



OCEANWIDE

EXPEDITIONS

Around Spitsbergen

6th July – 15th July 2018

M/V Plancius



MV *Plancius* was named after the Dutch astronomer, cartographer, geologist, and vicar Petrus Plancius (1552-1622). *Plancius* was built in 1976 as an oceanographic research vessel for the Royal Dutch Navy and was named *Hr. Ms. Tydeman*. The ship sailed for the Royal Dutch Navy until June 2004 when she was purchased by Oceanwide Expeditions and completely refitted in 2007, being converted into a 114-passenger expedition vessel. *Plancius* is 89 m (267 feet) long, 14.5 m (43 feet) wide, and has a maximum draft of 5 m. She has an Ice Strength rating of 1D, a top speed of 12+ knots, and three diesel engines each generating 1230 horsepower.



Captain Evgeny Levakov

and his international crew

Including:

Chief Officer:	Artur Iakoviev	[Russia]
2nd Officer:	Romanas Vicas	[Lithuania]
3rd Officer:	Luis Oroceo	[Phillipines]
Chief Engineer:	Sebastian Alexandru	[Romania]
Hotel Manager:	Dejan Nikolic	[Serbia]
Assist. Hotel Manager:	Gabor Ferencz	[Hungary]
Head Chef:	Mario Hribernik	[Austria]
Sous Chef:	Ivan Yuriychuk	[Ukraine]
Ship's Physician:	Edwin van Leeuwen	[Netherlands]
Expedition Leader:	Beau Pruneau	[Canada]
Assist. Expedition Leader:	Katja Riedel	[New Zealand]
Expedition Guide:	Michelle van Dijk	[Spitsbergen]
Expedition Guide:	Tom van Hoof	[Netherlands]
Expedition Guide:	Andreas Alexander	[Germany]
Expedition Guide:	Adam Turner	[UK]
Expedition Guide:	Ben Frederiks	[Netherlands]
Expedition Guide:	Anke Timmerberg	[Germany]

Day 1 – Friday 6th July 2018

Embarkation: Longyearbyen

GPS 08.00 Position: 078°14'N / 015°35'E

Wind: SE 2. **Sea State:** Smooth. **Weather:** Good. **Air Temp:** +11°C. **Sea Temp:** +6°C.

Longyearbyen, at 78° north, is one of the world's most northerly settlements. It was founded as a coal mining settlement but it has developed into a thriving town of around 2,000 residents who live and work here all year round. During the summer months this number swells with the arrival of thousands of visitors on cruise ships.

A few of us had arrived in Longyearbyen a day early and had the opportunity to explore the town and maybe to take a day trip into the surrounding areas. Many of us arrived just this afternoon, and we were met by Tanya and Mike at the airport. We had a few hours to visit and explore the town before making our way to the port to join our ship *Plancius*.

We made our way to the floating pontoon and we were met by Katja and Anke and Adam, who helped us with our luggage and gave us a quick introduction to travelling by Zodiac and a demonstration of how to put on the lifejackets. It was just a short boat ride into Adventfjorden to meet *Plancius*, which was lying at anchor out in the bay. It was an easy ride to the ship and it allowed us to become familiar with the Zodiacs which will be taking us to and from the shore over the coming days.



From the gangway we were shown to Reception where DJ, our Hotel Manager and his assistant Gabor checked us in and we were shown to our cabins by the very welcoming hotel staff. We found our luggage waiting for us outside our rooms. We had some time to familiarise ourselves with our cabin before we were called to the Lounge for the mandatory safety briefing which was given by our 3rd Officer Luis Oroceo. This gave us all the information we needed about safety on board the ship and prepared us for the lifeboat drill that was to follow. We heard the abandon ship alarm and gathered at the muster station, the Lounge, wearing our big orange life jackets, the only time we hope to be wearing them. After the roll call we were taken out to the lifeboats to see where they were located and how we would embark if required.

