

# Spitsbergen

## Triplog



## s/v Antigua

24 September – 2 October 2023

The *s/v Antigua* was built in 1957 in Thorne (UK) and served for many years as a fishing vessels, until it was completely re-built in the early 1990s in the Netherlands as a barkentine and equipped as a passenger ship. A barkentine has three masts with square sails on the foremast.

Captain – Serge Geurtz  
First Mate – Douwe Borg  
Second Mate – Estée Turk  
Deck hand – Reindert Vogelzang  
Head of Service – Charlot Laumen  
Service – Elbrich Bruinsma  
Service – Stella Le Gouallec  
Chef – Piet Litjes  
Expedition leader – Michelle van Dijk  
Guide – Martyna Urbańczyk  
Photography-guide – Jan Lambert

September 24.

## Longyearbyen

Position at 14 o'clock: 78°14' N 15°36' E

Temperature: -4 °C – Overcast – Wind force 2 East



It was Sunday, the 24th of September 2023 14:00 o'clock, when we all met for the first time to begin our journey in the Svalbard Arctic on board of s/v Antigua, our welcoming home for the upcoming week. Before the adventure had begun, some important formalities, like reporting our passports to the wheelhouse, needed to be completed. Thereafter, we got a chance to meet each other in the lounge, where captain Serge Geurtz welcomed us officially. The captain told us more about Antigua and its crew, crucial safety procedures, as well as how our life on board was about to look like. Thereafter, Antigua left the port in Longyearbyen and set the course to the west. Monumental white fjords and shimmering glaciers emerged from the distance enveloped in dramatic clouds. At 16:00 o'clock, we gathered again in the saloon for the first speech of Michelle van Dijk, our expedition leader. Michelle introduced herself, as well as her team – guide Martyna Urbańczyk and our photographer Jan Lambert. Michelle also showed us an instructive film made by AECO (Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators). The film featured necessary guidelines, that we all needed to know before setting foot on Arctic land, concerning nature protection, wildlife encounters, as well as preservation of historical remains and cultural heritage of Svalbard, among others. Michelle informed us also that the important decision had been made – after leaving the Isfjord, we were going north! The Arctic nature from the beginning treated us with wonderful impressions of its landscape and wildlife. Around the sunset time, at the entrance of Isfjorden, Jan spotted a group of white-beaked dolphins around the ship. We observed them vigorously emerging from the silver water in the soft, golden sunset light. Truly breathtaking experience! While looking at these graceful animals, so little we knew about the most spectacular show of the Arctic that was yet to happen. Around 23:30 o'clock, the nautical crew woke us up... northern lights dancing above Antigua! Many dreams already came true that night, and it was just the beginning of our journey.

September 25.

**Engelskbukta: Uvêrsøyra**

**Prins Karls Forland: Heemskerckneset**

Position at 8 o'clock: 78°48,2' N 011°29,6' E

Temperature: -5 °C - Overcast – Wind force 2 North



After a night voyage with a course to the north, around breakfast time, we arrived at the place for our very first landing of this expedition. Engelskbukta – the English Bay – is a natural bay located north of the shallows in Forlandsundet, known for its spectacular mountain landscape, as well as historical importance. As the name suggests, this place was in the 17th century frequented by English whalers. Some remains of their presence can still be found here, however when we arrived to the English Bay everything was already covered with this year's early snow. After a delicious and nutritious breakfast, our captain invited everyone on deck for a zodiac safety demonstration. During Serge's presentation, Michelle, Martyna and Jan went already to our very first landing beach. When everyone joined, we divided into two groups, accordingly to our interests. Jan, accompanied by Martyna, led a landscape photography workshop in the vicinity of the landing site. Dramatic and jagged mountains, covered with snow, provided the photographers with many breathtaking inspirations. Our hikers, guided by Michelle, walked towards the Comfortless Glacier. This descriptive name was propagated by the English whalers in the 17th century, as a reference to anchoring condition in the cove beneath the glacier front. The group bravely walked all the way to the glacier's moraine and even climbed its white hills.

