

# Arctic Golden Autumn & Northern Lights

Reykjavik, Iceland, Europe to Tromso, Norway, Europe (ISN)

## Day 1 Arrive in Reykjavik

Having made your way to Reykjavik, you will be met by a representative of Aurora Expeditions and transferred to our group hotel. Upon arrival at your included hotel, please visit the Aurora Expeditions hospitality area where you can leave your luggage and enjoy refreshments if arriving prior to 4pm. Whilst here you can collect your luggage cabin tags speak with our ground operations team, who may have information to share with you about pre-embarkation or to provide you with information about where to dine, withdraw cash or purchase last minute items from a local pharmacy or supermarket. The remainder of your time is at leisure. All meals today are at your own expense. Accommodation: The Grand Hotel Reykjavik



## Day 2 Embarkation

Today we follow the path of one of Reykjavik's most popular seismic attractions – the Golden Circle. Stops along our route include Thingvellir National Park, accredited as the site of Iceland's first parliament. A shaky start to the new nation, it is also the point where the Eurasia and North American tectonic plates meet as an open fissure. Our next stop is Gullfoss waterfall. This impressive water feature tumbles 34 meters into the Hvítá River, offering a popular photographic opportunity. Next we explore the geothermal fields and geysirs for which Iceland is famous. The variety of hot springs and bubbling pools are mesmerising as the sheer capacity of water and steam erupting from the ground makes you ponder just how much power is beneath your feet. Late afternoon we return to Reykjavik to board the Sylvia Earle. After boarding, there's time to settle into your cabin

before our important safety briefings before we 'throw the lines' to begin our Greenland adventure. This evening, meet your expedition team and crew at the Welcome Dinner.

## **Day 3 Dynjandi - Westfjords**

Over the next two days, we explore the Westfjords region featuring outstanding landscapes with jaw-dropping views of dramatic fjords carved by ancient glaciers, sheer table mountains that plunge into the sea and pristine North Atlantic vegetation. Immerse yourself in the tranquillity as we cruise northward, taking in breathtaking landscapes and keeping a watchful eye for whales. Later, we'll embark on a Zodiac landing to witness the awe-inspiring power of Dynjandi waterfall.

## **Day 4 Vigur Island & Ísafjörður**

On Vigur Island, birdwatchers can try and tick a few species on their list, while others can enjoy walks and hikes of varying levels of difficulty, soaking in the stunning surrounds. The island's unique ecosystem is a haven for birdlife, making it a paradise for nature enthusiasts. Stroll along the coastline, keeping an eye out for puffins and other seabirds, or venture deeper into the island to discover hidden gems. With its rolling hills, picturesque landscapes, and fresh sea air, Vigur offers an unforgettable experience. The region also features attractive towns such as Ísafjörður, surrounded by sheer mountains and steeped in history, evident in its preserved wooden architecture. Delight in its lively cultural scene and abundant outdoor activities.

## **Day 5 Sea Crossing to Jan Mayen**

Enjoy the sea crossing to Jan Mayen Island accompanied by sea birds while searching for whales. Enjoy informative talks from our team of experts, get to know your fellow expeditioners, stay active in the gym or treat yourself to a massage in the wellness centre.

## **Day 6 Jan Mayen**

The approach to Jan Mayen is spectacular. The huge 2,277-metre (7,470 foot) Beerenberg volcano is the northernmost active volcano in the world, and it last erupted in 1985. The northern part of the island is a great place to look for whales and dolphins and contains impressive glaciers, some of which reach the sea. If the weather is favourable, we will try to land at Kvalrossbukta, a relatively sheltered bay on the island's west coast. This is one of the landings used to supply the weather station Olonkinbyen, situated on the eastern side of the island.

## **Day 7-8 At Sea and Sailing the Svalbard Coast**

The Norwegian Sea surrounding Jan Mayen offers excellent whale-watching opportunities (bottlenose, fin, and perhaps bowhead whales in the pack ice). Sail towards Svalbard, retracing the route of Dutch explorer Willem Barents who discovered Spitsbergen and the Barents Sea, named after him.

