

Arctic Adventures: Spitsbergen Explorer 2008

June 9 - 20, 2008 (11-Night)

July 9 - 19, 2008 (10-Night)

July 19 - 29, 2008 (10-Night)

August 8 - 18, 2008 (10-Night)

PROGRAM FEATURES

Travel aboard the M/V Akademik Vavilov. This Russian vessel is a modern 6,450-ton ship that is equipped with stabilizers and built specifically for cruising the Polar Regions. The ship has a crew of 53 and accommodates 100 passengers. 24-hour bridge access, sundeck and sauna, small fitness room, well-stocked library, on-board physician, and daily cabin service.

Rates include cruise transportation, all meals, lectures, and services aboard ship. Not included: airfare, insurance (a comprehensive insurance package must be purchased for this program), hotel stays, transfers, wine, liquor, and other personal items.

You will travel on smaller craft (zodiacs) launched from your cruise ship to the many islands in the Arctic.

As with all of our expeditions weather, ice or other conditions may require that changes be made to our itinerary and that certain shore excursions be altered.

Because of the uniqueness of this trip, payment schedules and cancellation penalties are different for this program than other Learning Vacations. Payment amounts are larger and due earlier than those for other programs. A non-refundable deposit of \$1,250 per person is due upon registration. Balance of payment is due more than 100 days prior to your departure date. Cancellation penalties are very high - From the time of registration to 100 days prior - Full monies on deposit; 100 days or less prior to departure - 100% of program price. You must enroll in a comprehensive travel insurance package. Passports are required for all U.S. citizens. Any passport or visa processing costs not included.

Spitsbergen Explorer

The remarkable islands of the Svalbard archipelago are part of Norway, lying far to the north of the Norwegian mainland and high above the Arctic Circle. All up, they total an area of about 62,000 square kilometres, about the same size as Ireland or Tasmania, mostly in the form of three larger islands, plus quite a number of smaller islands and outcrops. These larger islands rise to form a group of wild and rugged mountains, with much of their highland areas being covered in ice and snow.

Our aim on this expedition is to undertake a complete circumnavigation of the major islands of the group, making frequent shore stops to hike or simply enjoy the amazing scenery, and to undertake zodiac cruises, often in close proximity to sea cliffs and abundant wildlife. Our exact course will be much dependant on the location and movement of sea ice. The shores and seas along the west coast of Spitsbergen, the largest island, are usually clear of ice for about half of the year, including the time of our visit, as a result of the modifying influences of the (comparatively!) warm North Atlantic current. The fjords along the west and north coasts provide plenty of opportunity for enjoying the wonderful scenery and often-prolific wildlife. In other areas our progress may be just as effortless, but the movement and location of sea ice will be an important factor in determining our exact route and landing locations: one thing is certain, wherever we go we will be rewarded with exciting exploration opportunities.

DAY 1: LONGYEARBYEN

You fly into Longyearbyen on Spitsbergen Island, the main settlement of Svalbard. Dependant on your airline schedule, you may have some time to visit the museums and investigate the shops of this town of a little over a thousand inhabitants. On Day 1 you will be met at Longyearbyen Airport or the Radisson Hotel and transferred to the pier, in time to board your ship, the Akademik Sergey Vavilov, about 3.30pm. Once on board, we'll get together for introductions to the expedition team, learn a bit about the ship and its layout, talk about our itinerary, and participate in the obligatory lifeboat drill. We'll set sail from Longyearbyen around 6pm, heading north from Adventfjorden – the first of our fjords - into Isfjorden. During the night the Akademik Sergey Vavilov will pass the long island of Prins Karls Forland and then turn east into Kongsfjorden in the early hours.

DAYS 2 - 9: AROUND SVALBARD

These days are spent exploring the coast and generally moving in a clockwise direction. Distances covered by the ship are not great, so much of the time will be available for shore excursions, sitting on the beach and just taking it all in, or being energetic and hiking, enjoying the wonderful wildlife, zodiac cruising and more. As mentioned, our itinerary will be very much determined by the location and movement of sea ice. The following notes for Day 2 through to Day 8 include descriptions of places, which we may visit during that time – it is unlikely that we will visit all of them. It is even possible we will visit locations not named should their beauty or interest warrant it.

