



PolarQuest

Spitsbergen

Logbook

20-27 July 2009

on board M/S Origo



With

Captain – Per Andersson (Sweden)
Chief Officer – Daniel Ståleby (Sweden)
Chief Engineer – Daniel Persson (Sweden)
Sailor – Peter Albihn (Sweden)
Sailor – Eric Åhlsberger (Sweden)
Chef – Ulf Zackrisson (Sweden)
Purser – Kersti Burman (Sweden)
Stewardess – Kristina Burman (Sweden)
Expedition Leader – Oscar Westman (Sweden)
Guide – Rolf Stange (Germany)

And 25 of us from Italy, Sweden, the UK and the US:

20 July 2009 – Longyearbyen, Barentsburg

Overcast, cold and windy

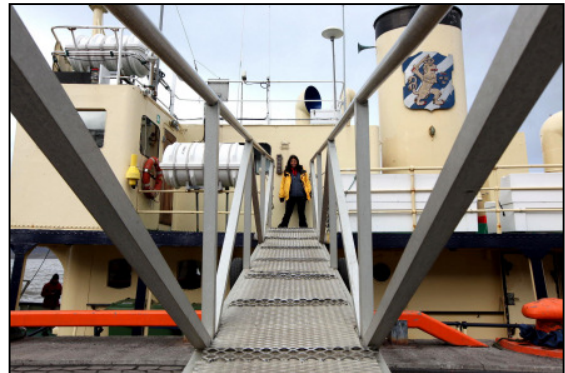
Some of us had already arrived a couple of days ago to have plenty of time to explore the high-arctic metropolis of Longyearbyen, others had come last night. We all joined up for lunch in the hotel and were on this occasion met by our fearless leader, Oscar Westman from Sweden. Oscar seemed to have spent most of his life at sea, including a lot of time in cold, arctic waters. Also our second guide Rolf Stange was there, he had made Spitsbergen his second home since 1997 and seemed to have spent most of his time since then in cold places.

Lunch was followed by a visit to the museum, which covered pretty much all aspects of Spitsbergen; indeed a good preparation for the days to come.

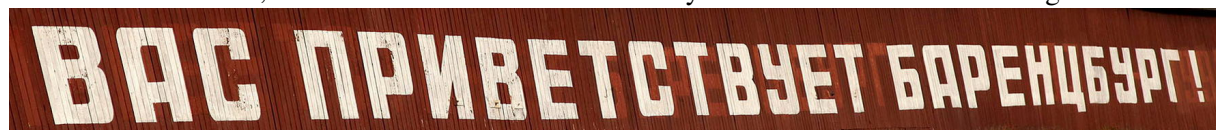
After a short bus ride and a brief photo stop at the polar bear warning sign near the port of Longyearbyen, it was time to embark the *Origo*, our good home for the week to come. A lot of information was given during first welcome meeting and briefing, including some safety information from our first officer, and we met the whole crew including Captain Per Andersson, who knew both the ship and these waters very well.

The ship was rolling a bit even there at the pier due to a fresh northeasterly breeze, but did not hesitate set sail, steaming westwards to Barentsburg.

After dinner, we stepped comfortably and with dry feet ashore at the pier of this little coal mining settlement. Oscar had put his tight contacts to good use and we were met by Oleg from Ukraine, who gave us a little tour of Barentsburg downtown, starting as soon as we had all climbed the 266 steps of the wooden stairs. Oleg was an attraction himself: As if someone had pushed a button, he just kept going, pouring all his knowledge about the place into us within about one hour, during which he seemingly did not even take a breath. Breathtaking achievement indeed! So was Barentsburg itself, where two worlds met, both of which considered hostile by most of us: A Russian mining settlement in



Welcome on board!



"Barentsburg welcomes you!"

a doubtful state of repair and the high arctic, although Oleg made it very clear that this part of Spitsbergen was the most favorable one, climatically. Well...

We got insight into the history, working and living conditions and had the opportunity to spend some money – souvenirs of various kinds and various liquids in the bar were at our disposal.

Oscar had announced that anyone who was in town later than 23.00 might experience this week in the Arctic in a slightly different way than expected, so we all made sure we were back on board in time to set course for tomorrow's adventures further north at the west coast.



Barentsburg: a place where several worlds meet

21 July 2009 – Ny Ålesund, Dei Sju Isfella, Sørgattet, Virgohamna on Danskøya

Warm, calm and sunny for most of the day. 1°C, strong breeze, snowfall in the evening

We woke up, full with hope and expectations of the greatest kind, to find ourselves entering the Kongsfjord at 79°N. The weather could hardly be any better, and the views of the famous scenery around this fjord were indeed delightful.

