

Svalbard Islands

Realm of the Polar Bear

July 1 to July 14, 2025



Polar Bears taken through a telephoto lens
© Stefan Froehlich

SAFARI OVERVIEW

Sail past glaciers through Norway's Arctic lit by the midnight sun to find a most mythic predator: the polar bear. This polar adventure is to the famed Svalbard Archipelago of northern Norway. Located between the North Pole and Norway, these islands are home to one of Earth's greatest concentrations of polar bears. This region remains wild and pristine with its vast mountains, dramatic fjords, massive glaciers, and picturesque icebergs coupled with iconic Arctic wildlife. The primary mission of expedition leader and professional photographer Scott Davis is to share with you the raw beauty of the high arctic world and the unique wildlife that inhabits this region, and for those interested also provide you with skills and opportunities to produce quality images of unique Arctic wildlife and beautiful landscapes.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Experience the untouched beauty of massive glaciers, shimmering fjords, and striking ice formations illuminated by 24 hours of daylight.
- Witness polar bears, walruses, Arctic foxes, and Svalbard reindeer in their breathtaking natural surroundings.
- Zodiac cruise past striking cliffs, observing nesting seabird colonies.
- Slip into Svalbard's many inlets and straits that larger ships cannot access.
- Search for walruses, beluga whales, blue whales, and humpback whales.
- Improve your photography skills with biologist-turned-professional-photographer Scott Davis.

LEADER: Scott Davis, assisted by an additional leader.

DAYS: 14, including estimated travel time. 10 nights aboard the ship.

GROUP SIZE: 12.

COST: \$14,475 per person, single occupancy for lower deck cabins and double occupancy for main deck cabins, not including airfare. See the *Costs* section on page 5.

Date	Description	Accommodation	Meals
Jul 1	Travel to Norway.		
Jul 2	Arrive in Longyearbyen, Svalbard, Norway.	Radisson Blu Polar Hotel Spitsbergen, Longyearbyen	—
Jul 3	Embark on our ship in Longyearbyen.	Aboard our ship	B, D
Jul 4-Jul 12	Voyage throughout the Svalbard Archipelago with Zodiac cruises and landings for unbelievable Arctic photography.		B, L, D
Jul 13	Disembark in Longyearbyen for flights homeward.		B
Jul 14	Arrive home.		

LEADERS

Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris carefully selects leaders who are experts in their field to ensure that your experience is the best it can be. Two leaders will provide a range of expertise for your trip.

Scott Davis

Scott is a professional photographer specializing in wildlife, nature, and travel. Originally trained as a wildlife and marine biologist, his research and photo assignments have taken him to the far corners of the globe and all seven continents. National Geographic, BBC, Animal Planet, NY Times, and renowned magazines have used his photography. His patience for teaching and love of capturing the essence of his subjects make him one of our most popular tour leaders. He has extensive experience working in the polar regions having led expeditions and guided in both Antarctica and Svalbard for 15 seasons. His great fondness for these remote polar regions is evident in every expedition he leads and he loves sharing this enthusiasm with all his guests.



SHIP

We chose the most well-equipped and comfortable vessel in the small ship class. The ice-strengthened hull and shallow draft enables you to explore and photograph channels and inlets other ships simply cannot navigate. The



ship is equipped with Zodiacs for cruising and shore excursions. Enjoy excellent wildlife and scenic viewing from a large, dual-level observation deck at the front, and large windows in the social areas. The spacious and comfortable lounge provides room to relax, gather socially, edit photos, and attend informative lectures. You have your own private cabin for lower deck cabins (or shared for main deck cabins), all with private bathroom facilities. With only twelve passengers, this ship is perfect for exploring places bigger ships cannot navigate. See the *Deck Plan* on page 9.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Jul 1 ~ Travel to Longyearbyen, Svalbard, Norway

Travel through Oslo, Norway on your way to Longyearbyen, Svalbard, Norway.

Jul 2 ~ Arrive in Longyearbyen

Arrive in Longyearbyen, Svalbard, Norway, for an overnight stay before boarding the ship the next day.

