

# LAND OF THE ICE BEARS: SPITSBERGEN AN IN-DEPTH EXPLORATION OF ARCTIC SVALBARD ABOARD THE *NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC EXPLOER*

**JULY 30 – AUGUST 8, 2010**

**NORWAY PRE-TRIP**

**JULY 25-31, 2010**

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*The remote Arctic island of Spitsbergen, the largest island within the Svalbard archipelago, is a land of literally breathtaking land and seascapes, immense icebergs, calving glaciers, vast sheets of pack ice, snow covered, pinnacle shaped mountains, steep sided fjords, and glorious flower-covered tundra. In fact, it is one of the most dramatic and spectacular places imaginable. To quote one writer, “This wondrous archipelago is an assault on the senses”. Separated from the North Pole by a mere 600 miles (950 km) of frozen ocean, it is the true “High Arctic,” an extreme land gripped by ice for over eight months of the year and by darkness for over four. This is Europe’s only large High Arctic territory and what a place it is. BUT above all, it is the land of the Polar Bear!*

*Today, Spitsbergen encompasses the highest proportion of national parks and nature reserves of any equivalent land mass on earth, and, as a result, the great majority of the archipelago is now protected. The entire Svalbard archipelago comprises absolutely stunning Arctic scenery graced by a rich Arctic fauna and flora that draw increasing numbers of visitors to such a remote part of our planet. This is undoubtedly THE best place in the world to see the magnificent Polar Bear, which, if you are like us, you have dreamt about seeing in the wild since you were a child. The timing of our cruise is such that we anticipate multiple encounters with this evocative creature and the possibility of gaining excellent photographic opportunities. It is estimated that approximately 2,000 Polar Bears live around Svalbard and some recent tour groups have seen as many as 54 animals on a single trip! No matter how many you see, however, there is no better way to see this magnificent creature than in its own icy realm, wandering over an ice floe amid a crazy paving of pack-ice stretching to the horizon. Add to this a rare opportunity to encounter good numbers of the bizarre Walrus; the very lovely Ivory Gull – sadly now seriously declining; blizzards of the adorable Little Auk or Dovekie; and the dainty Arctic Fox. Other wildlife may include nesting waterfowl such as the pale-bellied race of Brant; Pink-footed and Barnacle geese; Common and King eiders; Long-tailed Duck; shorebirds, such as Red Phalarope and Purple Sandpiper; plus Glaucous Gull; Long-tailed, Pomarine and Parasitic jaegers; Great Skua; Atlantic Puffin; Black Guillemot; Rock Ptarmigan; and Snow Bunting – the only nesting passerine here; in addition to the distinctive Svalbard form of reindeer.*

*We will pay a great deal of attention to sea mammals as we cruise the northern ice cap, where bearded and ringed seals are likely, and, if we are really in luck, beluga whales. And all this wildlife appears against a canvas of carving glaciers and impressive sea-ice, towering mountains and a tundra ablaze with beautiful Arctic wildflowers including such jewels as Svalbard Poppy, Purple Saxifrage, Moss Campion, Mountain Avens and Arctic Buttercups. This extreme outpost of the world has some fascinating history too – mostly revolving around Arctic exploration and the whaling industry – and we will visit areas to experience this aspect of Spitsbergen as we make our journey around the island.*

*It is important to emphasize that one travels to Spitsbergen for the experience of what is truly an unforgettable Arctic sojourn - many people find the cruise such an uplifting experience that it ranks among the finest experiences of their lives. The emphasis is thus on quality rather than simply tallying a big list of birds and other wildlife. The species diversity this far north is characteristically limited, so you have to be motivated primarily by the idea of seeing a spectacular part of the High Arctic and its natural history – and what an experience it is!*

*VENT will be taking an allotment on the very lovely National Geographic Explorer, a fully stabilized, ice-class expedition ship. Take our word for it, you will be satisfied with this vessel. It is among the most comfortable and elegant expedition ships imaginable. It has state of the art equipment in every category and the staff and crew are first rate. As much of the sailing as possible will take place during the period that passes for night at these latitudes (of course it is light 24 hours a day!), thus maximizing opportunities for going ashore and enjoying the beautiful arctic landscapes to the full. Landings are carried out by means of a fleet of zodiacs, the rugged, fast-moving inflatables developed by Jacques Cousteau for expedition work, which allow safe landings on remote coastlines in all types of conditions, and close approach to such charismatic creatures as Walruses and Polar Bears!*

*While sub-zero temperatures, fierce winds, ice, and total darkness symbolise this extreme land for much of the year, during the summer the weather is fairly mild and calm, with clear, bright skies and 24 hours of daylight. Because we will go ashore on a daily basis and will be mainly close inshore, there is much less chance of experiencing rough seas and mal-de-mer than on other ship-based tours.*

## **NORWAY PRE-TRIP**

### **JULY 25-31, 2010**

*This superb extension beautifully compliments our expedition to Spitsbergen. In just a few days we will enjoy the opportunity to explore the very attractive city of Bergen and stand in awe of some of Norway's most exhilarating fjord and mountain scenery. The primary focus of this pre-trip is the impressive Hardangervidda Mountain Plateau. This vast wilderness holds the most southerly breeding population of many arctic and sub-Arctic bird species in Scandinavia. Here, at altitudes ranging from 3,000 to 5,000 feet, we should find such species as Arctic Loon, Long-tailed Duck, Greater Scaup, White-winged Scoter, Black Scoter, Temminck's Stint, Eurasian Dotterel, Red-necked Phalarope, Horned Lark, and Lapland Longspur all on their breeding grounds and in their finest dress. And with a little luck a Gyrfalcon may come by. A number of pairs do breed in and around the national park. At this time of the Norwegian summer, all the breeding birds have nested and most can still be found around their territories. This is a good time to find Eurasian Dotterel, Purple Sandpiper, Dunlin, and Horned Lark. Furthermore, later in the summer, access to the central parts of the national park is easier as the snow has disappeared thus enabling us to search for key birds in places we might otherwise not been able to reach. How lucky we are with such perfect timing!*

**July 25, Day 1: International flight from USA to Oslo, Norway.** Participants should depart their homes today for the trans-Atlantic flight to Oslo, Norway.

NIGHT: On board commercial aircraft

**July 26, Day 2: Arrive in Oslo; transfer to Bergen.** Upon arrival in Oslo, you will take a connecting flight to Bergen. Upon arrival you will transfer to an area hotel where a room has been reserved in your name. This afternoon, you will have the option of exploring this attractive city on your own or simply relaxing at the hotel. We will meet in the lobby early this evening for a tour welcome and orientation, followed by dinner.

