

Expedition circumnavigation of Spitsbergen

"Myths, magic, midnight sun"



With the *HANSEATIC* inspiration from Longyearbyen to Tromsø
(INS2415)

15.07.2024 - 25.07.2024

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Monday, 15 July 2024: Longyearbyen - Capital of an Arctic island paradise

Sunrise: --:-- o'clock				Sunset: --:-- o'clock			
Midday position		Nautical miles Total	Temperature (°C)		Air pressure hPa	Humidity %	Wind Beaufort
Latitude	Longitude		Air	Water			
78° 13.8' N		127	8	7	1010	87	N2
15° 36.2' E							

Weather: overcast

Through the elliptical aeroplane window, we see the clouds clearing and catch our first glimpse of our accommodation for the coming days. The *HANSEATIC inspiration* is moored on the quay in the calm waters of Adventdalen. Our aircraft lands on Longyearbyen's special runway. We are in the northernmost town and therefore on the northernmost runway in the world. When we arrive, we arrive in two separate groups, and some notice that the planes are not full. The small number of passengers is mainly due to the weight of the planes, resulting in the split flights. The airport is built on permafrost soil, which is thawing and becoming unstable due to climate change. This is the first sign of the fragility of the ecosystem in which we will be travelling.



POLAR BEAR WARNING SIGN, EVERYWHERE ON SVALBARD

The crew collects our luggage and we take a tour of the town. We immediately notice the old conveyor belt systems that run from the town's former coal mines and meet at the "Spider", the central collection point of the conveyor railway. Next to this industry from a bygone era - coal mining paused and will be stopped until 2025.

After our journey, we relax with a little refreshment and a breath-taking panorama over the fjord. The subsequent tour through the town's museum gives us a first, fleeting impression of the geology, biology, history, and culture of Svalbard and whets our appetite for more! What will we experience on this trip?

After a short detour into the city, which is as well laid out as it is sleepy; we reach the *HANSEATIC inspiration* at around 4 pm. All aboard!

We take part in the obligatory safety drill - everyone is at their emergency stations within ten minutes - grab our rubber boots - the equipment for the expedition - and at 7 pm it is time to "Cast off!". Captain Jörn Gottschalk has moored us in Ymerbukta for the first night, directly in front of Fridtjovbreen. After a long day of travelling, the weather rewards us with powerful evening sunlight that breaks through the cloud cover and bathes the glacier in a bright, warm light. As your chronicler writes these lines, it is 11:45 pm. It is not going to get any darker. We have truly arrived in the far north and one can only imagine that Svalbard would like to welcome us with this midnight sun.



VIEW OF FRIDTJOVBREEN WHILE THE MIDNIGHT SUN

Tuesday, 16 July 2024: From expedition preparations to summer huts

Sunrise: --:-- o'clock				Sunset: --:-- o'clock			
Midday position		Nautical miles Total	Temperature (°C)		Air pressure hPa	Humidity %	Wind Beaufort
Latitude	Longitude		Air	Water			
78° 15.1' N	12° 41.8' E	46	4	5	1014	87	0
Weather: Medium cloud cover							



PERHYTTA ON GJERTSENODDEN (PICTURE: B. GERHARD)

The sun stayed true to us throughout the night. After this first quiet night, life gradually awakens on our ship. The particularly early birds among us arrive on deck at 6 am armed with their cameras and enjoy the peace and quiet of the morning. The fitness centre is well filled; others prefer to do their kilometres below deck exploring the ship. Where is the Inspiration Walk? Is this the way to the Lido? Orientation is still a little difficult, but should improve very quickly. "Oh!", "That's marvellous!" can be heard from everywhere. And "Unbelievable!". It is still hard to grasp what kind of place we have found ourselves in. At 9 am we raise anchor and leave the panorama of Ymerbukta in a northwesterly direction, heading for Poolepynten, 30 nautical miles away.

After a relaxed breakfast, we are briefed on the AECO regulations by the expedition team. The Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators, an association of cruise companies whose aim is to protect the sensitive environment from excessive tourism pressure, imposes a bio-security check on us in addition to rules of behaviour ashore. The outermost layer of our clothing for landings, especially zips and Velcro fasteners, is checked and, if necessary, any organic material is removed. This is done, to protect the endemic flora of Svalbard. We have now completed all the organisational requirements for this morning and are ready for landings. The first of these landings is in Poolepynten, which we reach at 1 pm. Those who have not stuck to our plan are the walrus. A group of males of this species often stay on the shallow beach of this spit and use it as a resting place to digest their food. However, nature does not keep to our schedule. As we are unable to spot any animals from the ship, the expedition leader and captain decide to move the landing to Gjertsenodden after a brief consultation. It takes just an hour and we are already anchored in St. Jonsfjorden.