We enjoyed a good *Origo*-style breakfast and went alongside at the pier of Ny Ålesund at 09.30. Another dry landing! We enjoyed it thoroughly, as all other landings were to be wet ones.

A first, certain highlight was the Kongsfjordbutikken which offered all kinds of souvenirs and one of the northernmost postboxes of this planet. We made good use of it.



Roald Amundsen, the famous Norwegian polar explorer, in Ny Ålesund



Barnacle geese: typical wildlife and research objects at the same time.

Then it was time to split up into two groups to go for a little walk with either Swedish or English explanations, the latter led by Rolf. We discussed the mining history, science, life in and infrastructure of Ny Ålesund and, of course, the famous stories of the polar explorers who had chosen to start their expeditions from this place: Roald Amundsen and Umberto Nobile, with their airship adventures in 1926 and 1928.

At the same time, Ny Ålesund offered a nice introduction into typical wildlife, including large groups of relatively tame Barnacle geese, which were obviously used by the researchers doing all kinds of things with them.



Iceberg north of Kongsfjord

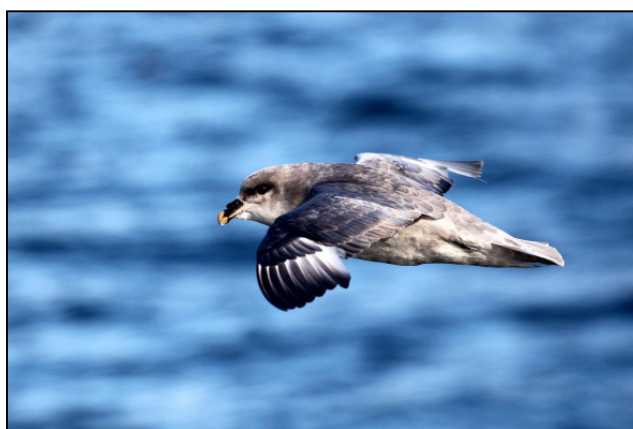
During lunchtime, we left the Kongsfjord behind to continue our voyage northwards, passing a stretch of coastline that was known as "Die Sieben Eiszberge" ("The seven icebergs", norwegianized as "Dei Sju Isfjella"; iceberg was used as a term referring to glaciers amongst whalers during the 17th-19th century), a name that described the landscape rather appropriately. A wild coast of glaciers and mountains, blue sky, blue, calm sea, and even a nice iceberg that we went close to, trying to collect some pieces, in the constant company of Northern fulmars and with the occasional puffin flying by – the

afternoon could hardly have been more pleasant.

Just before dinner, we entered Sørgattet, a narrow channel between the main island of Spitsbergen and Danskøya. A yellowish-white dot was lying on a rocky hill and was soon identified as a polar bear – our very first one! It did, however, not move and we left him alone, as he was obviously not in the mood to socialize.

And we did still have some plans. After dinner, we found ourselves anchored in Danskegattet, the strait between Danskøya and Amsterdamøya further to the north.

Virgoamna, a small bay on the north coast of Danskøya, was a holy grail for everybody who was interested in the history of polar exploration, especially for our Swedish fellow expeditioners, who were all confirmed Andrée fans. Salomon August Andrée had launched his balloon *Örnen* ("Eagle") in 1897 from



Northern fulmar



Pilgrimage to Virgohamna

Virgohamna, hoping to reach the north pole, but all he and his 2 comrades achieved was their own disappearance, only to be found no less than 33 years later on Kvitøya, northeasternmost Svalbard, but in a rather sad condition.

The next one to come to Virgohamna was the American journalist Walter Wellman, who tried to reach the same destination with his Airship *America*. All three attempts in 1906, 1907 and 1909 failed, and although Wellman's expeditions were later occasionally considered a big "humbug" (Fridtjof Nansen!), he made two major achievements: being the first one to try to reach the pole by airship, he kind of paved

the path for Amundsen's success of 1926, and – certainly more important – he returned alive.

So did we, despite of various hardships including rather cold and foul weather, and it was nice to warm up again after this first day.

22 July 2009 – Woodfjord, Liefdefjord (Andøyane, Monacobreen), 80°N, Moffen

Warm, calm and sunny for most of the day. 7-8°C, strong breeze at times during the morning.

