

Spitsbergen, North-East Greenland

20 August – 02 September 2023

On board *m/v Plancius*



M/v Plancius was built in 1976 as an oceanographic research vessel for the Royal Dutch Navy and was named “Hr. Ms. Tydeman”. The vessel was completely rebuilt as a passenger vessel in 2009 and complies with the latest SOLAS-regulations (Safety Of Life At Sea). M/v Plancius is 89 m long, 14.5 m wide and has a maximum draft of 5 m, ice class 1D, 10,5 knots average cruising speed and has 3 Diesel- Electric engines.

Captain Artur Iakovlev

And his international crew of 50 sailors

Chief Officer:	Romanas Vicas	[Lithuania]
Second Officer:	Nino Cizmic	[Croatia]
Third Officer:	Eline Schuurman	[The Netherlands]
Hotel Manager:	Ingrid van de Loo	[The Netherlands]
Asst. Hotel Manager:	Karolina Guziejko	[Poland]
Head Chef:	Khabir Moraes	[India]
Sous Chef:	Sachin Anant	[India]
Ships doctor:	Veronique Verhoeven	[Belgium]
Expedition Leader:	Rinie van Meurs	[The Netherlands]
Ass. Expedition Leader:	Michelle van Dijk	[The Netherlands]
Expedition Guide:	Chloe Marechal	[France]
Expedition Guide:	Irene Kastner	[Germany]
Expedition Guide:	Elodie Bouvier	[Switzerland]
Expedition Guide:	Frigga Kruse	[Germany]
Expedition Guide:	Ross Wheeler	[United Kingdom]
Expedition Guide:	Pierre Gallego	[Luxembourg]

We welcome you on board!

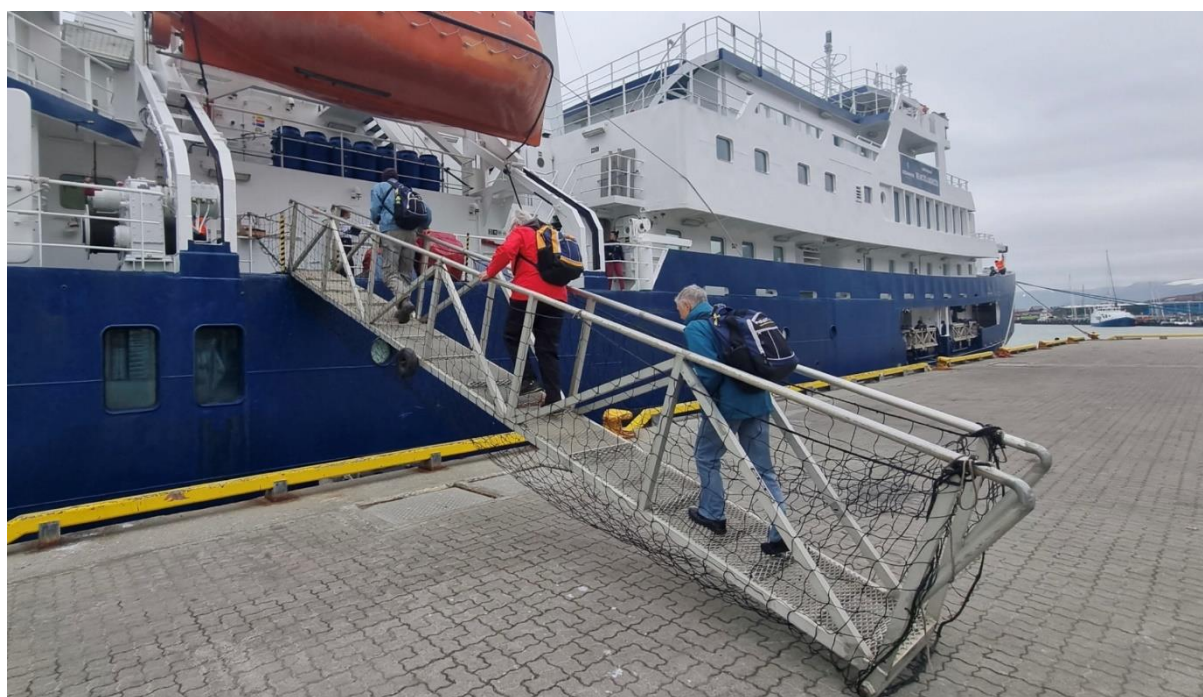
Day 1 – Sunday 20th of August, Longyearbyen, Embarkation Day