The landing routine begins, which is similar to a clockwork sequence of interlocking tasks and which will accompany us for every landing from now on. The ship positions itself, the Zodiacs are lowered into the water, and our polar bear guards board the first boat. They set up a safety zone that is free of polar bears and therefore safe. Our expedition team then reaches land. Points of interest are defined, the experts are distributed to their respective locations, and the "go ahead" is given to the ship for the passengers. The safe sailor's grip stabilises us as we get on and off the Zodiac. Ulrike is waiting for us on land. She shows us the landing site. The highlight here is certainly the hut of the trappers Per and Knut. Built in 1962, the log cabin, an unusual type of construction, was one of the last hunting shelters built on Svalbard for fur trapping. Reindeer, fox, and polar bear skins were hunted during the summer months. Since the ban on polar bear hunting in 1973, fur trapping was no longer economically viable here. The hut is still used irregularly during the reindeer-hunting season.

Next to the hut, we find our first Arctic tundra landscape. The tree- and bush-free vegetation here thrives comparatively lushly on the thawing permafrost of the glacier remnants. With an average annual precipitation of 190 mm in Svalbard, the meltwater-fed surface runoff is the ecosystem's most important source of water.

We leave the St. Jonsfjorden and set course northwards in a southerly arc around Prins Karls Forland to Ny-Ålesund, 99 nautical miles away. As the *HANSEATIC inspiration* sails out of the fjord, we accept the captain's invitation to the outside deck and toast to a wonderful journey with him and his officers.

Cheers!

Wednesday, 17 July 2024: On the trail of polar exploration - Ny-Ålesund and 14.-July-Glacier

Sunrise: --:-- o'clock				Sunset: --:-- o'clock			
Midday position		Nautical miles Total	Temperature (°C)		Air pressure hPa	Humidity %	Wind Beaufort
Latitude	Longitude		Air	Water			
78° 55.7' N		148	5	6	1017	90	E2
11° 56.3' E							

Weather: sunny

In the early morning, we round Mitrahalvøya with Kapp Mitra as the outermost headland and enter Kongsfjorden. Rocks from the early Mesozoic Era lie on our starboard side. The 250 million year old, reddish-coloured sandstone is overlain by shell limestone. Both are indications of the tropical conditions in which the archipelago once existed. The first ice floes cross our path - witnesses to the calving glacier in front of us, which marks the landscape-dominating peaks, the three crowns, at the end of the fjord. They symbolise the Scandinavian countries of Norway, Denmark, and Sweden.



AMUNDSEN BUST

In the inner Kongsfjorden, opposite Blomstrandhalvøya, lies our destination for today: Ny-Ålesund. Situated at 78°50' north, this settlement is the northernmost in the world. The former coal mining settlement is now an international centre for Arctic research with a focus on atmospheric and ozone layer research. However, geological, marine biological, and glaciological work is also carried out by various nations (Norway, Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy, India, China, South Korea), which maintain institutes here. In order not to disturb the sensitive measurements, we switch off the WiFi and Bluetooth on board home in accordance with the rules. We do not want to disturb anyone. Our bridge crew has planned and booked ahead so that we can moor at the only pier. We walk freely through town. On entering the settlement, we first reach the public museum about the history of Ny-Ålesund, coal mining, the history of research, and an insight into local medical treatment methods. The main part of the museum is dedicated to Amundsen's expeditions, which we will encounter again and again in town. It was from here that the adventurer launched his aeroplane expedition in 1925 and his airship expedition in 1926 to win the race to the North Pole.

From the museum, we visit the research stations of the individual countries that are located here. Climatology, geodesy, atmospheric research, as well as biological and geological topics are at the centre of interest, often with a focus on climate change. The centrepiece of the walk is certainly the bust of Amundsen, one of the many monuments to this prominent figure of polar research that have been erected in the Arctic region.

The next stop is the airship mast where Amundsen set off with the NORGE on his second attempt to reach the North Pole. As our historian Anuschka tells us later in the day, Amundsen was successful. However, the Norwegian adventurer was not able to enjoy his success for long, as he was lost in 1928 while trying to rescue his rival Nobile.

We head back towards the ship, take a quick look at the world's northernmost post office on the way home and do not miss the chance to buy a souvenir in the local shop - but only after taking off our shoes, please!



