



Expedition Log

## **Polar Bear Special – North Spitsbergen**

**June 26 – July 03, 2011**

On board the

### ***MV Antarctic Dream***



The *Antarctic Dream* was built in Holland in 1961 for the Chilean navy. Six years ago the present Chilean owners bought the ship and refurbished her as a passenger ship for the Polar Regions. She takes a maximum of 84 passengers, 5 expedition staff, 13 hotel staff and 20 nautical crew members. At 81 metres long and 12 metres wide, she has a draft of 4.6 metres.

With

**Captain Ernesto Barria Vargas**  
and his crew from Chile, Panama and the Philippines

Including:

1<sup>st</sup> Mate: Gonzalo Doren Paredes  
2<sup>nd</sup> Mate: Juan Condeza Parra  
3<sup>rd</sup> Mate: Erick Molina Perez  
Chief Engineer: Eduardo Hernandez  
Bosun: Julio Aravena Sanhueza

And the Expedition Staff:

**Expedition Leader:** Philipp Schaudy (Austria)  
**Assistant Expedition Leader:** Valeska Schaudy (Austria)  
**Guide:** Jørn E. W. Fortun (Norway)  
**Guide:** Jordi Plana (Spain)  
**Guide:** Louis Beyens (Belgium)  
**Zodiac Master:** Pablo Julian Onyszcuk (Argentina)

**Chef:** Tracie Whitlock (Wales)  
**Sous Chef:** Jeremy Trumper (New Zealand)  
**Hotel and Restaurant Manager:** Gemma Heaney (New Zealand)  
**Bartender:** Beverley Howlett (United Kingdom)

**Doctor:** Jans Mens (The Netherlands)

## June 26 – Day 1

### Longyearbyen; Embarkation Day

GPS position at 20.30: 78° 03.3'N, 013° 12.0'E

Weather at 20.30: 6°C, sunny



Those of us who were not already here arrived at Longyearbyen airport by mid-afternoon. We were greeted at the airport by two people from the expedition staff (Valeska and Jordi) and then transported to the centre of Spitsbergen's capital to explore the 'downtown' core for some hours before embarkation. This allowed us to get acclimatized to the Arctic environment, visit the terrific local museums, and poke around in

some of the souvenir shops. Longyearbyen (pop. 2.000) is situated in Adventfjord which lies within Spitsbergen's largest fjord, Isfjord. Its location at 78° 14' N makes it one of the most northerly towns in the world.

Some days ago we had been informed via email and also got the information at the airport that our ship was going to arrive in Longyearbyen a few hours late. So as an alternative to having dinner on board, we were invited to the Radisson Blue Hotel in the center of town. The hotel's restaurant was very nice and we enjoyed an excellent dinner, while getting to know some of the fellow passengers of the oncoming expedition cruise and two people more from the expedition staff (Louis and Jørn). During dinner we could see the *m/v Antarctic Dream* arriving at the pier. At 20.00 a bus picked us up and brought us to the harbour, where our ship, crew and staff were eagerly awaiting our arrival and the beginning of our journey into the wilderness of Spitsbergen. At boarding we were greeted by Gemma, our hotel manager, and shown to our cabins by the hotel staff. Then we began to settle in, explore the ship, and help ourselves to refreshments in the dining room, where Captain Barria welcomed us aboard and toasted on our journey. Then our expedition leader Philipp introduced us to the ship, hotel staff, expedition staff, and our doctor Jans.

We started sailing and many of us were out on deck as the pier faded from sight, but we were soon required back in the dining room for our SOLAS (Safety Of Life At Sea) mandatory safety and lifeboat drill. Convening in the muster station (dining room) with our life vests, we then followed the expedition staff out to the lifeboats for further instructions in case of emergency.

We sailed past the dramatically sculptured mountains of Isfjord as Captain Barria took the *Antarctic Dream* around Alkhornet, past the southern tip of Prins Karls Forland and into the open ocean. Our adventure was underway!

