

PolarQuest



Spitsbergen

Logbook

27 July - 03 August 2009

on board M/V Quest



EXPEDITION MEMBERS

Staff

Rolf Stange, Expedition Leader, Germany
Annika Larsson, guide/lecturer, Sweden
Bo Björnsäter, guide/lecturer, Sweden
Jamie Watts, guide/lecturer, UK

Crew

Bridge;

Joakim Säterskog, captain, Sweden
Prudencio Ramos, chief officer, Philippines
Mark Bogbog, safety officer, Philippines
Jorge Ferdinez, navigation officer, Panama
Gennadiy Kondratov, carpenter, Ukraine
Ramon Bernardez, able seaman, Honduras
Luis Alberto Zepeda Santiagos, able seaman, Chile
Truman Chow Davis, ordinary seaman: Colombia

Engine Room;

Chief Engineer: Gil Zurband Elizes, Philippines
1st Engineer: Alfredo Acosta, Philippines
Electrician: Albert George Watson, Jamaica
Motorman: Glenn Diaz, Philippines

Hotel Department;

Noe De Jesus Salazar, chief purser, Honduras
James Salmon, chef tournant, Jamaica
Teotimo Banares, chef de partie, Philippines
Edmon Anon, Commis de Cousine, Philippines
Arturo Lopez, utility GPU, Honduras
Olga Chyfliklii, restaurant stewardess, Ukraine
Georgeta Oprescu, bar stewardess, Romainia
Maria Eloina Olasiman, cab stewardess, Philippines
Viktoriya Volkova, cab stewardess, Ukraine
Robert Castro, medical officer, USA
Raymond Wilmot, controller, Jamaica
Odean Ferguson, hotel cleaner/laundry, Jamaica

And 49 of us from Australia, Poland, Sweden and the United Kingdom

Sunday 26 July, 2009 Oslo-Longyearbyen

We flew from Oslo to Longyearbyen. Our first view of Spitsbergen was the plateaux and peaks appearing through the low sheet of cloud as we approached. The plane dipped deep into the fjord as we descended to the runway. Midnight as we arrived, but Svalbard will not see darkness for several more weeks.

Monday 27 July, 2009 Longyearbyen - Barentsburg

Our first day in Longyearbyen was bright and still. We met for lunch and Rolf introduced himself and his expedition team. After lunch we visited the fabulous Svalbard Museum, a great resource and an excellent primer for our voyage. Then it was time to board Zodiacs to the good ship *Quest*. After settling in we sailed out into the spectacular Isfjord, accompanied by Fulmars and Black Guillemots. We made introductions, had

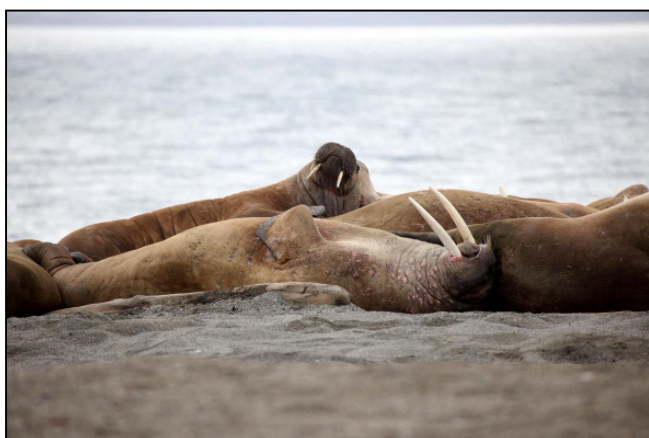
a couple of mandatory briefings and a lifeboat drill, then straight into our first landing. To the west we sailed down Gronfjord to the russian mining town of Barentsburg. Our local guide Slava showed us the fading settlement, including the 'Olympic' sports centre, the hotels, the giftshops, and of course the bar.



We all thought the survival suit fitted Jamie really well, but would rather not use it ourselves.

The famous stairs in Barentsburg.