We were woken up around 6 a.m. as two polar bears had been spotted on some drift ice as we were entering the Woodfjord. The two – possibly a mother with her fully grown little boy or girl – went into the water, swam to the next icefloe, climbed up, went into the water... nice to follow arctic family life, gently and carefully from a



A very successful quest for Polar bears in Liefdefjord.





Beautiful red rocks (Devonian Old Red) on Andøyane. Polar bears for scale.

respectful distance in order not to disturb those two. Finally, the two engaged in a playful little fight, splashing and rolling around in the water. What a way to start the day for us!

Breakfast was warmly welcomed by most of us, while *Origo* sailed into Liefdefjord to drop anchor near a group of small islands called Andøyane, where our fearless leader Oscar had planned to go for a Zodiac cruise. The wind had picked up a little bit, but this could not keep us from going out, and it did not take more than a few minutes until the next bears were spotted: a mother and a small cub, walking across a western outlier of Andøyane, looking for some breakfast in shape of eggs of Arctic terns and Common eiders.

The bears went into the water and swam across to the next island. We followed them carefully in a good, respectful distance and kept a good eye on them once they had gone ashore. Strong wind and very shallow waters challenged our Zodiac drivers, Oscar and Rolf, but both of them obviously enjoyed manoeuvring their little crafts to get the best perspective to observe and photograph the Queen of the Arctic and her little prince or princess, and some spectacular photos were indeed taken on this occasion!

Nevertheless, a hot cup of coffee or tea was very much appreciated by most, followed by lunch, whilst the ship was continuing further and further into Liefdefjord, heading for the large Monacobreen (-glacier). On the way, we saw another polar bear on some small islands (Lernerøyane), but could not get very close.

At Monacobreen, the scenery with this huge calving glacier, surrounded by wild, jagged mountain peaks, was overcast by bright sunshine and could hardly have been more spectacular. We did not hesitate to launch the Zodiacs again in order to be in the middle of the spectacle, enjoying both the views and the sounds of the ice. A short landing on Nyholmen, a small island that had appeared from underneath the retreating glacier just a few years ago, gave us the opportunity to enjoy with solid ground under our feet and to put the tripods up or simply to relax and to adjust our water balance, before we continued our cruise further along the ice cliff. Glaucous gulls and Arctic skuas were sitting on ice floes, and a Bearded seal was seen swimming in the water before we finally returned to the ship.



Nyholmen: a very young island in Liefdefjord, recently emerged from the retreating Monaco glacier



A Polar bear enjoying his dinner

As if all this so far had not already been enough, sharp eyes discovered a bear on some floes of drift ice near Andøyane as we were about to leave Liefdefjord. And this bear was having dinner in shape of a Bearded seal! It was a big, fat male bear who could hardly have cared less about our presence, as we approached his ice floe carefully and slowly. Finally, we even surrounded it to see it from all perspectives in all possible light conditions. It could not have been better!

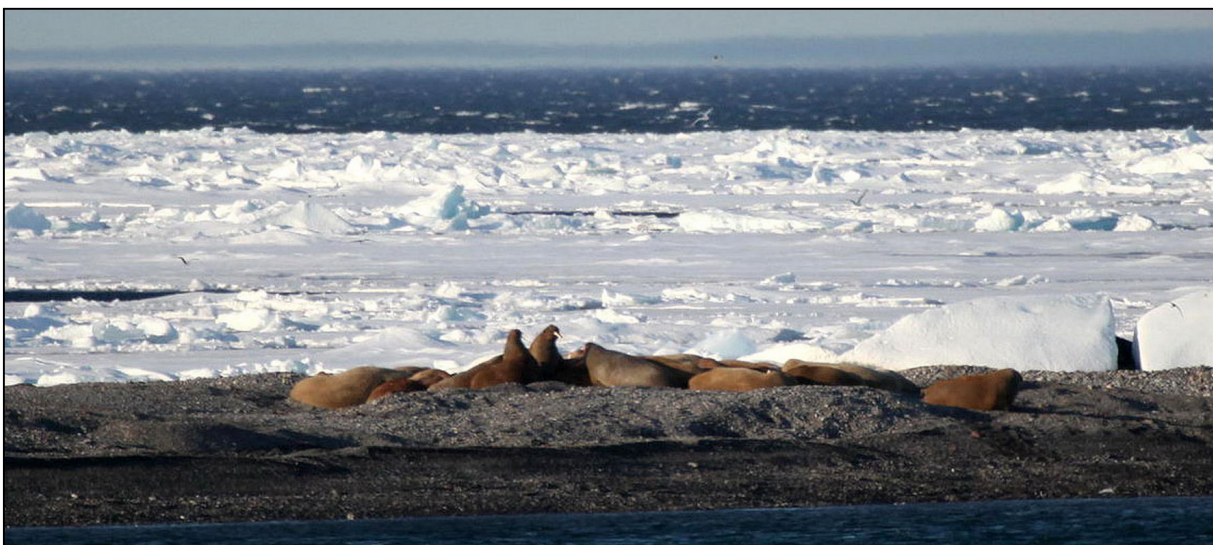
During dinner, Oscar explained the plans for tonight. And there was indeed another highlight to come: the crossing of the 80th parallel, entering the very very high arctic!