## June 27 – Day 2

### Krossfjorden – Fjortende Julibukta; Kongsfjorden – Blomstrandhalvøya

GPS noon position: 79° 07.6' N, 011° 49.5' E

Weather at 07.00: 7°C, partly overcast, calm

When we woke up this morning we realized that our expedition would be off to a fine start. The seas remained calm and the weather cleared up in the early hours, after being a bit cloudy while we sailed towards our first excursion place in Fjortende Julibukta (14<sup>th</sup> of July glacier) and surroundings. The visibility was great and just a light breeze was blowing over the bay where



the anchor was dropped. At 07.30 we enjoyed our first breakfast on board in the dining room, gazing out of the panoramic windows at the scenery. After that we gathered in the lecture hall of our *Antarctic Dream* for a mandatory briefing on rubber boat (zodiac) operations as well as polar bear safety and the AECO (Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators) Code of Conduct about how to behave in the Arctic and how we conduct our activities and excursions ashore. While our

Expedition Leader Philipp was explaining all this to us, the zodiacs were being prepared and ready to start the first cruise and landing of our journey in the amazing Fjortende Julibukta, named in honor of the French National Day by an Expedition by the Duke of Monaco in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Eight zodiacs were launched and we first steered for the rock cliffs, where many birds were breeding. Not only did we see northern fulmars, glaucous gulls, black-legged kittiwakes, black and Brünnich's guillemots but also a group of puffins. There are much larger bird colonies in





Svalbard than here, but it is one of the very few places this far north where one can find the puffins nesting. We enjoyed the company of the birds for some time and then we headed to the glacier to cruise along the glacier front, with a massive white and blue wall that impressed all of us. We carried cruising by several small ice floes, and then set foot ashore at the northern end of the bay. Here we found also a large and high bird cliff, located a little bit inland with mostly kittiwake's nests. In this area, along the beach and towards the glacier we had our first experience of the arctic tundra and glacial moraines. Once all of us were ashore we divided in three smaller groups: the ones aiming for a long and fast walk, the ones who prefer a medium trek and the ones who rather stay on the beach area and surroundings instead of joining one of the more strenuous walks. Philipp and Jordi took off following the beach towards the glacier and up one of its lateral moraines for a long trek, while Valeska and Jørn headed to the more vegetated area below the large birdcliffs for a medium hike. Louis stayed around the landing area with the ones that preferred a short walk.



The medium walkers found many plants, including polar willow and purple saxifrage, as well as reindeers and barnacle geese. Beneath the noisy kittiwake colony they walked into a peculiar acoustic shadow, a small cliff with water stream and profusely vegetated, and also generally they got accustomed to this new environment (which would change drastically over the ensuing days). The long walk climbed up to a high viewpoint on a lateral moraine of 14<sup>th</sup> of July glacier, where they could enjoy the great scenery of its crevassed surface amongst the high peaks. On their way along the beach they also found quite a lot of driftwood. This driftwood originates from northern Russia and is taken by the oceanographic currents to Spitsbergen, Novaya Zemlya, Jan Mayen, Bear Island and even the northern coast of Iceland. Around 12.30 everybody was back at the landing area where the zodiacs were waiting for us, and we boarded the ship for a nice lunch while sailing towards our next destination: Blomstrandhalvøya in Kongsfjorden.

This island takes its name from a Swedish chemist (Blomstrand) and the fact that it was at one time a peninsula (Nor. *halvøya*). Due to the retreat of the surrounding (and most of Spitsbergen's) glaciers in recent years, the one-time peninsula is now actually an island (*øya*).

Shortly after lunch a boat with three of our guides was sent ashore for scouting the area and



then we boarded our zodiacs and landed on the small quiet beach of Ny-London. Once we were all ashore, we visited the huts and remains related to the mining activities between 1910 and 1920, where Jørn did a short introduction to the history of the area, talking about Ernest Mansfield and the Northern Exploration Company (NEC), who tried to exploit marble here. But the quality of the rock was bad, due to the annual freeze and thaw, and therefore - as

many mining activities on Svalbard - Mansfield was unsuccessful. Although the equipment long ago fell into disuse, the standing houses are frequented by scientists and those from Ny Ålesund who want to get away from the small settlement for a while, like the two Sysselmenn (Svalbard Governor's men) that we met in the beach landing area. We photographed and explored the mining remains, houses and machinery still standing from the days of Ernest Mansfield's NEC. There were a few reindeers in the area, from which we could have a very close view. Exiting were also some of the birds, like the long tailed skuas, in fact quite a lot of them (around six of these birds). This landing zone is one of the very few nesting sites for these skuas in Spitsbergen. We were lucky as we could see how they behave, when some animal or somebody steps close to their nests, as they dive-bombed the reindeer that were wandering around, just like some arctic terns did.