Tuesday 28 July, 2009
Poolepynten – Ny Ålesund



The wildlife on Prins Karls Forland treated us with a variety of experiences.

Rolf gave us some introduction into good behaviour in Polar bear country and how to use Zodiacs, before we ventured on our first landing. About 20 walrus were hauled out on a gravel beach at Poolepynten on Prins Karls Forland. We approached them carefully to get some good views and photo opportunities, and then took a stroll along the beach to get some first impressions of the coastal arctic environment.

We moved into the Kongsfjord (King's Bay) and approached the community of Ny Ålesund. A remarkable place, small groups of scientists from over 20 countries work here on a wide variety of fields. Bo took us out to the mast where Amunden and Nobile took their historic airship flight over the North Pole, and told us their story. Back in the settlement, postcards from 79 north were sent. The local Barnacle geese and even more Ivory gulls were also seen, and Dutch goose researcher and tundra ecologist Maarten Loonen kindly gave us an introduction to his work (see www.arcticstation.nl).

Wednesday 29 July, 2009
Woodfjord – Monacobreen – Andoyane - Stasjonsøyane

We awoke at the mouth of the Woodfjorden. The watch officers had sighted a polar bear at the base of the cliffs. Our first bear just lay there, so we moved down to the Monaco glacier. This spectacular three-mile

glacier face gave us a fabulous zodiac cruise, which ended with a landing on Nyholmen – an island that was under the glacier until a few years ago.

This afternoon we took the zodiacs around the Andoyane (Duck Islands), and landed on one of the small islands. We explored the polar tundra, finding plundered eider nests and a variety of the low flowers that manage to survive here.

As we left the islands, a polar bear was spotted swimming in the water, and a little later Rolf saw another on an island. We dropped the zodiacs and slowly approached the young female bear. We had a fabulous few minutes with the bear before she walked off, finally swimming across to the main island.



Beautiful Devonian Old Red sandstone at Reinsdyrflya. Polar bear for scale.

Iceberg with Kittiwakes near Monacobreen.

Enjoying Monacobreen.

Polar bear on Stasjonsøyane .

Thursday 30 July, 2009
Alkefjellet-Smittøya-Sorgfjord

We awoke in the Hinlopen Strait, approaching the Auk cliffs, towering high above the ship. The 100 metre high cliffs were covered in Brunnich's Guillemots, 60,000 pairs of them, as well as thousands of Kittiwakes and dozens of Glaucous gulls. Captain Joaquim took the ship in close, and we glided down these incredible walls.



Natural piece of art and real arctic fog on Smittøya.

A little further south, we found the sea ice near Smittøya. The sea was like glass, the air still and bright. As we cruised amongst the floes, moving towards the island for a walk, the fog closed in. Whales were heard out of the fog and when we headed back to the ship she loomed out of the thick fog.

This afternoon we landed at the beach at Lundehuken, a gravel moraine beach at the edge of the Spitsbergen icecap. Some walked up to the edge of the icecap, while others did a forced march to the glacier front.



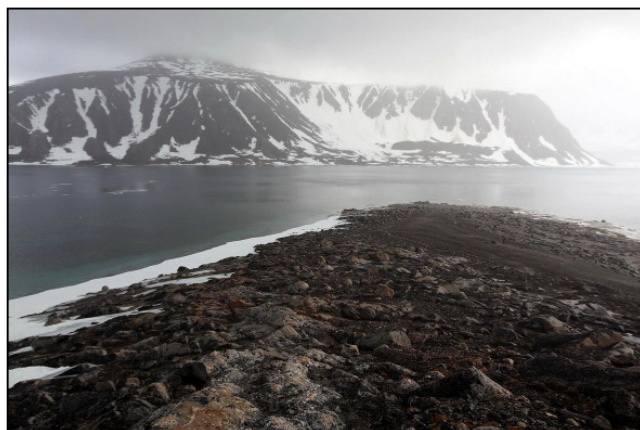
Wildlife and scenery at Lundehuken.

After a quick trip above 80 degrees north for Megan's 80th, we anchored in Sorgfjord for the night.