**14TH OF JULY GLACIER BAY/ NY ÅLESUND

Lying on the west coast of Spitsbergen this is almost a certain destination and landing. We'll drop anchor before breakfast in 14th of July Glacier Bay, and afterwards meet for an important briefing on Landing Procedures, Zodiac operations, Polar Bear Management and Firearm Safety (there is a good chance that we will see some of these magnificent animals during this trip, but extreme care must be taken if we ever encounter them whilst we are ashore!). After getting into the Zodiacs we'll steer toward the glacier and spend some time cruising past the spectacular ice-cliff of its face. We'll be greeted by a surprising exhibition of Svalbard vegetation on our first landing and our naturalists will help you identify the many species of plants. We may be fortunate to see some pink-footed geese or barnacle geese on shore. One of the reasons for the rich vegetation of this site is the plethora of natural fertilizer supplied by the large kittiwake colony that nest in the cliffs above the site during certain times of the year. After lunch, we'll visit the settlement of Ny Ålesund, one of the northernmost communities in the world. Ny Ålesund serves as a base station for international Arctic research, with a population of approximately eighty scientists and support staff. Everyone will have a chance to visit the station shop where you are able to send mail from the most northerly mailbox in the world! Bird-watchers should see Arctic terns, Arctic and long-tailed skuas, purple sandpipers and chicks, common eiders, barnacle geese, long-tailed ducks, kittiwakes, glaucous gulls and snow buntings, et al. Several reindeer are often seen on the periphery of the community. We'll stand near the airship mast that was used for the mooring of the famous airships Norge and Italia. The Norge was used by the Norwegian Roald Amundsen in 1926 to fly over the North Pole from Ny Ålesund to Alaska. A few days earlier the American, Richard Byrd, had taken off from the Tundra nearby Ny Ålesund and later returned claiming to have reached the pole before Amundsen. Umberto Nobile, the Italian who had constructed the Norge and participated in Amundsen's later expedition, decided to mount an Italian airship expedition from Ny Ålesund with the Italia in 1928. However, this ended in disaster when the airship crashed on the pack-ice north of Spitsbergen. Many expeditions were sent out to find and rescue Nobile and his crew including Roald Amundsen who disappeared during the search. Smeerenburg, on Amsterdamøya, is located on the north-western corner of Spitsbergen. Smeerenburg, or Blubber Town, was a settlement of Dutch whalers in the first half of the 17th century. We'll explain the whaling techniques which were used in the 1630s when almost 200 whalers spent the summers here. In 1634, a small group of seven men was left behind to guard the buildings during the winter and the early summer. They succeeded in their mission and were in good shape when picked up one year later. The following year another seven men wintered in Smeerenburg, but harsh conditions and poor diet caused every one of them to die before spring. This was the last attempt of over-wintering by European whalers for a quite long time. Blubber ovens, whalebones and other remnants can be observed in the shadow of the mountain that the Basque whalers used as a lookout-point for the bowhead whale. We also hope to visit one of Svalbard's most culturally historic sites, Virgohamna. This was the strategic point of departure in "the search of the Holy Grail of the 19th and 20th Centuries": the North Pole! The site is strictly protected and managed by the Governor of Svalbard, and the land-management methods are respected worldwide. We'll gather on the beach and listen as the guides unfold the story by explaining the importance of the site as a staging area for several celebrated expeditions. We'll learn about Arnold Pike, an eccentric English gentleman who in 1888 decided to spend a winter in the Arctic and chose this spot for his endeavor. He imported a pre-fabricated house from England, his yacht, and a crew of Norwegian whalers to man it, and his cook and butler. He undertook a great deal of ornithology during the winter and when he departed he left the house behind. It served other, later expeditions well. The next visitor to make Virgohamna his base was Salomon August Andree who used it for his attempt to reach the North Pole by balloon in 1897. This tragic effort failed when the balloon came down on the ice to the north east of Svalbard and after a trek towards Kvitøya all three men died, probably from eating bear meat from which they may have contracted trichinosis. Walter Wellman used Virgohamna as a base for his airship, America, in an attempt to reach the Pole. This was the first use of a dirigible aircraft in the Arctic. The flights of America were short, and the results of Wellman's efforts were an overt failure. Some believe his heart wasn't in it after he heard that the American, Dr

Frederick Cook, had beaten him to the Pole. The famous Norwegian explorer and author, Nansen, proclaimed Wellman as a charlatan and not a serious explorer.