After a restorative lunch, prepared by our chef Piet, Antigua moved across Forlandsundet to the shores of the island Prins Karls Forland. For the afternoon landing, we visited a place called Heemskerckneset, named after the Dutch explorer and naval admiral Jacob van Heemskerck. Heemskerck was one of the captains of the famous Willem Barentsz's expedition that during the search for the Northeast Passage discovered Spitsbergen. From the ship we could see pointed, jagged peaks that became the inspiration to name this archipelago Spitsbergen (the name was in 1969 changed by the Norwegian government to Svalbard). Once on land, we could see a group of reindeers in the distance. We again divided into two groups. Martyna with hikers started to walk towards the reindeers, and Jan, accompanied by Michelle and our passionate photographers, moved along the beach towards the south. Shortly after, the weather changed, and we got caught



in a true Arctic blizzard. What an adventure! Once the visibility got worse, it was time to return to Antigua.



The blizzard, however, didn't stop us from being active until the end of the day. Before and after dinner, we had a chance to attend two lectures. First, Jan gave us a very interesting and inspiring lecture about landscape photography, followed by all the burning questions, as well as practical tips. After a delicious, Antigua-style dinner, Martyna gave her lecture about aurora called „The Little Prince guide to northern lights“, and shed some light on the spectacle that we witnessed yesterday.





September 26.

## **Amsterdamøya: Smeerenburg**

### **Smeerenburgfjord: Smeerenburgreen**

Position at 8 o'clock: 79°43,6' N 010°55,3' E

Temperature: -2°C – Overcast – Wind force 1 West-Northwest

In the morning, Antigua reached the north-west corner of Spitsbergen, and also the northernmost point of our journey. After a delicious and nutritious breakfast, we landed on Amsterdamøya, an island of a great historical importance, as well as natural beauty. Today we got a chance to experience both – to visit the historical remains of Smeerenburg (from Dutch - „Blubber town"), and to make stunning observations of wild Arctic animals.



The area of Smeerenburgfjord became legendary for its abundance of whales. Some legends would tell that there were so many whales here that one could walk from the ship to the land, stepping on animals' backs and heads. Once we were on land, it was hard to imagine that in this remote and quiet place, 400 years ago, lived approximately 200 men. Smeerenburg served as home not only for the whalers, but also for merchants and traders. In its heyday, the whaling station consisted of around 19 buildings. Most of the houses had floors and fireplaces. The area between the houses was paved with side ditches that helped to maintain rain and melt water. Fresh water supply came from the Amsterdamøya's lagoon that this year appeared to be already completely frozen and covered with a layer of fresh snow. In the past, harpooned whales were dragged to the on-shore station on Amsterdamøya. Blubber, melted in installed on the beach ovens, was used as lamp-oil, to produce soap, for tanning leather and to refine sulphur. Today, the remains of several blubber ovens can be observed in the vicinity of our landing site. After looking at them, we moved slowly closer to a walrus colony that was resting on the beach, not so far from our landing site. Walruses remained undisturbed in our careful presence, giving us a chance for an unforgettable encounter. If that was not enough, at some point the colony was visited by an Arctic fox. It felt so special, that it almost seemed like the animals were posing for us together. Truly breathtaking!

