

NORWEGIAN COASTLINE & SPITSBERGEN

25 JUNE - 8 JULY 2010

KAYAK EXPEDITION NOTES AND ITINERARY

Voted 'the world's most unspoilt destination' by National Geographic Traveller magazine, Norway's rugged landscape north of Bergen has for centuries only been accessible by sea. Experience the spectacular west coast fjords, fairytale villages and remote Bear Island before reaching Spitsbergen – the realm of the polar bear.

These notes will give you an overview of what you may experience and discover on this fascinating journey.

From Bergen, we sail along Norway's mountainous coastline and kayak amongst thousands of islands. This is premier kayaking country. We cross the Arctic Circle, keeping watch for pods of whales, cruise through the Lofoten Islands and finally reach the far northern tip of mainland Norway before we set sail to Bear Island with its wild and foreboding coastline and prolific birdlife. We stress that this is an expedition style voyage and our adventures will be influenced by the Arctic weather and sea conditions. We hope to land on Bear Island but if conditions are too rough, we carry on to Spitsbergen and more sheltered waters.

Spitsbergen is half way between northern Norway and the North Pole, with a population of 3500 residents in five settlements. At Longyearbyen, in Spitsbergen, the sun does not set for the four months of summer. Winter is dark except for starlight, moonlight and the elegant curtains of the northern lights. We experience rugged mountains, fjords, glaciers, pack ice, tundra, wildlife and wonderful kayaking. We'll delight in taking advantage of spontaneous opportunities and there is always an element of the unexpected.

The warming influence of the Gulf Stream around Spitsbergen creates an environment where a prolific variety of tundra vegetation (mosses and lichens, fungi, species of ferns and many flowering plants) thrive on the sharp contrasts in temperature of the high Arctic.

We will see a broad range of birds from eagles, gannets, fulmars, Arctic terns, guillemots, little auks and the delightful puffins. Sitting quietly in our kayaks we may be privileged to watch seals, whales and further north, walrus, polar bear, arctic fox and reindeer.

SEA KAYAKING

The Arctic summer, with 24 hours of daylight, provides paddlers with the best in remote and scenic kayaking. We intend to use the ship as a comfortable floating base camp, paddling at every opportunity and returning for the comfort of meals and our cosy cabins. Zodiacs will be available for extended shore excursions for those who do not wish to paddle on any given day.

We hope to paddle one to two times a day, except when at sea, spending as much time on the water as possible. Landing ashore by kayak, we can stretch our legs and enjoy walks on the lush tundra amongst the summer flowers. Most paddles range from two and a half to four hours. We aim to have at least one extended paddle where we will be away from the ship for most of the day and generally meet the ship at a different location. The flexibility of kayaking with a small private group ensures our own unique experiences, the quiet dip of your paddle perfectly suited to our awe-inspiring surroundings.

Kayakers should be of an intermediate standard and have paddled before on outings up to 12 km in length. You do not have to be an expert or know how to roll but should have an adventurous spirit and recognise that the weather will influence greatly what we can and can't do. This is cold water kayaking and should not be your first paddling experience. For additional experience, rent a kayak locally before leaving home and seek out a local operator for some paddling tuition. We try to have our first familiarisation paddle from the shore and after that, launch directly from the ship. However, you should be comfortable on Day 1 to paddle in some swell and wind if we encounter it.

DO practice paddling in a variety of conditions prior to the trip. Generally the water surface ranges from glassy calm to a small wind chop.



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We'd be happy to talk to you about your level of experience and may be able to advise you on how to obtain the necessary skills before your trip.

Please note: along with your voyage booking form we require all participants to complete our "Sea Kayak Booking and Experience Form" and return it to us immediately to secure your spot in the sea kayak group.

ITINERARY

Day 1 Bergen, Norway.

In the afternoon we board Polar Pioneer in the historic waterfront town of Bergen and sail in the evening up the coast of Norway. (If you arrive earlier, Bergen is a lovely town to explore with quaint cobblestone streets in the old quarter and a funicular railway which can take you to the top of the plateau behind the town for fantastic views.)

Days 2 -8: Norwegian Coast

After leaving Bergen, we head towards the Arctic Circle, navigating the entire coast inside fjords and through a maze of islands. With an unlimited choice of landings we will try to pick the best opportunities depending on the weather. There is no end to the kayak possibilities and you could spend months paddling here. Some of the spots we may stop at are:

- Runde Island, home to over 200 species of seabirds including puffin, kittiwake, gannet, fulmar, petrel, peregrine falcon and sea eagle.
- Sor-Gjaeslingan, a picturesque and colourful fishing village, one of the best-preserved villages in this part of Norway.
- Torget Island and the bizarre rock formation called Torghatten, a hole in the mountain created, as legend has it, by a troll's arrow.
- The 1000 islands of Traena Archipelago, an idyllic and wild place for our paddling adventures.
- Lofoten Islands are one of the most picturesque parts of Norway. Cod fishing villages lie beneath snow capped jagged mountains that rise from sheltered bays. We will paddle beneath breathtaking fjords and hike around the scenic countryside.
- Andenes, is an area well noted for large numbers of Orca, Minke and Sperm whales.
- Alta is known for its ancient rock carvings made up to 6,000 years ago by hunters from the stone and iron ages.
- Nordkapp. At 71 degrees north, Nordkapp and its sheer granite cliffs enjoy being Europe's most northerly point.