NIGHT: First Hotel Marin, Bergen

**July 27, Day 3: Drive to Voss.** This morning we will make our way out of the city through the suburbs and head east to follow the road that borders the huge Hardangerfjord. The drive normally takes several hours, and depending on when we leave Bergen, should give us plenty of time to find a good selection of the breeding birds of western Norway. Our route takes us past several easily accessible small wetlands and on to the woodlands of Voss. Several woodpecker species breed here with Gray-headed and White-backed woodpeckers being the main target species. Northern Goshawk, Eurasian Capercaillie, Eurasian Wryneck and Eurasian Nutcracker can also be found in this area along with Crested Tit and both Red and Parrot crossbills. In July it never really gets fully dark, and we will offer a post-dinner excursion this evening to check a nearby area for Eurasian Pygmy-Owl.

NIGHT: Vossastrand Hotel, Voss

**July 28, Day 4: Drive via Geilo to Hardangervidda.** After breakfast we will drive towards Sognefjord where a photo stop is not an option! Driving over Goat's Back Mountain Pass, we will descend to Geilo on the east side of the Hardangervidda. Near Hovsfjorden is a small marsh that is always worth checking out, although it is generally more productive in spring. From there we will climb into the mountains and the Hardangervidda proper and search the woodlands for such species as Hazel Grouse, Black Woodpecker, Eurasian Three-toed Woodpecker, and Siberian Jay; and the mountains, looking for summer plumaged Arctic and Red-throated loons. Some of the mountain lakes may hold Red-necked Phalarope, and both Northern Harrier and Common Crane are seen here regularly. Upon arrival at our accommodation we will check in and have our evening meal. Afterwards there will be a short excursion to Isdalen where such species as the "Blue-headed" race of Western Yellow Wagtail, Northern Wheatear, and Ring Ouzel regularly occur.

NIGHT: Bardoela Hotel, Geilo

**July 29, Day 5: Hardangervidda.** After breakfast we will head straight to the Tinnhøl road that will take us out onto the vidda. The road stops at Tinnholvatnet. This large lake is home for a host of species such as Greater Scaup, Long-tailed Duck, and Black and White-winged scoters. The shores of the lake are of equal interest, for in July, Temminck's Stint, Dunlin, Purple Sandpiper, and Eurasian Golden-Plover will still be present and in their gorgeous full summer plumage. We should also be alert to the presence of the dapper Eurasian Dotterel. Passerines here include Bluethroat, the male is always a sight to remember, and several other species such as Horned Lark, Lapland Longspur, and Snow Bunting that all add to the charisma of the area. The expanse of the vidda is breathtaking, and even more so if a Gyrfalcon or a Long-tailed Jaeger roams by. Other birds of prey include Merlin and Eurasian Kestrel, and, if Lemming numbers are good, then there should also be a few Rough-legged Hawks around. After our day's birding, we will return to our mountain lodge for our evening meal. However, the day is not over. Later, we will offer an optional trip to return to the vidda to look for the incomparable Great Snipe.

NIGHT: Voeringsfoss Hotel, Voeringsfoss

**July 30, Day 6: Return to Bergen.** This morning we will slowly wend our way back down from these upland areas to Harangerfjord. As we turn westwards we will undoubtedly be entranced by some of the finest fjord scenery in Norway. Before heading to Bergen, we will stop in Eidford for some forest-birding, which could produce several breeding warbler species including Icterine Warbler as well as flycatchers and a good chance for woodpeckers (most likely Green Woodpecker) in addition to a good number of more common passerines. Late in the afternoon we will arrive back in Bergen and enjoy our final dinner before returning to Oslo.

NIGHT: First Hotel Marin, Bergen

**July 31, Day 7: Return to Oslo; afternoon on your own.** This morning we will fly from Bergen to Oslo. For the remainder of the morning you can rest in your comfortable hotel room. Highlights of an afternoon tour include a stroll among the famed Vigeland sculptures set in nearby park lands, and a visit to the Polar Ship Fram Museum to see the famed ship used by legendary polar explorers Nansen and Amundsen. This evening try one of the harbour restaurants or turn in early.

**POLAR BEARS, WALRUSES & IVORY GULLS:  
CRUISING THE HIGH ARCTIC OF SPITSBERGEN  
ABOARD THE *NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC EXPLORER***

**JULY 30 – AUGUST 8, 2010**

**July 30, Day 1: International flight from USA to Oslo, Norway.** Participants should depart their homes today for the trans-Atlantic flight to Oslo, Norway.

NIGHT: On board commercial aircraft

**July 31, Day 2: Arrive in Oslo.** Upon arrival in Oslo, you will transfer from the airport to an area hotel where a room has been reserved in your name. For the remainder of the morning you can rest in your comfortable hotel room. Highlights of an afternoon tour include a stroll among the famed Vigeland sculptures set in nearby park lands, and a visit to the Polar Ship Fram Museum to see the famed ship used by legendary polar explorers Nansen and Amundsen. This evening try one of the harbour restaurants or turn in early.

NIGHT: Continental Hotel, Oslo

**August 1, Day 3: Fly from Oslo to Longyearbyen; embark *Explorer*.** This morning we depart Oslo on our private charter flight to Longyearbyen, on West Spitsbergen, the administrative capital of the Svalbard archipelago. Upon arrival, we will board the *National Geographic Explorer* sailing out of Isfjorden in the early evening.

NIGHT: Aboard *National Geographic Explorer*

**August 2-7, Days 4-9: Cruising Spitsbergen.** This is an extraordinary journey to a remarkable destination, where the major attraction and fascination of the voyage is as much geographical as it is about wildlife. Here you can venture with ease, closer to the North Pole, than anywhere else on the planet; Longyearbyen on Spitsbergen (the main island of the Svalbard archipelago) is itself located far north of the Arctic Circle. Aboard our very lovely and comfortable cruise ship we will head northwards to the northern ice cap – probably reaching over 80° north. And just 600-700 miles short of the North Pole! Compare this with other Arctic destinations where VENT travels: Barrow, Alaska and Churchill, Canada are respectively about 750 and 1,500 miles south

of the latitude where Spitsbergen sits. In the Antarctic, few cruise ships ever go south of the equivalent Antarctic Circle, so this will truly be the closest any of us are ever likely to get to either Pole without mounting our own expedition.