** YTRE NORSKØYA / NORVESTØYANE, HAMILTONBREEN / 80°N / MOFFEN

It may start getting noticeably cooler as we near our northerly destination, Norskøya. After landing we'll walk to a 17th Century blubber-oven used by whalers to render the whales into valuable oil. Your guides will explain the history of whaling, methods employed, and the harsh life experienced by the early whalers, the last point emphasized by the hundred whalers' graves. Some of the group may wish to explore the lower area of the island, while others may climb to a cairn at the top. Later on we'll gather everyone on the bow as we cross 80° North, just 600 miles from the North Pole! After supper we'll visit a small atoll-like island further to the northeast called Moffen Island. Moffen is a wide gravel plain with a lagoon in the middle, not more than a few metres above sea level. This island is a protected walrus sanctuary, and there are often walrus seen hauled out on shore, and others usually come out to greet the ship! We have been lucky, in the past, to see sightings of the sabine gull and quite often polar bears on shore.

SPARRENESET, NORDAUSTLANDET

Sparreneset truly is a "polar desert" and our first landing is on Svalbard's second largest island, Nordaustlandet. Few plants or wildlife inhabit this barren site, but the scenery is fantastic. We'll walk up to the top of a gorge, and then split up into different groups where you will have a choice of some beachcombing, a shorter walk, or a longer invigorating hike.

** PHIPPSØYA & MARTENSØYA, SEVEN ISLANDS

In the early hours, we approach our most northerly landing and drop anchor close to Phipps Island. This is directly beside "Small Blackboard Island", the termination point for the British Trans-Arctic Expedition led by Sir Wally Herbert in 1969. This is a great place for hikes and can also be a good location for finding bears and walrus. There is a small hunters' hut with large whale vertebrae and bones strewn about, and an old boat adding to the antiquity of the milieu. Later on we may try to land on Martensøya. The geology is Precambrian, which is five hundred million to one billion years old, but the most noticeable thing is the large accumulation of driftwood on the beach. Many of the logs originated from Canada and/or Russia. The Canadian timber escaped from the mills it was destined for and floated north through the Bering Strait where it was caught in the currents and gyres of the Arctic Basin. The Russian logs escaped north from the Lena River where the currents took them on a voyage around the Arctic Ocean until they washed up on the shores of Svalbard. It was these same currents that carried pieces of the "Jeanette" (from the DeLong expedition) to the shores of Greenland after it had been shattered and foundered in the ice off the Siberian Islands in 1881. In 1890, Fridtjof Nansen conjectured, if the polar drift could carry articles across the Polar Sea, this drift "might also be enlisted in the service of exploration". He then mounted an expedition that set out to intentionally beset in the ice their specially designed ship, the Fram. After spending three years traveling with the ice floes and currents, the Fram finally exited via the northwest side of Spitsbergen in 1896. Therefore, it is very possible that some of those logs we see today travelled the same route as the Fram, more than one hundred years ago!

* * KRAEMERPYNTE & ANDREENESET, KVITØYA

Everyone should be on deck as we approach the large ice-domed island of Kvitøya. The western part of the island is only 98 kilometres from Victoria Island in Franz Josef Land, which is part of the Russian Arctic. This remote outpost is actually closer to the Russian Arctic than it is to Nordaustlandet (117 km). The staff will have to go on a scouting mission to investigate the rarely visited Kraemerpynten on the east side of Kvitøya. Since there are often bears in the area, we may not be able to land, but will hope to at least zodiac cruise this rarely visited site looking for bears. There are often large herds of walrus in the vicinity, and if conditions permit, we hope to see these animals on ice floes or in the water. The entire island is 700 square kilometres and the 410-metre ice dome covers everything except for three small spits of barren polar-desert. One of these spits, Andreeneset, is where the Andree expedition came to its tragic end. We'll walk to the monument where the guides will explain the history and significance of the spot. Andree's balloon was launched in July 1897 and was only airborne for about 60 hours before it crashed on the ice north of Svalbard. The party tried to make their way south to Franz Josef Land, however ice drift made this impossible. Salomon August Andree, Knut Fraenkel and, Nils Strindberg spent nearly three months on the moving pack ice and after many harrowing experiences they finally reached Kvitøya (White Island) and set up camp. Strindberg died first and was buried by Fraenkel and Andree. (We found his grave in a simple crack between two boulders.) The last sentence in Fraenkels diary was: "going home..." The location of their camp was found by chance in 1930, some 33 years after the expedition was

declared missing. The bodies of Andree, Fraenkel and Strindberg were returned to Sweden and all three given a state funeral. Some of their equipment, including about 100 exposed photographic plates, together with their diaries, filled the mysterious void of the great balloon expedition. Around 20 years later, a polar bear bone from the site was taken back to Sweden and analyzed. Trichinosis was discovered and was likely the cause of the adventurers' death.