12h00 GPS Position: 78°14.6'N / 015°32.6'E

Wind: Northerly, Beaufort force 2 • **Sea:** Calm • **Weather:** Overcast

• **Air temperature:** +7°C • **Sea temperature:** +9°C

We began our expedition in Longyearbyen, having travelled from all over the world to reach the spectacular Arctic archipelago of Svalbard. Once safely on board MV Plancius, our new home for the next two weeks, we familiarised ourselves with our new surroundings and undertook the required mandatory safety briefings. As our mooring lines were let go and we said goodbye to Longyearbyen, we toasted our forthcoming adventure with Captain Artur, Expedition Leader Rinie and the rest of the expedition team in the observation lounge. We then set off to the restaurant for a relaxed first buffet dinner amongst new friends. Following dinner, we headed down to the boot store for to receive our sturdy footwear that we would use throughout our expedition and enjoyed the remainder of the evening socialising in the lounge or on the open decks where the sun remained hovering over the horizon.



Day 2 – Monday 21st of August, SmeerenburgFjorden, Smeerenburg

12h00 GPS Position: 78°13.7'N / 015°36.1E

Wind: North-Easterly, Beaufort force 2 • **Sea:** Calm • **Weather:** Partial clouds

• **Air temperature:** +6°C • **Sea temperature:** +8°C

It was 07:45 when our Expedition Leader Rinie gave us our first wake-up-call. It might have taken a short moment to realise where we were – far North on the lovely ship Plancius which we were now calling home.

This morning we had reached the Northwest corner of Spitsbergen and during breakfast, the Captain himself was steering our ship through Sørgattet, the narrow passage south of Danskøya.

When we looked out of the windows of the dining room, we saw the stunning landscape, so right after breakfast we put on some layers and went outside to see the beautiful Smeerenburgfjord, and breath the fresh Arctic air. Over the PA, Expedition Leader Rinie told us that the still impressive glacier Smeerenburgbreen retreated a lot, and he remembered the time that the island in front of it, was still covered by ice. Having a closer look at the island, Irene, one of our guides, spotted two polar bears. It was a mother and her cub of last year. The ship sailed closer to get a better look, however, they were still difficult to observe, but with the help of our guides, we all managed to find them.

After a while it was time for the – because of the polar bears – postponed briefings. Rinie explained how safely to get in and out of the zodiacs, how to behave around polar bears and the dos and don'ts on land.



Right after lunch it was time to get into the zodiacs, ten boats cruised towards the island where mother and cub were relaxing. They didn't mind us watching them, and except for some polar bear yoga, they didn't move. But the Arctic is not only about polar bears, but the nearby glacier was also calling and as we approached, we were greeted with many species of birds flying and seals in the water.

Our next aim was Smeerenburgreen, Michelle looked first and spotted an Arctic fox, being attacked by Arctic terns. Incredible how camouflaged these animals are, if it wasn't because of the arctic terns, we would have difficulties to find it. Arriving in the ice at the glacier was exciting, and we could see so many different shades of blue and hear the air bubbles escaping from it. At 15:00h it was time to get back to the mother ship as we still wanted to visit the walruses on Smeerenburg.

Shortly before 17:00h we got into the zodiacs again, half of the group would be taken to the walruses and half of the group would be taken to the historical remains of Smeerenburg. Smeerenburg was build 400 years ago as a whaling settlement and there is a lot to talk about it.

But suddenly, the plans changed again as there were again polar bears spotted, across Danskegattet on the island Danskøya, opposite of the island Amsterdamøya on which Smeerenburg is situated. This time it was a mother with her cub of this year. Instead of the history talk, the second half was taken towards the polar bears and after some time with the walruses and bears we swapped.



Incredible, what a day!

We had only one day of Spitsbergen, but so much was experienced that it felt like much longer.

Day 3 – Tuesday 22nd of August, At Sea

12h00 GPS Position: 77°47.6'N / 001°07.8E

Wind: South-Westerly, Beaufort force 4 • **Sea:** Slight • **Weather:** Overcast, fog

• **Air temperature:** +6°C • **Sea temperature:** +2°C

Following an epic day exploring the wonders of Svalbard, our expedition continued its eastward course towards Greenland. The morning greeted us with a moody, overcast sky and a thick fog, accompanied by a slightly turbulent sea that gradually calmed as the day progressed.



