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Circling Isfjord 2010 – 17 days

Basically, the Isfjord (Icefjord) with its numerous branches, deeply indenting the main island of Spitsbergen, offers almost all varieties of scenery that can be found on the archipelago, plus a range of witnesses of earlier and modern human presence. However, the extension of this fjord system is too huge for a traditional, typical hiking arrangement, and moreover, a number of forbidding rock walls and highly crevassed glaciers, terminating into the sea, set further limits.

Therefore, we have been asked for years by customers, why not offering a program, which is focussed on hiking, but at the same time is making advantage of the possibilities of a boat. For a long time, we could not find a solution, simply because a normal expedition cruise boat is too expensive for most travellers to be paid for mostly waiting for hikers day after day, them being mostly on shore.

However, since 2005 we have come to a new concept – Circling Icefjord with a support boat.

Thanks to its huge extension with many branches, Icefjord offers an enormous variety of landscapes from the mighty plateau mountains of the East to the alpine-pointed scenery to the West.

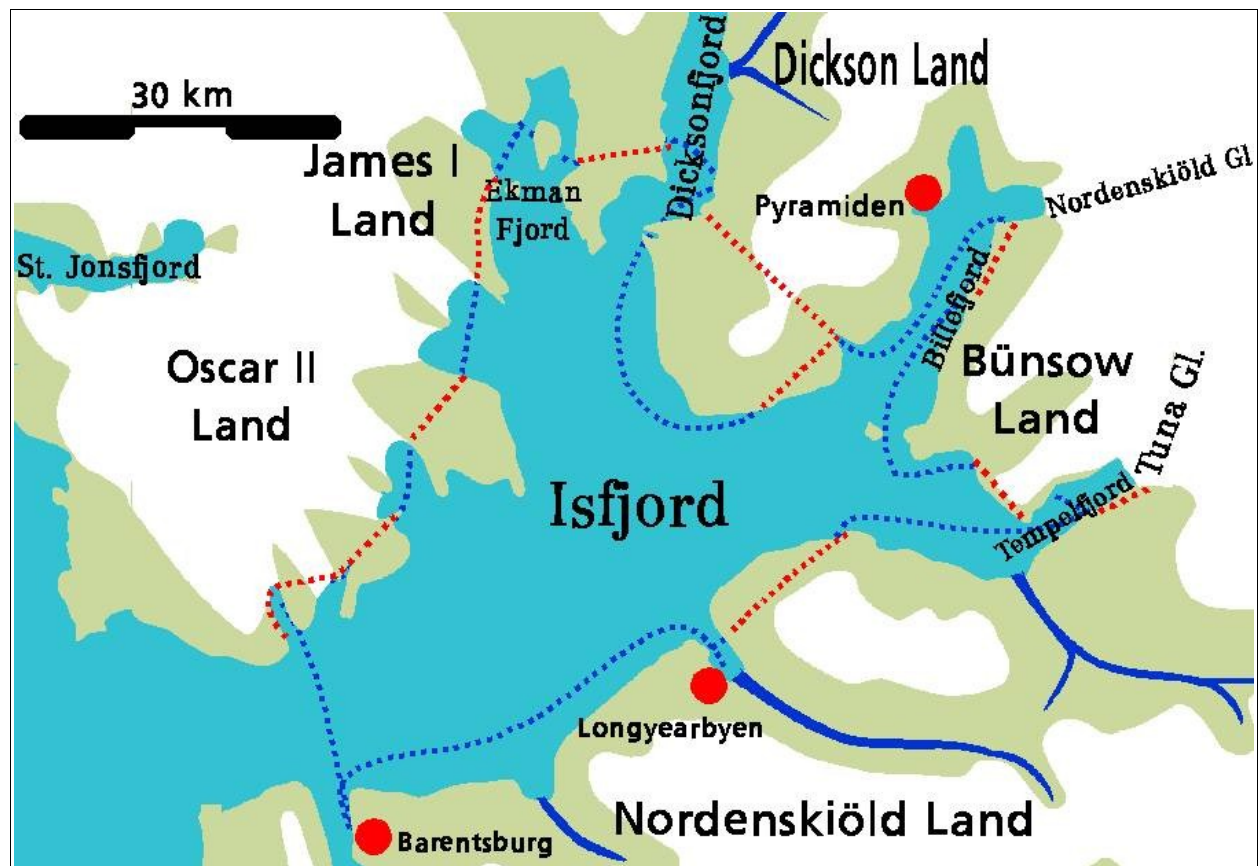


The concept: For more than 2 weeks, we set out for experiencing all of Isfjord with all its main branches, which provides almost all types of landscape and also historic periods, which exist in Spitsbergen. Obviously, hiking is the most intensive, most lasting way of experience, and at the same time closest to nature – and being on land and discovering it on our own feet makes up for most of the time of this program. However, for getting around in 17 days, and also for passing particularly problematic stretches (glacier fronts, etc.), we are supported by a small motor sailboat. The point here is not comfort or even luxury, like on an expedition cruise, but just making things easier and increasing the range, plus the additional attractive perspective from the sea as an additional dimension of experience. Nights, however, are usually spent on shore, setting up camp with the spacious base tents that are taken along on the boat, and the group will also jointly prepare the meals on shore. With this concept, a smaller boat is sufficient and allows such a long program at a still acceptable price, while a similar tour with accommodation on board would be much more expensive, requiring a much bigger vessel. Furthermore, also sleeping and eating on board, would in essence mean a normal expedition cruise, where most of the day is spent in the end on board – at the expense of a really intensive experience of the country.

Therefore:

- Small number of participants (6-14), compared to cruises – no mass tourism.
- Advantage of bigger range and the additional marine perspective by including the boat.
- The clear focus on being mainly on shore, also camping on land, provides the intensity and authenticity of experience that is characteristic for hiking arrangements.
- An estimated number of 8-10 different wilderness campsites plus Longyearbyen and at least one of the Russian settlements – no other program offers such a wide range of overnight locations on shore.