** ISISPYNTEN & VIBEBUKTA, NORDAUSTLANDET

If we encounter sea ice, we'll zodiac cruise amongst the floes and attempt to land on one. We may drop anchor near the southeast corner of Nordaustlandet Island and go ashore at Isispynten. A magnificent view of the ice shelf, that stretches 128 miles around Nordaustlandet, is just across the bay. This is a great place for a hike or contemplative stroll. After exploring the "headland" we'll make an important geographical discovery... Isispynten is an island! The nautical charts and topographical maps both define Isispynten as a point of the mainland, but we'll prove them wrong. After lunch we'll cruise the magnificent ice shelf, a fantastic platform for viewing the glacial face. Time permitting, we may try to land on a barren stretch of beach called Vibebukta. The area is known for the plethora of fossils and the raised beaches and strandlines.

** SUNDNESET, BARENTSØYA/KAPP LEE, EDGEØYA

During the early hours we transit the Freemansundet. This sound is quite often clogged with ice; however if we are able to pass through, we'll drop anchor on the south side of Barentsøya. We'll break into different groups and experience the fantastic flora, fauna and scenery. It's not unusual to experience a close encounter with reindeer. Very old whalebones are found hundreds of metres inland, which helps to elucidate the theory of isostatic rebound (land sprung up after the weight of glaciations has left). There are quite often long-tailed ducks and red-throated divers on the ponds in the area. And pink-footed geese, snow buntings and purple sandpipers are often seen here. After lunch we'll land at Dolerittneset near Kapp Lee. After spending the last few days in the barren polar landscape of the north, you'll see a noticeable change to the relatively lush vegetation "south of 79°". This site has a large scattering of reindeer antlers, but the plethora of ancient whalebones makes the landing memorable. This had obviously been a slaughtering ground for the great whale. The majestic animals were hunted to near extinction in the waters of Svalbard four hundred years ago. Now nature has turned the decaying old bones into things of beauty. Time and the elements have altered their original shape and sculptured them into works of art. They are painted with luxuriant blankets of green mosses and grasses, spattered with blotches of black and orange lichen, and framed with purple saxifrage, yellow cinquefoil, and white sandwort. Now, even after death, the noble whale supports life by robustly protecting the delicate flora from the harsh winds and providing nutrients to ensure their survival.

** ÆKONGEN, TUSENØYANE (THOUSAND ISLANDS)

We may drop anchor near the small island of Ækongen, Tusenøyane in the Thousand Islands. Once everybody is ashore we'll quietly approach a small pond inhabited by several pairs of red-throated divers. A bowhead whale skeleton has been put together from various bones on the beach and provides a fairly accurate perception of the gigantic size of the animal. The lower part of the island is littered with driftwood and extremely aged whalebones, as well as several polar bear skulls and many walrus bones.

** GÅSHAMNA/ HORNSUND

We'll land on a gravel beach near a small hut in Gåshamna and walk around the area of the hut admiring the old whalebones. Some may want to walk three kilometres in distance and 240 metres high, to the face of a glacier, to enjoy the fantastic views atop the moraines. After lunch, we'll sail into Hornsund, a spectacular Sound with several bays and fourteen glaciers flowing into the sea. Many seabirds, bearded and ringed seals, and bears are often seen here.

DAY 10: BOURBONHAMNA (AHLSTRANDHALVØYA)/ BARENTSBURG

Beluga whales often transit the narrow Sound near Bourbonhamna. The adults are pure white and the younger animals a mottled grey color. A beluga can weigh as much as 1,500 kilograms and reach a length of five metres. They are the only whales that can articulate their heads to nod and turn sideways. It is estimated that there are approximately five to ten thousand belugas in the Svalbard population. The beluga has no dorsal fin, which is a diagnostic feature of other whale species that live in the high Arctic, like the narwhal and bowhead. Since a dorsal fin could be damaged when the animal surfaces in areas with ice, it has been postulated that the lack of dorsal fin is an adaptation to living in waters that are frequently covered by ice. We'll search for the belugas, then hope to go ashore to Bourbonhamna. A hunters' cabin, grinding wheel and two overturned boats are points of interest a short walk away at

Ingebrigstenbukta. However, it is the massive piles of beluga whalebones that catch everybody's attention. The bones and all the artifacts are protected by the Svalbard Government and can't be removed. Dozens of reindeer are often seen in the area.

