



Practical information for Spitsbergen voyages

Arrival / departure / hotel check-in and check-out

When you arrive at Longyear Airport at the departure described in the program, you and the other participants will be met by one of our guides.

Look for the sign "Spitsbergen Travel/ Hurtigruten", as well at the name of the voyage and the ship.

If you arrive or depart other than our scheduled flights, you have to organise your own transport to/ from the airport. The airport bus charges NOK 50 per person, and will leave the airport after all luggages have been claimed.

By arrival and departure with other flights than described in our regular program, we recommend using the airport bus to the hotel; NOK 50 per person (leaves the airport after all luggages has been delivered).

For departure the airport bus leaves from hotel 1 ¾ hour before flight departure (please check correct time in the hotel reception). Longyearbyen also have several taxis. From Airport to/ from hotel the price is approximately NOK 150.

Identification

All passengers must bring with them valid passport and expiry date or EU ID card when embarking the ship.

Weather conditions at Svalbard June-August/September

- Average temperature 5°C
- Sea temperature around 2-4°C
- Daylight 24 hours per day
- Cold wind is common
- Even though there is very little rain, the tundra is often damp and boggy due to the melting snow
- Early in this period there are still snow-covered areas in Northern Spitsbergen

Shopping / payment

Svalbard is a tax-free area which means that many commodities are cheaper here than on the Norwegian mainland. Longyearbyen has a variety of shops that sell everything from perfumes to outdoor- and sports equipment, gifts and souvenirs. Norwegian Kroner (NOK) is used all over Svalbard, also in the Russian settlement Barentsburg. Credit cards are accepted in Longyearbyen as well as on board our ship MS Fram and MS Nordstjernen (Visa or MasterCard) there is also a cash dispenser in the centre of Longyearbyen. In Barentsburg they only accept cash in Norwegian Kroner (NOK), US dollar or Euro. We do also recommend our guests to bring some NOK in cash.

Custom regulations

At 'Nordpolet' in 'Svalbardbutikken' (the local grocery store), you can purchase tax-free alcohol by showing your airline ticket or boarding pass.

Alcoholic beverages:

- Spirits/liquor from 22 % to 60 % alcohol
- Wine/fortified wine from 4.7 % to 22 % alcohol
- Beer/premixed drinks from 2.5 % to 4.7 % alcohol

Total purchase quota (note – this quota is more than you can take to the mainland tax-free):

- 2 litres of spirits/ liquor
- 1 litre fortified wine

- 24 boxes/ bottles of beer

Table wine can be bought without showing flight tickets.

Within a value of NOK 6.000, you may bring alcoholic beverages duty free to the mainland. You may bring extra alcoholic beverages for customs clearance.

Total travel quota (to Norway), three optional compositions:

1. 1 litre spirits/liquor + 1.5 litres wine/fortified wine + 2 litres beer
2. 3 litres wine/fortified wine + 2 litres beer
3. 5 litres beer

To purchase alcoholic beverages with less than 22% alcohol you must be at least 18 years old.

To purchase alcoholic beverages with more than 22% alcohol you must be at least 20 years old.

Customs clearance to/from Longyearbyen

To Longyearbyen:

If your flight is from outside Norway, and you have stopover at Norwegian airport, customs clearance and immigration will take place at your first stop in Norway. That means that passengers need to clear customs even if you are checked in through to Longyearbyen. Passengers need to go through passport control, collect luggage and check-in again for the next connecting flight.

From Longyearbyen:

If your departure flight from Longyearbyen is via Tromsø or Oslo, customs clearance and immigration will take place at your first stop in mainland Norway. This means that passengers need to go through passport control, collect luggage and check-in again for the next flight. This applies even if your luggage has been labelled to your final destination. Passengers who have flights to other countries on the same day, may not need to collect luggage, but must go through passport control. Check with the airport personnel when you check in your luggage.

Shoes

On Svalbard, it is a tradition to take off your shoes when entering private houses, hotels and certain shops and public offices. On board the ship as well as in the hotel we advise passengers to have a pair of shoes to use inside. It is important that the shoes have good foothold (no slippy sole).

Polar bear and safety

The Polar bear is probably the foremost symbol of Svalbard's wildlife and it is an exhilarating experience to watch them in their natural habitat. The polar bear does not usually attack humans but it can be lethal. On all of Spitsbergen Travel's trips and activities safety is maintained by experienced guides carrying weapons and warning shots. The authorities on Svalbard together with a joint travel industry advise travellers to take part in organised activities so as to protect both the visitors and the polar bear.