- The widely spread system of Isfjord offers an enormous variety for experiencing nature, sceneries, history.
- 1-2 (from 8 participants upwards) armed guides with Spitsbergen experience – allowing a division of bigger groups into 2 sub groups for excursions.
- As all camp transfers are done by boat, only personal daypacks have to be carried on the excursions (exception: last leg – there, also sleepingbags and mats have to be carried).
- From 8 participants onwards: 2 varieties (sub groups) can be chosen on each departure, with different extension of excursions.

- Comparing duration, low number of participants and price, this is a very competitive boat-assisted program under Spitsbergen standards.
- Intentional absence of the luxury and service of typical ship voyages – in this program, the experience of Spitsbergen is clearly in the focus, and everybody has to take part in the daily practical chores (embarking/disembarking, setting up/taking down camps, cooking, washing up, etc.).
- Dates: Still within the midnight sun period (lasting until about August 21st, followed by a number of nights with at least bright dawn all night through), but usually well after the main snow melt.
- Languages English and German – international groups.

**Dates 2010:**

Fr 30. July (latest arrival night Th/Fr) – Su 15. August (flight back possible from morning onwards) 2010

Extra departures possible – requiring usually very early booking to secure availability of boat.

Prices (from/to Longyearbyen, per person – observe that with accommodation in shared tent, sexes may be mixed):

Variety A – emphasis on long day excursions, with accommodation in shared 4-person base tent: NOK 21500

Surcharge per person in shared 2-person tent: NOK 2000

Variety B – longer day excursions, with accommodation in shared 4-person base tent: NOK 21500

Surcharge per person in shared 2-person tent: NOK 2000

Observe: with less than 8 participants, there will be only 1 guide and no division into varieties (sub-groups).

Early booker deduction (with booking and deposit prior January 30th of travel year): NOK 1000

Accommodation in Longyearbyen: For nights in Longyearbyen, rooms can be booked instead of campsite against a surcharge. Also additional nights in Longyearbyen are possible.

The actual tour route will be adapted to circumstances and will be adjusted on a day-to-day basis. Therefore, the marked route is meant as a schematic and simplified example, only (therefore also mostly straight, symbolic lines on land). In the example, blue dotted lines stand for boat transfers, red dotted lines for day hikes on land between camp locations (camp equipment and provisions are moved on by boat).

Included in price: Guidance (English/German), accommodation as booked, boat transfers on days 3 and 5-13 and 15, transfers in Longyearbyen area as needed by program, entry museum Longyearbyen, meals (Longyearbyen: breakfast only, otherwise breakfast plus main meal in evenings – during day excursions, we do not take the cooking equipment with us, instead we advise that you bring along some own snacks for having something small to eat while out on hikes), camp equipment, safety equipment for group.

