



The Leader in Polar Adventures



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# SVALBARD & SPITSBERGEN

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*Destination Guide*

# THE REALM OF THE POLAR BEAR

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## 5 SPITSBERGEN HIGHLIGHTS



### HOME OF THE POLAR BEAR

Polar bears abound in the area around Spitsbergen; be on the lookout for sightings of the iconic arctic predator. Arctic fox and Svalbard reindeer are found here and each year during breeding season, more than 20 million birds nest in the region.



### OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

Skirt the surface of the water alongside whales, walruses and dolphins by Zodiac. Kayak to get even closer to stunning marine life. Or, hike the tundra to observe arctic landscapes and nature in their purest, rawest, most symbolic form.



### CULTURE AND HISTORY

Historically, whaling, trapping and mining were the primary industries on Spitsbergen. The island played an important role in the race to the North Pole and today, tourism is a key economic driver. The community of Longyearbyen boasts hotels, restaurants, a library and university.



### LONGYEARBYEN— AN UNLIKELY CITY

The streets have no names, owning a cat is illegal and reindeer wander the town. Three thousand polar bears live in the region and a local gourmet restaurant has one of Europe's largest wine cellars.



### THE LAND OF THE MIDNIGHT SUN

It's dark four months of the year, but when the sun returns to Spitsbergen in April, the days lengthen until June, when the sun never sets. The long lasting daylight creates opportunities to see and photograph wildlife enjoying the arctic summer.





*Things to See*



## WILDLIFE

Wildlife in the Svalbard region and on Spitsbergen have had to adapt to extreme conditions in order to survive. As a result, there are few species, but those that have adapted are greater in number. Food is the greatest challenge, especially during the dark winter months. Arctic fox and Svalbard reindeer have adapted by spending the summer building a layer of body fat for winter survival.

Other prolific species include walrus, many whale species and five types of seal. Only walrus, narwhal and bowhead whales stay in the area year-round, with the rest returning during summer months. It's those months that give Spitsbergen its reputation as the place for arctic wildlife viewing.

### SPITSBERGEN WILDLIFE

- ☐ **Polar bears**
- ☐ **Whales**
- ☐ **Arctic fox**
- ☐ **Reindeer**
- ☐ **Walrus**
- ☐ **Beluga whale**
- ☐ **Seals**
- ☐ **Birds (over 30 species)**

## POLAR BEARS

### *Check this off your bucketlist!*

The odds of spotting this most iconic resident are good, thanks to the large number that live in the region. As polar bears spend much of their time hunting seal on sea ice, they are often seen from the water, travelling on the sea ice in search of prey.

The largest land carnivore in the world, the male polar bear can stand 6.25-7.75 feet tall (1.9-2.36 meters) and weigh as much as 1,433 lbs (650 kilos). The female is slightly smaller, weighing in at around 330-660 lbs, or 150-300 kilos.

The polar bear is a prolific hunter, with an expansive home range. In the community of Longyearbyen, one is required to carry a high powered firearm when leaving the settlement. Polar bears can be curious, and need to be viewed from a safe distance!

### **Did you know?**

There are more polar bears than humans living in Svalbard.





## ARCTIC BIRDS

Most arctic seabirds spend their lives at sea, returning to land just once a year during breeding season. In Svalbard, and on Spitsbergen, there have been more than 100 species of birds identified, but only 30 species or so actively breed there. That can still mean up to 20 million individual birds competing for food and nesting space during the short spring breeding season.

Many breed on narrow ledges on the sheer rock cliff faces that rise up from the water. Safe from land predators, hundreds of thousands of birds spend six to eight weeks in these nesting grounds before returning to the sea.



### Did you know?

On Spitsbergen, house cats have been outlawed to help protect the bird population.

## THE WORLD'S NORTHERNMOST CITY

Surrounded by permanent snow fields, Longyearbyen was founded by American John Longyear, who started a mining operation on the island in 1906. Much of the original community was burned down during the Second World War, but a lone pair of wooden pillars and a set of wooden steps remain.

Today, this northernmost city in the world is a unique community featuring art galleries, museums, a school, university and sports complex. It's not unusual to see reindeer wandering around town, and snowmobiles are the primary mode of transportation in the winter months.