DAY 11: TRIP ENDS

We arrive back into Longbearbyen early this morning and, on disembarking the ship after breakfast, you are transferred to either the Radisson Hotel or the airport.

INCLUDED:

Shipboard accommodation, highly experienced expedition leader, crew and lecturers, all meals, afternoon teas most days if not on shore, access to public viewing areas, shore excursions by Zodiac boat, on-board lectures, videos, slide and film shows, on-board medical officer, port taxes, port transfers in Svalbard, comprehensive pre-departure booklet and expedition manual.

NOT INCLUDED:

Arrival and Departure flights. Any visa and passport fees, airport taxes, any pre-trip or post-trip hotel accommodation, laundry, postage, telephone calls, drinks, medical expenses, travel insurance, emergency evacuation charges, gratuities to staff and crew. In addition to funds for on-board expenses, it is possible to purchase souvenirs in a few locations – mainly Longyearbyen - in the form of books, t-shirts, stamps, postcards, wind-cheaters, caps and good knitwear and on a couple of shore excursions which include visits to scientific stations or small settlements. In addition some museums and sites charge entry fees, and in some locations you may wish to buy some food and drink (although the meals on the ship are very good and plentiful!). Visa and Mastercard are accepted on board ship – elsewhere they are of limited use. Norwegian Kroner are accepted in Svalbard.

NOTES:

1. These notes should be read in conjunction with the Scandinavian Arctic - Trip Information Guide booklet that is provided to you shortly after booking (or which can be requested prior to booking). A second manual, dealing with Scandinavian Arctic history, geology, geography, marine and bird life will also be provided prior to departure.
2. Clothes: Please read our Scandinavian Arctic - Trip Information Guide booklet carefully. You do not need to make expensive, specialist clothing purchases, but you must have adequate protection against the cold, and against possible wet conditions.
3. Some of your sailing will be in the open sea. The ship is one of the most stable ships in its class but it is impossible to remove all motion. Unless you are certain you are impervious to the problem, you should take precautions against seasickness. Your doctor can advise you as to the best methods for avoiding this uncomfortable condition.
4. Gratuities. We suggest you allow the equivalent of \$US10 a day for gratuities for the crew and expedition staff. This is usually collected shortly prior to the end of the cruise. The amount can be paid by Visa or MasterCard if you wish.
5. Sea Kayaking is offered on this trip. Please check the relevant sections of our brochure and Trip Information Guide for further information. Please note that this option must be booked prior to your departure from home: it cannot be booked on the ship. Some prior experience is required.
6. All itineraries are subject to change due to weather, ice and wildlife conditions and concentrations

ACCOMMODATIONS

MAIN DECK TWIN - 16 CABINS

These cabins have upper and lower bunk beds, opening portholes, ample storage space, desk, chair, and sofa. There is a wash basin with hot and cold water. Toilet and shower facilities are communal.

UPPER DECK TWIN - 12 CABINS

These cabins have a lower berth, sofa bed, opening window, desk, chair, and ample storage space. The wash basin with hot and cold water and toilet and shower facilities are shared with one adjacent cabin.

SUPERIOR TWIN - 18 CABINS

These cabins have one lower berth, sofa bed, opening window, desk, chair, and ample storage space. There is a wash basin with hot and cold water, and private toilet and shower facilities. These cabins are also larger and on a higher deck.

SUPERIOR PLUS - 10 CABINS

These cabins have two lower berths, a sofa, opening window, desk, chair, and ample storage space. There is a wash basin with hot and cold water, and private toilet and shower facilities. These cabins are also larger than the Superior cabins. They are also newer and on a higher deck.

MAIN DECK TRIPLE - 2 CABINS

These cabins have upper and lower bunk beds, a sofa bed and opening portholes. There is a wash basin with hot and cold water. Toilet and shower facilities are communal. All three clients requesting a triple room must register together.

For those traveling alone, we will same gender clients share in twin accommodations. If a roommate cannot be found, you will have the cabin to yourself without the need to pay the single cabin supplement. If you would like a single cabin you need to pay 1.6 times the twin cabin rate.

ARCTIC SPITSBERGEN PROGRAM PRICE

Departure Dates	Nights	Main	Upper	Superior	SuperiorPlus	Main Triple Cabin
June 9 - 20	11	\$4,300	\$4,700	\$5,150	\$5,600	\$3,100
ALL THE REST	10	\$5,200	\$5,600	\$6,050	\$6,500	\$3,990

Kayaking is available at an extra charge of \$395 per person. Reservations are required.

Single Cabin rate is 1.7 times the twin cabin rate.