

Svalbard in Spring

Sea Ice, Pristine Snow and Wildlife

Onboard Ultramarine & Ocean Explorer



Expedition Overview



Photos captured with a telephoto lens from a responsible distance, following regulatory/AECO guidelines.

See the Arctic Come Alive After Winter

Our 11 (or 12) day **Svalbard in Spring: Sea Ice, Pristine Snow and Wildlife** is a rare opportunity to visit the Norwegian High Arctic when Svalbard is bathed in 24 hours of daylight, yet the landscape remains in its snow-clad Arctic splendor. Mountains are still cloaked in snow, and sea ice, including fast ice, dominates the scene. You have the unique privilege of witnessing the Arctic “waking up.” Birds arrive, filling the silence with their calls. Meltwater trickles, ice cracks and pops, and the ground starts to thaw. Tiny shoots emerge through the melting snow—a quiet yet powerful rebirth unfolding.

- Spot iconic Arctic wildlife—walrus, reindeer, Arctic foxes, and the elusive polar bear
- Witness the snow-covered landscapes under the Midnight Sun
- Photograph sea ice and the wildlife it attracts
- Experience the Arctic as it “wakes up”
- Observe the arrival of migratory species
- Explore Svalbard on an ice-class polar vessel.

Day by Day Itinerary



Day 1

Arrive in Helsinki, Finland

Arrive in the Finnish capital and make your way to the group hotel located right at Helsinki airport—included in your Charter Flight & Hotel Package. You will have the rest of the day to explore the many museums, galleries and restaurants, relax at a Finnish sauna or wander the vibrant Design District. If you do plan to visit Helsinki city center, take advantage of the convenient 40-minute rail service from the airport.

Day 2

Fly to Longyearbyen, Svalbard, and Embark

After breakfast, the group will transfer to the Helsinki airport and board our private charter flight to Longyearbyen, part of your Charter Flight & Hotel Package. Our journey to the High Arctic now truly begins. You will see the coastal and birch forests of southern Scandinavia give way to taiga and tundra environments, the mountains of Norway and northern Sweden, and the convergence of the Norwegian and Barents seas. Approaching Svalbard, you may get your first views of a pure, snow-capped wilderness, complete with ridgelines, glaciers, and perhaps even sea ice in the distance. We land in Longyearbyen, Svalbard's largest settlement, and transfer to the harbor where we will embark on our ship.

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DAYS 3–9

Springtime in the Svalbard Wilderness

Days 3–10 on the 12-day itinerary

Spring in Svalbard is characterized by a beautiful combination of snow, ice and Midnight Sun. A fascinating contrast unfolds with the arrival of spring: majestic polar landscapes illuminated by continuous daylight. Sea ice is at or near its annual maximum, drawing us north.

If experiencing Arctic sea ice is on your bucket list, you have chosen the perfect time to visit. Your Expedition Team and Bridge Officers will consult the latest ice charts daily—sea ice is incredibly dynamic and can drift dozens of kilometers in a day.

Our route will depend on where sea ice offers the best opportunities for exploration and wildlife encounters. Sea ice is the primary hunting, resting, and travelling platform for iconic Arctic species—and spring offers the best chance to see it all.

As we navigate the ice edge—or even through it—spend time on deck with your binoculars at the ready. Somewhere in the maze of marooned icebergs and pressure ridges, wildlife may be present—perhaps even polar bears who are lured to the ice edge by the presence of seals—a primary food source. Watch for clues, shapes, and shadows that could signal something special. And while polar bears may be the main goal, you may also spot walruses, Arctic foxes, and ivory gulls—in addition to ringed and bearded seals.

On shore, spring landscapes remain blanketed in snow, with many bays still filled with ice—habitat crucial to Arctic wildlife for food and survival. It's the kind of scenery that embodies the word "pristine." On sunny days, snowcapped ridges against cobalt skies are electric in their beauty. On cloudy days, the Arctic's muted palette of whites, greys, and blues creates moody, powerful vistas. Photography tip: try switching your camera to black-and-white mode—textures become dramatic, and light behaves differently. Alongside drifting sea ice, you may see icebergs and bergy bits—fragments of glacial ice whose origins lie deep in mountain valleys.

Spring in the Arctic is also a time of awakening. As we travel, we'll witness this seasonal transformation firsthand. Some slopes, beaches, and valleys begin to melt faster than others, revealing bare ground untouched for months. Grasses and mosses emerge, seizing every opportunity to photosynthesize in the returning sunlight. Meltwater trickles grow into fast-flowing runoff, adding sound and motion to the awakening landscape. Yet spring remains cold. In fact, these areas may go through multiple freeze-thaw cycles, especially farther north and east. In Svalbard, this mesmerizing transition is vivid and inspiring—a reminder to all of us of the powerful rhythms of Arctic life.