## Things to Do

### KAYAKING

There's no shortage of natural beauty in Spitsbergen and sea kayaking is one of the best ways to take it all in. Used by the Inuit as a means to sneak up on their prey from the water's edge, kayaking is one of the most inspiring and intimate ways to explore the rugged coastlines and calm bays of Spitsbergen; every nook and cranny of this amazing island, from towering bird cliffs to ice strewn inlets and fjords.

Accompanied by a guide, paddling under 24 hours of daylight, kayakers have the chance to experience the richness of Spitsbergen from a breathtaking perspective. Paddle past polar deserts and beaches, flower-dappled tundra, multi-

prism ice formations, whaling station remains, ghost towns and magnificent wildlife. Be on the lookout for hundreds of seabirds above; polar bears, foxes, walrus and reindeer on the horizon; and playful seals in the water below.

#### Did You Know?

The word "kayak" means "hunter's boat," and were once made from marine mammal skins, opportunistic pieces of driftwood, bones, ivory and other natural material.



### HIKING & ZODIAC CRUISING

The wilderness surrounding Longyearbyen provides ample hiking opportunities for every experience level. The tundra can be surprisingly colorful in the summertime, with wildflowers, moss and lichen taking advantage of the short season.

Glaciers and rocky peaks beg to be explored, and you never know when you'll come across an ancient abandoned hut or encampment.

From the water, on board a Zodiac, there are many opportunities to spot wildlife and see, hear and smell the chaos of an arctic bird cliff from the water. Or, if you're lucky, witness a walrus haul-out. The giant creatures create quite a scene as they vie for a choice spot of coastline.

See what it's like to be on a Zodiac cruise in 360° virtual reality!  
**Watch Zodiac Cruising in Spitsbergen**







*"The caring and enthusiastic expedition team was courteous and patient, with passenger safety clearly a high priority - the trip of a lifetime."*

- Melanie Leach



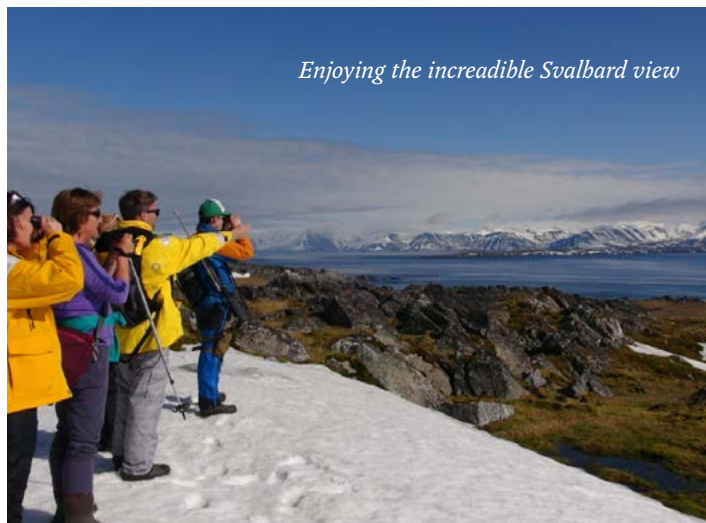


## PHOTOGRAPHER'S PARADISE

Visitors to Spitsbergen have front row seats to a wide variety of wildlife, and to capture amazing photographs. There are many spectacular destinations for animal viewing, including Phippsøya, one of the preferred hunting areas of the many polar bears that prowl the region.

It's also a great place to see walrus, while the towering cliffs of Alkefjellet are an ideal destination to observe sea birds, and their two land-based predators: the polar bear and the arctic fox.

Beautiful fjords, spectacular ice, vast tundra and soaring mountain peaks are the perfect subject matter for spectacular scenic photography. The austere beauty of the Arctic is visible at every turn, making this a true photographer's paradise.



*Enjoying the incredible Svalbard view*

## TIPS FOR BEST PHOTOS

### PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY

A wide-angle (around 18 mm) lens captures a wider angle of view, so more of your subject's surroundings will be included. A telephoto lens (over 70 mm) or fixed portrait lens (50 mm) will capture a more close up view of your subject for a sharper focus and slightly blurred background.

### WILDLIFE - WAIT AND WATCH

Be quiet and ready with your camera to take a series of photos to capture the animals' natural behavior and quick movement. A fast zoom lens is also nice for those animals that remain at a safe distance.