In the morning, Michelle and Frigga engaged us with an enlightening lecture about the history of whaling in Svalbard, recounting the sailors' daunting challenges in this unforgiving environment and the heartrending saga of whaling itself. Their narrative took us back to the early 17th century when there were so many whales in these waters that ships had trouble moving. Yet, by the late 18th century, the whale populations suffered a disastrous decline due to extensive hunting, marking the end of an era.

In the afternoon, Rinie and Michelle shared fascinating insights into the lives of polar bears. These magnificent mammals reach impressive lengths exceeding 2.5 meters and carry a remarkable weight of approximately 680 kilograms, firmly cementing their status as Earth's largest living carnivores. The polar bear's colossal size is just one facet of their remarkable adaptation to the unforgiving Arctic environment.

In the frigid Arctic, polar bears are perfectly suited for survival. Their thick fur coats provide insulation against the biting cold, ensuring their warmth in sub-zero temperatures. These formidable creatures traverse snow-covered terrain with grace, thanks to their oversized paws, which function as natural snowshoes, preventing them from sinking into the snow.

However, one of the most astonishing attributes of polar bears is their incredible swimming prowess. Their powerful front limbs act as efficient paddles, enabling them to navigate icy waters with exceptional skill and agility.

At the end of the day, our expedition team held our first recap. They told us about the never-ending daylight in the Arctic, the different types of Arctic birds, and the iconic walrus. We can't wait for more adventures ahead!

Day 4 – Wednesday 23rd of August, At Sea

12h00 GPS Position: 74°51.2'N / 009°15.9E

Wind: Westerly, Beaufort force 4 • **Sea:** Slight • **Weather:** Overcast, fog •

Air temperature: +2°C • **Sea temperature:** +1°C

Those of us who, despite poor visibility for most of the previous evening, had not given up seeing the first sunset of our voyage were rewarded with a spectacular sight as the fog fell apart on the horizon just before midnight. The setting sun became visible just as he was about to sink into the waters, and for the following hours, the sky turned crimson.



As we woke up to a beautiful morning, the fog kept a respectful distance at the horizon, and the sea had calmed down nicely. Pieces of drift ice passed by as Plancius moved steadily through the waters and the fulmars who circled around us seemed to enjoy the early hours as much as the early birds amongst us. Inside, today's breakfast buffet was waiting. As we expected to spend another day at sea on our way to westwards the daily program offered a few more lectures. Yet, as many of us had not experienced the pack ice before a quick change of plans was soon on the table. Our captain was not hard to persuade and soon we went on a ship cruise into the ice! As long as the pack ice was not too close, as long as there was space to push through between the floes, Plancius was maneuvering elegantly in this labyrinth of white, grey, blue and green. We found our way out into open water just in time for Elodie's lecture on sea ice and the importance of this special ecosystem both on and under its surface. Not only is the extent of sea ice important, but it also needs to be of the right age in order to provide the right conditions for plankton to grow to serve as food resource for fish

to be eaten by seals who are the main food source for the polar bears .By lunchtime, the fog had caught up with us again and made it necessary for the officers to close the bridge for visitors. Every now and then, drift ice came into our way forcing them to reduce speed and maneuver carefully, reading the radar screens and consulting ice charts. However, we made use of the circumstances as Ross invited us to a photography workshop. Hopefully, we would soon get a chance to put our new knowledge to the test! From time to time, visibility became better only to decrease again and even the fulmars seemed to have given up on following us. After a while in open waters the drift ice forced us once again to deviate from a straight course towards Myggbukta. The fastest way through the ice seemed indeed to be going around it and thus captain Artur decided to search for free passage further South. Eventually, at least the fog lifted again in the late hours and now we were waiting patiently for the Sun to set as we witnessed another one of the spectacular and extended crimson night hours of the late arctic summer.



Day 5 – Thursday 24th of August, At Sea

12h00 GPS Position: 72°46.7'N / 015°33.0W

Wind: South-Westerly, Beaufort force 4 • **Sea:** Slight • **Weather:** Overcast, fog

• **Air temperature:** +0°C • **Sea temperature:** +1°C

As the Arctic sun pierced through our cabin curtains, we awoke surrounded by a surreal landscape of sea ice. The cold air was invigorating, and the sight of the endless ice floes stretching as far as the eye could see was awe-inspiring. It was as if we had been transported to another world altogether. Shortly after we finished breakfast, Frigga, one of our expedition guides, began her captivating lecture on Greenland's rich archaeological history but her lecture was abruptly interrupted by a burst of excitement from the deck. Three massive fin whales had gracefully breached the surface and our attention was immediately drawn to this amazing natural spectacle.