There was still time for a short gathering after dinner to discuss some aspects of the lives of our new friends, the polar bears, before we then went up to the top deck, in expectation of the great event that was soon to come. And yes, not far ahead was a thin, blue line. The ceremony that was held to mark the occasion included Swedish songs – we understood that the lyrics were something about alcohol consumption – and alcohol consumption. We got glasses with pieces of glacier ice and an obscure blue liquid, which was said to be some kind of polar bear extract. It was soon established that the alcohol content was significant.

Just above 80°N, there was the strange little island called Moffen, which was not much more than a rim of gravel around a lagoon. Plenty of driftwood covered the beaches, and a group of walrus was hauled out near the southernmost tip! The drift ice added nicely to the scene, and so did the evening light. A splendid evening, and an appropriate end to a fantastic day.



80°N and Moffen: a very enjoyable experience and our first group of walrus!



23 July 2009 – Hinlopen Strait: Alkefjellet, Palanderbukta

Partly overcast in the morning, sunny and calm in the afternoon

During the early morning, we had gone far down into Hinlopen Strait, just to check the ice conditions, only to find the southern entrance (or exit, for that sake) completely blocked. We had thus returned to spend the day in central Hinlopen Strait, which had some rather remarkable places that we could visit. After breakfast, we found ourselves drifting near Alkefjellet, a black, triangle-shaped, steep cliff of basaltic rock columns, towering up to a good 100 metres above the flat-calm waters. A Bearded seal that was resting on an ice floe was a good reason for a little stop, before we continued to the bird cliff. An estimated 60.000 pairs of Brunich's guillemots was sitting on narrow ledges of the cliffs, making an incredible noise, not to forget the smell. Birds were everywhere around us, on the cliffs, on the water, in the air, and your scribe will not even attempt to describe the impression that this concentration of life made on us. One had to have seen this himself in order to have an idea. We spent more than an hour on board *Origo*, drifting close to the impressive cliff, enjoying the spectacle and filling a number of flash cards.



Alkefjellet: we are surrounded by 121.863 Brunich's guillemots

Then it was time to leave and to set course for our afternoon's destination: Nordaustland, the second-largest island of the Svalbard archipelago. Only ever touched by a small number of privileged people, this large, mostly glacier-covered island with its desert-like appearance was quite forbidding, and it provided landscape impressions quite different from those ones that were to be had on the main island. Oscar had chosen Palanderbukta, a side branch of the large Wahlenbergfjord, for our afternoon landing. Shortly after 1400, we went ashore on a beach of yellowish, sharp-edged pebbles, under a wide, very barren, gently-sloping coastal plain next to some plateau-topped mountains. The emptiness of the landscape was astonishing, but so was its reachness regarding various details, as we quickly found out as soon as we went ahead. Perfectly developed frost-patterned ground, explained by Rolf in both English and some kind of Scandinavian language (to the delight of some of our Swedish fellow expeditioners and possibly the disgust of some others within the same group, depending on their language demands) and whalebones thousands of years old were amongst the specialties of this almost bizarre landscape.



The polar desert soil of Palanderbukta tends to create frost-patterned ground rather than vegetation, making this a very harsh environment for any kind of higher life. Nevertheless, we saw a quite friendly reindeer.





Leaving Wahlenbergfjord was a little challenge for the bridge crew and an extremely enjoyable experience for us



The hikers enjoyed a fantastic view over Wahlenbergfjord – back in Palanderbukta

Those keen on some physical exercise ventured on a little hike with Rolf, ascending the ridge separating Wahlenbergfjord from Palanderbukta to enjoy a fantastic view over the icy landscape, while everybody else enjoyed the impressions on the tundra plain nearer the landing site, including a rare visit by a representative of the usually rather shy reindeer of Nordaustland.