### LOW-LIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY

The following tips are critically important when shooting vistas in lower light:

- Use a higher shutter speed to reduce shake and motion blur in conditions with low light—even in the daytime!
- For low-light photography, the lower the f-stop the better to let more light in.
- Use a tripod for long exposures and to improve the sharpness of your photos.

If you increase your ISO to 400, 800, 1600 and beyond, remember that you're doubling the sensitivity to light and reducing the amount of time needed for a clear shot.





*Cultural Context*



## HISTORY & CULTURE

The Svalbard archipelago is made of up four large mountainous islands and hundreds of smaller ones. Spitsbergen was home to several whaling stations for many years until the whaling populations around the island collapsed.

At one time, there were 50 whaling stations in Svalbard, the remnants of which can be seen today; blubber ovens, campsites, harpoons and whale bones serve as a reminder of the island’s history. At Smeerenberg, passengers can visit a memorial erected in 1906, to honor whalers who lost their lives there in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Trappers and walrus hunters followed the collapse of the whaling industry. Abandoned camps remain throughout the islands. In the early 1900s, mining became a major industry on Spitsbergen, and continues today.

### Did You Know?

Approximately 75% of the population is Norwegian; the remaining 25% Russian and Ukrainian. Svalbard’s official language is Norwegian.

## NATIONAL PARKS

There are three national parks on Spitsbergen that aim to protect the wildlife and history of the island.

Northwest Spitsbergen National Park contains the remains of whaling stations and arctic expeditions. There are two hot springs in the park, and cliffs comprise about a third of its total space, making it an important bird nesting area.

South Spitsbergen National Park is 65% ice cap and much of the rest is tundra. The park has been identified as an important bird area and contains several sanctuaries with breeding pairs of barnacle geese, common eiders, black legged kittiwakes and thick-billed guillemots.



*Colonies of little auk can be found*





*Know Before You Go*



## LOCAL TIPS

### CURRENCY

The currency in Svalbard and on Spitsbergen is the Norwegian Krone (NOK).

### CREDIT & DEBIT CARDS

Most credit and debits cards are accepted by hotels and restaurants. However, there is only one ATM in Longyearbyen, which can occasionally break down.

### SOUVENIRS

Museums, galleries and shops in Longyearbyen offer souvenirs for purchase. Most of the historic sites are protected; removing artifacts as souvenirs is strictly forbidden.

### SHOPPING

Longyearbyen is a tax-free zone, so prices can be lower than in mainland Norway. As many grocery goods are flown in when the weather allows, we suggest you refrain from purchasing basic food items so that local residents won't have to do without them.



*Towering mountains behind the town of Longyearbyen*

## CONSERVING THE FRAGILE ENVIRONMENT

At Quark Expeditions®, we take the conservation and protection of the natural and cultural environments we visit seriously, and we know you'll do the same when you travel with us.


Conservation is a central theme in our on-board education programs, each led by professionals in their respective fields. Many travelers return from their adventure with an enhanced sensitivity to the issues of polar conservation.

As a member of the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (AECO), we observe guidelines aimed at preventing adverse impacts from our visits by:

- Avoiding disturbing wildlife and its habitats
- Respecting archaeological and historical remains
- Respecting the sensibilities of local people
- Observing wilderness etiquette







*"This has been my first overseas trip. What an amazing place to start! How could I possibly go anywhere better than this?"*

– Mim McDacle-Tait





**INTRODUCTION TO SPITSBERGEN:  
POLAR BEAR SAFARI**

*9 days*

This voyage provides the opportunity to get a taste of everything the Arctic has to offer, from polar bears and walrus to spectacular scenery. Hike, explore and enjoy the beauty of the Arctic on your visit to Spitsbergen.



**SPITSBERGEN EXPLORER:  
WILDLIFE CAPITAL OF THE ARCTIC**

*11 days*

If there is such a thing as a “classic Arctic” expedition cruise, this is it. Packed with options for snowshoeing and sea-kayaking, this is the perfect expedition for exploring the “wildlife capital of the Arctic.”