Then, Frigga began her captivating lecture on Greenland's rich archaeological history. She delved into the mysteries of ancient Inuit settlements and the ingenious adaptations of the people who thrived in this harsh environment. Her insights into the artifacts, tools, and structures left behind by these resilient societies provided a profound understanding of their lives and challenges in the Arctic, making us appreciate the cultural significance of this remote land.



At the beginning of the afternoon, there were fog enveloping the ship, creating a mysterious atmosphere. Following lunch, James, the geologist guest speaker, gave us an interesting lecture on the geology of East Greenland. James described the tectonic forces and the fascinating stories of rocks and fossils that could be found in this remote corner of the world. It gave us a good understanding about what we will see the next couple of days.

This Arctic expedition had already proven to be an adventure of a lifetime, filled with surprises, wonder, and newfound knowledge. We are looking forward to what tomorrow would bring as our ship continued its journey through this remote wilderness.

Day 6 – Friday 25th of August, Segelsällskapetfjord & Alpefjord

12h00 GPS Position: 77°47.6'N / 001°07.8W

Wind: South-Westerly, Beaufort force 3 • **Sea:** Calm • **Weather:** Overcast, •

Air temperature: +9°C • **Sea temperature:** +5°C

There probably wasn't a single passenger onboard who wasn't on the outside decks before breakfast. The early morning sun, clear and unobstructed waters ahead of us and stunning scenery left us all amazed by the beauty of Greenland.

We had entered Davy Sund, a sound named by William Scoresby Jr., an English whaling captain, in 1822. Sir Humphrey Davy was an English chemist and President of the Royal Society, who incidentally invented the famous and important Davy miners' lamp.

As we continued into the wide Kong Oscar Fjord, we marveled at the multicolored mountains all around us. Named by the Swedish explorer A. G. Nathorst in 1899 to commemorate the king of Sweden, who could guess its scale?! It turns out we were looking at up to 25 km at its widest! It gave us our first sense of the vastness of this landscape.



Our first landing on Greenland soil would be at the oddly named place Segelsällskapet Fjord. Also named by Nathorst, it referred to the Swedish Royal Yacht Club. This location was full of geological wonders such as the axis of a fold in the rock, which we could place our finger on. Even if we did not understand all geological ins and outs, the layering and the colour that went with it were simply stunning. Opposite the fjord, we could trace the same colors in a sedimentary sequence called the Eleanor Bay Super Group, marine deposits of over 16 km thick that were later uplifted to form the mountains we see today.

In the afternoon, the ship sailed through Alpefjord, a name derived from the spectacular high mountains of the Stauning Alper on the east side of the fjord. Did anyone spot the Norwegian hunting hut built by Helge Ingstad's expedition in 1932/33? It looked tiny; it was dwarfed by huge erratics surrounding it. Here and there, there were musk oxen, and although we roughly know the size of these animals, they appeared a little black dots on the tundra vegetation.

We undertook our second landing near the merging glaciers Gullygletscher and Sefstrøm Gletscher (Gletscher = glacier, Sefstrøm having been a Swedish chemist and geologist). This time, we had a chance to practice exploring the landscape in three groups: the "mountain goats" on a faster, higher hike to gain height from which to look across to the two glaciers, the medium group, and the leisurely. And it is true: you think you already saw the place from the ship, but out on the landing you get a very different feel for what it means to finally be in Greenland.