**NOTE: With this amazing cruise taking us to the very edge of the Arctic ice sheet, local weather and ice conditions will ultimately dictate what we can do and where we can go, but the ship has a good record of completing its itineraries and the crew will do all they can within the bounds of safety to achieve this goal. The following describes some of the sites we may visit depending on the prevailing conditions.**

We may begin our cruise by heading north along the west coast, thus we could arrive offshore in the morning where we will take Zodiacs on an exhilarating cruise along the sculpted front of the 14th of July Glacier. On the surprisingly fertile slopes near the glacier, a rich variety of colorful flowers bloom and large numbers of Black-legged Kittiwakes and Thick-billed Murres nest on the nearby cliffs, and all the while constantly harassed by marauding predatory Glaucous Gulls. There is also a good chance to find Arctic foxes below the cliffs and bearded seals in the fjord. In the afternoon we might sail to Ny Ålesund, the world's most northerly settlement. Once a mining village - served by the world's most northerly railway, which can still be seen - Ny Ålesund is now a research centre. Close to the village is a breeding ground for Barnacle and Pink-footed geese and Arctic Terns. Visitors interested in the history of Arctic exploration will want to walk to the anchoring mast used by Amundsen and Nobile in the airship *Norge* in 1926 and Nobile in the airship *Italia* in 1928 before their flights to the North Pole.

Depending on weather conditions, we may sail to the mouth of Liefdefjorden and go ashore for a walk on the tundra island of Andøya. Many Common Eiders and Pink-footed Geese nest here, along with Red-throated Loon, Long-tailed Duck, and Red Phalarope, in addition to the rarer and notably spectacular King Eider. We hope to sail into Liefdefjorden, cruising near the 5km long face of the impressive Monaco Glacier. The waters of the glacier front are a favourite feeding spot for thousands of Kittiwakes, and on previous voyages, Polar Bears have been seen on the glacier, providing wonderful opportunities for photography.

On the following day we might visit Hinlopen Strait, home to bearded seals, ringed seals, polar bears and Ivory Gulls. Here we may navigate the ice-flows of Lomfjordshalboya in our zodiacs and explore the bird cliffs of Alkefjellet, filled with thousands of Thick-billed Murre. On the east side of Hinlopenstrait, we may attempt a landing at Palanderbukta on Nordaustlandet, home to Pink-footed Geese, breeding Ivory Gulls, reindeer, and walrus.

With a bit of luck we may reach the northern-most point at Phippsøya, in the Seven Islands north of Nordaustlandet. Here we will be at 81° north, just 540 miles from the geographic North Pole. The sole reason for this happy situation is the presence of a warm sea current derived from the Gulf Stream, which completes its journey as it curves around the top of Scandinavia and reaches Svalbard and the Arctic Russian coast. It keeps the sea open to a far higher latitude than would normally occur in the Arctic and allows safe access to this remote northern world. Polar bears inhabit this region, along with Ivory Gulls. We may sit for several hours in the pack ice, taking in our spectacular surroundings, and if we are lucky, we may see a Ross's Gull before we turn south again.

On another day we may visit Raudfjord on the north coast of West Spitsbergen, a beautiful fjord dominated by spectacular glaciers and favoured by ringed and bearded seals. The cliffs and shoreline of the fjord also support thriving seabird colonies, and a surprisingly rich vegetation flourishes in more sheltered spots. On the offshore island of Ytre Norskøya, we may visit a 17th century Dutch whaling site, whose large graveyard is a poignant reminder of the hardships and dangers that accompany the life of a whaler. The island's bird life is prolific, with colonies of Dovekies (Little Auks), Black Guillemots, Thick-billed Murres (Brünnich's Guillemots), Atlantic Puffins, and Parasitic Jaegers.

We may also land at the northern tip of Prins Karls Forland, near Fuglehuken, where Barents probably set foot on Spitsbergen for the first time. Seabirds nest on the cliffs and along the coast, and we should see harbour seals,

the only population in Spitsbergen. Furthermore, we also will witness the remains from the Polar Bear hunting era, with demolished set guns and bear traps. At the opposite site of Forlandsundet at Sarstangen is a haulout place for walruses. Alternatively, we may sail into St. Johns Fjord or south to the mouth of Isfjorden and land at Alkhorneret. Seabirds nest on its cliffs and Arctic foxes search the cliff base for fallen eggs and chicks, while Spitsbergen reindeer graze the relatively luxuriant vegetation. The reindeer may seem unbothered by human presence, but this is not really the case. The animals must survive the harsh winter, when temperatures plummet and food is hard to find, so they preserve what energy they can, fleeing only when it is absolutely necessary. In the afternoon we may cruise through beautiful Borebukta, following a glacier front before continuing to Longyearbyen.

NIGHTS: Aboard *National Geographic Explorer*

**August 8, Day 10: Return to Longyearbyen.** We return to port at Longyearbyen this morning and disembark. There will be time to explore Longyearbyen before we transfer to the airport and the return flight to Oslo. Upon arrival in Oslo, transfer to our airport hotel for overnight. Dinner this evening is on your own.

NIGHT: Radisson SAS Airport Hotel, Oslo

**August 9, Day 11: International flight from Oslo to USA.** Participants may depart Oslo for the United States at any time today.

**TOUR SIZE:** The *National Geographic Explorer* holds 148 guests, of which 30 spaces have been reserved for VENT travellers.

**PRE-TRIP SIZE:** The Norway Pre-trip will be limited to 14 participants.

**TOUR LEADERS: David Bishop and David Wolf**

**David Bishop** loves his vocation and cannot imagine anything better than exploring wild and beautiful places in Asia and the Pacific in the company of friends and clients. He has spent much of the past 33 years studying the birds and natural history of the Oriental region, in addition to New Guinea and the Southwest Pacific. David was once a police officer amid the streets of London's West End, but has emerged as an acknowledged authority on the birds of these exotic regions. His enthusiasm for these places and their birds is contagious. This, along with his skills in locating wildlife, sharing what he sees with others, and conversing with local people in their native language, ensures you the very finest quality tour. David has undertaken a number of expeditions to survey the birds and other wildlife of previously unexplored regions throughout New Guinea (largely together with Jared Diamond) and the Oriental Region. This has resulted in a number of exciting discoveries and rediscoveries including the incomparable Wallace's Standardwing, a bizarre bird-of-paradise. Some of the results of this work, together with observations gained during the VENT tours he leads, have been published in the scientific and semi-popular literature to which David is a regular contributor. In July 1997, David, together with Brian Coates, published *A Guide to the Birds of Wallacea (Sulawesi, the Moluccas, and Lesser Sundas)*, and David is currently working on other book projects. David lives with his wife and daughter (his son currently resides in England) in the attractive university town of Armidale, NSW, Australia.