Friday 31 July, 2009
The sea ice edge, north of Spitsbergen – Chermisideøya

This morning the edge of the Arctic sea ice spread across our horizon. Stretching all the way to the north pole, the southern edge was fragmented, but blown together by wind and currents, a white barrier ahead of us. We followed the edge for a while, watching seals and birds, including puffins, then dropped Zodiacs for a cruise amongst the floes.

This afternoon we moved around the top of Nordaustlandet, with it's dramatic rock formations, and landed on the small island of Chermideoya. Rock graffiti of three expeditions were there, and the view from the ridge was spectacular, an eerie beauty. As we left, a young bearded seal came over to look at us.



Wild ride and scenery at Chermideoya.

Saturday 01 August 2009

Hamiltonbukta – Smeerenburg – Virgohamna – Bjørnfjord

We cruised the Raudfjord early this morning – a beautiful fjord on the northwest corner of Spitzbergen, with shadowed basement rock on one side of the fjord and smoother sedimentary rock on the other. We moved in to drop zodiacs at Hamiltonbukta. This is a gorgeous spot, with towering cliffs full of Guillemots and Kittiwakes, with slopes below where Arctic Fox were spotted. Further into the bay steep glacier valleys and their algae-painted glaciers gave us one of Svalbard's most beautiful landscapes.



Scenery in Raudfjord and ice in Hamiltonbukta.

After lunch we went ashore at Smeerenburg on Amsterdamoya. A thriving whaling community in the 1600s, few remains of either the whales or the whalers now remain. We then crossed to Danskoya and Virgohamna, where Andree launched his hot air balloon to aim for the north pole. We heard the tragic story as we surveyed the remains.

For dinner, Captain Joachim took us into Bjornfjord, near the spectacular glacier. A gorgeous blue iceberg sat behind us. As we went out on deck for our barbecue, the glacier calved. A fitting end to a gorgeous day.

Sunday 02 August, 2009

Tordenskjoldbukta – Alkhornet – Longyearbyen

The sun was bright and the air was still this morning. We went ashore for a tundra plain walk at Tordenskjoldbukta. The long hikers had a four mile hike through the reindeer plain to some stunning views, while those enjoying a more leisurely pace enjoyed the flowers and the rocky coastline. A gorgeous morning, finished off with the polar plunge at the beach for the brave few.



A pleasant arctic summer day at Tordenskioldbukta

Then for our last landing, we went ashore at Alkhornet. The imposing horn of rock towered above us, and the thousands of kittiwakes high above provided background noise. On the ground we enjoyed the company of reindeer enjoying the lush vegetation of this south-facing outcrop. An Arctic fox was seen, and he approached the group very closely.

Then it was time to head back to Longyearbyen, with memories of a fabulous week.

