



Tough

SVALBARD ADVENTURE



This information should answer some of your questions about the trip and give you a better idea of what we do day-to-day. It doesn't hope to answer everything. If you have any questions please get in touch.



Petuniabukta base camp. Photo Roger Robb

- **Itinerary exclusive to High Places**
- **Arctic Circle Wilderness Adventure**
- **24 hour daylight**
- **Remote and challenging days**
- **Experienced Scandinavian guides**

Svalbard

The Svalbard archipelago lies between 74° and 81°N, only 700 miles from the Pole, and comprises 4 large mountainous islands and hundreds of smaller ones. Spitsbergen - the largest island in the archipelago - has 4 small settlements including Longyearbyen, the world's most northerly town. There is little infrastructure and in summer the only means of transport is by air, boat, or foot. Spitsbergen has a mild summer climate due to the influence of the Gulf Stream when the snow line recedes to uncover tenacious plant life. Today Svalbard is protected by 2 national parks, 15 bird sanctuaries and 2 plant reserves.

History of Svalbard

It wasn't until 1596 that Svalbard was first discovered by Willem Barentz. He named the largest island Spitsbergen, and brought back reports of the abundant wildlife within the fjords which was to

sustain a whaling industry for nearly 100 years. At the turn of this century coal mining operations started, and brought with them the first settlements. With different nationalities now investing in the islands, there was need for a formal administration. In 1920 The League of Nations passed 'The Treaty of Svalbard', assigning sovereignty to Norway. The latest step in Svalbard's history was the opening of the all year-round airport. This has brought a renewed prosperity to the islands with an increase in tourism. Today, most visitors stay within the settlements, or cruise the west coast. Inland, Spitsbergen is practically untouched, and seldom visited.

The trip

This mountaineering and walking expedition operates from a remote base camp in the heart of Spitsbergen, one of Europe's last true wildernesses. From the camp, we climb several of the surrounding peaks and make a multi-day trip up the vast glaciers to the mountains and ridges beyond. All this at 78°N in 24 hours of daylight!

We have been running trip in Spitsbergen since 1999. At the start 'High Places' designed and ran this exclusive trip themselves but shipping out equipment and food etc. became too much and so in 2001 we placed ourselves in the good hands of a locally based Norwegian Company. This itinerary however remains exclusive to High Places.

Trip grade

This trip has been graded 'Tough' and includes some 11+ hour days – with 24 hours of daylight available we like to make use of the weather/conditions. It is advisable to start the trip with a reasonable level of fitness - otherwise it may seem a grade harder. Likewise, if you are not used to carrying overnight gear you may also find the carrying days a grade harder.

Walking

This is a wilderness landscape and there are no paths. On valley floors, or along the coast, conditions are usually straightforward but the glaciers and moraine approaches will be more challenging and rugged. On the day walks, we carry equipment comparable to that for winter hill walking. On overnight trips we will need to carry sleeping bags, tents, and a share of the food, in addition to the usual items.

A great feature of this tour is the amount of time we spend on glaciers. Spitsbergen's glaciers tend to be broad and easy-angled with few hidden complications. Crampons ice axes and harnesses are required and are used on some days of glacier travel (can be hired locally if pre booked). Instruction will be given and no previous knowledge of ice axe, crampon, or rope safety technique is necessary.



A happy trekker. Photo Karin Töpfer

Polar Bears

This is polar bear country! There are sightings each year in the area and there is always a possibility that a polar bear will visit us. During July and August however, the bear population should be well to the north and east following their natural food source (seals) at the edge of the pack ice. As a precaution there will be a trip fence around base camp (the place most likely to attract a lost bear due to the smell) and a rifle will be carried. Although we have no record of any incidents, our Norwegian colleagues do stress that it is important to understand and respect the danger and to stay together as a group at all times during the trip.

Transport in Spitsbergen

We access base camp by boat - a journey of approximately 3 hours. Boat rescheduling and bad weather can always affect timings. You will need to carry your own gear and a share of the group equipment to the base camp which is usually a short walk from the landing point.

Climate

A northward branch of the Gulf Stream brings a mild climate to Svalbard. The average summer temperature is +5°C (with a relatively mild –12°C in winter). During your stay the fjords will be ice-free, and snow limited to the glaciers or scattered deep drifts, which have not completely thawed. We can expect temperatures to range from 0°C to +15°C.

Svalbard's climate is classed as an Arctic semi-desert, with only 200-300mm of precipitation per year. Rain or snow are infrequent in the short summer months - bad weather will most likely take the form of low cloud. Good weather will be clear blue skies and warm sunshine. The midnight sun is visible from mid April to the end of August.

Accommodation

In Longyearbyen we stay in the town's fully serviced lodge with twin bedded rooms and panoramic views. At our base camp we use 2-3-person 4 season geodesic tents with a communal mess tent. On the backpacking section of the trip we will use the most efficient number of tents to save as much weight as possible – possibly some lightweight 6 person tents.

Food

In Longyearbyen breakfast is included and there is a cafeteria where lunch and dinner cost around NOK90 each, or NOK400 upwards in the restaurant. See itinerary for full details of which meals are included. Once at basecamp all meals are provided. Our base camp food is shipped from Norway and meals prepared by your guides will aim to be varied, plentiful and tasty, but short on fresh fruit or vegetables. Vegetarians should discuss dietary requirements with us well before the trip. Helping with communal chores will be welcomed (and expected!).