THE EDGE OF THE 14 JULY GLACIER

In the afternoon, we cross over to Krossfjorden and have a Zodiac landing at the foot of the 17.–July-Glacier. Named after the French national day, the first traces of Albert of Monaco's voyage of discovery can be seen here. He will cross our course repeatedly. Before going ashore, we fortify ourselves once again with the delicacies prepared by the galley crew. Even those of us with a sweet tooth I get their money's worth! In this summery weather, the pool bar tempts us with waffles and excellent cinnamon ice cream!

The journey in the Zodiacs takes time, as our *HANSEATIC inspiration* cannot get too close to the glacier. This gives us plenty of time to search the steep slopes for our orange polar bear guards, who once again ensure a polar bear-free zone. In bright sunshine, we walk along the fjord towards the glacier and its shimmering blue, jagged front. We try to be as quiet as possible, but every now and then, we startle a few eider ducks, which then take off chattering wildly. The kittiwakes, which had taken a dip in the small pond on the beach before our arrival, do the same. They prefer to wait for our leave on the few ice floes floating in the milky, cloudy fjord from the calving of the glacier.

Even though glaciers are characterised by their constant removal of sediment and meltwater, a series of relict terminal moraines on the opposite bank indicate a steady retreat of the glacier. At this moment, there is a crash! The glacier calves and a fresh, deep blue surface emerges. There are two medium-sized pieces and just a short time later, a small tsunami reaches the shore where we are standing. We make our way back. The bravest among us dare to jump into the cold water, and then we are driven back to the ship by our sailors. Time for a hot shower and a cosy evening to take stock. In order to do this against the appropriate backdrop, our captain moves the ship in front of the Lilliehöökbreven with its 6.4 km wide front.

We conclude the evening with an informative talk show with the polar bear guards. They answer all our questions about the hunting aspects of their bear guarding function. Our expert Carina answers biological questions about the life and behaviour of these animals.

Thursday, 18 July 2024: Whaling, fog, and pack ice - Smeerenburg and the ice edge

Sunrise: --:-- o'clock				Sunset: --:-- o'clock			
Midday position		Nautical miles Total	Temperature (°C)		Air pressure hPa	Humidity %	Wind Beaufort
Latitude	Longitude		Air	Water			
80° 01.3 N 11° 32.8' E		120	4	6	1016	84	E2
Weather: foggy							

Our day starts very early today. The anchor drops at Amsterdamøya at 6 am and our expedition team goes ashore at 6:30 am to prepare the landing site. We are greeted by a small arctic fox with its grey fur typical for summer. In winter, its fur changes colour and turns white. From a geological point of view, the flat surface on which we find ourselves is the result of the sandy, weathered gneiss that forms the core of the island and the constant ocean currents. During the Holocene, *i.e.* the period after the last ice maximum 10,000 years ago, these currents formed a plain of sand.

Walrus use the flat topography to take their digestive nap. A group of animals rest at the tip of the island. They are males of the species, which we find here in the west of the archipelago. The animals were hunted until the last century and decimated to around 100 individuals on Svalbard. The population has been recovering since then, with migration from Franz Josef Land taking place. The females are somewhat more cautious with their calves than the more exploratory males. The population around the Svalbard archipelago is spatially divided into a female eastern and a male western part.

In addition to walrus, whalers also benefited from the flat terrain in the 17th century. Here they could pull the whales, which they had caught on the high seas, ashore, remove the blubber with their long flensing knives and refine it into oil in large cooking pots. During this process, the oil repeatedly splashed out of the bowls. It solidified the sand around the cooking area in a circular structure that is still clearly visible at this point today.



HISTORIC COOKING CENTRE FOR WHALE OIL

We leave Amsterdamøya at around 10:30 am and head north. Destination: unknown. We want to reach the pack ice, whose location and extend is constantly changing due to the ice drift driven by ocean currents. We can only estimate when we will come across it.

The moment our bow leaves the shelter of the archipelago and enters the waters of the open sea, we plunge into a dense bank of fog. We are in an area where the waters of the North Atlantic Current, which are unusually warm for these latitudes, meet the cold air masses of the polar region. This meeting of different temperatures and humidity creates this shallow fog bank. We continued on our northbound course undeterred. We pass the time with the amenities that our crew has prepared for us. Time to reflect on what we have seen. A few minke whales cross our path and make for excellent photographs.