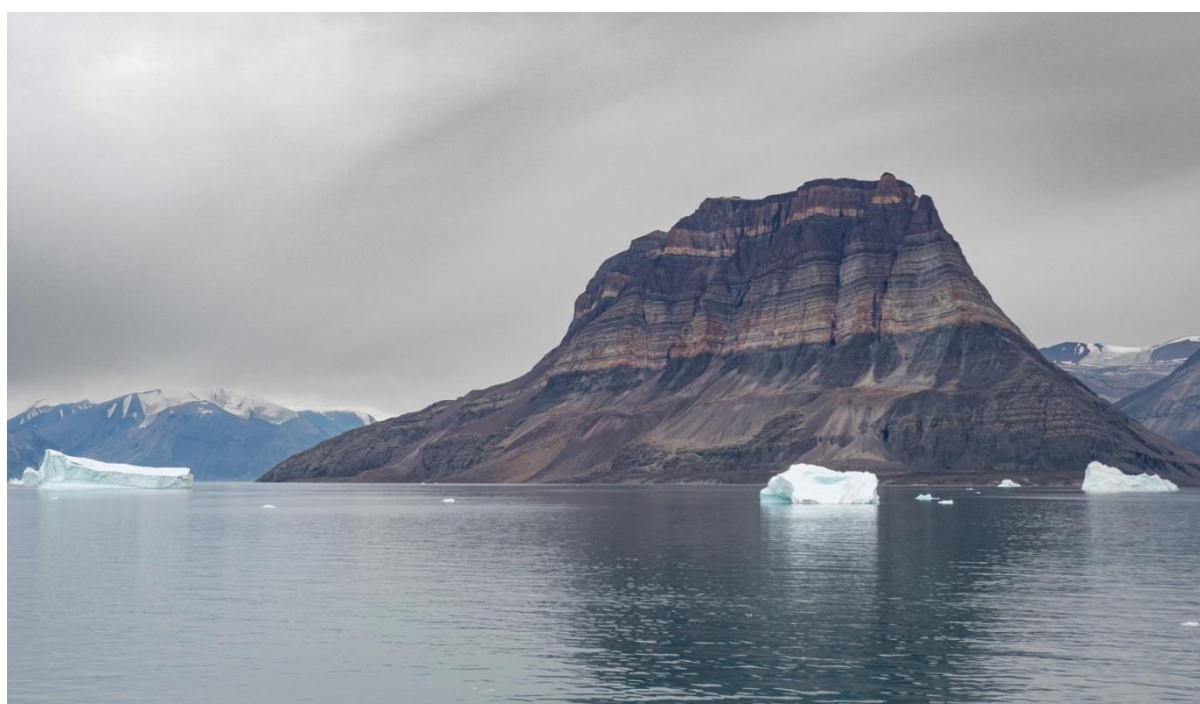
Day 7 – Saturday 26th of August, Blomsterbugt & Antarctic Sund

12h00 GPS Position: 73°19.7'N / 025°17.5W

Wind: South-Easterly, Beaufort force 1 • **Sea:** Calm • **Weather:** Overcast,

Air temperature: +10°C • **Sea temperature:** +5°C

Before breakfast, we sailed into Geologfjord, a narrow fjord nestled between mountains reaching heights of up to 2,100 meters (6,900 feet) on both sides. The cliffs here display beautifully coloured strata, hinting at the geological history of our planet and possibly supporting the Snowball Earth hypothesis. This theory suggests that the Earth's surface was completely or nearly frozen at least once, possibly over 650 million years ago.



Following breakfast, we made landing at Blomsterbugt, also known as Blomster Bugt or Flowers Bay in Danish. It was a unique opportunity to observe muskoxen as they grazed on the tundra. These creatures are a relic from the distant past, having roamed the Earth even before the woolly mammoth. Their remarkable insulative undercoat boasts the finest fur of any mammal worldwide. Surprisingly, muskoxen are more closely related to goats and sheep than to oxen or cattle. Their thick, shaggy coats and the powerful musky odour emitted by males during mating season are two of their most distinctive features.

In the afternoon, we embarked on a scenic ship cruise through the enchanting Antarctic Sund. The sound was named by Alfred Gabriel Nathorst, who discovered and mapped this fjord branch in 1899 aboard the Antarctic, during the Swedish Greenland Expedition's search for survivors of S. A. Andrée's Arctic balloon expedition of 1897. While cruising through this serene waterway, we had the privilege of witnessing a mother polar bear and her cub in the distance.



Day 8 – Sunday 27th of August, Ella Ø

12h00 GPS Position: 72°54.7'N / 025°03.5W

Wind: Westerly, Beaufort force 2 • **Sea:** Calm • **Weather:** Overcast, rain

Air temperature: +07°C • **Sea temperature:** +2°C

Today we were woken up by Rinie to a cloudy, rainy day. On our way to Ella. Island, the island that is home to the Sirius patrol base. We had already been in contact with them on our first day on arrival in Greenland when they came aboard to check our paperwork. We were allowed to land on the base, and several members of the patrol came to greet us. Most of the Patrollers will be stationed in Greenland for two years and there is a very strict procedure to be able to join the patrol. During the winter they patrol most of Greenland with their dog sleds. For the patrol to go all around Greenland it takes them 3 to 4 years in this harsh environment.