Once we all had observed them and listened to the history told by Jørn, we split again in three groups, the short walkers started with a leisurely walk around the ruins and surroundings, the medium hikers that departed to the east and the mountain goats doing a more demanding trek to the limestone ridge. Both long and medium excursions led us to two small lakes, where we saw long tailed ducks and snow buntings, purple sandpipers and even red throated divers, one of

them sitting on a nest. We found stone circles and our guides explained us, how those strange features form in permafrost areas. The long trekkers could also enjoy the views over Kongsfjorden from a hilltop in this sunny and quite warm afternoon. Some other geological interesting features observed by all of us in this landing site were the erratic boulders scattered everywhere. Big rocks with even different composition than the present limestone just sitting on top the smooth rocky landscape. These are big boulders that have been transported by the glaciers during the last ice age (last glacial maximum was 15000 before present) and then left behind when those retreated. During the afternoon we also enjoyed much of the abundant local flora, including purple saxifrage and moss campion. After three hours ashore and a good leg stretch, returned to the ship. But that was not all for today as around 19.00 Philipp conducted a recap of the day (another daily routine that we will get used to) and introduced the planned itineraries for the remaining days of the trip.

After dinner, and as our last activity for today, Louis presented a lecture in the lecture room: "What should we know about Polar Regions", an introduction to the Polar environments, how we define "the Arctic", its main features and characteristics, its ecological importance, how the polar regions affect the global climate and why they are so important in the predictions of the global climate trends and the so talked about warming of the planet, also introducing some human impacts on these regions. We felt happy in the end of this brilliant first expedition day and were looking forward to more arctic experiences coming tomorrow.

## June 28 – Day 3

**Liefdefjorden – Andyøane;**

**Woodfjorden – Ice;**

**80° North – Moffen Island**

GPS noon position: 79° 40.9' N, 013° 26.7' E

Weather at 07.00: 4°C, little rain, overcast



This morning our ship sailed into Woodfjorden. The weather had changed, and clouds hid the sun. Just as breakfast was served, the first polar bear of the day was spotted on the ice. It was a great start! We enjoyed watching that bear and took lots of pictures of our very first polar bear! After breakfast, around 09.30, the zodiacs were launched for cruising between the islands of Andøyanne in the Liefdefjord. The origin of this name is uncertain, but came probably from a

Dutch ship in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and translated from Dutch 'liefde' means love. The first bird we observed was the long-tailed duck, which landed almost in front of us between the ice floes, on which some common eiders were resting. Interesting – especially for the birders amongst us – were the grey phalaropes, feeding near the edge of the ice. A rather dull name for such a coloured bird, but when they stay in their winter quarters in Africa, they have indeed a grey winter plumage. Several great skuas were flying around, and also some arctic skuas. For the luckiest ones, a pair of king eider could be seen. Another conspicuous feature was the red snow. The colour is caused by microscopic unicellular algae (probably *Chlamydomonas nivalis*), which are able to thrive on a snowfield. The sun gives the warmth which melts the snow, so that water is available to them, while they can use the sunlight for their photosynthesis process (the method green plants and algae use to produce simple sugars). Not only the snow was colored, also the rocks. Very striking were the red mountains on the east side of the Woodfjord. They exist of deposits formed in the Devonian period, some 400 million years ago. These are mostly sandstones and conglomerates, with some carbonate rocks.



These sediments were formed in fresh or brackish water. These red Sandstones are called “Old Red”. The “Old Red” formed in a warmer tropical climate, when Svalbard was near the equator. The red color is caused by iron oxide, which develops during the weathering process of the rock in tropical climates. These Devonian sandstones obtain the oldest fossil fish found in Svalbard, and also the fossils of the oldest plants, which grew on mudflats and besides shallow lakes. Our zodiac cruise around the Andøyanen ended with the repeated but elusive sighting of a minke whale. Around 12.00 we were back on board and shortly after lunch was served.

In the afternoon our *Antarctic Dream* entered deeper into Woodfjord. At the edge of the ice foot (fjord ice that had been formed in winter and was still there in the back of the fjord) searching for wildlife, and indeed, at 14.35 a polar bear (Nr. 2 of this trip) showed up, also walking on the ice. As could be expected, seals were lying on the ice, and we got a closer look at some of them. Especially one bearded seal was posing for us on the ice while we took pictures.

