



Circumnavigating Spitsbergen – In the Realm of the Polar Bear

MS Spitsbergen, 26 July – 4 August 2026



Legend

— HX Expedition

50 km

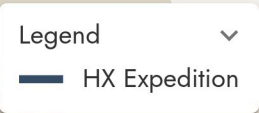
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Day 1 - Embarkation in Longyearbyen

The voyage began in Longyearbyen, the gateway to the High Arctic, where guests had the chance to explore the town and its surroundings before embarkation. Surrounded by rugged mountains and the cold waters of Isfjorden, the settlement offered an introduction to life in Svalbard and the landscapes ahead. In the afternoon, guests made their way to MS Spitsbergen, their expedition home for the journey around the archipelago. As they settled into their cabins and familiarised themselves with the ship, excitement grew throughout the

vessel. Before departure, guests took part in the mandatory safety drill. The Expedition Leader and Hotel Manager then welcomed guests on board and introduced the voyage ahead, their presentations offering practical information and a first glimpse of the experiences to come. As the ship prepared to leave Longyearbyen behind, the Expedition Team stood ready to discover the wonders of Svalbard.





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Day 2 - Ny-Ålesund

The morning was spent preparing for the adventures ahead while sailing through the waters of Kongsfjorden. The day began with several sessions on board, including the Introduction to the Science and Education Programme, where guests learned about opportunities to contribute to research and citizen science projects. Guests also attended the mandatory AECO briefing on travelling responsibly in the fragile Arctic environment, before all took part in a comprehensive safety drill. Afterwards, guests went ashore in Ny-

Ålesund, one of the world's northernmost settlements. Accompanied by the Expedition Team, they explored the community through guided walks, learning about its past as a mining town and its present role as an international research centre. Landmarks included the Amundsen mast, from where pioneering airship expeditions once departed in search of the North Pole. Back on board, the Captain's Welcome marked the official beginning of the voyage.



Day 3 - Smeerenburgreen (AM)

We awoke to a spectacular Arctic morning in the waters near Smeerenburgreen. Under excellent weather, we launched the expedition boats and set out to explore the glacier from sea level. Calm waters and clear visibility revealed the beauty of this remote corner of northwestern Spitsbergen. The highlight came early: our first polar bear of the voyage. Resting among the rocks at the end of a moraine, a large male lay sleeping, seemingly untroubled by our

presence. From a respectful distance, we watched this predator in its natural habitat. Smeerenburgreen provided a magnificent backdrop as we cruised on, its ice formations glowing in shades of blue and white. Birdlife was abundant, seabirds moving constantly between the cliffs, shoreline, and sea. Perfect weather, stunning scenery, and a first polar bear encounter made for a remarkable morning of Arctic exploration.



Day 3 - Ytre Norskøya (PM)