Not included in price: Travel to and from Longyearbyen, insurances, personal equipment, personal expenses, snacks for during hikes.

Minimal/maximal number of participants: 6-14 participants + 1-2 guides. Per variety (A or B) max. 7 participants, as the vessel is not allowed to carry more than 8 passengers (7 participants + guide) at a time. Due to differing routes, groups A and B can be transferred at different times due to different daily programs between the two sub groups.

Approximate itinerary (example):

The following itinerary has to be seen as a possible example, only. The actual itinerary will be strongly influenced by the actual conditions (weather, terrain conditions, ice, waves, interests, possible unexpected problems) and has to be adapted to these on a daily basis.

Day 1 (Friday): Guide meets participants at arrival of the scheduled flights at Longyearbyen airport during night Thursday/Friday, short walk to nearby campingsite and short information. Sleep – in full daylight ! In case of booking of accommodation in Longyearbyen, transfer to there.

Breakfast in the morning, joint information and discussion of program, equipment aspects, then transfer to Longyearbyen and short introduction to the settlement, including guidance around the museum. Time for meal in one of the restaurants and for shopping/post. Hiking tour of 2-4 hours in the afternoon, opportunity for having an evening meal in a restaurant. Transfer to campingsite.

Day 2 (Saturday): After breakfast: first longer day hike into the pathless and mountainous wilderness around Longyearbyen, also for getting a first impression of the special arctic terrain conditions and for finding out whether individual fitness meets the chosen tour variety and whether everything is OK with the equipment. Opportunity for a meal in Longyearbyen, transfer to campingsite, preparation for start on tour next morning.

Day 3 (Sunday): Early breakfast, final packing, transfer to pier. Fjord cruise with motor vessel (not yet the motor sailing boat) to the narrow bay of Trygghamna on the northern side of the western Isfjord. Setting up camp. Shorter reconnaissance tour into the spectacular surroundings, joint preparation of evening meal.

Day 4 (Monday): Day excursion (12-20 km) across Kjerulf glacier with its calving front, and possibly further along the west side of the bay. Spectacular, alpine scenery with dramatic small glaciers hanging up in the steep mountain slopes.

Day 5 (Tuesday): Camp is staken down after breakfast. The boat comes around midday and the camp equipment will be loaded on it for transfer to the next camp location. Variety A hikes from Trygghamna into the inland and across the Esmark glacier eastwards to the flat peninsula Erdmannflya and on that to its eastern side with view onto the front of Nansen glacier (18 km hike). Variety B hikes to the southern tip of Värmlandryggen (10 km), to be picked up there by the boat – passage of Esmark glacier and landing near Nansen glacier, camp is set up together with group A, joint preparation of evening meal.

Day 6 (Wednesday): Breakfast, camp taken on board. Variety B hikes into the mountains to the North of the peninsula to climb one of the peaks for a scenic view over the major glaciers (Esmark glacier, Nansen glacier) – 6-8 km – and is picked up afterwards by the boat and taken to the next camp location on Sveaneset. Before, passing the fronts of Nansen glacier and Bore glacier, the boat has taken group B across to the lowland of Bohemanflya, from where the group crosses the mountains in its North (additional ascends possible in good weather) to the moraine of impressive Wahlenberg glacier, from where it is transferred to the new camp site, too. Setting up of camp and joint preparation of evening meal.

Day 7 (Thursday): After breakfast and taking the camp onto the boat, both groups start on their hikes. Group A heads straight Northwest, to gain a good viewpoint from one of the heights over the crevassed Svea glacier, then continuing northwards to the bay Brevika, which is surrounded by glaciers (17 km). Group B crosses the lowland of Sveasletta to Ekmanfjord, following the shore there past a nice waterfall in Hemsedalen, ending also in Brevika (14 km). One after the other, both groups are transferred from there to the unusual island of Coraholmen: half of it is rich tundra, whilst the other is an extreme moraine moon landscape, as this half was overrun by a massive glacier advance about 100 years ago. Joint setting up of camp and evening meal.

Day 8 (Friday): Northernmost day of the tour. After breakfast and taking the camp onto the boat, transfer to the nearby eastern shore. Group A follows the glacier valley of Holmström glacier northwards, for then crossing the peninsula to Dickson Fjord (18-23 km). Variety B crosses the peninsula eastwards to Cape Smith in Dickson Fjord with traces of an old trapper station (10 km, additional top possible). Transfer of both groups to next camp site at Lyckholmdalen on the east side of Dickson Fjord.