Equipment

Good quality winter hill walking gear is required. This includes boots suitable for crampons, a rucksack/backpack big enough for overnight equipment, and a good sleeping bag. Tents, cooking and essential safety equipment are all provided. Ice axe, crampons, harness and ski poles are required – some may be hired locally if pre booked. A full kit list will be sent with booking dossier.

“How much do I have to carry”

On day walks you will need appropriate clothing and waterproofs as well as ice axe, crampons and harness on some days. You will also need a 1 litre flask each day which is used to rehydrate freeze dried meals. On DAYS 8 & 11 you will be given approx 5kg of communal gear per person including your share of tent, stoves, food and fuel. You will also need to carry your sleeping bag, spare clothing, harness, ice axe and crampons - so make sure your rucksack/pack is big enough – 65-75 litres. See the kit list and packing list to help you keep the carrying to a minimum.

What our clients say...

“Wow! Excellent ‘edge of the wilderness’ stuff. No picnic!”
Rosemary Scott

“I am 57 years old and the trip pushed me a bit. I enjoyed the mixture of the location (fabulous) with the sense of adventure and difficulty. Our guides were two fabulous guys who were obviously enjoying what they were doing. They were very safe and gave clear safety instructions and made sure they were upheld. I cannot rate them highly enough.”
Ced Booth

DAY BY DAY ITINERARY

This itinerary is flexible and should be seen as a guide only. Local conditions, weather or fitness could lead to changes in our daily plans. It is difficult to give accurate times for walking on trackless terrain, glacier and moraine and we have given distances only. Most days range from 9-12 hours. 'B,L,D' refers to meals included in the trip cost, i.e. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner.

Most people will fly to Spitsbergen from the UK, however you may prefer to join us in Longyearbyen.

DAY 1 Fly to Spitsbergen – arriving by mid afternoon or previous day. The approach to Longyearbyen is spectacular as the glaciated mountains of southern Spitsbergen are directly under the flight path. Afternoon briefing and overnight at the main lodge in town – the historic miners accommodation in Longyearbyen, now fully equipped with twin bedded rooms, laundry and kitchen facilities.

DAY 2 Boat to base camp at Petuniabukta.
Pack up and catch the boat for the journey to base camp. After being put ashore, we all help to set up the camp and settle in. (B,L,D)

DAY 3 Tarantallen
We start the trip with a bang - a magnificent day walk to Tarantallen, a 50m high double arched pinnacle atop a ridge. Our route takes us across moraine fields before ascending a valley towards the col below Tarantallen. We can ascend to the base of the feature, or climb Chephrenfjellet (730m). A long day but well worth it. 21km. (B,L,D)

DAY 4 Petuniabukta
A skills day to introduce or brush up on crampon and glacier techniques followed by a coastal walk with a focus on alpine flora. (B,L,D)

DAY 5 Svenbreen – Hørbybreen - Dicksonland

Our Dicksonland day walk involves three of the areas main glaciers. From camp, we have a short section of difficult moraine to access the Svenbreen (breen means glacier), north of Svenbrehøgda we walk up this glacier, at times roped together, to a col at its north and cross between 2 craggy mountains onto the Hoelbreen and the larger Hørbybreen. The final section of the walk descends the Hørbybreen, returning to our base camp. 21 km. (B,L,D)



Descending Hoelbreen. Photo Ed Warren

DAY 6 Petuniabukta
A rest day with time to prepare for the Mittag-Lefflerbreen expedition. Time also to relax with a sauna and barbeque by the fjord. (B,L,D)

DAY 7 Petuniabukta – Mittag-Lefflerbreen - Heclastakken
The start of the great Mittag-Lefflerbreen adventure! Today we backpack to our advanced camp on a nunataak in the centre of this 7km wide sea of ice. Our route

takes us across the valley floor to the Ragnarbreen which we ascend to meet the Mittag-Lefflerbreen. We camp at Heclastakken in a world of ice and rock. 20 km. (B,L,D)

- DAY 8 Heclastakken – Hoglandsvannet – Furystakken – Heclastakken.
From our camp we set off with light loads to Hoglandsvannet, an old glacial lake sometimes filled with icebergs. We then head on up the glacier to Furystakken for extensive views into the snowbound interior of Spitsbergen. We return to our camp at Heclastakken. 16+km. (B,L,D)
- DAY 9 Hecklstakken – Bottenfjellet – Heclastakken
We head up the smaller Akivbreen, roping up as we reach the snowline to climb Bottenfjellet (925m) for great views towards Austfjorden (east fjords). Dependent on weather and energies we may continue along a high level route before descending a series of glaciers to return to Heclastakken. 19km. (B,L,D)
- DAY 10 Heclastakken – Mittag Lefferbreen – Petuniabukta
With loaded backpacks we re-trace our steps across Mittag-Lefflerbreen to descend Ragnarbreen and return to base camp at Petuniabukta and dinner on the beach. 17km. (B,L,D)
- DAY 11 Longyearbyen
We pack up base camp and rendezvous with our boat back to Longyearbyen, arriving in the early evening. A hot shower at the guesthouse will be heaven before sharing a final celebratory meal together. (B,L,D)
- DAY 12 Depart Longyearbyen or continue with your own arrangements. (B)



Driftwood fire. Photo Roger Robb

ML 11/11

“A big thank you for allowing a casual walker like me to venture further north than I ever imagined, I look forward to browsing through your site for next years trip!”
Peter Ocampo