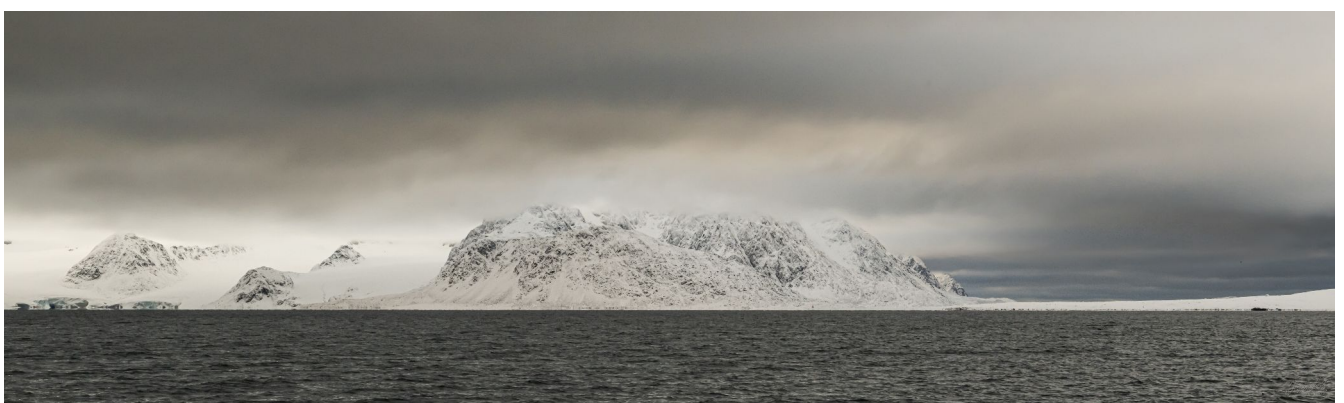


Today, we again divided into two groups. Photographers with Jan, accompanied by Martyna, stayed longer with the walruses, focusing on wildlife photography. Michelle with a group of hikers went on a walk across the island to visit an interesting memorial. The memorial was erected on Amsterdamøya in 1906 by the Dutch navy ship HMS Friesland to commemorate Dutch whalers who lived here in the past. The walk turned out to be very strenuous due to a thick snow cover that had already built up on the island.



We spent the afternoon cruising the monumental Smeerenburgfjord and admiring its glaciers in the soft autumn Arctic light. So much beauty to see, that we only went in to get ourselves a hot drink to fight the cold.

In the evening, Jan gave his second lecture. This time it was about photographing wildlife.









September 27.

## Kongsfjord : Blomstrandhalvøya & Ny-Ålesund

Position at 8 o'clock: 78°57,5' N 012°04,5' E

Temperature: -7 °C – Overcast – Wind force 1-2 East-Northeast



Last night, Antigua reached the shores of Blomstrandhalvøya, and this was where we woke up this morning. Already before breakfast, a seal was spotted close to our ship, and during breakfast Antigua moved closer to a place called Ny-London, which was our first landing site for the day. Blomstrandhalvøya, except for its stunning landscape and thrilling history, has also probably the most deceiving name in the entire archipelago. First, visitors who land in this place are more likely to find stones and rocks instead of "blomstrand" – flowery beach. This place was named after a Swedish mineralogist and chemist Christian W. Blomstrand, who came here in the 19th century looking for minerals. Secondly, the word "halvøya" means "peninsula", but since the Blomstrand Glacier, that once connected the Blomstrandhalvøya to Spitsbergen, has retreated – what in the past was indeed a peninsula now is a separated island. Nonetheless, not bothered by the misleading name, we landed in Ny "New" London. In this place, we could observe very well-preserved remains of a mining operation that was initiated here at the beginning of the past century by Ernest Mansfield. Mansfield, a rather enthusiastic Englishman, who hoped to find here large quantities of an excellent quality marble. The wintering party were uneducated and mined at a place where the marble has many cracks, and therefore its quality was low compared to other European sources. This was unfortunate for both investors who lost a lot of money, and Mansfield, who was fired. Today we can look at many artefacts from that time, like for example, old steam boilers, drills, remains of a railway, cabins, and even a stove with a rusty coffee pot on it. Interesting history is not the only "thing" that this island has to offer. For those who like walking, Blomstrandhalvøya has numerous possibilities for shorter and longer excursions. On the landing site, we divided into two groups. Photographers with Jan, accompanied by Michelle, stayed in New London and focused on photographing details of the historical remains, as well as the stunning landscape of Kongsfjord. Hikers with Martyna went for a hike to a hill nearby from where they had a splendid view over Tre Kroner – three iconic mountains of Krossfjord, named after three Scandinavian kingdoms – Svea, Nora, Dana (Sweden, Norway, Denmark). Both groups found a lot of polar bear footprints on the snow.