Day 9 (Saturday): Taking down of camp after breakfast. Variety A crosses Dickson Land to Skansbukta (22 km) – impressive rock walls, remains of a pioneer mine and a romantic decaying trapper cabin with a trapper's wife's grave nearby. Variety B follows the coast of Dicksonland southwards on boat and lands (waves permitting) in the area of Kapp Thorsden, then hiking to Svenskehuset, the oldest still standing house on the main island, and further to Skansbukta (10-13 km). Camp on west side of Skansbukta.

Day 10 (Sunday): Camp is staken down after breakfast. Variety A heads northwards into the interior and hikes across the Jotunfonna ice cap to Pyramiden (17 km), having a look at the Russian ghost town, then boat transfer to camp site near the front of Nordenskiöld glacier. Variety B is transferred further north in Billefjord and dropped on its west

side to hike across some plateau mountains to Pyramiden, too (13 km), having a look at the settlement as well and then also being transferred to the new camp site.

Day 11 (Monday): Camp is staken down after breakfast. Variety A circles Campbellryggen – in case of good weather possible inclusion of Robertfjellet (1116 m, great scenic view) – to Mathiesondalen with its karst phenomena (17-20 km), from there boat transfer to next camp location at Kapp Schoultz in Tempelfjord. Variety B sails southwards in Billefjord and is dropped on its eastern side to hike through the inland to Gipsdalen with its spectacular quarternary beach lines, dominated by the mighty Temple mountain (14 km) – from there transfer to Kapp Schoultz.

Day 12 (Tuesday): Camp is staken down after breakfast. Variety A ascends past the old gypsum mine to Reymyrefjellet and further onto Kalotten (655m), with its scenic view onto Tuna and Von Post glaciers and the ice cap of Fimbulisen., descend via Noisdalen to the trapper cabin Fredheim (22 km). Group B is dropped at the moraine of Von Post glacier and ascends Reymyrefjellet with its scenic view over Tempelfjorden and the glaciers, then descending to Kapp Schoultz (12 km). Both groups are separately transferred to Wimandalen with some bird cliffs for the next camp.

Day 13 (Wednesday): Day at disposition with the boat. Up to then, the natural unpredictabilities will have caused most likely already changes and delays in the program and this day at disposition has most likely been needed already somewhere along the route for balancing such unpredictabilities

In the evening, the boat leaves the group – items which are not needed anymore, can be sent with the boat to Longyearbyen.

Day 14 (Thursday): Breakfast – for a change without following taking down of camp, as we stay here one more night. The area near the camp offers numerous excursion possibilities from visiting the bird cliffs to ascending some of the nearby peaks. Back in camp again in the evening for preparing the main meal.

Day 15 (Friday): Taking down of camp after breakfast. Variety A crosses the mountain range at about 600 m (plus option of Wimandfjellet 915m) in case of good weather into Hanaskogdalen, reaching Adventfjord vis-a-vis Longyearbyen, and the small ghost mine remains of Advent City- 21-23 km. Variety B follows the coast to Karolinedalen, steep ascend to a pass at 300 m, possible peak 483 m, then down Louisdalen and also to Advent City. A boat transfers both groups across to Longyearbyen. Showers and tents at Longyearbyen Camping, transfer offered to town, also for evening meal in restaurant.

Day 16 (Saturday): Breakfast at campingsite. Transfer to Longyearbyen, time at own disposal. A minor hike is offered in the afternoon. Opportunity for joint farewell meal in evening, transfer to campingsite, packing.

Day 17 (Sunday): Early breakfast at campingsite, regular departure. Alternatively, departure can also be on the next day, if this is preferred for having an additional day for own activities (extra night at campingsite free of charge).