We then had a chance to explore the ship and to check out the many different viewing areas. Out on deck we found that the *Plancius* had quietly weighed anchor and was cruising out of Isfjord heading northwest, straight into the evening sun, for the start of our Arctic adventure.

We met in the Lounge once again and had a briefing from our Hotel Manager, DJ who explained some of the procedures on board *Plancius*, our home for the week. The hotel staff served us champagne and canapes before we met with our Captain Evgeny Levakov who explained a little bit about our forthcoming trip.

We then had a chance to meet our Expedition Team who will be guiding us during our voyage here on Svalbard. We have an international team on board with a wealth of experience both here in the Arctic and Antarctica. Our Expedition Leader, Beau Pruneau, gave us an outline of our plans for the coming days. The first destination was to be 14 Julibukta, in the north east of Svalbard.



It was then time for dinner, and a chance to meet with our fellow passengers. With 24 hours of daylight many of us enjoyed some time out on deck with some sunshine and a brisk Arctic breeze, we spotted Fulmars, Guillemots, and Kittiwakes. It was a very pleasant evening on board.

Day 2 – Saturday 7th July 2018

14 Julibukta

GPS 08.00 Position: 078°57'N / 012°06'E

Wind: NW 3. **Sea State:** Slight. **Weather:** Overcast.

Air Temp: +3°C. **Sea Temp:** +3°C.



Overnight we had headed north, arriving in amazing sunlight with blue skies showing the spectacular scenery of Spitsbergen as the snow topped mountains rose from the sea to contrast with the sky.

We had our mandatory briefings from Beau; before we could board the zodiacs, we needed the briefing on how to safely travel in them, it was also explained how important it is to help protect the environment of the Arctic and the AECO rules that we must comply with, but also safety surrounding polar bears.

The zodiacs were launched and we split in to two groups for a zodiac cruise to look at the bird life amongst the cliffs and flying past us. We were also able to see some Svalbard Reindeer on the shore and high up on the scree slopes.

In the afternoon we were taken to Ny Alesund by zodiac on a wobbly sea. Michelle and Anke told about the great Norwegian explorer Amundsen. After a stroll around the village, a visit to the museum and the shop we went back to the ship again. During recap Beau told his plans for tomorrow and Ben gave a presentation about his life as a scientist “back in the old days (2013)” in Ny Alesund. After an excellent diner we finished an excellent day of our Arctic exploration voyage.



Day 3 – Sunday 8th July 2018

Bockfjorden (Jotun Quellen)

GPS 08.00 Position: 79°37.800'N / 013°42'.600E

Wind: SE 3 **Sea State:** Slight **Weather:** Cloudy **Air Temp:** +8°C. **Sea Temp:** +5°C.

The day began with a wake up call from our Expedition Leader, Beau on this beautiful Sunday morning as we passed the Rentierflya (reindeer plain) on our starboard side as we headed towards Worsleyneset.

It was possible to notice that outside the ship gusts of wind were quite strong and the seastate was getting worse as we neared our site of interest. Due to the wind and waves it was unfortunately necessary to relocate our morning landing to another but yet challenging site, the hot springs of Spitsbergen! This meant the Plancius was forced to head deeper into Bockfjorden, providing an excellent sight of the old red Devonian mountainslopes on portside as we enjoyed breakfast. As our captain dropped anchor we could already see the golden yellow terrace of coarse sand where hot water used to seep out of the earth's core, resulting in the sedimentation of this strange yellow coloured gravel.

The landing site proved to be much more difficult, compared to the nicely paved roads of Ny-Alesund the day earlier. Big rocks and rounded boulders the size of footballs made up most of the landscape. Luckily our guides showed the easiest way towards the hot springs, where we could enjoy the view of the entire fjord.

The fast group went all the way up a steep hill to be rewarded with a view of the neighbouring glacier. The middle group had an interesting 'speed course' on the survival tactics of Spitsbergen's plants and flowers by Michelle and the leisurely group were with Tom, Anke and Adam.