**SPITSBERGEN IN DEPTH:  
BIG ISLAND, BIG ADVENTURE**

*13 days*

Spitsbergen is the largest island of the Svalbard archipelago, and on this voyage we’ll attempt a circumnavigation of the island. Lying entirely within the Arctic Circle, Spitsbergen is rugged, wild, unspoiled—utterly unforgettable. When it comes to viewing arctic wildlife, Spitsbergen is known as one of the most prolific destinations.







NEW

**SPITSBERGEN PHOTOGRAPHY:  
IN SEARCH OF POLAR BEARS**

13 days

The focus is on photographers with this new Spitsbergen voyage, where the wildlife influences your route - you go where it goes. The opportunities to snap polar bears, walrus and foxes in continuous daylight are more than plentiful. An early-season departure date during better ice conditions yields a higher probability of spotting the elusive polar bear.



NEW

**SPITSBERGEN HIGHLIGHTS:  
EXPEDITION IN BRIEF**

6 days

For those short on time, this new voyage touches on all the high points, cruising along Spitsbergen's west coast in just six days. Search for the iconic polar bear, enjoy daily hikes - vigorous or contemplative - or spend calm hours kayaking the clear waters. Zodiac excursions to shore deliver glimpses of foxes and reindeer. Walrus populations love Spitsbergen, too, feasting its food-rich waters.



NEW

**FAIR ISLE, FAROES, AND SPITSBERGEN:  
BIRDS AND BEARS**

11 days

This Spitsbergen voyage is like no other, taking in islands in the northern seas. Beginning on Fair Isle off the northern tip of the U.K., the first stop on your itinerary is the rarely visited Danish Faroe Islands before you head to Jan Mayen, an extremely remote volcanic island in the Norwegian Sea. From there, you ultimately make your way to the fjords of Spitsbergen to search for polar bears and puffins.



**THREE ARCTIC ISLANDS:  
ICELAND, GREENLAND, SPITSBERGEN**

13 days

This award-winning and popular expedition cruise takes you from high above the Arctic Circle in Spitsbergen, Norway, to Scoresbysund on the east coast of Greenland, ending in fascinating Iceland. If you want to experience the Arctic in all of its beauty, then you must venture to these Three Arctic Islands.







## GETTING THERE

Getting to Svalbard/Spitsbergen is easy with Quark Expeditions®, as you'll travel through a major international gateway from Europe or Canada to your embarkation point. All of our journeys begin in Longyearbyen, accessible by air via Oslo, Norway.

As you plan travel to your embarkation point, we recommend direct flights whenever possible. These are typically subject to fewer delays and cancellations,

with a reduced risk of jeopardizing your departure due to missed connections. Contact a Quark Polar Travel Adviser at 1.844.921.4835 to help you plan your trip to Spitsbergen or visit [QuarkExpeditions.com](https://www.QuarkExpeditions.com).

Please consult your local embassy or consulate to determine if you need any visas and ***make sure to submit your applications with plenty of time to spare.***

# PACKING CHECKLIST

### GET READY FOR YOUR TRIP!

*The time has come to gear up for your expedition! Still need tips on what to pack? Here's a handy checklist to help you remember everything you might need.*

#### TO WEAR ON LANDINGS

- ☐ Base layers (wool or synthetic)
- ☐ Mid-layer warm/fleece top
- ☐ Mid-layer warm/fleece pant
- ☐ Wool and synthetic socks (3 to 4 pairs)
- ☐ Glove liners
- ☐ Neck warmer or balaclava
- ☐ Warm hat that covers ears
- ☐ Waterproof pants
- ☐ Waterproof gloves
- ☐ Sunscreen
- ☐ Sunglasses with UV protection

#### LIST OF SUGGESTED ITEMS

- ☐ Waterproof, lightweight backpack or dry sack
- ☐ Swimsuit (for the polar plunge!)
- ☐ Binoculars
- ☐ Camera with extra batteries
- ☐ Extra memory cards
- ☐ Earplugs (in case of noisy cabinmates)
- ☐ Eye masks for sleeping
- ☐ Seasickness, indigestion, headache or other medicine
- ☐ Voltage adapters

#### ON BOARD

- ☐ Comfortable casual clothing (pants/jeans, shirts, sweaters)
- ☐ Lighter shirts (in case the ship gets warm)
- ☐ Comfortable shoes (without heels)

To help you get ready for your trip, visit Quark Expeditions® online Polar Boutique





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