**David Wolf** is a senior member of the VENT staff and one of our most experienced tour leaders. After birding the U.S. and Mexico for over a decade, an interest in the wildlife of Africa led him to Kenya in 1975, where he spent over a year studying the birds and other wildlife of the African continent. Soon after his return to Texas he began leading Rockport Wildlife Weekends for VENT, at that time a new company, and he hasn't looked back since. In addition to Africa, David has extensive birding and tour-leading experience in North America and the

Neotropics, and has birded widely on all of the continents. He unites great birding skills with a wide-ranging interest in all aspects of natural history, which he shares readily with tour participants. David and his wife, Mimi, live on a small farm in Nacogdoches, Texas, with assorted horses, cats, and dogs. They have two grown children, Matt and Elena, and are now the happy grandparents of Reimer and Ellison Rose, Matt and Tiffany's children.

## **NORWAY PRE-TRIP INFORMATION**

**FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:** The fee for the tour extension is \$4995. Prices quoted are per person in double occupancy from Oslo, Norway. Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration, a small-party supplement may have to be charged. The single supplement for this tour is \$300. You will be charged a single supplement if you desire single accommodations, or if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

### **Included in the Optional Norway Pre-trip:**

- All meals from dinner on Day 2 to breakfast on Day 7
- Accommodations as stated in the itinerary
- Ground transportation during the tour
- Guide services provided by tour leaders

### **Not included in the pre-trip:**

- International airfare from your home to Oslo, Norway and return
- Domestic air Oslo / Bergen / Oslo
- Airport departure taxes
- Alcoholic beverages
- Items of a personal nature such as laundry or phone calls
- Excess baggage charges
- Passport or visa fees (if applicable)
- Accommodations, meals, or transfers prior to joining/after tour
- Personal and baggage insurance
- Special gratuities

**REGISTRATION:** To register for this tour, please contact the VENT office. The deposit for this tour is **\$500**. If you prefer to pay your deposit by check, your tour space will be held for 10 days to allow time for the VENT office to receive your deposit and completed registration form. If you prefer to pay your deposit using a credit card, your deposit must be made with MasterCard or Visa at the time of registration. The VENT registration form should then be completed, signed, and returned to the VENT office. Full payment of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to the tour departure date.

**CANCELLATION POLICY:** Cancellation Penalties and Refunds are based on the following schedule: if cancellation is made 120 days or more before the tour departure date, the deposit less \$300 per person is refundable. If cancellation is made fewer than 120 days before departure date, no refund is available. This policy also applies to transfers from one tour to another. ***We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance for your protection.***

**If you cancel:**

120 days or more before departure date  
Fewer than 120 days before departure date

**Your refund will be:**

Your deposit minus \$300.  
No refund available.

## **CRUISE INFORMATION**

**FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:** Prices quoted are per person based on double occupancy. All staterooms are outside cabins with two lower beds and private facilities. Cabins will be reserved on a first-come, first-served basis. Sole occupancy cabins are available in Categories 2 and 3 only. If you wish to share accommodations, arrangements can be made at the double occupancy rate in Categories 2 and 3 only. You will be charged the single price if you prefer to share but have no roommate and we cannot provide one for you.

Category 1	C Deck (Cabins 301-308) Double with Porthole	\$ 7,260
Category 2	C Deck (Cabins 317-320, 335-336) Double with Window	\$ 7,690
Category 3	D & E Deck Cabins (103-104, 107-108, 201-202, 204-207, 210, 212, 217, 226, 228) Double with Window	\$ 7,990
Category 4	C Deck (313-316, 321-328, 337-340, 344,346, 348, 350) Long Double with Window	\$ 8,590
Category 5	C Deck (341, 343) Oversize Double with Window, No Balcony	\$ 9,890
Category 6	D Deck (209, 211, 214, 216, 218, 220-222, 224) Double With Balcony	\$ 9,890
Category 7	E Deck (101, 102) Suites with No Balcony	
	D Deck (213) Suite with Balcony	\$11,540
Category 8	D Deck (215, 219, 230) Suites with Balcony	\$13,190

### **Single Cabins:**

Category 2	C Deck Solo (309-312, 329-334) Single Cabins with Window	\$ 9,630
Category 3	D & E Solo (105-106, 203, 208) Single Cabins with Window	\$ 9,990

### **Included in your cruise package:**

- Charter flights Oslo / Longyearbyen / Oslo
- All accommodations aboard ship or in hotels per itinerary or similar
- Breakfast on Day 2, all meals aboard ship, breakfast and lunch on Day 10
- All shore excursions and sightseeing
- Entrance fees
- Transfers to and from group flights
- Use of kayaks
- Tips (except to ship's staff and crew, Expedition Leader, Lecturers, and VENT leaders)
- Taxes and service charges
- Services of a ship physician
- Services of the National Geographic Explorer staff and VENT leaders

### **Not included in your cruise package:**

- International air transportation from your home to Oslo, Norway and return
- Pre-cruise or Post-cruise arrangements
- Passport or visa fees
- Lunch and dinner in Oslo on Day 2
- Dinner in Oslo on Day 10
- Items of a personal nature such as alcoholic beverages, e-mail, laundry
- Excess baggage charges
- International or domestic departure taxes
- Accommodations, meals, and transfers prior to joining/after the cruise

- Personal and baggage insurance
- Gratuities to the staff and crew of National Geographic Explorer, Expedition Leader, Lecturers or VENT leaders

**REGISTRATION:** To register for the Spitsbergen cruise, please complete the application form and return it with a deposit of **\$1,500** per person (check or money order in U.S. dollars). If you prefer to register by phone, a deposit must be made within 10 days or the space will be released. A second installment of **\$3,000** is due January 1, 2010. The balance of the fees for both the Spitsbergen cruise and the Norway Pre-trip is due March 15, 2010.

The Spitsbergen cruise is designed for persons in reasonably good health. By forwarding the expedition deposit, you certify that you do not have a physical condition or disability which would create a hazard to you or other passengers. VENT reserves the right to decline to accept or retain you or other passengers should your health, actions, or general deportment impede the operations of the expedition or the rights, welfare, or enjoyment of other passengers.

**CANCELLATIONS AND REFUNDS:** All cancellations, for any reason, must be received in writing. Cancellations received before December 31, 2009 will be assessed a cancellation fee of \$500, whether previously paid or not. Cancellations received after December 31, 2009 but before March 15, 2010 will be assessed a cancellation fee of \$1,500, whether previously paid or not. Cancellations received after March 15, 2010 will result in 100% cancellation fee in the category booked, whether previously paid or not. Any refunds will be reduced by applicable airline cancellation penalties. No refunds will be made in the event of “no shows” or cancellations made on the day of sailing. We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance and/or travel insurance to protect yourself.