As we headed back to the Plancius, the seastate got even worse than it had been this morning. Waves up to two meters high made the powerful zodiacs turn into spots of foam as the waves crashed aboard as our drivers kept us as dry as possible.

During lunch, Plancius headed towards another landing site called Musshamna, as usual the expedition team would set foot ashore to ensure the area was bear free. Unfortunately the seastate was still severe, the combination of hard wind gusts and a shallow bay created waves that made it unable to board the zodiacs safely. Luckily our expedition leader had a plan B, ship cruising Moffen Island, famous for its numerous walrus laying on the beach.



As we headed to Mofen there was reason for celebration! We crossed the 80° North line of latitude, a great milestone in our expedition and more than enough reason for a nice glass of prosecco in the lounge provided by DJ, Charlotte and Gabor.

After Beau informed us about our destination of tomorrow: One of the seven islands (which are actually 9 in total), we got a very interesting insight in the creation of Spitsbergen by Tom. After that, Katja showed us some scenic pictures of Bockfjored as she skied the area during spring, tranquillic pictures and a great story. It was now time to enjoy dinner, drinks and some sleep.

Day 4 – Monday 9th July 2018

Phippsøya and the ice edge

GPS 08.00 Position: 079°06'N / 019°59'E

Wind: SW 3 **Sea State:** Smooth **Weather:** Cloudy **Air Temp:** +4°C. **Sea Temp:** +3°C.

After a calm night at sea, we arrived at Sjuøyane (Seven Islands) in the morning.

Our plan A for this morning was to land in Isflakbukta, a sheltered bay of Phippsøya.

Phippsøya is the largest island (26 km²) of the seven islands, and named after John Phipps, who was the first person to describe the Polar bear and Ivory Gull.

It is not often that you can land in Isflakbukta (Ice floe bay), as it is often blocked by ice or there is too much swell coming in. Today, it was free of ice and the swell was not too much, so the staff took the rifles and shore bags, and set off to the landing site. It was quite a long ride and once they arrived they found a bear sleeping next to it, so the landing was called off immediately.

But there is always a plan B. Expedition leader Beau called the bridge for some more Zodiacs for a cruise to the bear and enjoy it from a safe position.

All guests were divided into two groups. The first group set off and had a good view of the sleeping bear, which was most likely taking a nap to digest. All of a sudden three walrus looked out of the water, playing around in the distance near the beach. They seemed curious and came closer to check out what we were. Beau instantly communicated with dive master Michael, as the divers were in the water outside of the bay. But the walrus were not interested in us nor them and swam away.

By the time the second group came into the bay, the walrus had disappeared, but the Polar bear was awake. It was feeding on a whale carcass, that had washed up onto the shore. What a great experience, we were so lucky.

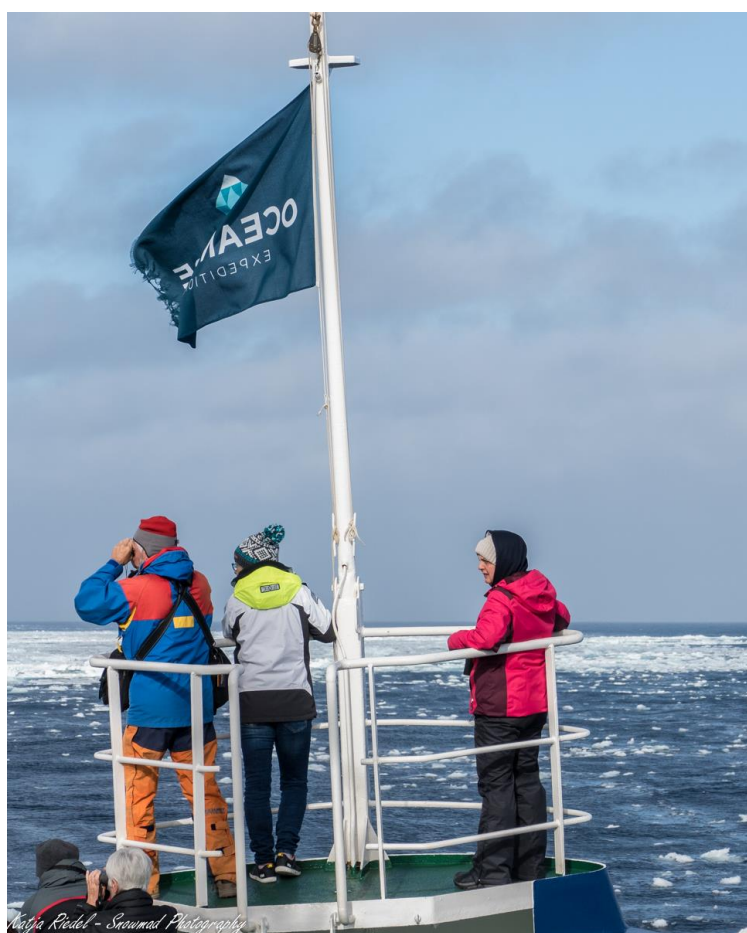
After we left Phippsøya, we headed for the ice. The latest ice chart showed that the pack ice had come down a bit, so it was worth a try. During the sail up, some lectures were offered.

