



**ARCTIC MAMMAL AND BIRDING CRUISE: SVALBARD
(SPITSBERGEN) - POLAR BEARS AND SEABIRDS**

20 - 27 JUNE 2026



Polar Bear, the 'King of the Arctic' occurs throughout the Svalbard Archipelago however is most readily encountered in the pack ice in the north.

This Arctic birding and mammal cruise around Svalbard allows you a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be acquainted with special birds and mammals of the High Arctic. The list of likely species (both birds and mammals) is a rather short one, however it is quality over quantity here, as these specials are mostly only possible in the High Arctic. Another highly exciting element of Arctic birding is that you get to enjoy several widespread species in their fine breeding colors – a breeding plumaged **Red Phalarope** takes some beating! We invite you to join us on this exciting cruise as we explore the Svalbard Archipelago and enjoy finding some truly iconic Arctic wildlife.

You will arrive in the world's northernmost town, historic Longyearbyen (previously known as "Long Year City"), deep within the Arctic Circle, and we will have time to explore this small city of about 2,000 human inhabitants. We usually spend some time birding around Longyearbyen, where several species are more easily observed (than on the cruise) and often make for good photographic subjects. We then depart on our cruise for the northern parts of the beautiful, remote Svalbard Archipelago (previously known as Spitsbergen).

While one of our main targets on the Arctic wildlife cruise will be **Polar Bear** (and other High Arctic mammals), our guide is first and foremost a birding guide, so we will be constantly watching for the Arctic's special birds. Some of our bird targets include **Ivory Gull** in the pack ice in the far north, with **Rock Ptarmigan** often found on our landings, and we will also try for all the sea ducks and the many other desirables. The scenery in the 'land of the midnight sun' is truly spectacular, with the many glaciers, fjords, jagged peaks, and myriads of small islands constantly taking your breath away!



Rock Ptarmigan, here a male in its winter plumage, can be confiding around Longyearbyen.

While on this eight-day Arctic cruise we will head up the northwest coast of the Svalbard Archipelago, although the final itinerary is based on sea ice and weather conditions. We will

generally partake in a couple landings and/or zodiac cruises (in small inflatable boats) per day which ensures we can get closer to the wildlife and birds, and often results in many fantastic photographic opportunities.

Itinerary (8 days/7 nights)

Day 1. Birding Longyearbyen, then cruise ship departs

We suggest arriving in Longyearbyen, the capital of Svalbard, Norway, the world's northernmost city, the day before the cruise departs, in case of any flight delays. Before the early evening departure (or the previous evening, if you arrive the day before our ship departs) we will explore this old mining town in search of **Brant** and **Barnacle Geese**, **King** and **Common Eiders**, **Red** and **Red-necked Phalaropes**, **Common Ringed Plover**, **Glaucous Gull**, **Parasitic Jaeger**, **Rock Ptarmigan**, **Purple Sandpiper**, **Snow Bunting**, and **Arctic Fox** which are often seen scavenging at the base of seabird cliffs. Although we should see most of the above on the actual Svalbard cruise, we often get better and more prolonged views, with improved photographic opportunities, on our Longyearbyen day tours. Please see the 'Costs' section to find out about additional costs for a Longyearbyen day tour prior to the cruise.



Red Phalaropes, such as this gorgeous female, are regular around Longyearbyen.

Upon setting sail out of Isfjorden, the second-longest fjord in the Svalbard Archipelago, we may see our first **Northern Fulmar**, **Red-throated Loon**, and **Common Minke Whale**, or perhaps we

will get very lucky with an early sighting of the angelic **Beluga Whale**! Our voyage will be on board a 300–350-foot polar vessel which accommodates up to 170 passengers.



Walrus are usually encountered on this cruise.



Arctic Fox is another charismatic mammal we should see on this Arctic wildlife cruise.

Days 2-7. Enjoying northwestern Spitsbergen's natural beauty and wildlife

Over the next six days we will visit a variety of spectacularly beautiful fjords, seabird breeding colonies, and other fascinating landing sites. The final itinerary is entirely weather- and condition-dependent and will be decided by the expedition leader while on the cruise. Below are some of the exciting destinations and activities we might enjoy over the next few days.

Along the northern coast of west Svalbard we will cruise alongside beautiful glaciers while enjoying the area's impressive wildlife. In this area of Svalbard, **Polar Bear** is sometimes seen, in addition to **Bearded** and **Harbour Seals**. The shoreline cliffs at 14 Julibukta are home to colonies of seabirds, including **Thick-billed Murre** (Brünnich's Guillemot), **Atlantic Puffin**, and **Black Guillemot**. High up above, masses of **Black-legged Kittiwakes** breed, with **Arctic Foxes** often prowling the lower slopes for fallen eggs and chicks. Lush vegetation flourishes in areas protected from the weather, and on our landing, we may find some of the Arctic's flowering plants here.



Atlantic Puffin breed on the low sea cliffs in Krossfjorden.

We hope to visit Krossfjorden which is close to Ny Ålesund, the most northerly settlement on Earth, once a mining town and now a research base. It was at Ny Ålesund that Amundsen and Nobile anchored their airships prior to their successful crossing of the North Pole. The area often has breeding **Arctic Terns** around, as well as **Great Skuas**, and **Red-throated Loons**. While cruising Krossfjorden it is always keeping an eye out for attractive **Long-tailed Jaegers**, as some of the archipelago's few known breeding pairs are found nearby. **Common Eiders** occur along the coastline here and these attractive sea ducks are likely to feature on most days of the cruise.