As we landed, it was raining slightly, and we set off to do different hikes across the island. The hiking group made it up to a high vantage point where they were able to have a breathtaking view of the surroundings. We went back to the ship right on time for lunch and Plancius set off to go south to Scoresby sound as there were predictions of heavy wind with the risk of having pack ice being blown into our itinerary. This is why the captain decided to set sail right after landing to avoid the ice and get to Scoresby Sund in time.



As we started navigating South, the sea was quite rough, and the visibility was quite poor, but our passengers had already gotten used to swell, and nobody got seasick. After lunch, we listened to a lecture about the female polar explorer Louise Arnar Boyd. We then had a recap of the day with Irene, telling us more about the Sirius patrol, the harsh selection process, the duties, and what life looks like for the members of these patrol for the two years commitment. Chloe gave us a recap on tardigrades. She uncovered all the mysteries of these very resistant little organisms, and confessed to us that she is keeping one as a pet.

Dinner was then served in the dining room, and we enjoyed yet another fantastic set of dishes, prepared by our signature chef Kabir. We then headed to the bar to enjoy a drink before going to bed and preparing for our next activities in Scoresby Sund.

Day 9 – Monday 28th of August, Vikingbugt & Denmark Island

12h00 GPS Position: 70°23.7'N / 025°04.5W

Wind: Westerly, Beaufort force 2 • **Sea:** Calm • **Weather:** Overcast •

Air temperature: +06°C • **Sea temperature:** +2°C

Rinie woke us up today to the beautiful side of blue sky and sunshine as we are already in Scoresby sound and entering Vikingebugt. Plancius had to progress slowly through the Icebergs, our first sights of very large Icebergs. After breakfast, we all headed to the outer decks to absorb the incredible views of steep cliffs and Icebergs.

At about 10 o'clock that ship stopped, and we dropped the zodiacs for a zodiac cruise. The ice coming from the glacier was so abundant that even with the zodiacs it was very difficult to progress, and it took us quite a time to get to the cliffs to observe the very characteristic columnar basalt that is typical of the area. We had a wonderful time driving through the ice stopping at beautiful Icebergs. We just could not get enough pictures of all these different shapes and sizes and colors. Back on the ship we had time for a lovely lunch prepared by Kabir and we even had time for a little rest as we repositioned Plancius to Denmark Island. Our navigation to our destination was amazing. We were navigating through flat, calm waters, with huge mountains on both sides, and Icebergs passing us by.



We arrived at Denmark Island at about 3:30 PM. The weather was gorgeous: the sun was shining brightly as we landed on the sandy beach of these islands. We divided as usual into three groups, the hikers, the medium group, and the leisure group. The hikers managed to go a long distance to a high vantage point, where we had

brehtaking views. But we all managed to have a beautiful walk in this tundra, and to have a look at the remains of the winter houses from the Thule.



We got back on the ship in time for a nice dinner and after dinner we all spent some time on the outer decks, looking at the Icebergs passing next to the ship. Some of us stayed up for quite a while waiting for the northern lights, but unfortunately, we were not lucky.

Day 10 – Tuesday 29th of August, Sydkap & Ø fjord

12h00 GPS Position: 71°17.6'N / 025°01.1E

Wind: Westerly, Beaufort force 2 • **Sea:** Calm • **Weather:** Fog clearing to clear sky

Air temperature: +04°C • **Sea temperature:** +8°C

What had seemed like a faint veil of mist settling with dusk the previous evening and thus obscuring our hopes of witnessing any Northern lights had developed into a rather dense layer of fog by the following morning. As we dropped the anchor in a small inlet in the northern part of Scoresby Sound, not much of the surrounding landscape could be seen, instead our attention was once again drawn to the delicious breakfast buffet while we hoped for better visibility outside.

Eventually, our patience paid off and the fog started moving, revealing rich tundra, soft slopes and finally, sharp peaks covered in ice sticking out of the mist. After a rather long zodiac ride, we soon found ourselves on land and ready to explore the neighborhood. Four groups formed and set off into the landscape into different directions, looking at the local geological features, exploring the remains of a former hunting settlement and hoping to find some musk ox willing to let us have a good look at them. Even though the fog had delayed us a bit this morning, the opportunity to stretch our legs was welcome. Upon return, the mystic morning mood had given way to a brighter light and fewer clouds which suited us perfectly as we were about to embark on a ship's cruise into the Ø fjord, a narrow sound between the high mountains of Milne Land and Renland with peaks of up to almost 2900 meters.