## **Day 9-12 Svalbard**

Svalbard offers Arctic wilderness at its best. Our experienced expedition team, who have made countless journeys to this area, will use their expertise to design our day-to-day itinerary, choosing the best options based on the prevailing weather, sea-ice conditions, and wildlife encounters. Phenomenal fjords, magnificent mountains ranges and a polar desert rich in fossils set the stage for heroic tales of early exploration. See walrus hauled-out on sea ice or on beaches. On land, stretch our legs on walks across tundra coming out in brightly-coloured wildflowers. We visit towering cliffs noisy with nesting guillemots and puffins, and scree slopes that hold Svalbard's largest little auk colonies. Most memorable are encounters with the majestic polar bear on pack ice. If you have chosen an optional activity such as kayaking, you'll have the option to enjoy the activity when conditions allow. For those who are enthusiastic to participate in a polar plunge, as soon as conditions are suitable, you'll hear the announcement to prepare for an exhilarating plunge, a memory you'll savour for years to come.

## **Day 13 Bear Island**

Bear Island, Svalbard's southernmost outpost, is a remote gem nestled halfway between Spitsbergen and Norway's North Cape. Despite its name, polar bears haven't been spotted here since 2004, but the island's history is deeply intertwined with the Arctic's most iconic predator, thanks to Dutch explorer Willem Barentsz's encounter in 1596. Strategically positioned at the confluence of the Norwegian and Barents Seas, Bear Island boasts a unique landscape. Its northern plains, dotted with freshwater lakes, contrast sharply with the dramatic cliffs that characterise the southern coast. This pristine environment, designated a Nature Reserve, is a haven for wildlife. The island's southern cliffs are a birdwatcher's paradise, hosting vast colonies of seabirds, including the dominant Black-legged Kittiwake, Little Auk, Common Guillemot, and Brünnich's Guillemot. Zodiac cruises offer an exhilarating opportunity to witness these magnificent creatures in their natural habitat, with the chance to spot rarer species like Atlantic Puffins, Northern Gannets, Glaucous Gulls, and Great Skuas.

## **Day 14 Sea Crossing to Norway**

Enjoy informative talks from our team of experts, get to know your fellow expeditioners or stay active in the gym. Remember to look to the skies at night and hope for sightings of the northern lights.

## **Day 15 North Cape, Norwegian Coast**

Over the next few days, we explore parts of Norway's remarkable 1,000-kilometre (600-mile) coastline. Starting in North Cape, in the very north of the country, we make our way south, stopping in the Lofoten Islands. The spectacular northern lights are a natural phenomenon that is most commonly seen in the sky above the Arctic Circle, between autumn and early spring. As we are near North Cape in northern Norway, keep a close watch in hope of witnessing this dazzling spectacle in the night sky. The North Cape is located at a latitude of 71° 10' 21" and is Europe's northernmost point. Personalise your expedition with our included 'Your Choice' experiences that best suits your interests and level of fitness. Option 1 - Behind the scenes of the seafood industry (Duration: 3 hours / Level of difficulty: Easy) During this tasteful and educational tour, you will learn all there is to know about the leading industry in Finnmark and more specifically, in North Cape municipality. Visit a local fish factory and observe their daily operations before tasting the local delicacies at one of the most scenic locations on the island. As one of the largest factories in

the municipality and exporter of king crab, your host does much more than simply processing fish. Your guide will show you around the factory and tell you about the production of stockfish, klipfish, fresh fish, king crab and less known products such as roe, liver, fish heads and much more. Undoubtedly, a tour like this requires a seafood tasting! After your visit to the factory in Nordvåg you will be taken to a lawo restaurant in Sarnes. As one of the most scenic areas on the island, this is the perfect location for a guided seafood tasting. You will have the opportunity to savour various delicacies and taste the national spirit of Scandinavia while your guide explains you exactly what is on your plate. Note: Make sure to wear sturdy (waterproof) footwear.