If you are going outside Longyearbyen, it is recommended that you bring a weapon because of the polar bear danger. On organized trips, the guide will always be responsible for the safety and he will bring a weapon and equipment.

Mobile phone

Mobile phones (GSM) can be used in Longyearbyen and Barentsburg only. There is no coverage for mobile phones during the voyage at sea. Spitsbergen Travel has contact with MS Fram and MS Nordstjernen with satellite telephones during the cruise.

If your family back home need to get in touch with you regarding urgent matters, please give them the telephone numbers to Spitsbergen Travel: tel. +47 79 02 61 00, Spitsbergen Hotel: tel. +47 79 62 00, or Radisson Blu Polar Hotel Spitsbergen: tel. +47 79 02 62 34 50. Via these numbers they can deliver urgent messages that will be forwarded to you.

Reading about Svalbard

If you want to read about Svalbard before you start your journey, we can recommend

"Birds and mammals of Svalbard"	Kovacs, K.M. & Lydersen, C. (Eds.), 2006
"The Place Names of Svalbard"	Norwegian Polar Institute, 1991
"No mans land"	Conway, Martin, 1995
"Svalbard - Arctic Land"	Hermansen, Pål, 2003
"Flowers of Svalbard"	Gjærevoll/Rønning, 1999
"Svalbard - Nature and History"	Hisdal, Vidar, 1998

Some of these books you will find in your local library or at a local bookstore. Svalbard Museum here in Longyearbyen have over 200 titles of books from the Arctic, so you are also welcome to give them a call and get a recommendation.

Internet: www.svalbardmuseum.no.
E-mail: post@svalbardmuseum.no
Phone: +47 79 02 64 90/ +47 79 02 64 92

Maps

Maps over Spitsbergen can be bought from Norwegian Polar Institute.

Internet: www.npolar.no (choose topographic maps).
E-mail: sales@npolar.no.
Phone: +47 79 02 26 00

AECO

We would like to refer to the web-pages of AECO (Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators), www.aeco.no. Here you will find directions for the cruisetraffic on Svalbard and how we shall act under the cruises managed by Spitsbergen Travel.

A journey to Svalbard

Svalbard has long been an attractive destination for tourists. The American John Munro Longyear sailed in Adventfjorden by cruise ship as early as 1901.

Climate

Despite its northerly location (74° to 81° north) Svalbard has a relatively mild climate. Due to the Gulf Stream Spitsbergen's west coast is the world's most northerly ice-free area. The average summer temperature is 6° C and the coldest winter month of March has an average temperature of minus 14° C. At low temperatures you need to be aware of the wild chill factor. There is little rain, but the moist air from the sea can cause a light drizzle and fog during the summer months.

Seasons

From April 19th till August 23rd Longyearbyen has midnight sun. From October 26th till February 16th it is dark, and from November 14th till November 29th it is what we call polar nights which means that it is still dark but the sun is lower than 6° below the horizon.

History

Since Willem Barentz' discovery of Svalbard in 1596, several nationalities have explored, hunted and managed industries in the northern hemisphere. The Svalbard treaty dated 1920, signed by 40 member countries, gives Norway subliminal governing rights of Svalbard.

Nature and wildlife

In order to preserve nature and wildlife on Svalbard, 65 % of the Archipelago is protected through national parks, nature reserves and bird sanctuaries. There are only three land mammals on Svalbard: Polar bear, Svalbard reindeer and the Arctic fox. In the sea however there are walrus, ring seals, bearded seals, Greenland seals, hooded seals, white-nose dolphins, narwhales, white whales and killer whales. There is a rich bird life on the island and more than 100 species have been registered. Surprisingly the flora is very diverse for a place this far north.

Tourist on Svalbard

”You are welcome to return to Svalbard when no-one have noticed that you have already been here”.

Svalbard's nature is very exposed especially due to the permafrost. All vegetation is protected and all traces of human activity up until 1945 is protected and regarded as cultural monuments. Svalbard's Environmental Act regulates travel on Svalbard, so if you are planning a trip outside administration area 10 you must inform the Governor on Svalbard and show proof of insurance. The tour operators must register all their activities and invoke a guarantee for possible rescue operations