Longyearbyen is a Scandinavian town located on the island of Spitsbergen, the largest in the Svalbard Archipelago. Three other small settlements on Spitsbergen include another 1,000 people with most in the Russian settlement of Barentsburg. The rest of the 62,000 square kilometers of Spitsbergen, and the remainder of the archipelago, are largely pristine. While walking around Longyearbyen, you'll be surrounded by tiny wildflowers beginning to bloom, and may encounter wildlife such as Svalbard ptarmigan and snow buntings nesting on the outskirts of town. Common eiders, parasitic jaegers (arctic skuas) and arctic terns nest along the coastal flats adjoining the town.



Photo Opp
© Kim Goodwin

Jul 3 ~ Embark on our ship

Today you can choose to do some last-minute shopping, visit the excellent museum next to the Radisson Blu Hotel, explore the shore for birds, or take a side trip to other locales along the coast of Isfjorden. You'll board the ship in the late afternoon.

The waters around these islands are very calm compared to the Antarctic. Due to the shallow seas and the warming waters of the Gulf Stream, the climate is much milder than one would expect so far north. During this in-depth voyage, you will have ample opportunities to land ashore, Zodiac cruise, and view wildlife from the decks of our ship.



Svalbard Ship
© Analise Dubner

Flexibility is paramount in expedition travel. Our itinerary depends on the weather and ice conditions. We emphasize photography and observation of polar bears and other Arctic wildlife along with unique and beautiful landscapes, complying with local regulations regarding wildlife sightings in Svalbard. Our small group size gives us the flexibility to stay at a perfect photographic

moment for however long needed according to the wildlife behavior and reactions.

Jul 4 – Jul 12 ~ Voyage through the Svalbard Archipelago

Your expedition will have an incredible amount of freedom to explore the Svalbard archipelago. In the land of 24-hr daylight, you'll search for Arctic wildlife of all shapes and sizes. The region hosts species that will present you with great opportunities to capture world-class images. Your small group expedition allows for flexibility and freedom to cruise around the shores. When on shore, you'll have the opportunity to hike, explore, and photograph wildlife and landscapes. You'll also find that Svalbard is a geologist's paradise with all the ancient colorful rock strata exposed and ready to explore.

You'll visit fantastic bird cliffs where black-legged kittiwakes, northern fulmars, and several species of alcids breed which include dovekie, black guillemot, thick-billed murre (Brünnich's guillemot), and Atlantic puffin. Where ice abounds, you'll likely see polar bears, seals, and ivory gulls. You'll also have time to get inland a bit to see pink-footed and barnacle geese along with common eider, king eider, and long-tailed duck (oldsquaw).

While walking, stay alert for nesting shorebirds, such as red phalaropes, terns, and skuas. Be aware that arctic terns and parasitic jaegers (arctic skuas) are quick to dive bomb if they are disturbed. While on land, keep an eye out for arctic fox and Svalbard reindeer (an endemic subspecies with short legs) foraging during the plentiful summer months. Read more about some of our favorite landing sites below.

A note about Norwegian geography terms (as seen in many of the following place names): "bukta" means bay, "sund" means sound, "sundet" or "stretet" means channel or strait, "øy" or "øya" means island, "landet" means land or country, "breen" means glacier, and, of course, "fjord" or "fjorden" means fjord or inlet.

Liefdefjorden

The end of this fjord encompasses the broad, impressive glacier front of Monacobreen. Polar bears regularly visit this fjord, searching for seals, birds, and eggs to eat. At this time of year, many geese feed on the lush tundra, and keep an eye out for the rare king eider. The surrounding sea is a favorite feeding spot for thousands of kittiwakes.

Raudfjorden

Along the north coast of Spitsbergen, Raudfjorden is a beautiful fjord with spectacular glaciers. It is home to ringed and bearded seals, seabird colonies, and surprisingly rich vegetation.



Polar Bear
© Scott Davis



Walrus
© Stephen Gorfien

Ytre Norskøya

Hike along the colorful lichen-covered cliffs on this small island on the northwest coast of Spitsbergen. There is an accessible breeding ground of seabirds here.