As we had observed our first polar bears, it was an appropriate time for a lecture on polar bears, given by Jørn. In his lecture “The Polar Bear and its environment” Jørn discussed the biology of this fascinating mammal, and the problems arising from pollution and global warming. At 19.00 Philipp highlighted the events of the day and presented the plan for the next day. Til today we had seen two different whale species, and therefore in this recap Jordi gave us a short introduction on the minke and the humpback whale.



## June 29 – Day 4

### Hinlopenstretet - Alkefjellet;

### Sorgfjorden - Eolusneset

GPS noon position: 79° 36.1' N, 013° 26.7' E

Weather at 07.00: 5°C, overcast, good visibility, calm

The *Antarctic Dream* sailed overnight from our 80° North position to a gigantic bird colony at Alkefjellet (the auk's mountain) in the northern Hinlopenstretet. The morning weather lifted a little bit and we had good views all around here in our position in the northern Hinlopen Strait. Alkefjellet is an extensive basalt cliff bustling with more than 100,000 breeding pairs of some



Brünnich's guillemots. We changed into our outdoor clothes and headed for the zodiacs. Thousands of birds were already resting on the water.

We started our zodiac cruise on the south end of the cliffs and drifted slowly north. The level of activity and noise associated with the guillemot colony was astonishing as thousands of birds were constantly on the move between sea and cliff. Due to the narrowness of the rock "balconies" that they are breeding on, guillemot eggs are pear shaped. If the egg moves while the adult birds come and go (both sexes incubate), the egg will spin on the ledge instead of



rolling off. But there is quite a loss of eggs and hatchlings to the glaucous gulls and arctic foxes.

In the end of our cruise we drove into a small glacier bay, where we found a few stranded ice bergs and a large number of kittiwakes. Back on our *Antarctic Dream* after nearly two hours of exhilarating avian observations, we aimed for Sorgfjorden, further north in the Hinlopen Strait.

Our expedition leader Philipp had got up in the middle of last night, in order to check out a walrus haul out place in that fjord on our way, when we passed it. He had spotted around six animals, and therefore we wanted to try our luck there in the afternoon. We were excited to meet these massive blubber beasts. And as luck would have it, there were over twenty walruses of varying ages squashed up against one another on the spit at Eolusneset. Although all of us were eager to observe the animals from up close we split into two groups in order to meet the number of people – allowed to approach the walrus at the same time – as regulations require. While one group slowly and calmly approached the sleepy group of animals, the other group strolled along the beach.

At this landing site we could explore a polar desert, which was pretty barren. But empty at first glance, we still found many interesting things, such as kelp (Jordi explained a lot about it), different shells, flowering purple saxifrage, plenty of driftwood and colorful rocks. Besides that we heard some stories told by our guides about the whaling history of Spitsbergen, as there had been a battle in those days here in the fjord (1692). During the 17<sup>th</sup> century there had been lots of land whaling stations situated on Spitsbergen. The Dutch and English were most active during this period. But so were the French and Danish. At that time Holland was at war with the French. To cut the supply the French went up to Spitsbergen to get the whale oil, which was worth lots of money. The French came up with two Frigates. Because the Dutch had outposts they saw the French coming. They retreated to Sorgfjorden (Fjord of Sorrow). The whalers installed some canons on the shore and pointed the ships sideways with the canons aiming at the entrance. The French with two ships tried to fight 40 Dutch whaling ships. The Dutch decided to tow the whaling ships away from Sorgfjorden.

Presumably there was no wind and the French could not move. In the end 13 of the ships were lost and but the rest escaped, with the valuable oil. After about an hour the two groups swapped to allow for equal opportunities.

At the walrus haul out site we could hear them snoring and doing some other funny sounds. From time to time they also lifted their heads, put flippers in the air and scratched themselves. A few more animals came to the shore from further out in the sea during the time we were observing, but they did not take notice of our presence. And the cameras were running on high revs. Although Spitsbergen's walrus population is



currently relatively small (~ 2,000 animals) after being hunted to near extinction over the centuries, it is slowly but surely recovering. Their traditional beach haul outs, many of which had been abandoned for decades or even centuries, are once again frequented by these huge creatures of the seal family (walrus hunting in Spitsbergen was banned in 1952). The beach at Eolusneset is one of those old haul out sites being used again only since a few years.