For our young explorers, Lisa and Anselm give an introduction to the rock cycle. Isabel and Kathleen explain how to take the best photo. For the older explorers, Anuschka and Carina give informative talks about the disastrous Schröder-Schranz expedition and the life of polar bears in the ice, respectively, when suddenly a crash goes through the ship and it begins to shake mightily.



PACK ICE AT 80°42' NORTH

At 3:45 pm, we hit the ice edge and work our way up to a maximum latitude of 80°42.2' north. The fog has lifted in the meantime, giving us a marvellous view of the "eternal ice". We stream onto the *Inspiration Walk* and simply enjoy the slow journey through the ice. The floes are constantly shifting, making every second a unique experience.

The view of the endless, white silence is breath taking. The ice shimmers in all possible shades from white to blue, and we feel as if we have plunged into another world. Ringed seals swim in the water and a bearded seal lazes on an ice floes directly in front of the bow.

We spend the evening in this incredible setting. The silence is all encompassing, interrupted only now and again by the cracking of the ice. We savour the interplay of water and ice and the deep silence of the Arctic. The majesty of this landscape takes hold of us and we take our time to absorb the impressions.

With all the grandeur and uniqueness that we are able to enjoy here, we notice the many freshwater pools on the surface and the thin ice. Although we are so high up in the north, the question arises: how "eternal" is this ice?

Friday, 19 July 2024: Polar Bears of Monaco- Liefdefjord and Bockfjord

Sunrise: --:-- o'clock				Sunset: --:-- o'clock			
Midday position		Nautical miles Total	Temperature (°C)		Air pressure hPa	Humidity %	Wind Beaufort
Latitude	Longitude		Air	Water			
79° 40.0' N	14° 09.7' E	117	6	7	1013	87	N1
Weather: overcast							

The fog bank that we passed through during yesterday's lunchtime still lies heavy on the northern tip of Spitsbergen. We start the day grey in grey, while a dark strip slowly appears on the horizon: the shore of Andrée Land. Geologically, we enter the oldest landscape on Svalbard. The mountains hiding in the clouds are made of "Old Red". The sediment that builds up these rocks dates back to the Devonian period. At that time, a dry, desert-like climate prevailed, which oxidised the iron to a strong, dark red haematite.

We reach our planned landing point in Gråhuken. Here we want to visit the Ritter hut. Its namesake, Christiane Ritter, lived and spent the winter here, and became famous for her novel "A Woman in the Polar Night".

The terrain is characterised by a clearly visible plain on which light-coloured boulders can be seen repeatedly. One of our seamen notices that one of these stones is moving. Validated by our polar bear watch team, it is soon clear: abort the landing, we have found a polar bear!

A few hundred metres above the hut, the magnificent animal lies stretched out on all fours and only lifts its head listlessly from time to time. He is flanked by a flock of seagulls and our polar bear guards confirm the dark colouring of the area around him as blood and a carcass. We look down on a bear that has eaten its fill and is resting to digest. Polar bears are often seen lying on their stomachs with their legs stretched out. This is how they cool their body temperature on the cool ground.

After a good hour, we do not want to disturb him any further, turn away again and put our keel on a southerly course into the fjord towards Mushamna, our spontaneous alternative landing site 7 nautical miles away.

There is no bear in sight and our landing is successful. Probably the most striking detail at the landing site can be prominently found on a hill: The main hut of the Sysselmeister, built in 1987. It is from here that the governor's employees carry out their task of monitoring and ensuring compliance with Svalbard regulations by visitors. Today it is not manned. Our expedition leader tells us that the hut is filled via an application process in which the successful applicants are allowed to stay in the hut for a year free of charge. As an extra, the residents receive a licence to hunt foxes, ptarmigans, reindeer and seals. Two adjoining cabins are available for catering, toilet, and sauna. There is also an additional platform for securing supplies against polar bears, as well as several barrels of fuel. This is used for refuelling sporadically arriving helicopters. If you compare it with the shelter built by Hillmar Nøis in 1927, a little further upstream at, things are dignified here today.