Now, the Sun had dissolved all the fog, and our captain steered carefully and with high concentration between the many icebergs these waters were sending our way! Watching Plancius maneuver swiftly between all these beautiful but demanding obstacles was fascinating – often, it seemed as if there was no further passage, then yet again, a slight movement of the hand at the helm, a new angle of approach and we were able to cautiously pass between the bright white chunks of ice.



The sea was still and every now and then we were able to spot the little head of a seal curiously peaking out of the water. As the evening came, a barbecue was arranged on the aft deck and we had proceeded into Rypefjord where we found a nice little bay providing shelter from the icebergs for anchorage. The party went on for a few hours while we watched the sunset and the first stars appeared. This time, no clouds or fog appeared, the sky remained clear and finally, our patience was rewarded and the Northern lights appeared! First, a faint green ribbon was only recognizable to those who knew what to look for, but eventually, the lights became a bit stronger and also those who had gone to bed already were woken up to have a chance to witness this phenomenon of the high latitudes.

Day 11 – Wednesday 30th of August, Røde Ø

08h00 GPS Position: 70°42.0'N / 027°53.9W

Wind: SW1 • **Sea:** Calm • **Weather:** Clear • **Air temperature:** +05°C •

Sea temperature: +7°C

As the rising sun crept over the mountains, the cold crisp air slowly began to warm on what was a perfect morning in the Scoresby Sund. With mirror calm conditions and a vibrant blue sky, we lifted anchor and started to head South along the magnificent Rødefjord, or Red Fjord.

Meandering slowly through countless icebergs of all shapes and sizes we were awarded with glassy conditions and perfect reflections of the 300-million-year-old Permian red sandstone cliffs that wall the 11km fjord. The intense brownish red sandstone, which gives the fjord its name, is sometimes referred to as 'New red, as it is both geologically and visually very similar to the 'Old red' sandstone found in parts of Spitsbergen and Scotland; however, it is younger or 'newer'.

Following our relaxing morning and a buffet lunch, we arrived at Røde Ø or Red Island, a monolithic island of the red sandstone rock that is found throughout the fjord. We started our visit to the island with a zodiac cruise along its Southern edge where we encountered picturesque geological dikes and an intrusion of columnar basalt that earns itself the nickname 'braendestabelen' or 'pile of firewood'. We continued along the coastline of the island to observe the eastern edge of the 'iceberg graveyard' that makes Røde Ø so famous. With a depth of just a few meters, countless towering icebergs like those seen throughout the morning were literally stuck in position to form a virtual maze of ice.



After our zodiac cruise, We made a landing on the island and undertook a short hike up the hills to get a more elevated view of Røde Ø's breathtaking landscapes and to observe the gigantic icebergs from above – For many, this was the most breath-taking and memorable moment of our expedition to East Greenland.

Making our way back down to the beach, a few of the bravest amongst us took the opportunity to strip down to their swimming costumes and take a swim in the balmy water as a part of the infamous 'polar plunge'.



Shortly after our departure from Røde Ø, we arrived back onboard Plancius for a hot shower and dinner in the restaurant. We spent the remainder of the evening relaxing in the lounge and on the open decks as we admired the beautiful scenery of Føn fjord as we head East towards the settlement of Ittoqqortoormiit.

Day 12 – Thursday 31st of August, Ittoqqortoormiit

08h00 GPS Position: 70°28.7'N / 021°58.3W

Wind: E5 • **Sea:** Calm • **Weather:** Cloudy • **Air temperature:** +04°C •

Sea temperature: +7°C

As the sun's gentle rays broke through the portholes, we awoke to a breathtaking view from aboard Plancius. We found ourselves in front of the settlement of Ittoqqortoormiit in Greenland. The morning greeted us with an idyllic scene - clear blue skies and a tranquil sea without a whisper of wind. The first sight to capture our attention was the colourful houses nestled along the shoreline, creating a picturesque contrast with the pristine Arctic surroundings. It was a truly enchanting start of our day.

After a quick drive to the shore in Zodiacs, we had the entire morning to explore this remote settlement. Ittoqqortoormiit had a museum that provided valuable insights into the rich history and culture of the Inuit people. For those looking to take home a piece of the Arctic, a souvenir shop offered crafts made by the locals. We could even musk ox meat! One of the most heart-warming sights was the locals of Ittoqqortoormiit feeding their dogs. They were busy feeding and caring for the sled dogs, a vital part of their livelihood and culture.



