



HURTIGRUTEN
SVAlBARD

Expedition log
M/S Nordstjernen

Svalbard August 16th – 20th 2019



Friday, August 16th 17:00 78°10'N

Longyearbyen

Longyearbyen is a Norwegian settlement and the 'capital' of Svalbard. It was originally a mining community, but now science and tourism are slowly taking over. It is named after the American John Munroe Longyear who started the first coal production in the Longyear valley in 1906. It was bought by a Norwegian mine company in 1916. Today Longyearbyen is a modern town with almost every facility you can imagine. The population is approx. 2300 and increasing.

After breakfast at the hotel we went sightseeing around town, and visited the museum and Camp Barentsz. In the afternoon we embarked the M/S Nordstjernen and our Arctic Adventure started. The ship sailed out of Adventfjorden and west towards Barentsburg, passing the former coalmining settlements Grumant and Coles Bay. As we entered Grønfjorden we could see the Russian settlement Barentsburg.

Friday, August 16th 20:00, 78°03'N

Barentsburg



Barentsburg, located along the eastern shore of Grønfjorden 60 km west of Longyearbyen.

Barentsburg is a mining settlement found on the east side of Grønfjorden. It is currently the only Russian settlement on Svalbard – there used to be two more: Grumant which closed down in the 1960's, and Pyramiden which closed down in 1998. The first house was built in 1912 by a Norwegian company and then sold to the Dutch N.V. Nederlandsche Spitsbergen Compagnie. It was bought by the Russians in 1932. In Barentsburg there are currently approx. 400 inhabitants. We went on a guided tour with a Russian guide, and we joined a genuine and entertaining modern Russian folklore

show, which the mineworkers perform in their spare time. We also visited the hotel, and some of us tried the Russian vodka and the local brewed beer.

Saturday, August 17th 09:45, 79°35'N

Magdalenefjorden and Gullybukta

Today we woke up on the way into Magdalenefjorden, which is one of the best-known and most beautiful fjords of Spitsbergen, with its jagged mountains. These are said to be the mountains Wilhelm Barentsz first saw when he discovered Svalbard in 1596 and he named the biggest island Spitsbergen after them (Spitsbergen = pointy mountains).

Entering the fjord, a small peninsula reaches out from the southern shore. The outer part of this peninsula has a small hill. This is Gravneset where Dutch whalers came to bury their dead in the 17th and 18th century. Today stone gatherings and wooden coffins remain from the around 130 graves.

The Governor on Svalbard – Sysselmannen – has two park rangers on duty here during the summer to take care of this cultural heritage, and the environment in the area.

Magdalenefjorden – where whalers buried their dead during the 17th and 18th century



On our walk along the beach we could see remains of three blubber ovens. This is where whale blubber was melted and filled into barrels. The guides told us about the history of the whaling on Svalbard while we had a walk to the other side of the peninsula. There, some of us were lucky to spot a couple of walrus laying on the opposite site of the bay at a little beach. On the way back to the ship a lot of brave people even took a swim in the ice cold arctic water.

Saturday, August 17th 15:00, 79°40'N

Smeerenburg Fjord and Smeerenburg Glacier

On our way northward, we sailed through Sørgattet, a narrow strait connected to Smeerenburgfjorden.

Our second landing for the day was at the mighty **Smeerenburg Glacier**. At the Northern side of the Bjørnfjord, on a snow-covered moraine ridge, with a lovely view down to the glacier front. The guides explained to us how a glacier is formed and what types of glaciers can be found on Svalbard. We even were lucky to see some glacier calvings during the time we spent a shore.

We then continued our journey further North, enjoying the dramatic Arctic landscape and scouting for wildlife...

Passing the former Dutch whaling station of Smeerenburg, we could observe a few **walruses** laying at the beach and took us the time to appreciate the sight.

Saturday, August 17th 20:00 79°45' N

Raudfjord and anchoring at Worsleyhamna

While we enjoyed our dinner, we sailed through Raudfjord, still scouting for wildlife.

Slightly before midnight, we anchored at Worsleyhamna, a quite protected bay, Southeast of Reinsdyrflya, where we spent the night.

Sunday, August 18th 09:45, 79°40' N

Liefdefjord and Texas Bar

We left our anchorage at nine o'clock and went to the close-by Texas Bar, for our first landing today.

"Texas Bar" is a trapper cabin, built in 1927 by one of the most famous Norwegian trappers : Hilmar Nøis. We had a lovely little hike on the tundra here, all the way to the next bay called Hornbækkpollen. The guides told stories about trapper life in the early 1900s.

During lunch time, we sailed further into the Liefdefjord (= the fjord of love, translated from Dutch). We had a beautiful view over the mighty **Monaco**

Glacier, which is one of the most well-known glaciers on Svalbard and is “surging” right now, which means it is increasing its flow velocity.