As soon as we were back on board, some brave individuals even dared to take a plunge in the icy waters that could hardly be any warmer than 1 or 2°C! An adventure that was promptly rewarded with "Gammeldansk", a Danish drink that was, for some of the brave swimmers, tougher than the dip in the cold water.

After a delightful dinner, the anchor was lifted and we set course north, for tomorrow's adventures. During the afternoon, some currents, most likely tidal, had shifted the near-by drift ice towards Palanderbukta, so it took some time to get back out to Hinlopen Strait. We enjoyed the ice passage thoroughly before it was finally time to go to bed.

24 July 2009 – Lågøya (Purchasneset), ice edge and furthest north at 80°33'N

Sunny and calm.

To our surprise, we found ourselves at anchor in mostly ice-free waters just north of Lågøya, an area that we had expected to be completely in dense ice according to the latest ice-chart. Current and wind had obviously changed the situation.

We made good use of the opportunity and went for a Zodiac cruise as soon as possible after breakfast. We had already spotted some walrus hauled out on an ice-floe near Purchasneset, the northernmost tip of Lågøya. A small group of five, that could hardly have cared less about our visit. We shifted



Friendly inhabitants of Lågøya

between various positions between the drifting ice floes to get all possible perspectives and spent quite some time within 20 metres from these majestic and quite lazy animals.

After a while, we left them alone and rounded the northernmost tip of Lågøya (Purchasneset) to get to a little bay further west, which was still covered with ice, but accessible for a landing. A landing on this remote, exposed island, often surrounded by drifting ice for most of the year, was a nice geographical achievement, and beyond this, we were surprised about the landscape and the birdlife of this desolate place. Many shallow lagoons were devided by ancient beach ridges and some rocky outcrops, and no less than approximately 25 Grey phalaropes crowed the shoreline of the nearest lagoon on their search for food! A Long-tailed duck appeared and landed on the water, and Arctic terns were breeding in large numbers on a near-by gravel ridge.



Good shore discipline was needed during this rare landing on the bear-infested island of Lågøya.

The reward came in soon of a splendid sighting of the elusive Sabine's gull.



We followed the ridge for a few hundred metres until a closer look at the terns revealed a rare Sabine's gull! There are probably less than 10 breeding pairs of this accordingly extremely rare, but very beautiful gull in Svalbard, and we were lucky to have found one pair which was likely to be breeding in this area.

We went back to the Zodiacs and paid another visit to the walrus group before we then returned to the ship. After lunch, Rolf gave us a talk about our new friends, the walrus, to provide background regarding all aspects of their life.



A pleasant afternoon walk at 80°33'N

The afternoon was announced as an "expedition afternoon", which meant that we set course for the north pole, without any serious hopes of ever getting there. We wanted to find out how far north we would finally get until the ice would stop any further progress in that direction.

The result was a position northeast of Lågøya at 80°33'N, in other words just 1050 km from the pole! This was an appropriate place for a little walk. The *Origo* went alongside at a large and solid ice floe, we put the gangway down and everybody was invited to step onto the ice. We enjoyed this rather unusual perspective together with some Swedish kind of Glühwein and some biscuits to supply us with the energy desperately needed for these polar hardships that we had to endure.

Back on board, Rolf delivered the Swedish/Norwegian/kind-of-Scandinavian version of his Walrus talk, as we set course southwest, towards the northwestern corner of Spitsbergen, sailing through various fields of very open drift ice and several times meeting more walrus resting on ice floes. The evening highlights included some movement of the ship as we went through a breeze that came through Hinlopen Strait, a dramatic talk by Oscar who had been on the *Explorer* when she sank in Antarctica on 23 November 2007 and some more walrus on ice. Those who stayed outside or on the bridge for quite another while were lucky to see some Minke whales (in the water) and Puffins (flying) north of Reinsdyrflya. Another excellent day, with brilliant sunshine all the way through it!



Two good friends

25 July 2009 – Hamburbukta, Heemskerckneset (Prins Karls Forland)

Sunny and calm, later overcast and some drizzle.

During the night, we had spent some calm hours at anchor in Magdalenefjord, which we left during breakfast to sail just a few miles around the corner to our next destination: Hamburbukta. This hidden little bay was a perfectly sheltered natural harbour, but the entrance was just too shallow for any vessel larger than a little yacht, so good old *Origo* had to stay outside and we went to explore with the Zodiacs.