**Because of the agility required for cruises on board an expeditionary vessel, travelers with disabilities, heart and/or respiratory problems, or other significant physical limitations or conditions are advised not to participate in expeditionary cruises. Please be advised that medical conditions that are discovered at any time during or prior to boarding and which, in the sole and reviewable opinion of the Captain, may jeopardize the health or safety of the Passenger or any other individual, will be grounds to deny the Passenger permission to board the ship at the point of embarkation, and/or to require the Passenger to leave the ship and terminate his or her continued participation in the cruise. By forwarding the deposit for this cruise, the Passenger certifies that he or she is in good physical health and capable of performing normal activities on this expedition.**

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

**FUEL AND FUEL SURCHARGES:** In the uncertain, often volatile oil market of late, it is difficult – if not impossible – to predict fuel costs over the long term, and more specifically, at the time of operation of this voyage. Our prices are based upon the prevailing fuel rates at the time of brochure printing. While we will do everything possible to maintain our prices, if the fuel rates increase significantly, it may be necessary to institute a fuel surcharge.

**EXCHANGE RATE SURCHARGES:** In the erratic global financial markets of today, it is difficult to predict foreign currency exchange rates over the long term or at the time of operation of a tour or cruise departure. Tour prices are based upon the rate of exchange at the time of itinerary publication. If exchange rates change drastically, it may be necessary to implement a surcharge. If a surcharge is necessary, every effort will be made to minimize the amount. In many cases, these additional foreign exchange rate surcharges are passed to VENT by its vendors and suppliers.

Because of the agility required for cruises on board an expeditionary vessel, travelers with disabilities, heart and/or respiratory problems, or other significant physical limitations or conditions are advised not to participate in expeditionary cruises. Please be advised that medical conditions that are discovered at any time during or prior to boarding and which, in the sole and reviewable opinion of the Captain, may jeopardize the health or safety of the Passenger or any other individual, will be grounds to deny the Passenger permission to board the ship at the point of embarkation, and/or to require the Passenger to leave the ship and terminate his or her continued participation in the cruise. By forwarding the deposit for this cruise, the Passenger certifies that he or she is in good physical health and capable of performing normal activities on this expedition.

**TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EVACUATION INSURANCE:** A brochure and application form for optional coverage for baggage, illness, and trip cancellation can be obtained through the VENT office. We **strongly recommend** that you purchase trip cancellation insurance as soon as possible to protect yourself against losses due to accidents or illness. Check with your insurance agent regarding coverage you may presently have via other insurance policies that may cover illness during your trip. **Waiver for pre-existing conditions is available; however, stipulations apply, usually requiring the purchase of the insurance soon after registering. Contact the VENT office prior to registration for details.**

**Victor Emanuel Nature Tours is not a participant in the California Travel Consumer Restitution Fund. California law requires certain sellers of travel to have a trust account or bond. This business has a bond issued by Travelers in the amount of \$50,000. CST #2014998-50.**

Due to the nature of the expedition, weather conditions or government regulations may require changes to be made to the itinerary and/or the cancellation of certain shore excursions. Every attempt will be made to adhere to the itinerary described, within the limits of safety and time. In the event of changes, passengers have no right to any refund or other compensation. Expedition fees are based on group participation. Should you choose not to take part in any activity or make use of services provided, no refund will be made.

**AIR INFORMATION:** Victor Emanuel Travel is a full-service travel agency and wholly owned subsidiary of VENT. Victor Emanuel Travel will be happy to assist you in making air arrangements. Airline tickets carry restrictions due to the airfare used. You may find that your ticket cannot be reissued or exchanged for another air carrier or routing. Cancellation penalties and change fees may be assessed for any changes to the ticket. These charges are solely your responsibility. First and business class travel may be available on some flights. **All requests for travel assistance (air tickets, additional hotels, etc.) must be received no later than 90 days prior to departure date. Within 90 days, arrangements must be made on your own.**

## **EXPEDITION CRUISE INFORMATION**

**The Ship** – The *National Geographic Explorer* is a state-of-the-art 1A ice-class expedition ship accommodating 148 guests in 81 outside cabins. It is fully stabilized, enabling it to navigate remote passages and remain steady under challenging sea conditions. All cabins have windows or portholes onto the ocean, some with balconies. Each cabin is stylishly decorated and well appointed to keep you comfortable throughout the voyage. Each cabin has private facilities and climate controls. *Explorer* has two lounges, a Main Lounge and a glass-enclosed Observation Lounge for viewing the natural surroundings. Other public areas include a library, fitness center, and a wellness spa. For added convenience, a business center provides internet access. An Open Bridge policy allows guests to learn about navigation and visit the Captain and his officers.

**Dining** - The window-lined dining room comfortably seats all passengers at leisurely single seatings for all meals, with tables unassigned. The chefs can prepare food according to special dietary needs, provided the ship receives sufficient notification. Please advise of any special needs at the time of registration.

**Zodiac Landing Craft** – Expedition cruise ships carry fleets of Zodiac landing craft. Developed as a means for gaining access to places where larger vessels cannot go, Zodiacs are employed to bring greater intimacy to your

travel experience. Each craft is constructed of high performance plastimer fabrics and outfitted with a powerful motor, and designed to withstand the challenging conditions of the harsh Arctic environment. During your cruise you'll make numerous excursions to shallow bays and landings on isolated beaches, coming face-to-face with an assortment of wildlife. Each craft holds as many as 10 passengers. Although flat-bottom design allows for direct on-shore landings, passengers will need to walk through shallow surf on some occasions.

**While on Land** – Walking conditions on land are generally not difficult, yet it is important to pay close attention to footing and walking conditions. The diversity of topography in the Arctic guarantees that you'll experience a variety of terrain, from soft sand, to coarse gravel, to stepping around large boulders. Walks to alcid rookeries frequently involve treks of varying length through shallow snow and ice. Most walking is over fairly even ground, but tall grasses and mosses are often slick with recent rain.

**While at Sea** - While cruising at sea you'll have options to join your leaders on the viewing decks for sea watching, or remain below decks and relax in the library, the passenger lounge, or your stateroom. The sea is generally at its calmest during the time of our visit and especially so as we will spend a large part of our time within inshore waters nevertheless rough conditions may develop at any time.

**CLIMATE & WEATHER:** The weather in Norway in summer can range anywhere from warm (75°F) and dry, to cool or cold (low 35°F to low 50s°F) and raining. Since the expedition cruise and mainland pre-trip take place during the Arctic summer, on average we can expect beautiful sunny days, but conditions can change without warning in these higher latitudes, and overcast skies, poor visibility, and precipitation do occur. **Please be advised that while cruising at sea, a steady wind-chill can dramatically affect even moderate temperatures.**

**BAGGAGE:** The airlines now strictly enforce baggage regulations. Excess baggage charges, which can be substantial, are the personal responsibility of each participant. Please consult your pre-departure materials and airline to find out specific weight restrictions. As a precaution against lost luggage, we suggest that you pack a change of clothes, essential toiletries, medications, a change of clothing, important travel documents, optics, and any other essential items in your carry-on bag.