Weather dependent, we will sail along the three-mile-long face of Monaco Glacier, heading into Liefdefjorden. These waters harbor a favorite food source for **Black-legged Kittiwake**, offering spectacular views of thousands of birds. **Polar Bear** also frequents the glacier, sometimes

providing good photo opportunities. The rare **Sabine's Gull** will also be on our radar in this area as we will be relatively close to one of their breeding islands at Moffen Island.



King Eider can often be seen alongside the more widespread Common Eider.

Seven Islands will likely be the most northerly point we visit on this Arctic cruise. This area likely represents our best chance of finding our most important mammalian target, **Polar Bear**, and we will ensure we have our scopes out on deck scanning for bears. The pack ice is also the best area to find our most important avian target, this being **Ivory Gull**, which is a delight to observe. There are usually good numbers of alcids around in this area too, with **Black Guillemot**, **Thick-billed Murre**, and **Little Auk** constantly giving flyby views. There will hopefully also be good numbers of seals on the pack ice in the north, with **Bearded**, **Harp**, and **Ringed Seals** being the most likely candidates.

We will likely also stop in at Sorgfjord where we visit a haul-out of massive **Walruses** and enjoy a walk in the Arctic tundra which often produces **Rock Ptarmigan** and shorebirds, such as **Purple Sandpiper**, **Ruddy Turnstone**, **Dunlin**, or **Sanderling** – all looking dapper in their breeding colors.

Navigating through the Hinlopen Strait will prove to be rich in Arctic wildlife. We will have opportunities to see thousands of **Thick-billed Murres** alongside some impressive Arctic wildlife such as **Polar Bear**, **Ringed** and **Bearded Seals**, and if we are lucky **Blue Whale** – the largest animal known to have ever existed. In our zodiacs we may cruise through the sea ice floes of Lomfjordshalvøya and visit a huge colony of **Thick-billed Murres** at the cliffs of Alkefjellet. We will also attempt to land at Torrelneset on the island of Nordaustlandet, where **Pink-footed Goose**, (Svalbard) **Reindeer** (the smallest subspecies of Reindeer), and **Walrus** may be seen. As we cruise

through the Hinlopen Strait we will pass through the foraging waters of **Fin Whales** and have decent chances of spotting **Common Minke Whale**.



Ivory Gull will be our primary avian target in the High Arctic.

Weather dependent, we will either sail into Forlandsundet, where we might encounter **Walrus**, or alternatively into St. Johns Fjord or to Isfjorden and possibly landing on Alkhorner, where along the cliffs we will look for nesting seabirds and along the base of the cliffs **Arctic Fox** may be seen foraging for fallen chicks or eggs. We may see **Svalbard Reindeer** grazing before making a nighttime arrival back in Longyearbyen.

Day 8. Disembarkation at Longyearbyen

We will come ashore in Longyearbyen on this last day of our journey for flights south to Oslo and from there to our home destinations.

PLEASE NOTE: A typical itinerary to the northern Svalbard Archipelago is illustrated above. This itinerary is for guidance only. Depending on local ice and weather conditions, the availability of landing sites, and opportunities to see wildlife, the program may vary. The expedition leader on board will determine the final itinerary. Flexibility is paramount for expedition cruises. Average cruising speed for the vessel is 10.5 knots.

Duration:	8 days
Limit:	The group sizes of cruises are a function of the capacity of the ship, so our usual small group size policy cannot apply here.
Date:	20 – 27 June 2026
Start:	Longyearbyen, Norway
End:	Longyearbyen, Norway
Longyearbyen day tour:	\$330 per person (2-8 pax)
Cruise price per person:	Quadruple porthole – sharing US\$4,450 per person Triple porthole – sharing US\$5,550 per person Twin porthole – sharing US\$6,150 per person, single US\$10,455 Twin window – sharing US\$6,700 per person, single US\$11,390 Twin deluxe window – sharing US\$7,100 per person, single US\$12,070 Superior (double bed) – sharing US\$8,050 per person, single US\$13,685 Junior suite (double bed) – sharing US\$9,200 per person, single US\$15,640 Grand suite (double bed) – sharing US\$9,950 per person, single US\$16,915

All cabins contain private shower and toilet, flat screen TV, telephone and internet connections, hair dryer, and ample storage space.

Price includes:

All meals throughout the voyage aboard the ship, including snacks, coffee, and tea
 All shore excursions and activities throughout the voyage by Zodiac
 Program of lectures by noted naturalists and leadership by experienced expedition staff
 Free use of rubber boots and snowshoes
 Transfers and baggage handling between the airport, hotels and ship (only for those passengers on the group flights to and from Longyearbyen)
 All miscellaneous service taxes and port charges throughout the program
 Comprehensive pre-departure material

Price excludes:

Any airfare, whether on scheduled or charter flights
 Pre- and post-tour land arrangements
 Passport and visa expenses
 Government arrival and departure taxes
 Meals ashore
 Baggage, cancellation, and personal insurance (which is mandatory)
 Excess baggage charges and all items of a personal nature, such as laundry, bar, beverage

charges, and telecommunication charges

The customary gratuity at the end of the voyage for stewards and other service personnel aboard (guidelines will be provided)