Boat: The motorized sailing boat used as a transport vessel for this tour, is very suitable for these waters with an extremely stable steel hull (11.60 m), good navigation and communication electronics (including IRIDIUM satellite telephone) and an inflatable motor dinghy, but definitely no luxurious pleasure yacht – rather a reliable no frills working horse. As we have a tight program, sailing will be the rare exception, compared to motoring 5-6 mph. Small toilet on board. The english-speaking skipper and his partner are very helpful and service-minded, with extensive Spitsbergen experience. They are in charge for the boat, including dropping and picking us up. All activities on shore, including setting up and taking down of camp and cooking, will happen under the leadership of our guide(s). The purpose of this boat in this program is not a leisure cruise, nor accomodation on board, but reliable transfers and transports. The transport in the beginning (Longyearbyen – Trygghamna) and in the end across Adventfjord back to Longyearbyen are done usually by other vessels.

The motor sailing yacht: basic standard, but very strong steel hull and good electronic equipment.



Camps: For days in Longyearbyen area, the standard version is using our tents on Longyearbyen Camping, where also showers and cooking facilities are available in the service building. 4 persons in a tent is the standard, but against surcharges, also booking of shared 2-person or single tent is possible, in addition also rooms of various standards in the settlement.

For camps in the field, we use conic-shaped (teepee) tents with a central pole, allowing to stand in the middle (more than 2 m high), with 4 persons sharing a tent as the standard, against surcharge also shared 2-person or single tent. The natural ground under the tent will be covered by a persenning. Cooking is done on Trangia expedition stoves (methyle spirit) – though somewhat slower than parafine or petrol, these stoves are extremely reliable also with un-experienced users.

A 10 mm foam insulation mat is provided by Spitsbergen Tours at the start of the tour in Longyearbyen and taken by the participant to each camp – alternatively, the participant can use other types of insulation to sleep on (like therm-a-rest, etc.), brought along by the participant individually.

Our camp concept is basic, no frills. This allows maximal closeness to nature, keeps the tour prices lower and reduces waste and energy consumption. On the other hand, this requires also living with nature, including washing at the stream, etc. – with intelligent adaptation to nature, this can be even pleasant, for instance by washing while still hot from an excursion instead of first relaxing and letting the circulation go down.

Polar bear safety, fire arms and explosives: Though polar bears are not encountered frequently, and though many encounters with a polar bear are harmless, there is a clear risk connected to such meetings. According both to common sense and the local regulations, it is required that groups out in the field are armed with a big bore firearm, supplemented with additional means for deterring bears. In case of this tour program, the guide(s) take(s) care of this issue. It is also required that participants stay within a close perimeter to the guide, which allows the armed guide to react on a sudden bear encounter in a responsible way. Moreover, camps will be surrounded with a pyrotechnical alarm system, which should deter an approaching nightly bear and alarm both the armed guides and the participants. If there are indications of a polar bear in the vicinity, the guide can order a watch system, in which all participants take turns.

It is forbidden by the local regulations to provoke dangerous situations by intentionally approaching/enticing polar bears. In case of a meeting with a polar bear, the guide's instructions immediately. Delayed response to orders of the guide, for instance in order to take pictures first, is not acceptable.

While encounters with polar bears include a natural risk, it should be stated that for the last 50 years, no human being was killed by a polar bear, except of cases where the basic safety rules were ignored (unarmed or insufficiently armed, too far away from guide, etc.). From this point of view, the polar bear risk in the wilderness of Spitsbergen is considerably smaller than for instance being killed innocently in road traffic in most of the home countries of our visitors, assuming that one follows the normal safety precautions both in Spitsbergen and in the home country.

Fire arms and explosives are part of the safety equipment on a tour and cannot be locked away to deny all access to them by the participants. Participants are therefore expected not to touch these devices without clear order by the guide and are furthermore expected to make sure that also participating minors stay away from these safety means.

Choice of varieties: From 8 participants onwards, the program will be offered with two sub-groups A and B. This allows a differentiation according to different level of fitness and eagerness. You can book your preferred variety in advance. However, the guide is allowed to relocate participants who clearly are booked into the wrong sub-group in comparison to the other persons in that sub-group. To begin with, you should choose the variety, which supposedly suits your level of fitness and eagerness more – you should not feel bored, but neither test your limits, either. As a vague orientation, you find some hints about the demands of the sub-group in the exemplaric itinerary further up. Be aware that this itinerary is an example only, and that pathless terrain is considerably more demanding than hiking on beaten tracks in other mountainous regions – if you do 6 km per hour in easy mountainous terrain on paths, this will go down most likely in Spitsbergen to 2-4 km per hour.

Later swapping between sub-groups is possible as long as no sub-group exceeds 8 participants and as long as the guides consider a participant as suitable (fitness, etc.) for the other sub-group.