Low tide and shallow waters made the landing a bit tricky, but the second attempt worked well and soon we could all admire the wonderful carpet of colourful mosses and lichens. The tundra was

obviously rather fertile, thanks to fertilization from the near-by birdcliffs. There was a large number of Little auks breeding in the steep scree slopes surrounding Hamburgbukta.

We found the remains of an old trapper hut on the low ridge just behind the landing site. Only ruins were left, the hut must have collapsed quite recently as Oscar and Rolf had still seen it standing in recent years. It had been a small one, a so-called "bistasjon", a secondary station that had been used as shelter during travelling only. "Bistasjoner" had been built to enlarge the hunting area that could be covered by boat or ski and sledge, but the hunters lived most of the time in huts that were – not always, that is – in larger and a bit more comfortable.

Next to the hut, there was an open grave with some remains of an obviously very old coffin. Hamburgbukta had been used by whalers in the 1640s. Unfortunately, Rolf had forgotten where the whalers that had used Hamburgbukta came from – Copenhagen? Berlin? Buenos Aires? Or possibly ... Hamburg?

We ventured on a little stroll, enjoying the beautiful colours of the tundra carpet and slowly ascending the lower parts of the nearby slopes. Little auks were coming in and out from their colonies which are located under the scree, in usually quite inaccessible positions. We spent a good while listening to the seemingly crazy laughter coming from tenths of thousands of little bills and throats, watching huge swarms of the birds, which were so very characteristic of the high Arctic that some birdwatchers described them as the "soul of the Arctic".

A little stroll took us down back to the beach, where we found three Harbour seal resting on rocks just behind the landing site. Harbour seals are quite uncommon in Spitsbergen, their only confirmed colony is on Prins Karls Forland, but they tend to roam up and down the central and northern west coast. The Harbour seals in Spitsbergen are rather shy, so we could not get too close, but it was a nice sighting of a quite rare and unusual animal in these waters and those of us with long lenses could obtain some reasonable photos.



Tufted saxifrage – whaler's grave from the 17th century

Harbour seals – Puffins



As soon as we were all back on board, the anchor went up and we started to sail further south along the west coast. After lunch, the motto was "shop til you drop" as our purser Kersti opened the world-famous *Origo* souvenir shop, before we approached Prins Karls Forland, where we wanted to attempt a landing at Heemskerckneset, a low-lying, gravel-covered coastal plain just north of the large lagoon Richardlaguna. Oscar was hoping for something special there and had promised us a surprise. And a surprise it was indeed – we were quite surprised by the absence of anything that could have been of any obvious interest. The PKFNSC (Prins Karls Forland Naked Swimming Club), that had its usual gatherings at Heemskerckneset, had obviously chosen this very day for a little trip elsewhere. This was indeed a site where one could usually expect walrus hauls out on the beach, any number between 5 and 80 would be possible, but such was nature – nothing could be predicted, and out of coincidence all animals could have decided to go into the water to feed at the same time. They might also have been disturbed by a polar bear or by human interference; we would not be able to find out, and in the end, it did not matter. They were simply not at home.



*Heemskerckneset
a large lagoon, an unusual discovery, Purple saxifrage and traces from an almost forgotten past*



We went for a little walk, which was spontaneously turned into a little geological excursion, as we found the beach to consist of gravel of a large variety of rock types. Rolf identified almost all of them as clastic sediments of various types, mostly sandstones and conglomerates, which were deposited in a subsiding area, a tectonic structure called a "graben": a subsiding area, separated by steep faults from surrounding areas that experience uplift at the same time. Erosion from the uplifted crustal blocks would then result in the graben quickly being filled with thick piles of sediments, mostly sandstones and conglomerate (a mixture of sand and gravel, usually deposited in a fast-flowing river), but also more fine-grained marine sediments during transgressive periods, when deposition could not keep pace with subsidence, resulting in the sea flooding the graben, or coal formation, when occasional swamps and forests would again be buried by sand. In the North Sea, Mesozoic graben systems played an important role in hydrocarbon formation and storage; a recent example is the Upper Rhine valley in southwestern Germany. Another very clear example is the Forlandsund Graben, on the rim of which

we were standing at the moment (anyone interested in this kind of stuff? Check "Rocks and Ice", written by the author of this triplog and available on www.spitzbergen.de).