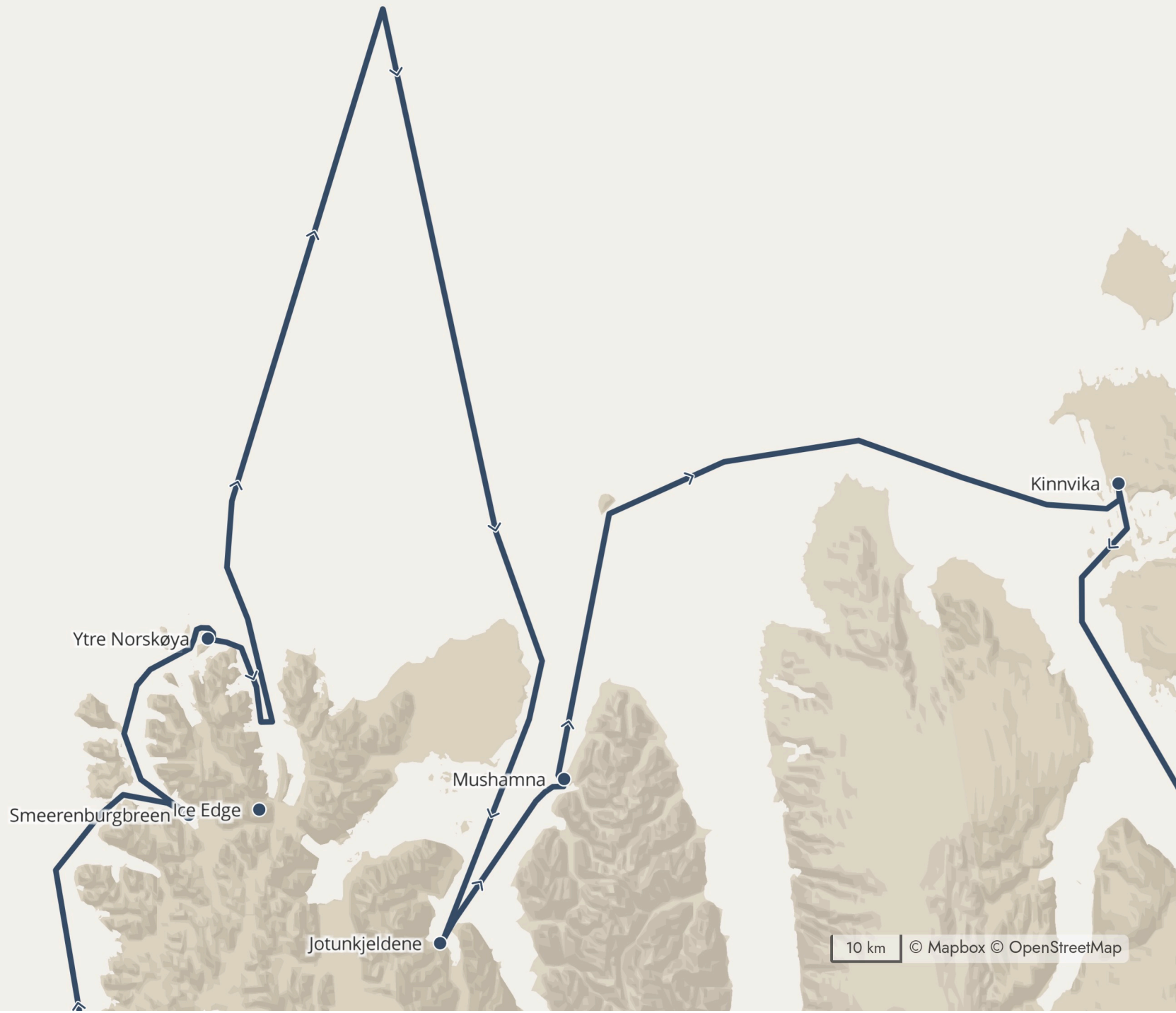
In the afternoon, we approached Smeerenburg with plans to go ashore and visit the walrus colony that regularly hauls out along its historic shores. As the ship made its way toward the landing site, the Arctic reminded us who sets the schedule: a polar bear was spotted moving through the area, making a landing impossible. Rather than disappointment, the sighting brought excitement throughout the ship. We observed the bear from a safe distance as it roamed across the

landscape, a reminder of the wild nature of Svalbard. With flexibility an essential part of expedition travel, a new plan was quickly made. We sailed farther north to Ytre Norskøya, where excellent weather and calm conditions awaited. Landing on its rocky shores, guests explored the coastline and climbed to a vantage point overlooking the historic graves that tell the story of the region's whaling past, the views across the surrounding islands magnificent.