At 3 PM Michelle offered her plant talk in German, and Andreas his geology lecture in English.



At 5 PM Katja & Anke offered a lecture about Polar bears, but this had to be postponed a bit, as shortly before we had reached the first drift ice. It was only a small patch, and after we had left it, Katja told us about Polar bears; why Polar bears can stand the cold, that they live a life of feast and famine, their stomach can hold 20% of their body mass, and that they can eat up 10% of their body weight in 30 minutes. The reproduction cycle of this majestic animal is very impressive. They mate in spring but have a delayed implantation. Polar bears wait until September before they get pregnant, and only then if they are fat enough. After four months, the cubs are born only the size of a guinea pig; helpless, blind and deaf. Thanks to the fat rich milk they get from their mother, they can leave the den end of March.

Around 6 PM we reached the pack ice, and while we had a good view of it, Beau explained the plans for the next day, Adam told us about John Phipps, and Ben talked about feces. The day ended in the ice, and while the sun was still shining and it wasn't cold at all, it was hard to go to bed.



Day 5 – Tuesday 10th June 2018

Pack Ice

GPS 08.00 Position: 081°55'.700N / 021°39'.000E

Wind: S 3-4 **Sea State:** Smooth **Weather:** Overcast **Air Temp:** +3°C. **Sea Temp:** 0°C.

Well what a day we had! The expedition team began scouting for bears in the early hours of the day and the perseverance paid off when a bear was sighted at breakfast time. It is fair to say that extensive words in this log will not describe the encounters that were had of all the bears so here are some pictures of each one with the time they were sighted.

Bear 1, male. 0821 hours (Photo: Tanja Bayer)



Bear 2, male. 0853- 0958 hours.



Bear 3. 1324 hours.



Bear 4. 1324 hours.

No picture, pixel bear in fog!

Bear 5. 1440-1530 hours.



At the re-cap Katja explained about the bears we had seen and how we can see what sex they are and Beau spoke about the last bear that we had seen and his age, condition and other identifying features that we saw.

We all owe a big thank you to the Captain for safely navigating through the ice so we could see the bears as well Deck team and the Engineering department.

Day 6 – Wednesday 11th July 2018

Alkefjellet and Torellneset

GPS 08.00 Position: 079° 38'. 300N / 018°28'.100E

Wind: Light air **Sea State:** Calm. **Weather:** Clear. **Air Temp:** +7°C. **Sea Temp:** +4°C.

The morning started with our wake up cal followed by breakfast as the ship sailed in glorious conditions that gave us as spectacular view of the cliffs that we would soon be cruising by.

We arrived with the excellent weather at the birdcliffs named Alkefjellet. This is a medium sized colony of Brunich's Guillemots with estimated numbers around 60,000 individuals. We cruised the cliffs in zodiacs and managed to get really close to the birds. We witnessed thousands of Guillemots flying over the boats, sometimes dropping something. We saw them fight for food and dive underwater. On the less steep areas of the birdcliff we encountered an Arctic fox who was devouring an unfortunate Guillemot.