Not taking part in any excursion of a certain day and staying on the boat instead, for instance for having a day's rest, is possible only if this leads neither to capacity shortages on that boat for the necessary transports and/or having to stay on shore in between without an armed guide.

Variety A includes hiking day excursions in partly demanding pathless mountainous terrain with partly up to 25 km distance and up to 1100 m differences in altitude, starting and ending at sea level. For this, up to 10 hours (including shorter breaks) may be needed per day, partly also with crampons. No real climbing and no use of further ice equipment. Accordingly, variety A appeals to fairly fit participants, but also here, the central aim is experience of Spitsbergen, not physical challenge as a purpose in itself. If you have participated in another trekking program of Spitsbergen Tours already without any difficulties, Variety A should not be a problem for you, either, especially as backpack weight is somewhat lower than on trekkings from camp to camp on other tours without accompanying transport boat.

Variety B takes place in similarly demanding pathless mountainous terrain for the day excursions, but distances are shorter with only occasionally up to 20 km, and less altitude differences of ascends/descends

In case of less than 8 participants in total, there will be only one guide and no differentiation in varieties/sub-groups, which means usually day excursions more on the level of variety B.

Photography and other special interests: Almost all our travellers do at least some photography and/or filming, and many do have also other special interests like birds, flora, geology, history, etc.. If you intend to focus on such special interests more intensively, and thereby spending more time on them, especially if this involves also more related equipment (like tripod, which has to be set up each time, etc.), the slower variety B is more suitable. Keep in mind, though, that also variety B is not a program designed especially for special interests where all participants share the same keen interest in one subject. To avoid problems, special interests of a participant should not demand too much patience from the rest of the group. If there are widely different interests, compromises will be needed,

focussing for instance on different aspects from excursion to excursion. A key factor can also be the personal routines: for the rest of the group, it makes quite a difference, how accessible for instance lenses are packed (accessible with or without taking off the rucksack), and how time-efficient a participant follows such special interests (for instance using breaks).

Still, this program is designed for a more general interest approach. For travellers who want to devote truly much time of excursions to a special interest, it may be advisable to join a program devoted explicitly to that interest or arrange a special departure. Spitsbergen Tours has experience with such special arrangements on request.

Tour guides and safety: The tour guides are in charge of guiding the activities on shore (including camps), as well as safety issues. Instructions by the tour guides are to be followed by the participants. All our tour guides do have Spitsbergen experience prior to being guide of a group, as well as training with the fire arms and other safety equipment used in the course of the tour. However, Spitsbergen being a vast wilderness with suitable routes changing quickly with the change of seasons, and in view of varying weather conditions and participants interests/fitness, excursion routes may vary considerably from tour to tour. It cannot be expected that the tour guide is familiar with all day excursion routes – general experience with the terrain and other natural conditions in Spitsbergen is therefore a more important qualification. On some of our tours, it may well happen, that the route you take has been – at least in parts – not been touched by anybody else for years.

All tour guides have been through a repeater course in first aid, a number of them has taken part in a special internal course in “First Aid Extreme”, designed especially for hiking in more remote cold regions, and we demand a repetition of first aid knowledge at least every second year. Exceeding this basic training of the guide, the tours are not accompanied by any staff with a more extensive medical background. Moreover, the medical equipment available on tour consists of a limited first aid set, only (comparable to what is compulsory in a car), as there are limits to what can be carried in a backpack, also in view of the other safety equipment (gun, signal pistol, ammunition) needed by the guide. For legal reasons (liability in case of allergic reactions), our guides do not hand out any medicine/drugs to participants – consult your doctor at home and bring along your own travel pharmacy based on his recommendations for your individual needs.

A satellite telephone is available on the boat for emergency use, as well as a PLB, and a VHF radio is taken along on some excursions for communication with the boat. However, even with these means, communication lines can be fragile, or the group can be partly out of reach. Even if communication is possible, external help cannot be guaranteed and can take time – under unfavourable conditions also more than a day. At least for some time, appearing problems have to be handled with the limited means available to the group and can quickly have at least consequences for the program. Under these conditions of a tour in remote arctic wilderness, a key aspect is to avoid problem situations by careful behaviour of all participants. Both “stunts” or wrong heroism can have undesirable consequences for the whole group.

See also polar bear issue.