After a short voyage across the Kongsfjord, and tasty lunch, we docked in the harbour of Ny-Ålesund, an international research village, one of the world's northernmost settlements. In Ny-Ålesund we had some free time, after being instructed to not leave the settlement unarmed, stay on the paths, as well as respect that this unique place is in absolute radio-silence due to scientific data being collected here on a constant basis. Most of us visited the local souvenir shop that was opened for us upon request. Ny-Ålesund is proudly a place where the world's northernmost postbox is located, and some of us made a use of it, sending postcards to our families and friends. In the afternoon, Michelle invited everyone for a guided walk through the settlement to the famous anchoring mast of Amundsen's airship Norge and Nobile's airship Italia. The walk started at the local museum, where Michelle began her lecture about the famous Norwegian polar explorer Roald Amundsen. The second part of the lecture took place by the anchoring mast. This exciting story was interesting not only for us, as two ptarmigans joined our group, sat on a rock, and listened carefully. The weather was crispy cold. After the lecture, some of us decided to go back to the warm ship, and some joined Michelle on a walk through the outskirts of this special town.





September 28.

**Krossfjord: Ebeltoftthamna**

**Möllerfjord: Regnardneset**

Position at 8 o'clock: 79°01,6' N 011°41,5' E

Temperature: -2 °C – Overcast – Wind force 2-3, East



After a comfortable night that we spent by the quayside in Ny-Ålesund, in the morning Antigua moved to the neighbour fjord system called Krossfjord. The temperature dropped during the night enough for the fjords' waters to begin to freeze. Breaking the glass-fragile layer of ice, Antigua moved to a place called Ebeltoftthamna. The bay was filled with floating pieces of ice, as well as smaller and bigger icebergs. Before we went on land, Michelle had told us the history of this interesting place, that across the ages hosted numerous activities. Polar historians state that Ebeltoftthamna was the very first English whaling station on Svalbard. The whalers left remains of blubber ovens and a little graveyard on the southern side of the bay. Both Pomors and Norwegian trappers were active in this area. The remains of all these activities are now protected by a no-entrance zone at the South side of the bay. We landed at the Northside. Once on land, we traditionally divide into two groups. Photographers with Jan, accompanied by Martyna, stayed in the vicinity of the landing site and focused on pictures of fascinating structures of the Ebeltoftthamna's shoreline, as well as icebergs. Hikers guided by Michelle went for a walk, thoroughly exploring the area.





Afternoon in the Krossfjord. During the second landing of the day, we got to visit a very interesting place, that definitely stands out from the surroundings in terms of colour – Lloyds Hotel. The hotel with its bright orange walls was built here in 1912 during „Zeppelin-fever” on Spitsbergen, when there were plans to establish a commercial air base in this area. On the landing site, we again divided into two groups. Photographers with Jan, accompanied by Michelle, stayed close to the Lloyds Hotel and followed photographic inspirations of the area. Hikers guided by Martyna walked towards the Lilliehöök glacier. Already in the close vicinity of our landing site, we discovered polar bear footprints in the snow. The hiking group discovered more places where polar bears were crossing this place some time ago.

Tonight was movie night. The film ‘When the light comes’ was screened, it is based on the dairy of Heleen van der Laan. In the eighties, she was 19-year-old and worked as the kitchen help on a small expedition-cruise-ship and when the summer came to an end she did not want to go home to Holland. Full of expectations, she moved in with a trapper in the north of Spitsbergen. This trapper also had his expectations, but they did not match. Living together in a small hut in the middle of nowhere, they had to deal with this situation. How many of us would have done this, call any unknown Spitsbergen trapper to spend a whole Arctic winter with him?!





September 29.

**Krossfjord: Fjortende Julibukta**

**Forlandsund: sailing**

Position at 8 o'clock: 79°07,2' N 011°53,7' E

Temperature: -1 °C – Overcast – Wind --



After the comfortable night, that we spent anchored in Fjortende Julibukta (Norwegian for “Fourteenth of July Bay”, to commemorate the French National Day), it was time for today's landing. The theme for today was ice, in all shapes and forms. The bay was full of smaller and bigger pieces of blue ice, as well as ice floes of many shapes, and ice-slash. After a longer zodiac shuttle through the ice, we landed approximately one kilometre from the Fjortende Juli glacier front. The beach was filled up with various ice blocks in different sizes brought here by waves of tsunami created by the calving glacier. Michelle gave us a safety briefing about this phenomena. Jan's photography group, accompanied by Martyna, stayed on the beach and focuses on details, whereas the hiking group, guided by Michelle, walked to the glacier's side moraine. We were all in awe after discovering all the colours, shapes, structures, as well all these little details enclosed and encrypted in the ice.