After lunch we sailed on to Torellneset where we were planning a short walk to see the Walrus colony from nearby. Because a previous expedition ship had scouted a bear nearby, the expedition team took some extra time to scout the area. Again we were lucky, the bear was gone. After a short zodiac trip to the gravel-beach of Torellneset we walked in a line to the walrus-colony and slowly spread out so the Walrus could get used to our presence. The wind came from the right direction so we did not witness the incredible stench of all the burping and farting which was the result of enormous amounts of mussels and clams one Walrus eats a day. After this wonderful afternoon with these majestic animals, we headed back to the ship where Beau closed the day of with his plans for tomorrow and Anke and Ben told us something about respectively Guillemots and Walrus.



Day 7 – Thursday 12th July 2018

GPS 08.00 Position: 078°12'.900N / 021°35'.600E

Wind: SW 8 **Sea State:** High **Weather:** Overcast **Air Temp:** +6°C. **Sea Temp:** +2°C.

Good morning, Good morning, it is Thursday the 12th of July.
It is 6°C and we have 25 knots of wind....

Mm mm.... 25 Knots of wind... That did not sound very promising for our morning program, looking out of our portholes we could tell that we could not expect much today weather wise.

The landing at Kapp Waldburg had be cancelled as it was not safe to launch the zodiacs or use them as the wind was gusting up to 55 knots.

But there is always a plan B.

At 10.00 AM, Adam was scheduled for a lecture about Benjamin Leigh Smith. But plan B, became Plan C as 15 minutes at

forehand, there were two Polar Bears sighted, while we sailed through Freemansundet, on the slope of a mountain called Seelisberg.

One bear was very visible, at 1300 meters distance, but the other went up and disappeared in the low hanging cloud, a little lower on the slope we a few reindeer grazing.

When we heard that this distance of bear is the best they get at some trips, we realized how lucky we are with our bear in the pack ice that was so close most lenses were too big and the best option was a mobile phone camera.



The lecture was re-scheduled and a short time later we were listening to Adam, we learned a lot about the explorer Benjamin Leigh Smith and his dog named Bob. He was born in March 1828 in a rich family and was a cousin of Florence Nightingale.

Inspired by the travel stories of Lamont, Kane & Dufferin, he decided to go to the Arctic himself.

In 1871, he reached 81°25'N, named 33 new places, 22 islands & took 7 oceanographic warm deep-water records. In the following years, he traveled to Jan Mayen, Spitsbergen & Franz Josef Land to do some more research.

But everything he did, he did for his own sake. Because of that, and the fact that nobody died on his expeditions, made him an unknown Polar explorer.



The later landing was planned at Kapp Lee, but the clouds were so low that we could not even see it, while passing by.

Another plan was put in to action and this time it was the turn of Tom to give a lecture and to teach us something about climate change.

He first explained that although the Ice age is over, we still live in an Ice house climate, as there is still ice on the Poles and that this had not always been the case, there were also times that our planet had a Hot house climate and trees were growing on Spitsbergen, although it was situated further North.

In those times, the Arctic ocean was an Arctic lake surrounded by Cypress forests.

He also explained that the changes of the temperatures are caused by many factors with a complicated feedback mechanism.

We had our usual recap with the plans for tomorrow by Beau, Kittiwakes by Anke, Arctix Foxes by Adam and the story of Ewald Schmutzler.

Day 8 – Tuesday 13th June 2018

Burgerbukta and Gashamna

GPS 08.00 Position: 077°02'.700N / 015°58'.700E

Wind: S 3 **Sea State:** Calm **Weather:** Overcast **Air Temp:** +5°C. **Sea Temp:** +4°C.

Time to wake up! Our morning wake-up was made by Beau, shortly followed by DJ calling us to breakfast, a beautiful meal from the restaurant team and DJ to start the day.