We then split up into two groups, lazy walkers and mad hikers. The lazy walkers went on with Oscar to check the lagoon for birds. Common eiders, mostly females and chicks, had already been around in quite large numbers. The mad walkers took off with Rolf, but soon made a stop when sharp eyes detected an interesting and quite unusual object: a human lower jaw, lying on the gravel. There was nothing around it, such as a grave, other bones or artefacts, that could have given any hints about the story that was behind it, so we were unable to solve the mystery for the moment. But we marked the site and took the GPS coordinates, so Rolf would report this to the local authorities in Longyearbyen. The coarse gravel was not the greatest surface to walk on, but we made our way to the northernmost end of Richardlaguna to find some pleasant tundra vegetation – the gravel area was utterly barren. On the tundra, we were surprised to find some artefacts, possibly a grave and a former dwelling site, most likely from Pomors, hunters that came in the 17th to early 19th century from the Russian White sea coast.

The hike had certainly fuelled the appetite, and once back on board, we were happy to learn that a BBQ was scheduled for dinner. Our chef Ulf Zackrisson had prepared all kinds of goodies, that were warmly welcomed, and it was a very happy ship when the anchor was finally lifted and the *Origo* steamed south through Forlandsund, carefully navigated across the shallow Forlandsrevet – minimum depth 1.2 metres under the boat – by Captain Per Andersson.

26 July 2009 – Prins Karls Forland: Poolepynten, Isfjord: Colesbukta

Overcast, some raindrops, calm, 7°C.



The "Prins Karls Forland Naked Swimming Club" was present at Poolepynten with 12 members on shore.



While sailing southwards during the night, we had seen that the "Poolepynten section" of the PKFNSC (Prins Karls Forland Naked Swimming Club) was present with about 12 members on the beach near its club home. It did not take Oscar and the Captain long to decide to drop the anchor, and soon after a quick breakfast, we were ashore on a wide gravel beach – smaller stones than at Heemskerckneset and thus certainly more pleasant to walk on, and with a larger number of nice pieces of driftwood. But some of us were even more attracted by the walrus than by the driftwood – can you believe it?

Oscar explained some important rules about how to approach walrus respectfully, and then we went, slowly and stepwise, towards the group that was doing what walrus do best: lying, lazing around, sleeping and letting various noises, liquids and steams escape through their various body holes. It was simply amazing. The walrus however were not the least impressed about us, ignoring us all the way through our visit, even when we had reached our minimum distance of 30 metres, where we spent a while to observe. Some more walrus were swimming in the water and came curiously towards us. After some time, we retreated again carefully, leaving them exactly the same way as we had found them – splendid!

We said goodbye to the PKFNSC and their pleasant island to steam into the Isfjord, Spitsbergen's largest fjord, for the afternoon and later – unfortunately – for Longyearbyen. For those who had not yet seen enough Polar bears, a natural history documentary was screened after lunch, and then our last landing was scheduled shortly after 1500 hours at Colesbukta. This was the harbour of the former Soviet coal mining settlement Grumantbyen just a few kilometres further east. Colesbukta and Grumantbyen were together at times the largest settlement in Spitsbergen! But those days were history since more than half a century, the place was abandoned in 1962 and the remaining buildings are decaying since then.

The adjacent valley Colesdalen had some of Spitsbergen's richest tundra vegetation, which provided food for a relatively large number of well-fed reindeer. Birds were nesting both on the flat tundra and on steep cliffs nearby, and Arctic foxes were roaming around – certainly somewhere, just not here today – to find eggs and chicks.

Finally, it was time to get back on board. We set sail for Longyearbyen, which was not too far to the east.



Colesbukta: a strong contrast to complete our Spitsbergen-experience

27 July 2009 – Longyearbyen

Weather: colder than at home.

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.