However, the highlight of this day is certainly, what follows in the afternoon. We turn our bow deeper into the Woodfjord and finally turn into the Liefdefjord. Suddenly there is a rumble in the ship. We hit ice again. The destination of our journey is foreshadowed. At 2:30 pm, we reach the Monacobreen. The imposing glacier, with its six kilometre wide front, forms the end of the fjord. It seems to be in a very active phase. The thundering of the ice can be heard without interruption. Just before we drop anchor, the sky opens up. A glacier truly thrives on sunlight! The play of light from this mix of clearing clouds, deep blue ice, and the shadows of the pointed mountains is breath taking! Today, nature brings out its full repertoire of beauty for us. We dive in with a Zodiac cruise and experience the glacier with all our senses. The ice

sculptures look strange; the ice itself feels sharp-edged and cold. We hear the crackling of air escaping from the ice and the surroundings simply smell fresh, clear, and pure. After a good hour, we make our way back. Wait a minute! Did we not say we were experiencing the glacier with all our senses? Our hotel manager Doris personally takes care of the missing one. She and her team have prepared a little surprise for us on the way back to the ship. In the middle of the fjord, we are served refreshments from the Champagne Zodiac to toast this wonderful day and savour the glacier paradise. Back on board, we recapitulate the events and, despite all the beauty, see the sharp retreat of the glaciers around us. It is important that we keep reminding ourselves that we are travelling in a beautiful but fragile landscape.

We say goodbye to the Monacobreen. As we leave, we wave starboard once again to our sister ship, the *HANSEATIC nature*, which accompanied us in the afternoon. Here we part ways again. See you next time!



ZODIAC CRUISE AT MONACOBREEN (PICTURE: B. GERHARD)

Saturday, 20 July 2024: From lunar landscapes to bird cliffs - Palanderbukta and Alkefjellet

Sunrise: --:-- o'clock				Sunset: --:-- o'clock			
Midday position		Nautical miles Total	Temperature (°C)		Air pressure hPa	Humidity %	Wind Beaufort
Latitude	Longitude		Air	Water			
79° 35.3' N 20° 42.2' E		153	6	7	1015	89	NE3

Weather: sunny



VEGETATION-FREE TERRACE WITH HEXAGONAL FROST
PATTERN SOILS

Today we wake up in a new world. Yesterday, we were surrounded by rugged mountains and dark colours, today we are presented with a gentle hilly landscape with flat terrain and yellowish-pastel-coloured rock. The complete absence of plants is striking. We drop anchor in Palanderbukta, with the foothills of a plateau glacier stretching out in front of us. As we travel by Zodiac through the crystal-clear water, we see a barren landscape that at first glance seems to offer little life and appears to be out of this world. But on closer inspection,

we discover gentle waves of yellowish sediment stretching over a hill several hundred metres long. Here grows the Svalbard poppy, a small, bush-like plant with yellow flowers that defiantly holds their own in this inhospitable environment. Along the beach, we notice structures of assorted grain sizes: long lines of coarser pebbles surrounded by fine material. These are signs of permafrost, hexagonal polygonal patterned soils that are elongated by solifluction. The sediment we walk on is interspersed with fossils from the Jurassic, Triassic, and Precambrian periods. We find shells, brachiopods, and corals everywhere, giving us an insight into the ancient history of this land.

For the afternoon Zodiac cruise, we drive along the imposing cliffs of Alkefjellet. The impressive cliff face made of basalt columns from the Jura Mountains offers extensive breeding ledges for a medium-sized colony of thick-billed. Around 60,000 pairs of the stubby-winged birds breed here. The soundscape is overwhelming, and all around us we see the seemingly clumsy birds landing safely on the rocks. It is an impressive spectacle of nature. Unfortunately, no Arctic fox can be spotted today. The skilful hunter likes to collect the guillemot eggs and chicks, that have fallen off the ledges, under the colony and store them for the long winter. For it, they are treasures in the ground. Another subterranean treasure flashes in light-coloured clay just above the water level: the dolerite has baked into marble on contact with the underlying limestone.

On our return, our team of experts recap with us what we have seen over the last few days and prepare us for what lies ahead. During dinner, our captain has to interrupt the "chef's dinner", during which the members of our kitchen team present their favourite dishes. A polar bear has been spotted off the bow. However, the ruler of the Arctic declines an audience. After a few minutes, it leaves our field of vision and we continue on our course to Torellneset. We are very much looking forward to the new surprises of the next day!

Sunday, 21 July 2024: Losing and finding walruses - Alkefjellet and Kapp Ravenstein

Sunrise: --:-- o'clock				Sunset: --:-- o'clock			
Midday position		Nautical miles Total	Temperature (°C)		Air pressure hPa	Humidity %	Wind Beaufort
Latitude	Longitude		Air	Water			
79° 03.9' N		105	5	4	1010	81	S4
20° 03.9' E							

Weather: sunny

We arrived in Torellnesetin the evening and could see the objects of our interest lying on the elongated headland. A group of females and calves were comfortably resting on the beach when we arrived. When we woke up in the morning, the dark patches on the beach were no longer visible. A look through the binoculars cleared things up: A large polar bear was lying on the beach. We saw the walruses, frightened by the presence of this top predator, swimming and looking repeatedly at the polar bear. Even if it is always a one-off encounter, seeing a polar bear always means cancelling any excursion activities. The advantage is, of course, that you always have unexpected free time in our otherwise well-filled schedule. An opportunity to celebrate Sunday breakfast comes in very handy!



