



Science & Education Report

MS Spitsbergen

28 February – 7 March

2026

Ultimate Norway –
Arctic Expedition
under the Northern
Lights





Science & Education Programme

Our Science and Education Team joined you on a journey to the remote communities and breathtaking landscapes of Arctic Norway.

Together, we explored the region's stunning natural beauty, remarkable wildlife, and vibrant culture. On board, we hosted lectures and activities, while onshore and from the water, we experienced the destination through landings, excursions, and immersive adventures.

History & Culture

During our expedition along the coast of Northern Norway, we explored a cultural history spanning from the Viking Age to the present. We learned why churches were often built on small islands along historic shipping routes and heard stories from fishing communities that revealed the seasonal rhythms and resilience shaping life in coastal settlements.

A visit to Trollfjord and a small boat cruise provided an up-close view of how geography, natural resources, and access to the sea influenced where and how people settled in the region.





Lofotfiske

In Lofoten, we explored the stunning landscapes and learned about the rich history of the region, including the famous winter cod fishery that takes place from January to April. During this period, thousands of fishermen participate in the traditional Lofoten fishery for the Skrei (cod), which comes to Lofoten to spawn.

The Vikings were the first to hang cod to dry, preserving it for food on their journeys. Today, the cod is still dried on racks, just as it was in Viking times. First practised over a thousand years ago, this fishery continues to thrive today, attracting fishermen from across Norway and remaining a cornerstone of coastal life.

Friluftsliv

During our seven-day voyage, we embraced the Norwegian concept of “**Friluftsliv**,” fully immersing ourselves in the natural world.

More than simply spending time outdoors, this philosophy encourages a deep, active connection with nature and a mindful awareness of our place within it. Throughout the journey, we lived this idea, experiencing firsthand the serenity, wonder, and inspiration that come from truly engaging with the environment around us.





Geology

As we sailed along Northern Norway's coast, we travelled across landscapes shaped by nearly 1.8 billion years of Earth's history.

Beneath the rugged peaks lies ancient crystalline bedrock, later uplifted during the Caledonian orogeny, when continental collision built vast mountain ranges some 400 million years ago.

Over time, erosion and repeated Ice Age glaciations carved deep fjords and sharp ridgelines, creating the dramatic scenery unfolding around us from the deck.

Aurorasaurus

We contributed to aurora science by providing boots-on-the-ground observations of auroras during geomagnetic storms and substorms.

This information will assist Aurorasaurus scientists in collecting data from northern Norway, a region with very few residents. If you would like to contribute your own observations, it's not too late!

Visit [Aurorasaurus](#) to learn more about the project and submit your photos!





iNaturalist

Throughout our expedition, we documented the flora and fauna of the Scottish Isles and uploaded all our findings to the iNaturalist biodiversity platform.

During our voyage, we recorded 93 observations across 57 different species. This collective effort contributes to a broader understanding of species distribution and supports researchers in their ongoing studies and conservation initiatives to protect these remarkable animals.

View our data submitted on our [iNaturalist project](#)

Under the Microscope

Often there is more to see than meets the eye... During our time in Norway, you took part and engaged in several Discovery Sessions and Explorer Labs in our Science Centre, where we took the time to dig a little deeper.





Plankton Samples

We explored the microscopic world of plankton, the tiny organisms that drift in our ocean and are the base of marine food webs.

Explorer Lab

Throughout the trip, you had the opportunity to explore different aspects of Arctic Norway under the microscope, during our self-guided Explorer Labs.

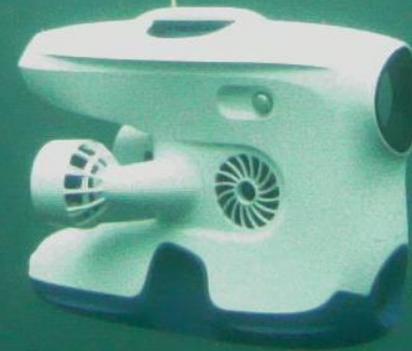
From Arctic geology to the cold to microscopic ecosystems found in moss, we discovered life in these harsh environments really means.



Underwater Drone

We used a Blueye Pioneer underwater drone to explore the underwater world of Norway, in Selfjorden, Narvik and Tranøya.