**PRE-TRIP CLOTHING:** Bring light summer wear, but be prepared for cooler, wetter weather with a sweater, warmer outdoor coat, and rainwear. Strong walking boots will be needed, though walking distances need not necessarily be that great. Dress will be casual throughout.

**EXPEDITION CLOTHING:** The choice of clothing for cold climates is a very personal matter. It depends on your individual experience with cold conditions. Are you more susceptible to cold temperatures than other people? For your comfort and safety, avoid getting wet (whether from perspiration, precipitation, unsuitable boots, or sea spray). Bring wind and waterproof outer layers. Beware of tight clothing that leaves no room for trapped air, which is an excellent insulator. Wool, silk and some of the new synthetic fibers like polar fleece retain heat better than cotton. The secret to keeping warm is the "layer principle." It is better to have several light layers of clothing than one heavy layer. This also gives you flexibility in your clothing so you can take off a layer if you are too warm or put another layer on if you are cold. The most important layer is the outer waterproof and windproof shell because even a light wind of 6 kph (about 4 mph) can carry away eight times more body heat than still air. The so-called "wind chill factor" measures the increase in cooling power of moving air, whether it's wind that is blowing or you who are moving rapidly and, in effect, creating a wind against yourself. A common complaint is "it's not the cold, it's the wind," but an equally common polar maxim is "there is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothing!"

### **Tips for staying comfortable and warm in cold weather**

- Avoid overdressing to reduce perspiration
- Wear water repellent outer garments that will keep you dry on the outside and still "breathe" enough so that moisture from your body can escape.

- Body heat is most likely to be lost from parts that have a lot of surface area in comparison to total mass - namely, the hands and feet. Keep them warm and dry. For hands, mittens are better than gloves.
- Another polar maxim is “if you have cold feet, put a hat on!” If the rest of your body is covered, as much as 90% of the heat you lose can come from your head, so be sure to wear a cap, beanie or balaclava. These items can be pulled down to protect your ears, forehead, neck and chin. The neck also needs protection with a woollen or synthetic scarf, which can be wrapped around the face when travelling against the wind.
- Dress in comfortable, loose layers. For anyone out in the cold, it is far better to wear layers of relatively light, loose clothing than one thick, heavy item. Between each layer there is a film of trapped air which, when heated by your body, acts as an excellent insulator. Keep from overheating.
- Wool and silk are superior to cotton because they can trap warm air. Synthetic fabrics that spring back into shape after compression are also good. When damp or wet, polyester down is a better insulator than goose or duck down. Polar fleece is popular and recommended.

Arctic expeditions are generally casual affairs and consequently comfortable and practical clothing is recommended while on board the ship and ashore, for daytime and evening wear. For the Captain’s Welcome Aboard and Farewell dinners Smart Casual attire is appropriate. For women this includes casual dresses or slacks/blouses ensembles; for men, khakis/slacks and open-collared shirts. Men may choose to wear a sports jacket for such occasions. A list of essential items includes:

- **Waterproof & Windproof Jacket – REQUIRED** A well-fitting jacket with attached hood that can be worn over your under layers with reasonable comfort. It is most important that this garment is thoroughly waterproof. Gore-Tex or sailing gear is ideal although it is possible to find cheaper waterproof gear. The waterproof jacket is the most important layer of clothing. There is nothing worse than wind on wet clothes at zero degrees.
- **Waterproof Rain-pants – REQUIRED** for protection against precipitation, ocean spray in zodiac landing craft and wet landings. Your rain-pants should fit comfortably over your regular pants. Some types feature a zipper on the outside of the lower pant-leg, enabling you to pull your pants on and off without removing shoes or boots. Gore-Tex and similar fabrics are both waterproof and “breathable”.
- **Warm, waterproof gloves and mittens – REQUIRED** for almost every circumstance. Keeping your hands warm and dry is a challenge - and important. Thin polypropylene gloves can be worn underneath warm mittens. Thus, you can take off the mittens to operate your camera and binoculars and still have some protection from the cold. It’s a good idea to bring an extra pair of wool mittens to wear if your other pair gets wet (or lost).
- **Warm Socks –** Sturdy, tall wool socks worn over a thin pair of silk, polypropylene or cotton/wool socks should provide enough insulation for your feet. It is important to bring several pairs of dry socks as they will inevitably get wet during through the duration of the voyage. Pack accordingly.
- **Regular Pants –** Ski pants are suitable if you have them; otherwise, bring any sturdy trousers that can be layered between your long underwear and rain over-trousers. Denim, cotton, corduroy, or wool pants are acceptable in dry conditions, such as when birding from the ship’s decks; and for evening recaps, social hours, and dinners.
- **Hats, scarves and gaiters – REQUIRED.** You will need a cotton, knit, or wool pull down cap at the least, while a warm scarf or gaiter come in handy when exposed in windy conditions.
- **Long Underwear - STRONGLY RECOMMENDED.** Silk or other lightweight material polypropylene is sufficient for most people. Those who are easily chilled might consider a heavier material, such as wool.
- **T-shirts (long- and short-sleeved) –** Simple cotton shirts for wearing under warmer outerwear.
- **Turtlenecks and flannels –** More warm weather clothing for wearing under parkas, fleeces, and sweaters.
- **Warm Sweaters or Polar fleece –** Offers excellent insulation against cold temperatures.

## What to pack for your shore excursions

When packing, don't weigh yourself down with too many clothes or too much gear. Select informal, practical attire for your trip that can be worn in layers.

**EXPEDITION FOOTWEAR:** IT IS MANDATORY that you bring a pair of pull-on rubber, waterproof, knee-high boots with strong rubber-ridged, nonskid soles that fit comfortably. With wet landings, you will be stepping from the zodiac into icy water that may be up to 10" deep. You should expect to walk over icy, uneven ground between the shore and the various nesting colonies you'll visit. Do not bring heavy, "clunky" boots or boots with poor traction, as you need the right footwear that will keep you warm, yet agile. Make sure that your boots fit comfortably over thicker socks as well. Waterproof lightweight boot coverings that can be worn over hiking boots or shoes, such as NEOS Performance Overshoe, are also recommended. Boots with waffle soles like those on a hiking boot or running shoe tend to give the best footing. Avoid imitation 'rubber boots' made from PVC. These are unyielding and more prone to slipping. Ideal boots are "Wellies" or "Viking" boots: other brands of rubber boots can be purchased from work clothing stores, surplus stores, farm co-op stores, garden supply centers, outdoor stores and marine supply houses. Sailing boots that are sold at marine stores have good non-skid soles that are good for slick ship decks and wet rocks, but they lack traction on snow, ice or mud. The all-around traction soles are good for ice and snow but are not as slip resistant on slick decks or rocks.