POLAR BEAR AT TROLLNESET (PICTURE: B. GERHARD)

Our crew adapts and brings the afternoon schedule forward a little. At around 10:30 am we reach Wilhelmøya, twenty-four nautical miles from Torellnesetin in the Hinlopen Strait, with its tranquil Binnebukta. Bjørnsund, just 1.25 kilometres wide at its narrowest point, separates the island from the island of Spitsbergen. We reach the landing site by Zodiac. It is a steady climb up to a lateral moraine about 100 metres high. We have to follow the flagged path closely as it is flanked by muddy wetlands. Once we reach the small plateau, we find identical structures to those in Palanderbukta. However, the hexagonal frost pattern soils are formed by so-called ice wedges and are clearly visible in the loess-rich permafrost, traced by the vegetation in the depth contours.

Our polar bear guards find a few reindeer bones and polar bear scat on the outskirts of our free-roaming area, all of which are already rotting and therefore old. We realise once again that we are only guests in this place, as we are standing in the polar bears' dining room.



WALRUSES AT KAPP RAVENSTEIN (PICTURE: B. GERHARD)

We spend our afternoon at a new spot for the *HANSEATIC inspiration*. Kapp Ravenstein is only 5 nautical miles south of Torellneset, but it is a completely different world. Our ship is moored in a wide bay that resembles an amphitheatre. The rocky terrain is made up of gentle hills that are repeatedly criss-crossed by small rivers bursting with life. We ascend from the landing site, look over a ridge and now find walrus, seven of them. It is certainly not the group we missed in the morning, but the "Gotcha!" feeling spreads. We enjoy this moment at least as much as the colossi enjoy their sunbathing. We can observe them well from our slightly elevated position. After this stop, we walk along the ridge and find some fresh troll bread! We enjoy the view of this marvellous nature once again before we start Zarathustra's descent to the people. Down on the beach, in addition to the obligatory driftwood, we also find a huge amount of rubbish. Fishing nets, plastic parts of bottles, boxes, lighters. We collect all this human litter. According to the "Clean Up Svalbard" initiative, this rubbish will be reported and disposed of.

Back on board, the schedule continues to be tight. We reminisce somewhat wistfully about the spontaneously quiet morning. The meeting of the Hapag-Lloyd Club is coming up. Although clearly outnumbered by the first-time travellers, as the captain reports, we still do not miss the opportunity to raise a glass with them.

To round off this eventful day, the officers around Captain Jörn Gotschalk invite us to enjoy their favourite cocktails, which they prepare for us. Banana Alexander, Mexican, Mango Colada, Mojito - there should be something for everyone! Queen and REM are played for us, but not by our official musicians. Today the crew band of the *HANSEATIC inspiration* does the honours!

Monday, 22 July 2024: A paradisiacal ascent with a view into the future - Spjutnes

Sunrise: --:-- o'clock				Sunset: --:-- o'clock			
Midday position		Nautical miles Total	Temperature (°C)		Air pressure hPa	Humidity %	Wind Beaufort
Latitude	Longitude		Air	Water			
78° 16.1' N		105	7	6	1011	87	SW4
20° 19.8' E							
Weather: sun							

Landing, walk, animals, back. Cultural philistines would break it down like this, but this landing site is also unique! We go ashore in the centre of a large, amphitheatre-like valley. Our path leads us up the tiers formed by gentle terraces. The heavily overgrown ground bounces beneath our feet. The tundra is doing well here! The glacier ice must have retreated here a long time ago. The soil is so far advanced, that we can even see the odd mushroom. In the stony ledges built up by dolerite, there is a nest of a snow bunting. Behind the stone gallery of this natural amphitheatre, we encounter reindeer on both sides. We do not disturb these gentle animals, even if they occasionally peer sceptically at our blue jackets and us. They graze and lie blissfully in front of us. The tundra here is intact, with a multitude of flowering plants. Moss Campion, snow buttercup and the rarest of them all, the polar Campion, to name just the most important. Behind this ecological paradise, the wasteland spreads out into the distance, a likely scenario towards which the Svalbard ecosystem is heading. In front of us is a landscape rugged and sparsely vegetated by the outflowing water. The permafrost has already completely melted here. Without the stabilising effect of the ice and its function as a water reservoir for the vegetation, a process of devastation is set in motion here, as the low rainfall in this region alone is not sufficient to supply the vegetation with water.



