



THANK YOU FOR JOINING OUR

ULTIMATE SVALBARD – WITH BENJAMIN HARDMAN

21 ST – 29 TH MAY 2025





Thank you for Joining our Svalbard in Focus Journey

21 – 28 May 2025

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Natural World Safaris are a niche travel outfitter specialising purely in the natural world, incredible habitats, and the wildlife that calls these remote corners of the planet home. We hope you enjoyed your time in the Arctic and that this trip log serves as a reminder of your journey.

Your Journey

Day 1: 21 May 2025

Embarkation Day. Location: Longyearbyen

Finally, the day has come! We gathered gathered on the pier for our Svalbard Expedition with the lovely Kinfish. We were greeted by our Expeditions Leaders and welcomed on board by the captain and his fabulous crew. Immediately after embarkation, we cast the lines and enjoyed some time out on deck as we watched Longyearbyen quickly disappear out of sight. We then gathered in the lounge for an introduction to the team and learn that our hasty departure was due to us arriving at the right time to catch the high tide at a shallow passage on our way north.

The following safety briefing took us on a little tour around our home for the next week. This was then followed by a few mandatory briefings, covering AECO, Zodiac and polar bears as well as an outfitting of the floatation suits that would become our favorite dresses for Zodiac cruises. We finished the day with a delicious first dinner on board – and the Arctic adventure truly began.

Day 2: 22 May 2025

Zodiac Cruise & Polar Bear Spotting. Location: Gullybukta - Smeerenburgfjorden - Fuglefjorden

Morning: We started with a Zodiac cruise in Gullybukta. Surrounded by Spitsbergen's pointy mountains and a little snow fall we ventured towards our first glacier, Gullybreen. We soon spotted a lonely walrus hauled out on a piece of the remaining fast ice, nicely posing for us in front of the blues of the glacial ice. We slowly continued along the bay when we spotted a group of 15-20 walrus hauled out on the beach. We parked our Zodiacs and made our way through the snow to get some better views. The group showed us a variety of beautiful walrus behaviour, lots of interactions between the different individuals; some even climbed out of the water to join the group while others hauled their massive bodies into the water for a little spa session. A great start to our adventure!

Afternoon: Here we enjoyed another beautiful Zodiac cruise and spotted a big group of king eider ducks. We also got intimate with the fast ice edge and explored pieces of glacial ice. We fished out some to study the colour variations caused by the various amounts of bubbles.

Back on board the day was far from being over. We repositioned into the next fjord, Raudfjorden and as we approached the fast ice edge our guides spotted a polar bear on the ice. Shortly after, the bear turned into 3 as a mum with a cub showed up followed by another bear. Scanning left to right we had the privilege to observe 4 bears altogether, while being surrounded by incredible shapes of broken up fast ice and stunning mountains. How would we ever be able to top this?

Day 3: 23 May 2025

Ship & Zodiac Cruising Location: Sorgfjorden - Murchinsonfjorden - Lomfjorden - Alkefjellet

Morning: We got woken up by a gentle morning announcement just an hour before breakfast: polar bear on the ice, 500m away from the ship! We probably hardly ever dressed so quickly and stepped up onto the bridge to spot a sleepy bear on the ice as we learnt that it was not one but 2 bears. As the second one was walking, we first had a look at this one before returning to the sleeping bear. After some nice time with the bear, we headed off across the Hinlopen Strait and spent the morning scouting Murchinsonfjorden – it was a bit too windy to get off the ship.





Day 3: Continued...

Afternoon: After lunch we crossed the Hinlopen once more and headed into Lomfjorden and into a bay called Faksevågen. We arrived in breezy, yet sunny conditions. Luckily, the winds died down quickly and we explored once more in the Zodiac. Enjoying the beautiful mountain scenery, we learnt more about the importance of fast ice for the Arctic environment and scouted the shoreline for a possible landing site. We found a small opening amongst the overhanging snowbank and went on a lovely afternoon walk towards an old wooden boat, most likely a remnant from the trapper times.

We celebrated Richard's birthday (part one) during dinner and suited up for a late evening Zodiac cruise along the mighty cliffs of Alkefjellet. We got treated to a great Arctic fox sighting, the little fella looking a bit scruffy as it was already changing into its summer fur. We drove past thousands and thousands of Brunnich's Guillemots and finished the day off with Richard's birthday (part two), i.e. champagne in the lounge.

We couldn't wait for what the next day will bring, our portholes were shut and all we know was we would head far north into the Arctic pack.