Day 9: Bear Island.

After leaving the north part of Norway we head for Bear Island. The island is in the North Atlantic and it is incredibly remote. Bear Island is known for its stark beauty and unpredictable weather, being located at the juncture of two jet streams. Weather permitting, we hope to paddle around lofty sea stacks, view the tundra wildflowers and keep a look out for Arctic fox, reveling in the wilderness of this island.

Days 10-13:Spitsbergen.

We reach Spitsbergen, where 60% of the land is covered in sheets and rivers of ice. Cliffs are brought alive by noisy Arctic fulmars and kittiwakes. We will explore Hornsund, a stunning fjord of immense scale. There is some chance of seeing polar bears, as Spitsbergen supports one of the world's densest populations of these stunning animals. Other wildlife, which may be spotted, are walrus, seals, whales, reindeer and the rare ivory gull.

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Day 14: Longyearbyen

On the morning of day 14, we arrive at the capital of the Svalbard archipelago, Longyearbyen. Here we say farewell to our fellow passengers and staff before transferring to the airport, taking home wonderful memories of this amazing adventure.

GENERAL INFORMATION

This Tour Includes:

- Transfers to the ship from the group hotel in Bergen and an afternoon group transfer from the ship to the airport in Longyearbyen .
- Ship's accommodation. All public areas are open to all passengers.
- All meals on board ship.
- The use of zodiacs for shore excursions, but excludes entry fees and other optional expenses at historic sites, towns and villages.
- Lectures, videos, slide and film shows and guide services.
- Medical services. There is a resident medical officer and well equipped clinic on board.
- Port taxes, port charges and landing fees imposed by government authorities.
- Kayak guide, kayaks, paddling and rescue equipment. Drysuits are included.

This Tour Does Not Include:

- Air transport to Bergen and from Longyearbyen.
- Excess baggage on any air flights.
- Visa, passport and vaccination charges and airport departure taxes.
- Hotels and meals before and after voyage.
- Tips on board for crew and service personnel.
- Optional tours, entry fees, shore transport and other expenses during shore excursions.
- Laundry, postage, personal clothing, medical expenses, personal travel insurance and items of a personal nature such as bar charges and phone calls.
- Emergency evacuation charges.

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SHIP DETAILS

Polar Pioneer

Polar Pioneer was built in Finland in 1985 as an ice-strengthened research vessel. In 2001 she was refurbished in St Petersburg to provide comfortable accommodation for 54 passengers.

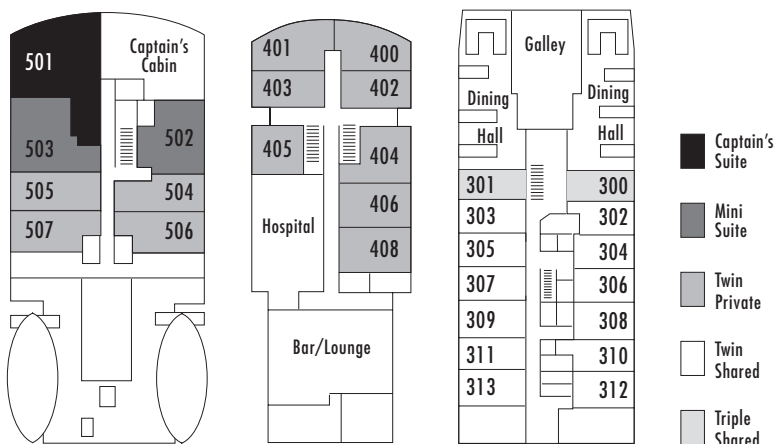
Polar Pioneer is not a luxury ship but is homely and strong. The accommodation is simple yet comfortable and the meals are wholesome and uncomplicated. The mood on board is definitely casual. A small fleet of Zodiacs, (rubber inflatable boats), with outboard motors enable us to travel from ship to shore.

Length - 71.6 metres, Beam - 12.8 metres, Draft - 4.5 metres, Displacement - 2140 tonnes, Cruise speed - 11-12 knots, Powered by - 2 x 1560 HP diesel engines, Chef - European or Australian, Captain & Crew – Russian.

General Facilities:- Bar/lounge/library area, Sauna, Laundry Service, Medical Clinic staffed by a doctor, Dining area, TV/Video (NTSC & PAL systems), Lecture room.

There are five classes of cabins on board the Polar Pioneer

- **Triple Cabins** have two lower bunks and one upper bunk, porthole, wash basin, desk and storage. Shower and toilet facilities located conveniently just outside the cabins.
- **Twin Share Cabins** have two lower bunks, porthole, wash basin, desk and storage. Shower and toilet facilities located conveniently just outside the cabins.
- **Twin Private Cabins** have two lower berths, two have upper & lower berths. All cabins have private bathroom (shower and toilet), window, desk and ample storage.
- **Mini-Suites** have one double bed and one fold down couch in separate sleeping areas, private bathroom, (shower & toilet), windows, desk, sitting area, refrigerator, TV and video facilities, electric jug. Two only.
- **Captain's Suite** features a double bed in separate sleeping area, private bathroom (shower & toilet) forward and port windows, desk, large lounge and table area, refrigerator, TV and video facilities, electric jug. One only.



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