AMPHITHEATRE-LIKE BAY IN SPJUTNES

Back on board, the crew have prepared a pølser party by the pool for lunch. Over hot dogs, we have the opportunity to recapitulate what we have seen today. We spend the afternoon at sea. Our course is south-west towards the southern tip of Spitsbergen. Our experts bridge the waiting time with lectures on Arctic whales and the geological history of Svalbard.

Tuesday, 23 July 2024: Humpback whales in front of a glacier panorama - Samarinvågen in Hornsund

Sunrise: --:-- o'clock				Sunset: --:-- o'clock			
Midday position		Nautical miles Total	Temperature (°C)		Air pressure hPa	Humidity %	Wind Beaufort
Latitude	Longitude		Air	Water			
76° 56.4' N		182	10	4	1012	83	N1
16° 14.6' E							
Weather: sunny							

Once again, we see a completely new world. In the morning, the *HANSEATIC inspiration* reaches Hornsund, a landscape formed by folding processes. The thought creeps in that the Alps have sunk into the sea and now only the peaks rise above the surface. At around 8:30 am we reach Samarinvågen in southern Spitsbergen. Just as we are about to drop anchor, we spot a young humpback whale astern. The captain turns a little to get a better view of the animal, but it quickly distances itself from us. The anchor is dropped and we hear our General Expedition Manager call out our colours one last time. This is to be the last landing of this journey. Once again, we prepare ourselves for the Zodiac shuttle with rubber boots and appropriate waterproof clothing. We have about a hundred metres of ascent ahead of us and by the halfway point we realise that the waterproof, warm clothing is very good for shuttling, but less suitable for a mountain hike in full sunshine. It is warm. Against all odds, we climb the mountain. Once again, the effort is worth it! We can see the glacier-filled Hornsund in front of us. Jonas Poole, who travelled through this area in 1610 and named it Hornsund after a reindeer horn he found, seems to have followed a premonition. Although the valley is closed off by a glacier and should therefore be called a fjord, Pool named this place "sund". If you follow today's maps, you can imagine that it is in fact a glacier-filled strait, a sound. Even though there are fossilised and living plants up here in all their glory, we are mainly fascinated by the indescribable beauty of this landscape. The wide-open eyes of each of us confirm this. It is a successful end to an impressive journey!



THE FINAL GLACIER PANORAMA

There is a certain reserve about us as we make our way back to the Zodiacs. We hear the countdown for the last Zodiac shuttle repeatedly on the radios in an increasingly impressive tone. You could be forgiven for thinking that we wanted to delay the return journey for as long as possible. It is just too beautiful to leave!

Nevertheless, we are all back on board with only a slight delay. Our captain lifts the anchor from Svalbard's seabed and turns the bow southwards. We have 477 nautical miles to cover before we reach our next destination, Tromsø. It will take us just over a day and a half to cover this distance. Our experts will fill the travel time with lectures and our crew with sporting, relaxing, and culinary specialities for us. Today we start with a travelogue about a walk to the North Pole in moccasins and the life of seals.

Now that this final day on the Svalbard archipelago has been able to boast some special natural features, the only thing missing for a worthy finale is a cultural highlight. The crew will not miss the opportunity to organise a farewell party for us! As always, the bar provides us with all kinds of liquid delicacies, true symphonies of flavour! The map of our itinerary, which led to many a discussion about the course, was raffled off. The highlight of the evening is certainly the *HANSEATIC inspiration's* shanty crew choir. Seamen classics such as "Auf der Reeperbahn" are sung, and our captain and staff captain do not miss the opportunity to perform a duet for us! The HanseAtrium is cooking! A worthy finale to an eventful journey. We are briefly interrupted once again. A few humpback whales do the honours once again; it seems as if Svalbard is wishing us a safe journey. We make a full turn to starboard and say goodbye!

For technical reasons - this logbook still has to be edited and copied onto USB-sticks - the exact report of the chronicler ends here. The editorial deadline was 00:00. What is written after this time is what could be added, what is planned - and what will probably happen. Any similarities with reality are therefore purely coincidental!