Day 4: 24 May 2025

At Sea. Location: Pack Ice

Morning: Treated to a little lie in and a later breakfast, we awoke to the first sounds of the ice scraping along the side of our ship. Stepping outside, we were surrounded by an endless amount of ice. As far as the eye could see, ice, ice and more ice. We reported for spotting duty on the bridge, knowing that we were looking for the needle in the haystack. Yet luck was on our side and Captain Leo spotted a bear effortlessly meandering across the pack ice. We observed her swimming, diving under ice floes, sniffing and even standing up. This lady was clearly on a mission.

Afternoon: We parked the ship in the ice during lunch and many of us enjoyed being on top of the world by a climb up the mast. The fabulous crew of Kinfish of course made sure we were safely harnessed up.

Our search through the ice continued throughout the afternoon. Suddenly the call: Beluga! First one, then 3 then 5 then around 20 belugas were cruising along the ice edge. And then another call: Polar bear ahead! We couldn't really believe it, a polar bear was indeed walking along the ice edge and the beluga were right on track to meet it. From a cautious distance we observed a spectacle only very few people get to witness: the bear (also a lady) tried to catch the beluga. She repeatedly jumped into the water, yet the hunt remained unsuccessful. The beluga swam off, yet we got to spend some amazing time with the true king of the Arctic.

Full of impressions we gathered for another way to delicious dinner while the crew found a spot to anchor along the ice. We watched as ice anchors were deployed and Kinfish was securely fastened.

A few of us finished out the day with a relaxing sauna session.

What an amazing day, no words can describe what we had the privilege to experience.



Day 5 : 25 May 2025

Zodiac Cruise & Polar Plunge. Location: Pack Ice - Liefdefjorden

Morning: At 2 am we felt some banging noise and shortly after the engine started up. The winds had increased and the Arctic pack ice told us it was time to leave. So we turned our bow south, heading for Woodfjorden. We anchored up in Mushamna and explored the coastline from the Zodiacs. It was a stunning day, sunny and no winds, with water like glass. We investigated polar bear and fox tracks along the shoreline and slowly made our way towards a beautiful kittiwake cliff. Suddenly, one of our guides spotted a male and female Svalbard rock ptarmigan amongst the kittiwakes. He was still in his all-white plumage with the beautiful red crown above the eyes, whereas the female was already starting to moult into her brown rock plumage. We continued on southwards into Woodfjorden when we spotted a seal on the ice in the distance. On approach it turned out to be a single harp seal, not exactly the species we'd have expected to see within the fjords. On our return, we photographed a bunch of kittiwakes sunbathing on the water before we returned to another surprise by our fabulous crew: barbecue on the back deck.

We enjoyed delicious food, stunning scenery and sunshine when one of the guests alerted us to 3 white dots approaching from the distance. A mum with 2 1.5 year old cubs. How can we be so lucky?!?

Afternoon: For the afternoon we relocated into Liefdefjorden towards the pack ice. We were called out on deck for a safety briefing and many of us enjoyed a bit of play time in survival suits in the Arctic waters of Svalbard. Some even dared to jump in for a polar plunge. As we sailed out of Woodfjorden during dinner, the mood was lively and we enjoyed the smooth seas and Arctic sunshine.

Day 6: 26 May 2025

Zodiacs & Landing. Location: Tinayrebukta - Signehamna & Lilliehöökreen

Morning: We anchored deep in Tinayrebukta, a little side fjord of Krossfjorden and started our exploration from the Zodiacs. We soon spotted and carefully approached a big male bearded seal resting on a piece of glacial ice. He exhibited a nice rusty head, a result of iron present in the sediment that gets stuck in their fur as bearded seals are bottom feeders. Upon contact with air, the iron oxidizes colouring the seal's head rusty. We then navigated to a stretch of brash ice towards Tinayrebreen, a stunning hanging glacier. We switched off the Zodiac for a little while, taking in the sounds of the Arctic.

Onwards our exploration went along the shoreline. We spotted another bearded seal, this time a young one from this season on the ice, observed reindeer that were spooked by pink-footed geese and saw a fox trying to catch a goose. A second fox (most likely his mate) appeared, and we witnessed the interaction between them including some fox barking. Plenty puffins were spotted in the water and on approach to our landing site we encountered a curious harbour seal. On shore we saw more reindeer and were lured to a lookout by another Arctic fox. From the top we enjoyed great 360 views and saw a lonely beluga swimming in the waters below.

What a morning!