After this super exiting day there was still no time to head for bed. Our chef Tracie and Sous Chef Jeremy with their team in the kitchen had polar bear liver fried in Beluga oil. Well, not quite - that was obviously not true. We had a great Arctic BBQ with “normal” delicious meat, salads and plenty of other side dishes, sauces and dips. Most of us went for seconds, and quite some of us for thirds too, because it was just too tasty. After that there was a lot of desert too. Now we had to dance off all this food – which was done in the proper Arctic disco at the bar. The dance floor filled up a lot of us stayed at the party till late.

## June 30 – Day 5

### Day in the Pack Ice

GPS noon position: 80° 30.9' N, 016° 26.5' E

Weather at 07.00: 5°C, partly overcast, partly sunny, some fog banks, calm

At 08.00 our *Antarctic Dream* reached the edge of the polar pack ice, close to north Spitsbergen, west of the Seven Islands Archipelago. We had been sailing overnight from Sorgfjorden slowly towards the north, in order to reach this area in the morning. Today we could have a sleep in, as the wakeup call was

half an hour later than usual. The meal schedule was programmed also a bit differently, as some snacks were ready at 08.00, while we were entering the pack ice and most of us were out on the decks. Later this morning we could enjoy a high arctic brunch from 10.00 until noon.

Today we entered a new world of ice structures and patterns that kept our interest for long hours. We



were also able to witness the power of the arctic winter, since the boat weaved its way along compact packed ice, floes, and bergs of at least a meter in thickness and in many places just ice as far as the eye could see. All of us wanted to see some more polar bears, so most passengers spent many hours on deck scanning the white wilderness with binoculars, hoping for a reward after so much concentration! Our efforts were rewarded pretty soon as during the morning three bears were spotted, though we wished

they had come closer! But later on our patience was again rewarded when another bear was sighted walking on thick ice. This time the animal showed great interest and came very close, walking all the way along our port side, passing below the bow and continuing its way on our starboard side, off into the great unknown.

Afterwards, for a while it was pretty quiet and we enjoyed the sights and took pictures of the hundreds of Brünnich's guillemots that were swimming, diving and feeding next to the pack ice border. Many seals were lying on the pack ice and we learned how to spot these "black sausages" and recognize them as seals. At 15.00 Jordi started a lecture on "Polar Ecosystems and Wildlife Adaptations", a talk where he tried to put together some characteristics and features of both frozen worlds (Arctic and Antarctica), comparing and talking about similarities and differences between them, and introducing the wildlife living in these world freezers and their strategies to survive in this harsh environments (adaptation to them or migrating during winter to less extreme environments). But this talk was interrupted by an announcement from Philipp, telling us that another polar bear had been spotted a bit in the distance, but this time the fat male sighted was feeding on a seal, probably hunted shortly before. All of us left the lecture hall, took our cameras, dressed warmly and made our way to the outer decks to enjoy the

spectacle. For the next approximately three hours the captain made a great job of slowly steering the boat to a distance that delighted all photographers without scaring away or changing the behaviour of the feeding bear. While all this was taking place, and many of us were focused on that animal, another polar bear quickly approached the area attracted by the smell of the kill, swimming along the port side of the ship and getting out of the water right where the first bear was quietly feeding... creating a lot of



expectation amongst all of us that witnessed the interaction between the two animals. It was interesting to see how the large male, the first in the area that was feeding on his seal was pushed away by the second individual that emerged from the water, smaller and slimmer than him... but also for sure more

hungry.

For a while the second bear fed on the catch, from time to time pushing away the other one, till at the end we could observe quite an unusual behaviour as both bears ended up sharing the meal instead of fighting! What an end for our evening! Two bears sharing a meal close to the starboard side of the Antarctic Dream. For hours lenses were shared between the passengers and clicking of the cameras just stopped from time to time to get new memory cards... for sure many of them were filled up today.

After around three hours our ship slowly started leaving the area with a very happy and – by now also - cold crowd. We all sensed that this was a very special encounter with these wild animals. Back in the dining room there was enough to talk about and even more pictures to be looked at after having our dinner. Also after dinner the international student group on board invited us to the lecture hall and explained why they are on board, what projects they are working on and which studies they had been and are doing. Although they were talking about a sad topic – climate change and its effects – at the same time they spread a lot of enthusiasm and energy, giving the message “act now” to all of us and the task to encourage more people to do little by little. In the end we did some discussions in smaller groups. What an interesting evening!