Option 2 - Trek to Kirkeporten (Duration: 3 hours / Level of difficulty: Moderate-Strenuous) Just a short hike away from the village of Skarsvåg, Kirkeporten boasts one of the most spectacular views on the island of Magerøya with the North Cape Horn peeking through a gated cliff. After a short drive to the village of Skarsvåg make your way up the hill, and if weather permits you will have a spectacular view to the North Cape Horn. This monolith pokes out of the side of the North Cape plateau and makes it very easy to orientate oneself. Continuing down into Mefjorden, the arch-shaped cliff will slowly reveal itself. Kirkeporten is the name of a geological wonder, a fissure several meters wide in an overhanging cliff shaped as a gate. Both Kirkeporten and the North Cape cliff were places of sacrifice for the indigenous Sami population. Note: It is recommended to dress in layered clothing and wear proper hiking boots/shoes. The hike is approximately 3 km (1.9 mi) on dirt and gravel path with boulders, uneven terrain and some consistent, but gradual slopes. Visibility of sights may be affected in adverse weather conditions.

Option 3 - A Panoramic Journey to the North Cape (Duration: 3 hours / Level of difficulty: Easy) Take in magnificent vistas along Europe's far northern shores and enjoy an independent visit at the splendid North Cape. This scenic drive takes you to one of Europe's most stunning natural sights. Located on the reaches of Magerøya Island where the Norwegian and Barents Seas meet, the cliffs of Nordkapp rise more than 305 metres (1,000 feet) from the sea waters and are topped by a large, flat plateau. Upon arrival at the North Cape Hall, you will have time to take in its spectacular vista of barren tundra. The North Cape Hall has shopping facilities, post office and a chapel, a bar, restaurants and a cinema with a 225-degree wide-screen. There will be an audio-visual presentation of Magerøya and the North Cape, showing the magnitude of the areas breathtaking scenery during the four seasons. Adjacent to the cinema there is a Hall of Fame, with models of important events that have taken place at the North Cape Plateau, and Cave of Lights with a terrace offering a nice view of the ocean further north. There will be ample time for photo opportunities, shopping, writing and posting cards, or simply finding yourself the perfect overlook to enjoy the breathtaking

views. Note: It is recommended to dress in layered clothing and wear comfortable walking shoes. Walking at North Cape Hall is optional and involves uneven terrain to some of the sites.

## **Day 16 Tromsø, Norwegian Coast**

Tucked above the Arctic Circle at latitude 69 °N, Tromsø is the main gateway to experiencing the northern lights in Norway. Today we embark on an enchanting journey into the celestial wonders of the Arctic sky at the Tromsø Science Centre. Join an immersive experience that combines the magic of a northern lights followed by an engaging presentation by an astronomer, providing you with insight into the captivating phenomena of the aurora borealis. Settle into the comfort of the planetarium's auditorium for a cinematic journey into the heart of the Arctic night. Join the award-winning photographer Ole Salomonsens on his journey through northern Norway, Finland and Sweden in pursuit of his passion – filming the wildest and most spectacular light show the nature has to offer. *Extreme Auroras* is a stunning new full-dome visual, featuring the aurora in science, history and myths. After the movie, enjoy a live presentation by the in-house astronomer, introducing them, a presentation of the few Norse constellations that are still known, and the Hunting Party story from the Sami mythology. This talk looks at the sky from a northern angle and will add new knowledge to old. At the end you will have time to explore the Science Centre's interactive displays and exhibits. Engage with hands-on activities that further enhance your understanding of the natural forces at play, making this experience both entertaining and educational.

## **Day 17 Disembark in Tromsø**

Disembark in the early morning at approximately 8.00 am. Farewell your Expedition Team and fellow passengers as we all continue our onward journeys. Transfer to Tromsø airport.