General requirements and conditions: As on all our tours, we focus on wilderness hiking without real climbing – this means that the hands may be needed maximally for occasional stabilising. On glaciers, we do hike, but only in zones, which are technically less demanding and where little or no snow makes possible risks visible, so that with careful behaviour, no ropes are needed. Own crampons and boots suitable for crampons are to be brought along for tours with more activities on glaciers (see equipment list), because the ice sometimes can be slippery (after rain, later in season also after nightly frost). In spite of no real climbing, the terrain can be physically demanding, being mostly pathless and partly including steep slopes with partly loose scree, snow slopes, icy parts, wading of streams and rivers, hiking on scree and through muddy/swampy terrain, or on ridges. This requires an appropriate fitness, good balance and a firm step and sometimes good humor and mental endurance. Variety B means usually slower pace and shorter distances, but the terrain conditions are basically the same. All participants must be able to carry their own personal baggage during the day hikes, which is heavier than the average day pack elsewhere due to an extra pair of boots (rubber boots or hiking boots), spare clothes, etc.

No matter of the variety booked, this is a program designed for travellers who enjoy being actively out in nature for longer time – but the aim is in no case to challenge the personal limits or to set personal records as a purpose in itself. At the same time, you should be sufficiently fit so that you can enjoy the tour – and also the other participants. Book therefore the variety, which you most likely can manage without getting to your limits or become an obstacle for the rest of the group, but where you are not bored, neither.

Unexpected problems arising during the tour (accidents, illness, natural and technical problems), can lead to considerable changes of program, possibly requiring assistance and cooperation by the other group members to solve a problem on the spot where help from outside is not possible in good time or unreasonably expensive/difficult to organise.

Participation is limited to those who are physically and mentally sufficiently fit and who do not have any potential physical or mental problems ((heart, asthma, rheuma, outworn joints and ligaments, pregnancy further than 3rd week, depressions, epilepsia, etc.), which could turn out to be problematic out on tour. The program is not accompanied by persons with professional medical background and equipped only with a very basic first aid set. The guides or the boat crew will not hand out any drugs due to the risk of allergic reactions – consult your doctor in advance and bring along your own travel pharmacy. While the possibilities of professional help in case of medical problems during the

tour are limited, fast help from outside cannot be guaranteed, either, depending not least on uncertainties connected to the limited communication means, and also on natural conditions (weather restrictions for helicopter flights, etc). Under adverse circumstances, help from outside may take up to several days. Participants on these tours are aware of these conditions and accept that participation is at own risk regarding possible medical problems. Participants who depend on medications (diabetics, etc.), are requested to inform the tour operator and the guide about this in advance and to bring with them a triple supply of these medications and necessary other equipment, to have some backup in case of loss/damage, preferably kept apart to avoid total losses.

In case of an accident or illness with unclear consequences, a participant can be excluded from further participation in a suitable way, if his/her present or possible coming state bear the risk of becoming an impediment for the group (example: sprain of foot). The extra costs caused by such an exclusion (transport, etc.) are to be covered by this participant, if they are not covered by a suitable insurance of the participant.

Personal equipment has to meet the requirements of the equipment list. Differing individual solutions without prior consent by the tour operator can have negative consequences both for the participant and the group as a whole. Example: one participant not bringing suitable rubber boots, because the participant elsewhere waded rivers in sandals with success, can lead to problems with river crossings and spreading of group between different optimal wading routes, which is problematic both regarding polar bear safety and following waiting times.

We travel in remote wilderness and the tour will be inevitably influenced by changing weather, terrain conditions, forces of sea and ice and that possible unexpected technical problems have to be solved with the means available, as there is usually no reasonable way of getting replacement within short notice. Be aware of the fact that plans have to be adapted to accordingly to such. changing situations.

Responsibility for the success of the tour: As consequences of accidents and other problems are more severe in such remote places, avoiding them becomes a key issue. The responsibility of each participant exceeds therefore responsibility just for his or her own well-being, as accidents or other problems caused by one participant, usually will have consequences for all of the group. The arctic is no good place for testing own limits, trying stunts and taking chances – certainly not in a group arrangement, where also others are affected.