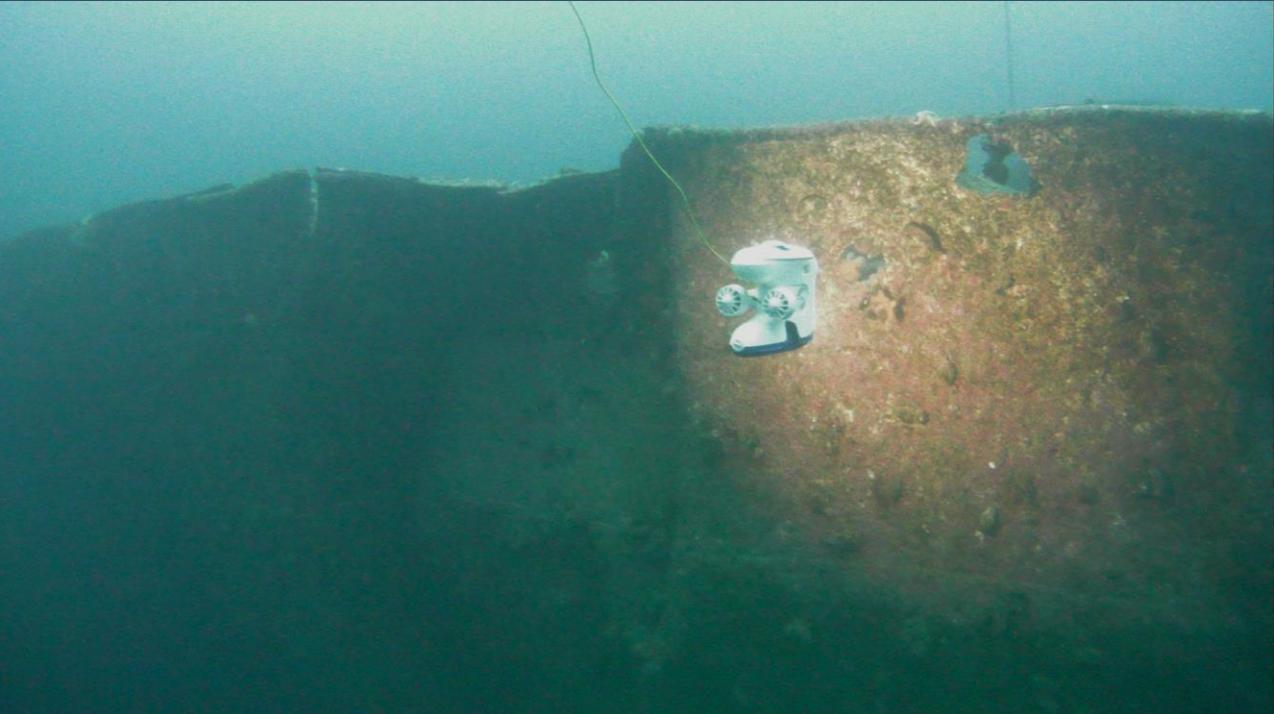
Find the highlights from our underwater drone footage [on YouTube](#)