Remember that you will be wearing these boots a lot. So they must be comfortable for extended wear and walking. The boots should not be too tight or too sloppy. If they are too tight you will get cold feet. If they are too loose you can, within reason, add an insole or extra socks to take up the space. For maximum warmth, wear loose-fitting boots and two pairs of socks. Rubber boots generally come in whole sizes and many brands are unisex. Be sure to get the best fit no matter what size they are.

Some places to find boots with these specifications include Cabela's, REI, L.L. Bean, Defender Industries, and Rocky Boots. When on board the ship, comfortable walking shoes, or deck shoes are sufficient.

**Your boots are among the most important items you will need. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or need further advice.**

**LAUNDRY SERVICE:** Laundry service is provided by the ship staff for an extra charge. Check with the staff upon embarkation for procedures and turnaround time.

**EQUIPMENT:** One of the most important aspects of having an enjoyable travel experience is being prepared with proper equipment. The following items will come in handy during your Arctic expedition:

- **Backpack** - A waterproof nylon backpack, rucksack, or similar bag with shoulder straps, for carrying your camera and other gear during shore excursions. Be sure to choose one with shoulder straps so that your hands are free. It is very important that you have some means of keeping your camera dry. We have occasionally had disappointed people whose camera has been splashed in a Zodiac. Such a pack should be good for carrying extra clothing, field guides, supplies, and optical equipment during all landings and excursions
- **Ziploc bags** – Excellent for keeping small items or any items of value dry; bring several different sizes
- **Notebooks and pens**
- **Travel alarm clock**
- **Polarized sunglasses with good UV protection** - Good quality sunglasses. Note that the glare from the water and surrounding snow/ice can be quite penetrating, even when the sky is overcast.
- **Sunscreen, lip balm, skin lotions**
- **Personal toiletries**
- **Cameras, lenses, film, memory cards, and extra batteries** - From experience, it is advisable to bring an extra camera in case of malfunction or accident. Cameras have been dropped in the water and it is a disappointed photographer who can't take pictures. Bring twice the amount of film you first plan to bring !

- **Collapsible walking stick**
- **Tissue packs**
- **Binoculars** – We strongly recommend good binoculars of at least 7 x 35, 8 x 42, 10 x 40, or 10 x 42 magnification. We recommend that you do NOT bring mini-binoculars of any kind. Some people like them because they are small and lightweight; but they have an extremely small field of view and very poor light gathering power. Trying to find a bird in your binoculars using minis is like trying to read a book through a keyhole. You will be very frustrated, and even if you do manage to get the bird in your binoculars before it flies, you will have a poor view. You will find that 7 x 35 or 8 x 42 binoculars are compact and light enough.

**Spotting Scopes** - Since most wildlife viewing will take place on a moving ship or zodiac, or among the birds and animals at often very close range, you do not need to bring a spotting scope. Your tour leaders will have one available for group use on the occasions where it is necessary to have one. However, if you wish to bring one please feel free to do so.

## **PASSPORTS AND DOCUMENTS:**

### ***PASSPORTS***

A valid passport is required. Please check the expiration date on your passport. **If it is not valid for at least six months after your trip return date, you will need to get it renewed.** You will also want to make sure that you have at least two blank pages in your passport for stamps.

If you need a passport, you should get it well in advance of your trip departure date. For additional fees, a passport can be issued on an expedited basis. In the United States this can be done at the nearest passport office, most post offices, or the county clerk's office. You may also visit [www.state.gov/travel/](http://www.state.gov/travel/) for information on how to get or renew a passport.

As a safety measure, photocopy the first two pages of your passport. Keep the photocopies in a safe place, so if your passport is lost you will have proof of identification. Your passport should be signed and easily available at all times. You will need it for check-in at the airport on your first day of departure, so **do not pack it in your checked luggage.**

On board ship, it is customary for the purser to hold all passports for clearance with Customs and Immigration authorities. Your passport will be collected prior to or upon embarkation, and returned upon disembarkation.

### ***VISAS***

Visas are not required for U.S. citizens for entry into Norway.

Rules and regulations pertaining to non-U.S. citizens may vary; please check with the consulates or embassies of Norway.

**CURRENCY & MONEY MATTERS:** Your trip to Spitsbergen includes most necessary expenses, including all meals aboard the ship. You will want to bring enough cash to cover such extra expenses as taxi rides, gifts, laundry, gratuities, and meals on your own before and after the cruise, and personal items. Cash and credit cards are recommended for meeting expenses during the cruise. Traveler's checks may not be accepted. Small denominations of cash are best as the places we visit may be unable to provide change for large bills or travelers checks. In Longyearbyen change is returned in local currency. Shipboard accounts can be paid with most major credit cards. Visa, Mastercard, and EUROcard are accepted.

Should you extend your vacation in either Oslo or Longyearbyen beyond what is offered in the cruise program, you'll want to consider obtaining local currency. Norwegian Kroner can be obtained at major hotels, banks, airports, and railway stations. Visa, MasterCard, American Express, and Diners Club are widely accepted. ATMs are readily available. Please check with your bank and credit card issuer for more information regarding banking and the use of ATM and credit cards overseas.

The unit of currency in Norway is the krone (plural: kroner), which translates as "crown," written officially as NOK. Price tags are seldom marked this way, but instead read "Kr" followed by the amount, such as Kr 10 or 10 Kr. Norwegian krone is often abbreviated NOK. One krone is divided into 100 ore, and coins of 50 ore, 1, 5, 10, and 20 kroner are in circulation. Bills are issued in denominations of 50, 100, 200, 500, and 1,000 kroner.

As of March 5, 2009, the conversion rate is:

1 US dollar = 7.0224 Kr (NOK)

The standard currency on board the *National Geographic Explorer* is the US dollar. Other currencies may be accepted at the discretion of the hotel manager at prevailing rates.

**TIME:** Norway is six hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time (EST),

**MEDICAL SERVICES:** A qualified physician is in attendance at all times, but must be made aware of any potential medical problems that might arise because of any medical condition, disability, or illness of any passenger on board. **Please return your medical information form in a timely manner.** No sophisticated medical facilities are available in Spitsbergen. Passengers, who are not fit for an expedition cruise, including those with physical disabilities that affect mobility and balance, heart or immune deficiencies, or other conditions associated with poor health, are advised not to join the cruise. A serious health emergency in the Arctic may result in an air evacuation, which will come at considerable expense to you.