Monday 03 August, 2009

Longyearbyen

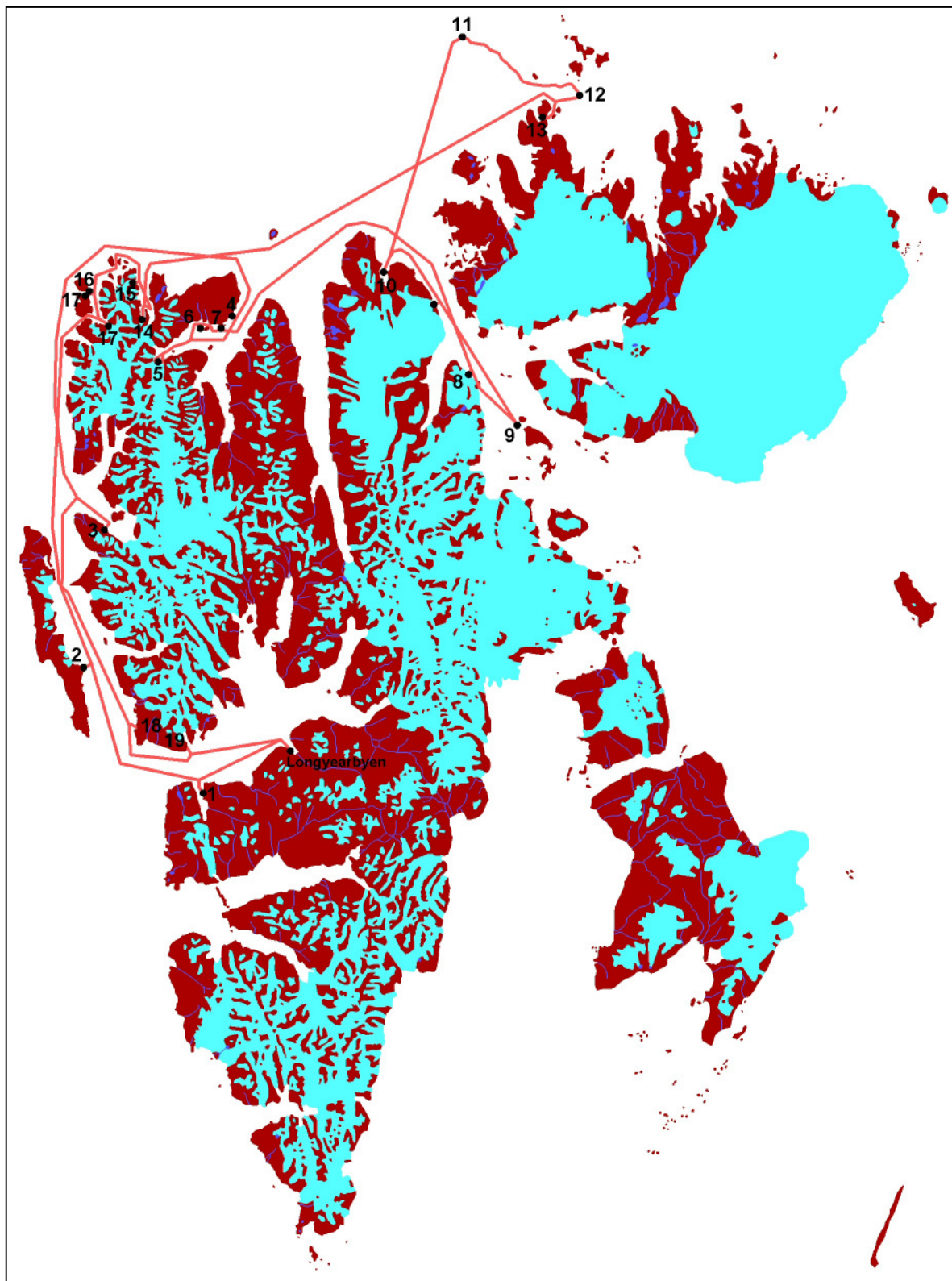
Most of us had to leave the ship at a time that was so ungodly early that it shall remain unmentioned here, to get on a bus to the airport. It was hard to believe that it was only a few hours from now until we were back to civilisation, with all its cars, its noises and the hectic. But we would never forget the wonders of the arctic, many of us had already decided that this should not be our last visit to the far north.

*Thank you very much for travelling with us on board MS Origo,
for good spirits on board and on the tundra!
See you again, anywhere between the poles!*

Text: Jamie Watts. Photos, layout, map: Rolf Stange

For more information on PolarQuest expeditions to the Arctic, Antarctic and other destinations, see <http://www.polar-quest.com>

This triplog can be downloaded from <http://www.spitzbergen.de>



1. Barentsburg
2. Poolepynten
3. Ny Ålesund
4. Reinsdyrflya (first Polar bear)
5. Monacobreen
6. Andøyane
7. Stasjonsøyane (second Polar bear)
8. Alkefjellet
9. Smittøya
10. Sorgfjord (anchor during night)
11. 80°46'N (furthest north)
12. Zodiac cruise
13. Chermsideøya
14. Inner Raudfjord
15. Hamiltonbukta
16. Virgohamna
17. Bjørnfjord/Smeerenburgbreen
18. Tordenskioldbukta
19. Alkhornet