The weather did nothing to encourage us to get outside, grey clouds and fog engulfed house high icebergs floating around in the water. But, we were in Hornsund today! One of the most beautiful places on Spitsbergen.

The fjord system was once covered by one giant glacier. In the last 100 years the icy giant retreated further and further, creating several adjacent fjords and separate glaciers at the end.

This morning we would visit Burgerbukta East on a zodiac cruise, before we got near the large glacier, we had to circumnavigate some massive icebergs.

While taking a closer look we could see kittiwakes having a rest on the perfectly blue shaped pieces of ice. Together with some rays of watery sun it provided a beautiful scenery for some high Arctic pictures. As we neared the glacier front we could see a large flock of kittiwakes actively following one certain point, it could only be that there was something interesting out there.

And there it was! A pod of around 12 belugas showed up, making way near the shoreline. Not only the white adults but also the grey and even darker grey juveniles could be spotted. Absolutely great to see these normally very shy animals.

The kittiwakes were following the belugas out of the fjord at a fast pace. Time for us to head further into the fjord, towards the glacier! And lucky we were, the glacier front calved some huge pieces of ice, echoing a thunder throughout the fjord followed by a large wave. Luckily, we were at a safe distance from the glacier, but close enough to experience the power of a calving glacier.

After boarding the Plancius we were treated to a nice cup of hot Choco milk, a great thing to warm up with.

After lunch we had a landing at Gåshamna a beautiful stony bay with remnants of the old whaling days. Whale oven foundations and Greenland whale bones laid all around, surrounded by a particular type of moss that only grows there due to the nutrients provided by the whale bones, and that after 400 years!

The long hikers evolved into some sort of mountain creatures while ascending the steep mountain bordering the bay, an amazing view was the reward at the end of the hike. The middle group explored the moraines and the beach crawlers achieved their own mountain high at a slightly lower point. All in all, a lovely landing.

Back onboard we were surprised by the smell of charcoal and meat, the BBQ was fired up and we had a great evening at the back deck of the Plancius after we had been to re-cap in the lounge.

Day 9 – Wednesday 14th July 2018

Bamsebu

GPS 08.00 Position: 077°33'. 200N / 015°05'.000E

Wind: SE 4 **Sea State:** Slight **Weather:** Overcast **Air Temp:** +5°C. **Sea Temp:** +3°C.

We woke with the usual call from Beau followed by DJ calling us to breakfast.

The Expedition team went ashore and set up a perimeter for this morning's landing.

This gave us the chance to explore a nice area which had several historical artefacts that were very well preserved. The hut near to the landing site was named Bamsebu by members of the Norwegian Polar Institute and means 'Bear Hut'. Near to the hut we could see an upturned boat that had been once used as a shelter; stone walls had been built up to the gunwales and remains of a cooker were inside. Entire Beluga skeletons could be seen which were a remnant of the white whale fishery that existed along these beaches and in the nearby bay where the remains of a wooden winch can be seen that was once used for raising a net across the bay after Beluga had entered and it prevented them from escaping their impending slaughter.

The remains of a heavily built boat could be seen further along the beach and this old motor boat was now forming part of the landscape as the artefacts and scenery tell a story of Svalbard's past.

A large variety of flowers ranging from Moss Campion to Scurvy Grass could be seen growing as well as sightings of Eider ducklings and their mothers and Purple Sandpipers and their chicks, Glaucous Gulls and Skuas could also be seen.

The remains of a polar bear were also visible; It is thought that the bear was about 2 (male) or 3 (female) years old, the immense size of the paws of this young bear makes one truly appreciate how large the bears were that we had seen previously.

Unfortunately, we had to cancel our afternoon landing owing to the fog.

We enjoyed a farewell cocktail with the Captain in the lounge which was followed by dinner.



Total distance sailed on our voyage:

Nautical miles: 1201.88 nm

Kilometres: 2163 km



***On behalf of everyone on board
we thank you for travelling with us
and wish you a safe journey home.***