back home and the Vikings to navigate the north. The ship was built to sail Norwegian Coastal Voyages in 1956 and extensively modernised in 2000 for exclusive Arctic sailing. Today she takes explorers on adventures in the waters around Spitsbergen. Despite modernisation, she still retains the aura of an old Atlantic ship, restored to her former splendour with new brass, classic wooden interiors and all her original art. Out on deck you come extra close to the untouched nature of the Polar Arctic and with roofs over a lot of the deck space you can enjoy being outside, even in rough weather. MS Nordstjernen is equipped with a dining room and bar, a café, a panorama lounge and a library. Inside you'll find cosy interior and exterior cabins, the majority of which have upper and lower berths. All rooms and deck surfaces exhibit that old, beautiful wood. All outside cabins have ensuite shower and W/C, and inside I cabins have ensuite. Inside D & E cabins have shared facilities.



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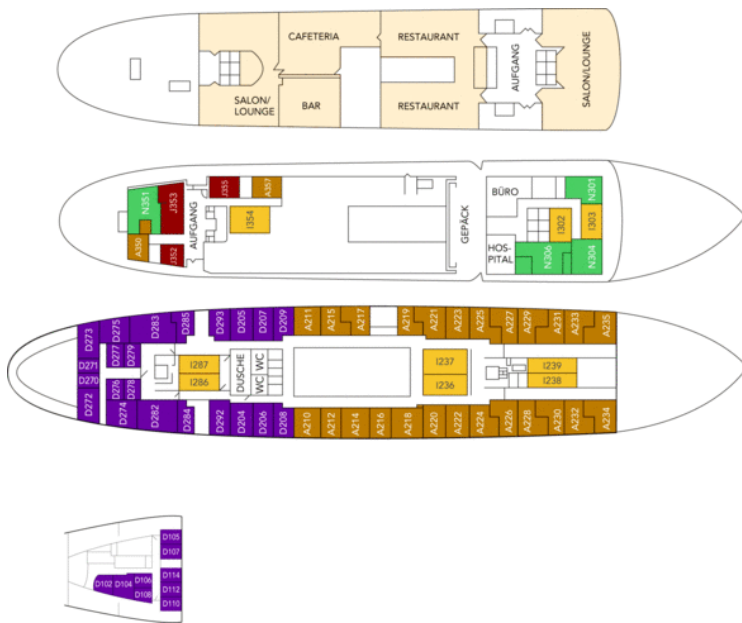
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