**Comprehensive optional insurance, including coverage for medical evacuation, is available and highly recommended. This coverage is available through your trip cancellation policy, if purchased through VENT. Please consult your insurance agent or existing policy, if in effect, for the terms and limitations of your existing coverage. Refer to the section on Trip Cancellation Insurance.**

**HEALTH:** As of this writing (April 2008), no major shots or inoculations are required for entry into Norway. As standard travel precautions, you should always be up to date with "routine" inoculations for influenza, chickenpox (or varicella), polio, measles/mumps/rubella (MMR), and diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) and consider inoculations against Hepatitis types A and B. If you are taking personal medication, prescription or over-the-counter, be sure to bring an ample supply that will allow you to get through the expedition safely. Please consult your physician as necessary. Remember to pack all medication in your carry-on baggage, preferably in original containers or packaging. As airline baggage restrictions can change without warning, please check with your airline for procedures for packing medication.

**Motion Sickness** – Since our cruise route will not take us far from shore, travel in rough water is not expected. However, those travelers especially sensitive to motion sickness should be prepared. Most cruise ships typically carry a supply of anti-motion sickness medication for general availability to passengers. We recommend that you consult your physician on an appropriate medication.

**Sun Exposure** – The sun's ultraviolet rays are more dangerous in the Arctic than most other places in the world. Anytime you are outdoors you will want to protect your skin, including your lips, eyes, nose, and ears. Severe sunburn is potentially very painful and will affect your level of enjoyment. Always protect yourself when outdoors and be sure to bring an ample supply of high SPF sunscreen and lip balm. We strongly recommend the use of ultra-violet blocking, polarized sunglasses.

In addition to your physician, a good source of general health information for travelers is the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, which operates a 24-hour recorded Travelers' Information Line (877) FYI-TRIP. You can check the CDC website at [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel). Canadian citizens should check the website of the Public Health Agency of Canada: [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new\\_e.html](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/new_e.html) (click on travel health).

**ELECTRICITY:** *National Geographic Explorer* has both 110-volt outlets (standard U.S.) as well as 220-volt outlets (standard European) in each cabin.

**SUGGESTED READING:** Our website, [www.ventbird.com](http://www.ventbird.com), offers an affiliated online store that carries a wide variety of items for birding and nature lovers including over 6,000 books. A portion of the sales from the store benefits the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. You might also want to visit such other online stores as [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), and for those out-of-print and hard-to-find titles, [www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com) or [www.buteobooks.com](http://www.buteobooks.com), which specializes in ornithology books.

The Arctic is a region widely written about. A great many books and magazine articles have been written over the past century addressing its magnificent wildlife and rich human history. Although a person could research the topic indefinitely, the following list highlights some of the best material available about the Arctic and in particular Spitsbergen that will prepare any traveler for a trip toward the North Pole!

***BIRDS:***

**Mullarney, Killian and Lars Svensson and Dan Zetterstrom. *Birds of Europe*. Princeton Field Guides. Princeton University Press; Princeton, NJ, 1999.**

This is the most recent of a huge range of field-guides available on European birds. It includes more up to date details on identification and better illustrations than other guides and has received excellent/rave reviews. Highly recommended!

**Jonsson, Lars. *Birds of Europe with North Africa and the Middle East*. Princeton University Press; Princeton, NJ, 1992.**

Excellent illustrations and comprehensive. Available in a 1996 paperback edition. Christopher Helm in UK.

***MAMMALS:***

**Shirihai, Hadoram and Brett Jarrett. *Whales, Dolphins and Other Marine Mammals of the World*. Princeton University Press; Princeton, NJ, 2006.**

This is the latest, and one of the very best, field guides available for identifying the world's marine mammal species. High quality range maps, photographs, and species descriptions make this guide indispensable on a polar expedition.

**Macdonald, David and Priscilla Barrett. *Collins Field Guide to the Mammals of Britain and Europe*. HarperCollins Press, 2005.**

Note that this field guide is now published through Princeton University Press. Those taking the Norway pre-trip may find this guide especially useful.

***GEOLOGY:***

***Geology of Svalbard*. Norsk Polarinstitut. ISBN 9788276662375**

***WILDFLOWERS:***

**Gjørevoll, Olav & Olaf I. Rønning: *Flowers of Svalbard*. Tapir Publishers, Trondheim, 1999.**

***NATURAL HISTORY:***

**Sale, R. *A Complete Guide to Arctic Wildlife*. Christopher Helm and imprint of A&C Black. London, UK, 2006.**

A beautifully constructed book offering species accounts, with photographs, maps, and illustrations, of all the “birds and marine mammals of the Arctic and the Northern Oceans.” Highly recommended.

***Birds and Mammals* Norsk Polarinstitut. ISBN 8290307675**

***HISTORY:***

**Conway, M. *No Man's Land: A History Of Spitsbergen From Its Discovery In 1596 To The Beginning Of The Scientific Exploration Of The Country.* Martino Publishing (Hardcover), 2005.**

***GENERAL REFERENCE:***

**Elliott, M. et al. *Scandinavian Europe.* 2007. Lonely Planet Guide. Melbourne, Australia.**

There is also a fairly extensive library of relevant books on board the ship.

**TIPPING:** Tipping (restaurants, porters, drivers, and local guides) is included on all land portions of this tour. Gratuities for the ship’s staff and crew are **not included** in your tour fee. **Note:** To avoid confusion the ship’s staff and crew generally consists of housekeeping, dining room service, maintenance workers, and deckhands. Tip envelopes will be provided at the end of the cruise for your convenience. The Cruise Director, Expedition Leader, and trip lecturers are **NOT** considered part of the main crew. **If you decide to tip the Cruise Director, Expedition Leader, and lecturers, you should hand it to them directly.** Gratuities are a personal decision and the amount extended should be based on the quality and manner of the service you receive.

If you feel one or all of your VENT leaders or any local guide has provided exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are not expected and are entirely optional.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, Inc. (VENT) and/or its Agents act only as agents for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motor-coach, boat, or airplane and assume no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity which may be occasioned either by reason of defect in any vehicle or for any reason whatsoever, or through the acts or default of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. VENT and its agents can accept no responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. The right is reserved to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. The right is reserved to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute leaders on any tour. Where this is necessary, notification will be given to tour members. No refund will be made for any unused portion of the tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. The prices of the tours are based on tariffs and exchange rates in effect March 23, 2009 and are subject to adjustment in the event of any change therein. The right is reserved to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner’s risk entirely. The airlines concerned and their agents and affiliates are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their aircraft. The passenger ticket in use by said airlines, when issued, shall constitute the sole contract between the airlines and the purchaser of these tickets and/or passenger. The services of any I.A.T.A.N. carrier may be used for these tours, and transportation within the United States may be provided by any member carrier of the Airline Reporting Corporation.