The individual attitude towards life in wilderness in general and the tour itself is a key factor. Core aspects are flexibility and accepting that in wilderness, adapting to the situation is important, carefulness and consideration, willingness to help and the willingness to integrate and take part actively in the daily chores, as well as respecting the authority of the guide. Moreover, there will be faster and slower participants in every group. Especially in a destination like Spitsbergen, where the group has to stay closely together for safety reasons, this requires compromises – the faster participants have to slow down, while the slower ones can be expected to avoid unnecessary delays (for instance by packing photo equipment quickly accessible, etc.). From 8 participants upwards, our regular longer arrangements include 2 guides, which allows also a division into two subgroups to adapt further to interests and fitness, but even then, compromises will be needed.

Every participant is expected to take a fair part in chores like setting up and taking down camps, fetching water, cooking, washing up, and so on. The guide will introduce the group into the practical aspects of these chores and will be involved, too, but is not the provider of full service for the participants.

Essential is also the willingness, even pleasure of living under simple, natural conditions, without many of the normal amenities of civilisation, for instance the lack of warm showers, basic cooking facilities, etc..

Special aspects of this program: Particularly for this tour, and especially when it is booked by a sufficient number of participants for offering two sub-groups, discipline is needed for following the schedule of each day, so that the boat can do its transport with the two sub-groups and without evitable waiting times for the group that is not due for transport at that moment.

According to Norwegian law, smoking is forbidden in public areas, wherever this affects other people – this includes the boat (inside in general and on deck depending on wind direction) and also the camps. Cigarette stubs are to be collected as special waste to be delivered to the garbage system in Longyearbyen.

Costs for medical treatment and rescue operations: Precondition for participating on this tour is individual insurance coverage of costs of possibly needed medical treatment and of possible rescue operations. The costs of rescue operations have to be covered to minimum NOK 40000 per person. Proof of insurance has to be shown to the tour operator after arrival in Spitsbergen. If you have such insurances, make sure that they include also Spitsbergen.

Equipment to be brought along: good quality backpack with at least 50-60 l volume, sturdy mountaineering boots suitable for crampons plus (important !) hiking rubber boots (“green wellies”), weather- and windproof outer layer of clothes (long anorak with good hood, weatherproof trousers), warm extra clothes to be worn underneath when needed (fleece, pullover), several pairs of thick hiking socks, several sets of light underwear plus 1 set of long underwear, T-shirts, spare shirt, pullover, gaiters, plastic dishes (cup, deep plate), hiking cutlery, hygienic articles, cloth, flannel/washcloth, personal first aid set including plaster against blisters, personal pharmacy, personal small repair set, toilet paper, sleeping bag (comfortable down to -10 C), waterproof bag for sleeping-bag, waterproof bag for spare clothes, some snacks for every day for out on excursion (no meal prepared at midday), passport (identity card not sufficient for return voyage), travel insurance (including coverage of search and rescue costs up to at least NOK 40000 in Spitsbergen/Svalbard, medical services insurance, liability, coverage of costs of cancellation and unexpectedly necessary early return), sufficient cash, sufficient photo/film material (both strong wideangle and tele lens can be useful), spare batteries/accumulators, small waterproof cushion to sit on, crampons.

Einzelne Tagestouren führen auch auf oder über Gletscher, wobei wir uns auf einfachere, spaltenarme Bereiche ohne Schnee beschränken, die relativ leicht begehbar sind. Zur Sicherheit können jedoch teilweise Leichtsteigeisen an steigeisenfesten Bergschuhen erforderlich sein.

Mit etwas Glück läßt sich ein solch spektakulärer und trotzdem sicherer Aussichtspunkt in eine Gletscherfront hinein finden.



Extra equipment tips:

Hiking rubber boots should go up to at least just under the knee and have a strong sole with good profile, no thick insulation (use additional socks, instead – easier to dry, if wet) – a light extension that can be pulled up to the hip where needed is useful (no extension made of thick materials (cannot be rolled down comfortably), no wading trousers, extension can be self-made, using for instance the cut-off legs of cheap waterproof rain trousers).

Packing sleeping bag, spare clothes and other sensitive equipment **waterproof** is highly recommendable for accidents (falling into water).

Crampons can be light – strap binding recommended – check fit at home in combination with the mountaineering boots to be used) and should have some protection against damaging other equipment. We have some spare crampons here, but we have also observed fit problems, so bringing own ones that fit, is recommendable. Crampons may be needed for safe big steps across small crevasses/streams, or if ice should be slippery, not for any more advanced climbing. An ice-axe in right length can be a nice extra.