There were also other highlights of the day, and all of them a gentle reminder that we can only enjoy the wonders of the world if we take good care of the planet. Harp seals swam close to us, a minke whale was also spotted, fulmars, glaucous gulls, kittiwakes, guillemots and skuas were ever present. Several ivory gulls were spotted, mostly around the carcass of the seal being eaten by the bears, always looking for some leftovers. Today we also reached the most northerly point of our journey: 80° 38,22' N/18° 04,25' E and could see the Sjuøyane in the distance. Evening dinner was served as our *Antarctic Dream* drifted away from the thick pack ice, sailing between scattered ice floes, heading again towards Spitsbergen's northern coast, where we plan to spend tomorrow. Still more amazing experiences to come during the next couple of days!!

## July 01 – Day 6

### Northwest Spitsbergen – Fuglesangen; Sallyhamna

GPS noon position: 79° 48.9' N, 011° 28.3' E  
Weather at 07.00: 4°C, overcast, good  
visibility, calm





After another excellent breakfast we landed at Fuglesangen (bird song), a small island located in the northwest corner of Spitsbergen.



The island was one of the first visited by Willem Barents in 1596 and hosts colonies of little auks in the scree slopes. After a rather difficult landing at a beach with big round boulders, we walked a few tens of meters inland, where the mossy ground was easier to walk on. We slowly approached a colony and sat down near the edges of it. We kept quiet and set still and the birds started coming closer to us. For a few hours

the only sound was the happy chattering of the birds and the “swoosh” as they soared to and from the nests. Little auks breed in huge colonies, which can contain tens of thousands of birds. They nest under and between boulders in steep scree slopes. As they swoop along they can be caught with a net, which is what is done in Greenland. While enjoying these little birds, a curious sound attracted our attention. It was made by eider ducks, two drakes and two females, swimming along the coast. Other birds seen around were snow buntings with their nice song, barnacle geese and arctic skuas.

Over lunch our expedition team went with a scouting boat away, in order to have a look at a special place. Their success was announced at desert time, when they reported their sighting of two polar bears in a bay close by – Sallyhamna. So therefore the program was changed from another landing with lots of rocky ground on a small island, to a zodiac cruise in the hope of seeing those two bears. At 15.00 all eight zodiacs were in the water and our cruise could start to Sallyhamna. This sheltered place was used by whalers in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The name was given by a Norwegian trapper after his wife Sally. Our reason to visit this place was the presence of polar bears. This corner of Spitsbergen is always good for bears, especially since from two years ago an old whale carcass is to be found here and attracts not only polar bears but also different sizes of tourist ships. Now the remains lie below the sea surface, but this is no problem for the bears as we could observe. Two bears were lying in the snow, and the one near the coast started soon after our arrival to go in the sea, and he began to dive to feed on the remains of the carcass. The animal emerged with some whale meat alike stuff in the mouth, and went back ashore to eat it. We were lucky to see this several times. It was an odd sight when the bear was



under water with the paws sticking out of the water in the air. When one bear left, the one which rested on higher ground, descended to the shore, where it gave the same performance.



One of these bears was tagged. Last year a bear was seen here with a satellite transmitter attached to a neck band. Data from these satellite transmitters give information on the movements of individual polar bears, and some of these bears are covering immense areas in one year. Very few of the Svalbard polar bears migrate to East Greenland indicating that the Svalbard/Russian population is separated from

the East Greenland population which is important knowledge from a conservation point of view. Very happy about this spectacular bear observation, we returned to our *Antarctic Dream* after almost three hours. It had started raining in the end of the zodiac cruise, but nobody was bothered by that, as we were so focused on watching the kings of the arctic.

Before dinner we got the second part of the lecture of Jørn on polar bears, where he presented an original point of view on the interactions between people and polar bears, with examples getting that far back as Barents and Nelson.

During dinner we could admire the scenery with steep mountains and glaciers falling into the sea. We sailed past the famous Amsterdamøya and Magdalenafjorden. It was this landscape with pointed mountains that inspired Barents for naming this land Spitsbergen. The evening was ended with the second polar bear lecture of today, this time by Beverley, who spoke of "Churchill- the great white bears", on her experiences of working there in a hotel on wheels. We were amazed by our multi-tasking bar lady, who does not only drive zodiac besides being a chef and bar tender, but in addition also makes a very talented lecturer! After this very "beary" day, we went to bed and were a little bit sad that tomorrow we would do our last landings here in the wilderness of Svalbard.