Sunday, August 18th 15:00, 79°35'N

Bockfjord & Jotunkjeldane

On our way from the Liefdefjord to the Bockfjord, we spotted a **Polar bear** ashore, resting on a slope! He eventually stood up and then disappeared behind a ridge. What a sight!

We arrived in the Bockfjord around 15:00 for our second landing of the day. The geology in this area is quite unique. South of the landing site, you can find the latest active volcano on Svalbard, the Sverrefjell. During our walk, we took a look at the rare **warm springs** of Spitsbergen, called the “Jotun Kjeldene”. They are the Northernmost warm springs in the entire world.

We went for a walk in the rugged terrain and enjoyed the beautiful view. We saw a lot of drift wood on the beaches, brought to Svalbard from the main Russian and Siberian rivers Dvina, Pechora, Ob, Yenisey and Lena. Our hike ended at another beach closer to the Friedrich Glacier and the tender boats brought us back on board.

Sunday, August 18th 20:30, 80°N

Moffen Island and the 80th parallel

On our way from the Bockfjord to the 80th parallel, we passed Mushamna, a more modern trapper station, built in 1987.

Later on, at about 20:30, we crossed 80 degrees North and this was celebrated on the aft deck with a toast. The North Atlantic is in fact the only place on the planet where you can be almost certain to pass the 80th parallel with a ship – the southern hemisphere is mostly ice-covered and at 80°S you will hit a continent. An interesting thought is that there were probably no other people between M/S Nordstjernen and the North Pole at that time!

A few moments later, we reached **Moffen** island, where we could see a group of walruses lying at the beach and swimming in the water. A perfect way to end a perfect day!

Monday, August 19th 09:45, 78° 56' N

New London

After waking up in front of the beautiful Blomstrand Glacier this morning, we went ashore on the Southern shore of the Blomstrand Island, where remains of British mining activity on marble can be visited. The place was called “Marble Island” at that time (1910), and the small settlement “Camp Mansfield”, after its founder, Ernest Mansfield. The Norwegians called the English camp “London” to make fun of them and this name came into general use. We took a walk to have a look at the historical heritage on the site.



North of Blomstrand Island, you can see the Blomstrand Glacier, both named after a Swedish geologist, who took part in the Swedish Spitsbergen Expedition of 1861, together with the admiral Liljehök.

Kongsfjorden. Ny-Ålesund is located just South of New London and the Blomstrand Island.

Monday, August 19th 13:30, 78°56' N

Ny-Ålesund

Ny-Ålesund is the world's northernmost civilian community. As we came ashore, we went on a guided tour through the little settlement. Ny-Ålesund is a former Norwegian mining village, which has become an important international research centre. Many of the research programs are about the atmosphere and ozone layers, but also about geology, biology and glaciology.

There is even a small souvenir shop, a post-office and a museum. Ny-Ålesund has been several times captivating the world's attention during the 1920's:

1925, Roald Amundsen attempted to reach the North Pole from Ny-Ålesund, with the seaplanes N24 and N25. 1926, Amundsen returned to Ny-Ålesund, accompanied by American Lincoln Ellsworth and Italian Umberto Nobile, in order to set out on a joint expedition with the airship "Norge". This expedition was a success. The airship flew over the North Pole, as planned, and landed in Teller, Alaska.



From 1945 until 1962, Ny-Ålesund experienced its second (and main) mining period. The problem with the coal layers in Ny-Ålesund's mines is, that they are almost vertical, so that dangerous gas sips into the galleries. 70 miners have lost their life in the mines of Ny-Ålesund under the years, and the worst accident happened November 5th 1962. Late at night that day, a big explosion occurred in the Esther Mine and 21 miners lost their life. A committee made an investigation and they concluded that the Norwegian state should have been more concerned about the safety in Ny-Ålesund's mines. Since the Kings Bay Company was a state enterprise, the public blamed the government. In August 1963, Prime Minister Gerhardsen and his government resigned as a result of this tragedy.

Research started in Ny-Ålesund in 1964 and, through the years, research increased from 4,100 man-days in 1990 to 10,031 in 2000. Each year, scientists from at least fifteen nations run more than 120 different research projects.

After the guided tour, we went for a stroll through the tiny settlement and visited the museum and the souvenir shop.

Monday, August 19th 17:00, at sea...

Farewell gathering

We gathered with the ship's crew and the guides for a farewell 'ceremony' in the aft saloon. Certificates were handed out to everyone for almost crossing the 80th parallel, and to the true heroes among us, who took a swim in the

chilly Arctic waters. That was the end of the Svalbard summer adventure for this time.

Are you sad to leave Svalbard? Are you curious about what it is like in the winter? Grab a copy of our catalogue or visit **www.hurfigrutensvalbard.com**. We hope to see you back again for another Arctic adventure!

Best regards from your cruise guides,

Heiko, Rémi, Kristin, Yibo, Sandra, Vladimir and Juliane.