Krossfjorden and Kongsfjorden

On the west side of Spitsbergen, Zodiac cruise along the famed Fourteenth of July Glacier (or Fjortende Julibreen, its Norwegian name) and other beautiful glacier fronts, such as Lilliehöökreen, one of the largest, at 22km in length.

Alkhornet

At the mouth of Isfjorden, the largest of all Spitsbergen’s fjords, you may land to look for arctic foxes searching the cliff base for fallen birds and for Svalbard reindeer grazing the luxuriant wildflower-covered vegetation, creating some of the best reindeer photography in the archipelago.

Jul 13 ~ Disembark and fights homeward

The entire group will disembark the ship in Longyearbyen around 9:00am and either transfer to the airport or, if you depart later in the day, into town.

Jul 14 ~ Arrive home

COSTS (ALL COSTS ARE IN US DOLLARS)

Cost

Type	Cost per Person
Trip Cost, single occupancy on lower deck*	\$14,475
Trip Cost, double occupancy on main deck	\$14,475
*Single occupancy aboard the ship, but double occupancy at Longyearbyen hotel.	

Costs are per person, single occupancy for lower deck cabins and double occupancy for main deck cabins, not including airfare. See *Included* and *Not Included* sections for more details.

If you are a single traveler, we will find a roommate for you at the hotel in Longyearbyen, but if we cannot find you a roommate, we will not charge you a single supplement. If you prefer a single room for your included night in the hotel, it costs the same as an additional night and is subject to availability.

We cannot guarantee a specific cabin number, but if changes occur, we will assign a cabin of equal or greater value.

Payment Schedule

Payment	Due Date	Amount per Person
Deposit	Due now to reserve your space	\$6,000
Final	January 20, 2025	Remaining Balance

Payments are due based on the schedule above. All reservations require a deposit to confirm reservation of your space.

Cancellations

Refunds are given depending on the time left before departure according to the following table. Through November 20, 2025, the cancellation fee of \$300 per person can be applied toward another trip if reserved within six months of the cancelled trip's departure date. Cancellations are non-transferrable.

Dates	Forfeited Amount per Person
On or before November 20, 2024	\$300 (see terms above)
November 21 to December 19, 2024	10% of trip cost
December 20, 2024 to January 19, 2025	40% of trip cost
On or after January 20, 2025	100% of trip cost

Included

- Carbon offsets for the duration of this trip.
- All leaders, transport, park entry fees, landing fees, and permits for all activities unless described as optional.
- Accommodations (double occupancy, singles extra) for the night of July 2 in Longyearbyen.
- Ten nights on board our ship.
- Meals from breakfast on July 3 through breakfast on July 13, except meals listed in *Not Included* section.
- A group transfer from the Radisson Blu Polar Hotel in Longyearbyen to the ship on July 3 and a group transfer from the ship to the airport or into town on July 13.
- Trip Planning Materials – information about flights, packing, entry and departure requirements, airport transfers, gratuities, etc.

Not Included

- All airfare, airport and departure taxes, and excess baggage fees. Round-trip airfare is approximately \$1,500 to \$3000 between the US and Longyearbyen, depending on origin.
- Passport and visa fees.
- COVID tests.
- Lunch on July 3 in Longyearbyen.
- Transfer from the airport to the hotel upon arrival in Longyearbyen.
- We can arrange extra hotel nights for an extra cost.
- Gratuities – tipping is always discretionary. However, we suggest budgeting about \$300 to \$350 per participant to be distributed equally among the ship's crew and Scott's assistant guide.
- Mandatory [emergency evacuation insurance](#).
- Optional [trip cancellation insurance](#).
- Items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone calls, medical costs or hospitalization, room service, alcoholic and other beverages, items not on the regular menu, etc. If you have special dietary needs, please indicate them on your Traveler Form.

SIGN UP

Please contact us first to check availability, reserve your space, and obtain a Traveler Form. To confirm your reservation, we require a deposit and signed form from each participant.

[Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris](#)

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WhatsApp: (408) 741-5330 | Skype: CheesemansEcologySafaris

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OTHER DETAILS

Climate

You will visit the Arctic during its summer with 24 hours of daylight. Weather patterns may be highly variable, so bring appropriate attire and gear to handle a mix of conditions including wind, snow, rain, and sun. Expect temperatures in the 40s°F (4 to 8°C) during the day and in the 30s° (0 to 4°C) at night, but weather fronts can cause temperatures to either drop further or rise to the 50s and low 60s°F (10 to 17°C).

Fitness Level

You must be able to get in and out of the Zodiacs, from the ship, via a six-foot ladder with staff assisting above and below you. Once ashore, you must be also able to get in and out of the Zodiacs onto the beach. You'll have opportunities for a range of activities from easy, short hikes to longer, more vigorous hikes for those interested. Please contact us if you have any health concerns that may make this trip challenging.

Motion Sickness

Don't let a fear of motion sickness keep you away! Even those who have experienced seasickness reported that the incredible wildlife and overall experience were well worth the temporary discomfort. If you are susceptible to seasickness or are concerned that you might be, please come prepared! The key to avoiding seasickness is to act before you experience nausea. Do your own research and consult your doctor before taking any medications. A good night of sleep, eating well, limiting alcohol, and using your favorite seasickness remedy is sufficient for most travelers. Find more information on our [Coping with Seasickness](#) webpage (this information is applicable to any form of motion sickness) and contact us if you have any questions.



Ladder to Access Zodiacs

Flights

Detailed logistical information is included in the Trip Planning Materials we will send you.

Flights you book

- Arrive in Longyearbyen, Svalbard, Norway (LYR) on July 2.
- Depart from Longyearbyen, Svalbard, Norway (LYR) after 11:00am on July 13, as you disembark from the ship at 9:00am and we recommend at least one hour to check in before departure.

Terms and Conditions

Read our current [Terms and Conditions](#).

Conservation

Our company ethos has always regarded conservation as inseparable from responsible tourism. We struggle with the dilemma that traveling worldwide expends climate-changing carbon. However, we wholeheartedly believe that traveling with us will cultivate your passion for conserving our beautiful world while stimulating each destination's local economy. We encourage you to explore the various ways in which Cheesemans' operates within this context:

- **Ecotourism and Conservation for [Svalbard](#).**
- **Cheesemans' Trips are [Carbon Neutral](#).**
- **Offsetting your Travel to/from our Trip:** We ask you to pledge to offset the carbon emissions for your travel to and from our trips. You can purchase offsets with most airlines (Delta includes them automatically), use our handy [carbon calculator](#) and donate to Sustainable Travel International, or contribute to your favorite offsetting organization.

FAQS

Why travel on a small ship?

With only twelve passenger cabins, our ship is smaller than most ships in Svalbard, allowing you to travel farther into smaller inlets than other ships. Our small group size gives you the flexibility to seize the moment and enjoy special wildlife encounters. With two leaders and only twelve passengers, you will receive plenty of individual attention. And, with two Zodiacs, you have plenty of room for you and your photography gear.

Why do we sail in June and July?

June and July represent the peak months of the short but incredibly productive Arctic summer in Svalbard. In addition to polar bears, it is during these months we see a peak of summer animal activity including the amassing of significant bird colonies, the beginning of the short season of wildflower blooming, the potential to discover arctic fox families with their new pup additions, and ice-free access to various walrus haul out locations. It is also during the short summer that the pack ice breaks up enough to allow further exploration of the far north fjords and coastline that is otherwise inaccessible due to ice during the winter and early spring months.

Is there a big difference between the June and July trips?

Because our two expeditions visit the archipelago back-to-back, spanning four weeks, your wildlife encounters will not vary much, but the July expedition *may* have slightly more opportunities for wildflowers and less ice.

DECK PLAN



Deck plan and cabin sizes are not to scale and shows the number of beds, not actual bed arrangement.
Cabins 101, 102, 107, and 108 have one twin bed with a private bath.
Cabins 103–106, 109, 110, 201, and 202 have one double bed with a private bath.