The other group walked to the side of the glacier. It is impressive to see a massive piece of ice so close. It looks so solid, that it is hard to believe that the glacier is moving. Michelle explained the life cycle of glaciers, illustrated by the one we were standing next to.









Already before lunch, the anchor was being lifted and Antigua set course to the south. We received a new weather update from Michelle, who told us that strong winds were predicted for the west coast of Spitsbergen in the course of the next days. The plan was therefore to travel back to the Isfjord. We said our farewell to the beautiful, endless, white landscapes of Krossfjord and Kongsfjord. The wind was already picking up when we were passing through Forlandsundet. This created a perfect opportunity for setting up the sails. All hands on deck! We were sailing! The light was getting softer and softer as we were quietly moving towards the entrance to the Isfjord. The sun shed some delicate yellow and later orange light on the mountains on both the sides of Forlandsundet. At some point, the wind dropped enough to put our zodiacs into action. Everyone, who wished to do so, could that way take pictures of Antigua with the sails up from the level of water.





September 30.

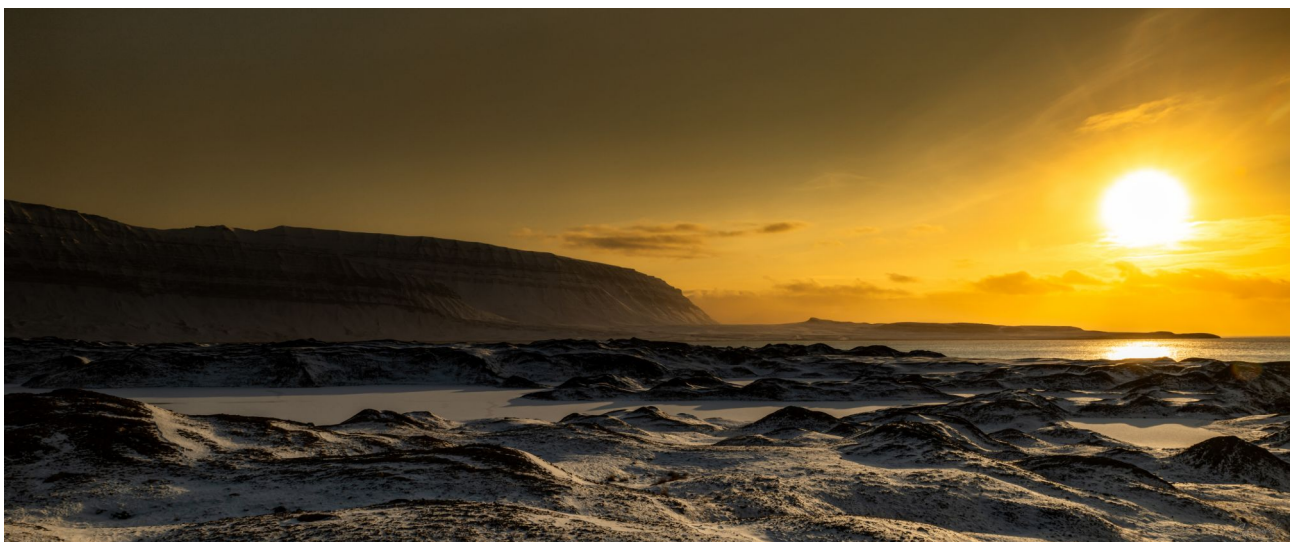
## **Ekmanfjord: Coraholmen**

Position at 8 o'clock: 78°39,9 N 014°39,6 E

Temperature: -2 °C – Clear sky – Wind force 3, Northwest



After an adventurous ride back to the Isfjord, we witnessed a misty, almost fairy-tale like morning in Ekmanfjorden. Fortunately, the fog dispersed enough for us to make a landing on a special island called Coraholmen. The intriguing, „Mars-like” landscape of the island was created by the glacier Sefströmbreen that in 1896 had a powerful surge. During the surge phase, sand, gravel and overall material was pushed by the glacier front from the bottom of the fjord up to Coraholmen and Flinholmen. Colourful, dreamy shells that can be found on the islands' shores show that not so long time ago (in geological scale) the fjord waters must have been warmer. After the surge phase, Sefströmbreen retreated, leaving an intriguing moraine landscape of red, few meters high mounds and small glacial lakes in between that covers the half of the island. The other half, covered by tundra, shows what the island would look like if not for the presence of the glacier Sefströmbreen. On the shores of Coraholmen, we traditionally divided into two groups – hikers and photographers. Martyna led hikers through the moraine landscape of the western side of the island, that looked like an obscure red labyrinth of mounds and frozen lakes covered by a layer of the fresh snow. Martyna's group reached tundra on the other, eastern side of the island, where we met a reindeer with very impressive antlers. Jan and his eager photographers, accompanied by Michelle, stayed closer to the landing site and explored photography opportunities around it. Both groups agreed that Coraholmen was very high on the list of our favourite places on this expedition.