Spring also welcomes migratory birds and whales. As the season unfolds, cliffsides will become busy with seabirds, such as little auks, guillemots and kittiwakes, returning to breed. Each day brings new arrivals. Nest-building, courting, and bird calls fill the air in a sensory-rich spectacle. When we encounter these colonies, take time to pause. Put down your camera. Simply observe the vibrant pulse of life and imagine the sheer abundance of food required to feed so many birds—and the chicks that will soon arrive.

Whales, too, may appear. While sightings can never be guaranteed, some large migrators—such as blue whales—begin arriving in coastal waters by late spring. Others, like belugas, live here year-round and may be spotted threading through sea ice. Each encounter, however brief, reminds us of the interconnectedness of Arctic ecosystems.

With seven full expedition days in Svalbard, we aim to explore a wide range of locations. The order of our journey will be shaped by sea ice conditions, which vary daily. Potential destinations include the spectacular fjord systems of Hornsund, Bellsund, Isfjorden, Krossfjorden, Smeerenburgfjorden, Raudfjorden, Woodfjorden, Sorgfjorden, and others. These fjords feature dramatic mountains rising directly from the sea, folding into endless layers. Glaciers spill from the highlands, many reaching the water's edge where they calve into the sea.

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Throughout Svalbard, we'll look for thriving seabird colonies and hope to make regular landings along the coasts and within fjords. Some outings may take place on exposed rocky terrain, but most will involve walking on snow. And if conditions are safe and suitable, we may even set foot on the sea ice itself—an unforgettable moment that truly feels like walking on water.

Day 10 Disembarkation in Longyearbyen and Charter Flight to Helsinki

The time to say goodbye has come. Your adventure ends as it began, in the frontier settlement of Longyearbyen. From here, we'll transfer you to the airport for your charter flight to Helsinki, and group hotel night. Both are included in your Charter Flight & Hotel Package.

Day 11 on the 12-day itinerary

Day 11 Depart Helsinki

After breakfast at your included hotel, make your way independently to the Helsinki airport for your onward flight home, or spend more time exploring the Finnish capital as prearranged.

Day 12 on the 12-day itinerary

Arrival & Departure Details



* Arrive at the hotel on Day 1 by 3pm or earlier. Day 1 includes a mandatory briefing.
✈ International flights are not included in the cost of the voyage.



Day 1

Arriving And Hotel Night In Helsinki

- Overnight in the Finnish capital
- Explore on your own if your flight arrives early in the day

You may arrive in Helsinki at any time during Day 1 of the itinerary. Your included accommodation will be at the airport hotel, so arrival transfers are not necessary.

Upon arrival at the hotel, you will receive a welcome letter outlining the departure information for the following day's flight. Please keep in mind that your hotel room may not be ready for check in until 3 p.m. A Quark Expeditions representative will be available in the lobby of the hotel later in the day to answer any questions.



Day 2

Charter Flight and Embarkation In Longyearbyen

- Fly to Longyearbyen, Svalbard
- Embark on your springtime voyage

After a restful night at your hotel, you will join your flight to Longyearbyen. Upon arrival in Longyearbyen, you will be transferred from the airport to a drop-off point and your luggage will be taken directly to the ship. Details of ship transfer times will be provided during your arrival transfer. Due to port logistics, it is possible that you may need to board the vessel by Zodiac, rather than from the pier.



Disembarkation Day

Disembarkation in Longyearbyen and Charter Flight To Helsinki

- Disembark the ship after breakfast
- Potentially explore Longyearbyen before flying to Helsinki

Your voyage is scheduled to end back in Longyearbyen where you will disembark after breakfast. The process takes about an hour and, due to port logistics, may involve one last Zodiac ride to the pier. If time allows, you can spend the day exploring Longyearbyen before being transferred to the airport for your charter flight to Helsinki. Upon arrival in Helsinki, you will be transferred to your included hotel for the night.

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Final Day

Departing from Helsinki

After breakfast at the hotel (which is included), make your way to the airport to catch your onward flight, or continue exploring locally.

Airport Transfers

Helsinki Airport Transfers

Included hotel accommodations are provided at the Helsinki airport; therefore, transfers are not required.

Luggage Restrictions

- Travel with one checked bag and one carry-on only.

This expedition includes charter flights. Your package includes one checked bag and one carry-on bag. Luggage weight restrictions on these flights are typically lower than those on international carriers. There is no option to pay for additional luggage. Specific weight limits will be confirmed in your final travel documents.



Photos captured with a telephoto lens from a responsible distance, following regulatory/AECO guidelines.



Book Your Next Adventure

Contact your travel professional
or a Quark Expeditions Polar
Travel Advisor.

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