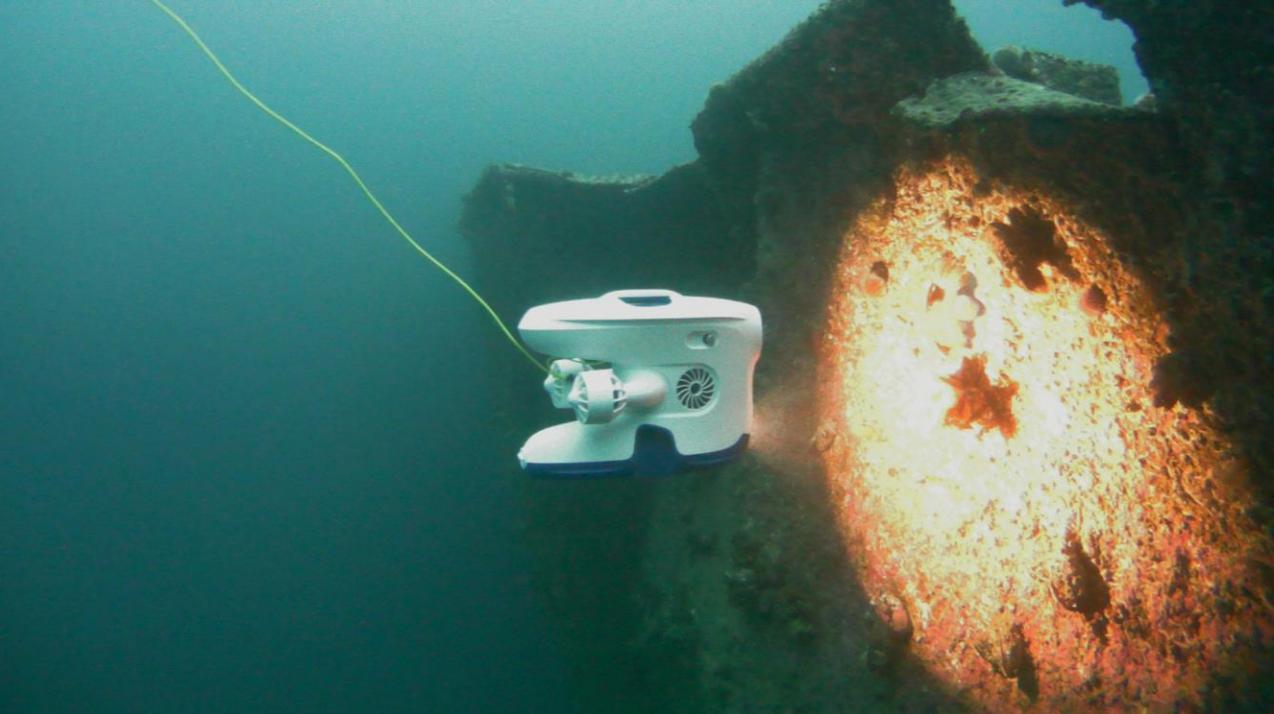




Science & History Boat

In Narvik, we went out on the water and deployed our underwater drones to explore the historic wrecks of the German iron ore transport vessels **MS Neuenfels** and **MS Martha Hendrik Fisser**, as well as the Swedish transport vessel **MS Stråssa**, all of which were sunk during the Battle of Narvik on 10–11 April 1940.





Wildlife List - Birds



Wildlife List – Seabirds

SCIENTIFIC NAME	ENGLISH	DEUTSCH	FRANÇAIS
<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	Great Cormorant	Kormoran	Grand Cormoran
<i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i>	European Shag	Krähenscharbe	Cormoran huppé
<i>Larus marinus</i>	Great Black-backed Gull	Mantelmöwe	Goéland marin
<i>Larus argentatus</i>	European Herring Gull	Silbermöwe	Goéland argenté
<i>Rissa tridactyla</i>	Black-legged Kittiwake	Dreizehenmöwe	Mouette tridactyle
<i>Cephus grylle</i>	Black Guillemot	Gryllteiste	Guillemot à miroir

Wildlife List – Shore birds

SCIENTIFIC NAME	ENGLISH	DEUTSCH	FRANÇAIS
<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Grey Heron	Graureiher	Héron cendré
<i>Cygnus cygnus</i>	Whooper Swan	Singschwan	Cigne chanteur
<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	Mallard	Stockente	Canard colvert
<i>Mergus serrator</i>	Red-breasted Merganser	Mittelsäger	Harle huppé
<i>Somateria mollissima</i>	Common Eider	Eiderente	Eider à duvet

Wildlife List – Land birds

SCIENTIFIC NAME	ENGLISH	DEUTSCH	FRANÇAIS
<i>Corvus corax</i>	Northern (Common) Raven	Kolkrabe	Grand Corbeau
<i>Corvus cornix</i>	Hooded Crow	Nebelkrähe	Corneille mantelée
<i>Pica pica</i>	Eurasian Magpie	Elster	Pie bavarde
<i>Turdus merula</i>	Eurasian Blackbird	Amsel	Merle noir
<i>Passer domesticus</i>	House Sparrow	Haussperling	Moineau domestique
<i>Parus major</i>	Great Tit	Kohlmeise	Mésange charbonnière
<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>	Eurasian Blue Tit	Blaumeise	Mésange bleue
<i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>	White-tailed Eagle	Seeadler	Pygargue à queue blanche
<i>Lagopus lagopus</i>	Willow Ptarmigan	Moorschneehuhn	Lagopède des saules



Norway's White-Tailed Eagles

The white-tailed eagle, one of Norway's iconic birds, is a sight we were excited to see.

Once considered endangered and locally extinct in some areas, conservation efforts have helped this species make a remarkable recovery in Norway.

Whether you spotted one on land, from the small boats, or during the Eagle Safari in Svolvær, we hope you caught a glimpse of this incredible master of the skies.

Wildlife List - Mammals



Wildlife List – Mammals



SCIENTIFIC NAME	ENGLISH	DEUTSCH	FRANÇAIS
<i>Phoca vitulina</i>	Common Seal (Harbour Seal)	Seehund	Phoque commun
<i>Alces alces</i>	Moose	Elch	Élan
<i>Lepus timidus</i>	Mountain Hare	Schneehase	Lièvre variable

What's that Track?

We do not always have to see the wildlife to know it has been around. Taking note of the tracks and signs left behind by fauna, can give us valuable insights into who has been roaming around the wilderness.

Taking the opportunity to slow down and absorb nature, reminds us that if we take the time, there is often more to see in that meets the eye.

We hope you enjoyed exploring the more subtle signs of nature with us, and embrace this wherever you may explore next on your travels.



A photograph of the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights) in shades of green and yellow, dancing over a dark mountain range and a body of water. The sky is filled with stars. The word "THAT" is written in large, semi-transparent green letters across the right side of the image.

**Connect with your
inner scientist**