In the afternoon, we moved towards the neighbour fjord system called Billefjord. By the evening, Antigua's anchor rattled down in Skansbukta. In this place, our captain invited us for a special evening - 'Captain's Dinner', the tradition that Antigua's crew has been cultivated with passion for many years. Our chef Piet could show that his skills of cooking are not only the one you need for an expedition ship, but also meets the standard of a fancy restaurant. At the beginning of the evening, captain Serge welcomed everyone in the saloon that our service team prepared for this occasion. The captain, on behalf of the entire crew, thanked everyone for this wonderful time that we spent together. Then we toasted with a glass of bubbles, and that gave a beginning to a series of touching and funny speeches prepared by participants of this expedition. Icing on the cake was the performance of a special song about crew members written by our lovely expeditioners. There was no end to laughter, passionate conversations, and even some emotional tears.



October 1.

## **Billefjord: Skansbukta & Adolfbukta**

Position at 8 o'clock: 78°31,7' N 16°01,7' E

Temperature: -4 °C – Clear sky – Wind force 1 West-Northwest



We started the last full day of this expedition in Skansbukta. During Michelle's morning speech, we got to know that this place is indeed special. Skansbukta gives name to a small bay framed by steep-sided mountains of beautifully striped sedimentary rocks. The shelter-like character of the landing site allows visitors to have more freedom in terms of polar bear safety. This time, instead of guided tours, Michelle and Martyna positioned themselves and guarded both ends of the landing site. Therefore, all the guests were welcome to explore the site on their own, and to take all the dreamed pictures. Finally, freedom! Of course, Michelle and Martyna kept a watchful eye on the situation.

The site in Skansbukta has a lot to offer for the visitors. Archaeological remains that can be found here are connected to the spectacular geology of this place. In 1918, a Norwegian company made a first attempt to mine gypsum here, and a second attempt was made in the 1930s. As everyone can already assume after all the former mining sites that we visited during this trip – neither of the attempts was profitable. Now the entrance to the former mine is barred for safety reasons, but the remains of an old railway can give some photographic inspiration. The old wooden trapper's hut, that dates back to the mining activities, is still in use by members of Longyearbyen's hunting and fishing club. Most of us could imagine spending a few days here, reading all the books we've always wanted to read but never had the time to. A wooden ship wreck is said to have functioned as a lighter between the shore and a larger, seaworthy vessel.





Gliding through the misty landscape of Billefjord, in the afternoon we reached a front of the Nordenskiöld glacier. As we cruised along the glacier, the sun lit the ice, giving us the last beautiful and unforgettable impressions of Svalbard's ice. During our way back to the port, we experienced some turbulences that made us even more appreciate the great weather that we had during this expedition.