We could walk around the settlement, soaking in the picturesque vistas that surrounded us. The fjord lay before us, its pristine waters reflecting the clear skies above. Towering mountains served as a majestic backdrop, and colossal icebergs added a touch of surreal beauty to the scene.



Back on Plancius, a lunch awaited us as we prepared to set sail once again, this time in the direction of Iceland. The afternoon brought a change in weather as the wind picked up considerably. Despite the challenging conditions, Plancius sailed smoothly.

To enrich our understanding of the Arctic environment, Pierre conducted a fascinating lecture. He delved into the workings of the International Whaling Commission, shedding light on the delicate balance between conservation efforts and sustainable whaling practices. The discussion of whale quotas left us with a profound appreciation for the complexities of managing marine resources in this pristine wilderness.

As the day ended, we retired to our cabins with the memories of our day in Ittoqqortoormiit and the last days we spent in Greenland in our minds.

Day 13 – Friday 1st of September, At sea towards Iceland

12h00 GPS Position: 66°44.4'N / 018°56.0E

Wind: SE4 • **Sea:** Calm • **Weather:** Overcast, rain • **Air temperature:** +09°C •

Sea temperature: +8°C

Today, Rinie woke us up to a much calmer sea than yesterday. The crossing overnight had been a little bit shaky, but we all made it. A lot of fulmars were flying around the ship, because there was not much wind left, they were mostly landing on the surface of the water. After a hearty breakfast, Ross gave us another workshop on photography where he taught us how to edit pictures.

Right after lunch we could already see Iceland in the distance. The typical rugged coastline was covered in clouds, which gave it a very dramatic look. We kept on looking for whales, and at some point, a group of white beaked dolphins appeared in front of the ship. In the afternoon Irene gave us a lecture on her activities in Longyearbyen, where she looks after dogs for her dog sledging activities. It was very interesting to learn about her experiences, and how she works with these kinds of dogs. At 4 PM the time arrived to say goodbye to our rubber boots, and we brought them to the boot room.

We were then all called deck by deck to go to reception to settle our Bar bills. Some of us had quite a surprise. At 6 PM. It was time to go to the observation lounge for the captain's cocktail where our captain addressed us for the last time. Rinie also thanked us all for choosing Oceanwide expeditions, thanked the entire staff and crew for this incredible voyage, and took us through all the memories of the different steps of this expedition. Ross and Pierre then showed us the slideshow of the trip with a time lapse, with all the beauties that we had experience during these past 14 days.

It was then time to go for our last plated dinner in the dining room, where our chef Kabir spoiled us again with his delicious creations. At the end of the dinner, the entire crew from the kitchen, hotel department and laundry came through the dining room to say goodbye, and it was wonderful to be able to see all the faces again. We then all gathered at the bar for a couple of drinks as the pilot came on board Plancius to assist the bridge in their efforts to get alongside in Akureyri. There was a gigantic cruise ship in front of us on the pier which made our mighty Plancius appear very small. We all could not believe that our fantastic trip had come to an end.

Day 14 – Saturday 2nd of September, Arrived in Akureyri

09h00 GPS Position: 65°41.1'N / 018°04.4E

Wind: SSE8 • **Sea:** Moderate • **Weather:** Overcast • **Air temperature:** +16°C • **Sea temperature:** +8°C

Late last evening, we arrived in Akureyri. While we enjoyed a last breakfast on board, our suitcases were taken off the ship. It is a sad moment to disembark from Plancius, which has been a comfortable and cozy home during this unforgettable journey. We have shared many unique moments, seen a range of rarely sighted wildlife, and made new friends. Loaded with fond memories we now must head home.

Our wildlife encounters and the landscapes we saw on this trip were truly spectacular. For the most part the weather has been fantastic, and we have loved sharing our love for the Arctic with you.

Thank you all for travelling with us on this voyage, for your enthusiasm, support, and good company. We very much hope to see you again in the future, wherever that might be!



Total distance sailed on our voyage: 2244 nautical miles
Northernmost position: 79°49.8'N

On behalf of Oceanwide Expeditions, Captain Artur Iakovlev, Expedition Leader Rinie van Meurs, Hotel Manager Ingrid van de Loo, and all the crew and staff of M/V Plancius, it has been a pleasure travelling with you.