## July 02 – Day 7



### Sankt Jonsfjord; Isfjorden – Alkhornet

GPS noon position:

78° 31.1' N, 012° 52.0' E

Weather at 07.00: 5°C, high cloud cover, calm

The day started again with a wakeup call from our expedition leader Philipp. After breakfast we were quickly getting dressed. We got pretty much used to these procedures and got faster and faster during the last week. The landing was at a nice little trapper's hut. Hard to imagine that these trappers were wintering alone in such small huts all winter. In the area around the huts they caught foxes, polar bears and reindeer. They gained their income with selling the winter fur of polar bears and arctic foxes. We split up in three groups. One group went with Philipp and Louis on a long hike up on a moraine and had a nice view on Gaffelbreen from the top of the terminal moraine. The birders and flower power people went in the group with Valeska and Jørn. Arctic skua and purple sandpipers were seen during the walks, a purple sandpiper played injured to lead us away from the nest that was close by, when we moved further away the bird returned to the nest. A pair of pink footed geese was gobbling around by the water in the small valley. The arctic strollers went with Jordi and found a lot of nice flowers, and the reindeer came up close to inspect the strange "colorful animal" that was walking on the tundra. The mountain avens and moss campion were dominant flowering beige and pink. But other flowers were also seen like mountain sorrel, knotweed, fringed sandwort, arctic mouse-ear chickweed, nodding lychnis, Svalbard poppy, purple saxifrage, both white and yellow whitlow grass and hairy lousewort. The arctic strollers found frost-patterned ground. Stone rings that get formed by freezing and thawing processes. On the hikes we spent ten "quiet minutes", just sitting down and enjoying the silence of the



Arctic. When all the groups returned to the landing site, there was swimming time and about 25 people took part in this event with temperature 2 degrees in the water and 7 degrees in the air. Respect!

In the afternoon we got on shore in Trygghamna to have a closer look at Alkhornet, a vertical cliff where kittiwakes and Brunnich's guillemots are nesting. We set off in the usual three groups. This was a complete different landing compared to the previous ones. It was very green with a lot of flowering plants in high variety on the tundra, such as buttercups and mouse-ear



chickweed. Reindeers were swarming the place and came walking right up to us. Antlers, that had been shed, were all over the place. Reindeer shed their antlers every year around November to have them regrowing in January to February. The long walkers observed a pair of pink footed geese walking on their way to the sea with their goslings. The "bird group" saw some Barnacle gees, after seeing the geese, a lot of the birders started to take pictures of the flora too. We all

enjoyed taking pictures of these colourful high arctic plants. The strollers came across a pink footed goose sitting on its nest. Around 18.15 we were back at the shore, in order to board the zodiac after our last landing. There was a certain sadness in the air that this trip had almost come to an end now. The ship set sail for its final destination, Longyearbyen. The Captain, Expedition leader Philipp and the staff said goodbye to us with a glass of sparkling wine, meanwhile Tracie and Beverly, our good chefs, prepared a delicious farewell dinner.

## July 03 – Day 8

### Longyearbyen

GPS position at 07:00: 78° 03.3'N, 013° 12.0'E

We all met for a last breakfast on board. We had already packed yesterday and with a tear in our eyes we disembarked our *Antarctic Dream* after a fantastic trip. Many of us took a flight back home today, some stayed for some more days in the high arctic village of Longyearbyen. All of us were bitten by the arctic bug and will eventually/hopefully return...



An interesting detail on the side: on our expedition cruise we had a very international group consisting of 82 passengers 11 staff and 26 crew with 27 different nationalities: Polish, British, German, Slovenian, Dutch, Czech, Hungarian, Cypriot, Latvian, Danish, Croatian, French, American, Congo, Belgian, Norwegian, Canadian, New Zealand, South African, Australian, Austrian, Argentinan, Irish, Spanish, Philippines, Chile, Panama.

**Total distance travelled: 777 Nautical Miles (1439km)**

As for you - you have been such an enthusiastic and interesting group – it has been a pleasure to share this voyage with you all. On behalf of Captain Barria and his crew, the expedition staff and hotel team of the *Antarctic Dream*, we look forward to sailing with you again – in the far north, the deep south, or somewhere in between. *Bon Voyage*, and Safe Travels!

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