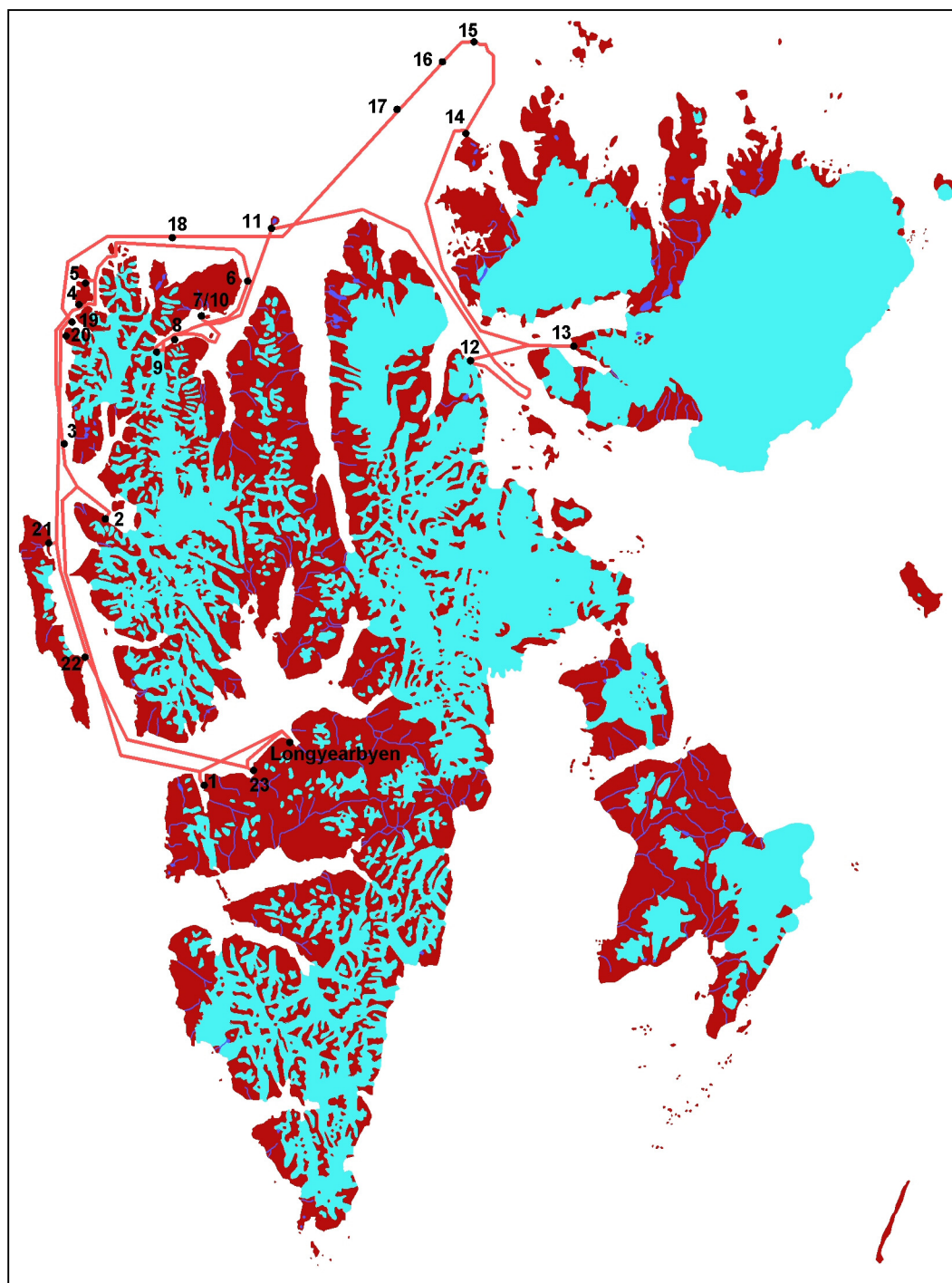
*Thank you very much for travelling with us on board MS Origo,
for good spirits on board and on the tundra!
See you again, anywhere between the poles!*

Text, images, 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. Ny Ålesund
3. Iceberg
4. Sørgattet (first Polar bear)
5. Virgohamna (Danskøya)
6. Woodfjord (two bears, playing in the water)
7. Andøyane (Liefdefjord): Zodiac cruise, mother bear with cub
8. Lernerøyane (distant Polar bear)
9. Monacobreen (Zodiac cruise, landing Nyholmen)
10. Andøyane (Polar bear eating a seal)
11. 80°N (Swedish drinks and associate drinking song performed by Oscar), Moffen (walrus)
12. Alkefjellet (Hinlopen Strait): birdcliff

13. Palanderbukta (Wahlenbergfjord, Nordaustland)
14. Lågøya: Purchasneset (Zodiac cruise with walrus on ice, landing)
15. Furthest north (80°33'), ice walk
16. Walrus on ice
17. More walrus on ice
18. Minke whales
19. Magdalenefjord (overnight at anchor)
20. Hamburgbukta (ruin of trapper hut, Little auks, Harbour seals)
21. Heemskerckneset (no walruses)
22. Poolepynten (walruses)
23. Colesbukta