While our captain keeps the ship on course for Tromsø, we spend the day at sea. It is a relaxed journey south. Without any particular incidents. During the trip, our experts do the honours once again. On the programme, we find “adaptations of fish and their abilities”, as well as the “race to the North Pole” with all its explorers from Amundsen to Zeppelin.

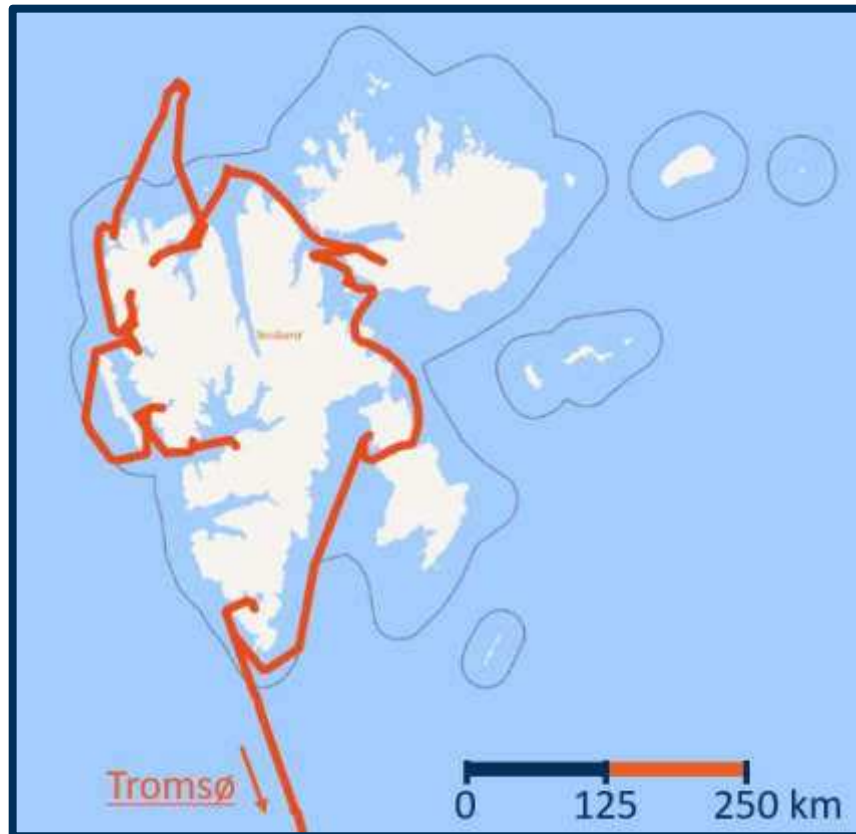
The final recap of the trip concludes the programme. Here, the last questions about common knowledge about Svalbard, its general and specialised flora are answered. We look at the excursions of its inhabitants, the love stories of its visitors and the characteristics of its explorers.

For the last time, we will also enjoy the creations of our Chef Dominik Igl's team. One last time we are pampered by the amenities of Doris Adler's hotel team and are safely navigated through the waves of the Arctic Ocean by our ship's crew under Captain Jörn Gottschalk. Tomorrow we will reach Tromsø and thus disembark the *HANSEATIC inspiration*. It was a memorable journey, characterised by imposing landscapes, spectacular evidence of the early explorers and, above all, the inhabitants of this barren landscape, who approached us shyly, sunbathed unperturbed on the beach, grazed on the tundra, or drove us away with their mere presence. We take many impressions with us and see the world from a new perspective. Just like after every journey. And that leaves this chronicler with only one thing to say:

Bon Voyage!

**“Freedom on the seas! The breath of the crypts
does not go out to its pure airs;
The world is completely everywhere,
where man cannot reach with his torment.”**

(Inspired by Alexander von Humboldt)



ACTUAL TRAVEL ROUTE

We hope that this logbook will help you to remember your clockwise journey through the Svalbard Archipelago - hopefully fondly!

Oliver Donnerhack (our geologist) wrote it. He is therefore also responsible for any inadequacies, for which we apologise.

The colleagues contributed information relating to the trips they accompanied. They also helped to copy this opus onto USB-sticks and to "bag" and "deliver" them.

On behalf of HAPAG-LLOYD CRUISES, the expedition team, the ship's officers, and the entire crew, we would like to thank you for choosing our expedition voyage **"Myths, Magic, Midnight Sun"**.

Have a safe journey home, please stay healthy, "Auf Wiedersehen!" until the next time on the *HANSEATIC inspiration* (or a sister ship) - and:

Stay curious!

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