Afternoon: Over lunch, Kinfish repositioned to Signehamna, yet a polar nap was interrupted by a pod of belugas that were slowly cruising close to the shoreline. Our crew steered the ship very carefully and we enjoyed amazing views before we went back on course for an afternoon landing.

In slightly snowy conditions we stepped on shore in Signehamna for a leg stretch. The goal was a bit of "secret mission history": the German weather stations, that were put up here during World War II. The snowy weather was quite fitting for the topic, yet the wildlife once more performed and a ptarmigan couple landed close by and allowed a nice close approach. On our way back we enjoyed some delicious chocolate provided by the guides and a little snowball fight.

Yet once more, the day was not over yet. Deeper into Krossfjorden we ventured towards the mighty Lilliehöökreen. Approaching in moody low-cloud conditions it was as if a curtain was opened. The glacial seracs appeared out of the mist and we enjoyed the most stunning scenery: ice all in front and incredibly views southwards of Krossfjorden. Kinfish parked at the prime location, and we could witness of a few majestic calvings. It was hard to eventually move inside for dinner. Yet as we stayed anchored here for the night we enjoyed the views after dinner and some of us even from the sauna.



Day 7 : 27 May 2025

Landing & Settlement Visit. *Location: Ny London - Ny Alesund*

Morning: This morning we explored the marble mine of Svalbard at Ny London. Astonished by the determination of these men, we investigated the remnants of houses, machinery and even the marble quarry. A nice morning walk was finished off with a pair of long-tailed ducks swimming in the bay where our Zodiacs were anchored.

Over lunch we explored the beautiful and intensely blue icebergs in Kongsfjorden before docking in Ny Alesund for our afternoon excursion.

Afternoon: It was still snowy like in the morning, when we stepped of Kinfish for our settlement visit. We learnt about the coal mining, the flights to the North Pole as well as the research currently undertaken here in the far north. Of course, our visit wouldn't have been complete without a bit of shopping and some postcards being sent. After the guided tour we had some free-time to explore town on our own, many of us visiting the museum and simply enjoying the time outside as – just like the day before – the sun decided to come out. Simply wonderful!

We stayed alongside until late in the evening, before turning south towards Isfjorden for our final day.

Day 8: 28 May 2025

Landing & Captains Dinner. *Location: Alkhornet - Isfjorden*

Morning: For our final day we went to Alkhornet, a stunning horn-shaped mountain overseeing extensive tundra landscape. The weather gods were once more on our side: we had calm seas and even a few rays of sunshine followed us throughout the morning. Today's main objective was reindeer. Plenty were grazing on the lush tundra and allowed close encounters. After Ben's workshop last night, we soon found ourselves as low as we could get on the tundra, with cameras in front of our eyes. We also spotted a fox climbing through the scree and heard him call for his mate. Onwards we went to investigate more reindeer. Eventually we hiked up a little ridge to enjoy amazing views – many of us sat down to review the trip for ourselves.

Back on board we enjoyed another delicious lunch.

Afternoon: Throughout the afternoon we enjoyed a presentation from our ship's captain on the history of Kinfish and a presentation on polar bears from one of our guides in between packing our bags.

Just before dinner we had a final briefing recapping our trip, the vast landscapes we've seen, the incredible weather we encountered as well as the amazing sightings we have witnessed together during our Arctic adventure.

We travelled 774 nautical miles and still feel that we only touched the surface of what Svalbard has to offer. So many memories were made on this trip and what a privilege it was to have spent time up here.

Later after tying up, we are phasing out our fabulous trip with drinks and Captains dinner. Thank you to the fabulous crew of Kinfish, specialist leader Ben, as well as our great expedition guides that made this trip so memorable!!

Day 9: 29 May 2025

Disembarkation. *Location: Longyearbyen*

This morning after another delicious breakfast its time to say a fond farewell to the R/V Kinfish, its amazing crew and your fellow explorers.

IN THE PRESS & AWARDS

Natural World Safaris has won various awards for our unique and carefully crafted safaris. We've also featured in the press around the globe, receiving rave reviews from some of the world's most respected travel writers.

CONDÉ NAST
Traveler

"The Fixer to use"

Condé Nast
Traveller

"A marvel for first-hand knowledge of destinations"

DEPARTURES

"One of the most unique experiences in the world"

FINANCIAL TIMES
how to spend it

"One of the more intrepid operators in southern and eastern Africa"

TATLER

"An adventure off the scale - a place and experience to make your heart beat faster"