We ended the day in Longyearbyen port, where Jan organized a presentation for us with pictures of that our talented photographers took during this voyage.



October 2.

## **Longyearbyen**

Position at 8 o'clock: 78°13,7' N 15°36,7' E

Temperature: -4 °C – Overcast – Wind force 5 Northwest

In the morning, in the Longyearbyen port, it felt like winter, and the floating pier was covered with a thin layer of ice. After the final, good Antigua-style breakfast, it was time to say goodbye to the crew and Antigua, our lovely home of the past over two weeks. In the morning we had some time to explore Longyearbyen. Hard to believe that the trip had come to an end, and that so much beautiful Arctic experience could fit into our photographs!

Many of us knew already now that this was not our last visit to the Arctic.

Amount of pictures: more then steps







*Thank you Dear Guests for this wonderful experience, your enthusiasm, and trust! All the beautiful moments that we experienced together will stay in our hearts for a long time. We are happy to welcome you on board again!*

Triplog is written by Martyna Urbańczyk.

Photographs by Jan Lambert.

Edited by Michelle van Dijk

This triplog can be found on <http://www.spitsbergen-svalbard.nl>

The s/v *Antigua* will continue to sail in Spitsbergen's waters in the year to come; the other sailing ships of the Tallship Company fleet, *Artemis*, *Elisabeth* and *Atlantis*, sail the North Sea, the Baltic Sea, Mediterranean Sea and the IJsselmeer.

More information:

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### Lectures, Emphasis & Sailing

24 September	Aurora borealis	
25 September	Basics of landscape photography	Jan
	Physics of Northern lights	Martyna
26 September	Basics of wildlife photography	Jan
27 September	Amundsen (in Ny Ålesund)	Michelle
28 September	When the light comes	film
29 September	Glaciology (at 14. Julibreen)	Michelle
	Sailing	
30 September	Sailing	
	Post processing of photographs	Jan
1 October	Evaluation of photographs	Jan



## SEA- AND LANDMAMMALS SVALBARD

LATIN	ENGLISH	DUTCH	GERMAN	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1
<i>Alopex lagopus</i>	Arctic Fox	Poolvos	Polarfuchs / Eisfuchs			X					
<i>Erignathus barbatus</i>	Bearded Seal	Baardrob	Bartrobbe			X			X		X
<i>Dephinapterus leucas</i>	Beluga	Beloega	Weisswal								†
<i>Balaenoptera musculus</i>	Blue Whale	Blauwe vinvs	Blauwal								
<i>Balaena mysticetus</i>	Bowhead Whale	Groenlandse walvis	Grönlandwal								
<i>Phoca vitulina</i>	Common/Harbour Seal	Gewone zeehond	Seehund		X		X	X	X		
<i>Balaenoptera physalus</i>	Fin Whale	Gewone vinvis	Finnwal								
<i>Pagophilus groenlandicus</i>	Harp Seal	Zadelrob	Sattelrobbe								
<i>Megaptera novaeangliae</i>	Humpback Whale	Bultrug	Buckelwal								
<i>Balaenoptera acutorostrata</i>	Mink Whale	Dwergvinvis	Zwergwal								X
<i>Monodon monoceros</i>	Narwhal	Narwal	Narwal								
<i>Lagenorhynchus albirostris</i>	White-beaked Dolphin	Witsnuitdolfijn	Weisschnauzendelphin	X							
<i>Orcinus orca</i>	Orca (Killer Whale)	Zwaardwalvis	Schwertwal (Orca)								
<i>Ursus maritimus</i>	Polar Bear	IJsbeer	Eisbär								
<i>Phoca hispida</i>	Ringed Seal	Ringelrob	Ringelrobbe								
<i>Balaenoptera borealis</i>	Sei Whale	Noordse vinvis	Seiwal								
<i>Physeter macrocephalus</i>	Sperm Whale	Potvis	Pottwal								
<i>Rangifer tarandus platyrhynchus</i>	Spitsbergen Reindeer	Spitsbergenrendier	Spitzbergen-Rentier		X					X	X
<i>Odobenus rosmarus</i>	Walrus	Walrus	Walross		X	X					