Legend

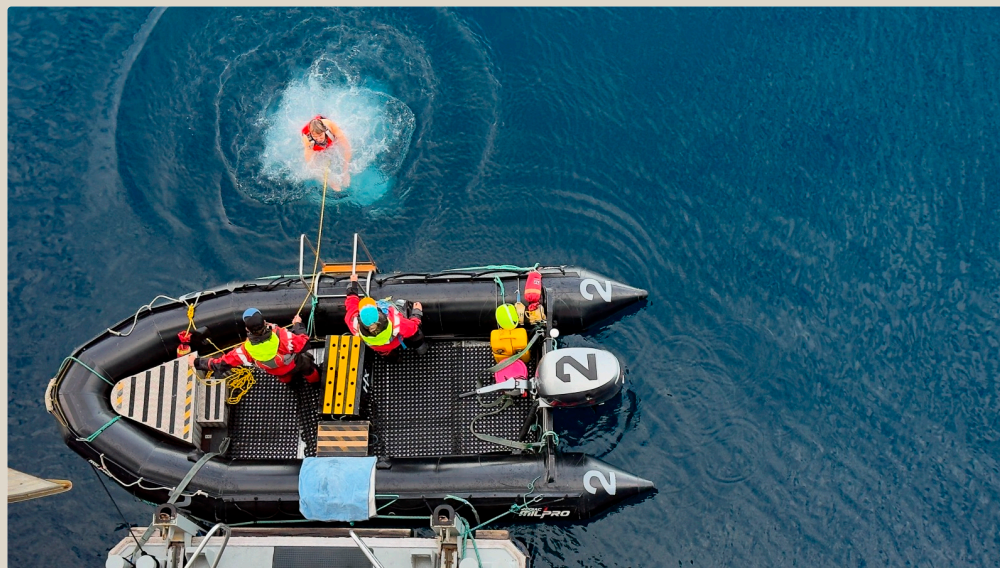
— HX Expedition



Day 4 - Ice Edge

We spent the day at the ice edge. As we sailed northward, dense fog surrounded the ship, creating a mysterious atmosphere and limiting our views of the frozen world. Just as we reached our destination, the fog began to lift, revealing drifting ice floes stretching across the horizon. A grey morning had transformed into a beautiful day for exploration. We launched the expedition boats and cruised among the ice, gliding between the floes to experience the scale of this

environment up close. Several seals rested on the ice, perfectly adapted to life in these northern waters. A surprise awaited when the 'bar boat' appeared among the boats, delivering hot chocolate to each one. A group of paddlers headed out by kayak, experiencing the ice edge from an even quieter perspective. After lunch, around 40 guests braved the icy Arctic waters for the polar plunge, cheered on from the decks above.





Legend



— HX Expedition

Jotunkjeldene

Mushamna

5 km

© Mapbox © OpenStreetMap

Day 5 - Jotunkjeldene (AM)

We awoke to a magnificent Arctic morning at Jotunkjeldene in Bockfjorden, greeted by clear skies and unusually warm temperatures for these high latitudes. The landscape was bathed in sunshine, offering views of the colourful mountains and rugged terrain that make this one of the most geologically unique places in Svalbard. We carried out a perimeter landing, allowing guests to explore at their own pace. Many made their way toward the hot springs that give Jotunkjeldene its name, discovering this contrast of geothermal activity

in the heart of the Arctic wilderness. Elevated viewpoints rewarded us with sweeping panoramas across Bockfjorden and the surrounding ranges. A group of kayakers paddled through the calm fjord beneath towering peaks, while others joined a Science Boat session, combining exploration with hands-on learning. With calm weather, warm sunshine, and a range of activities, it was a remarkable morning showcasing another side of Svalbard.



Day 5 - Mushamna (PM)

In the afternoon, we continued toward Mushamna, where a fresh breeze greeted us as we prepared for the landing. The wind added a touch of adventure, but once everyone had landed safely, we enjoyed this remarkable site in northern Spitsbergen. Mushamna is home to one of the largest trapping cabins in Svalbard, and it became the focal point of the visit. Standing before the cabin, it was easy to imagine the isolation of those who spent seasons here. The

surrounding area was rich in birdlife, and we observed the species that nest and feed along this coastline. A group of hikers ventured beyond the perimeter for wider views of the fjord and mountains. Later, we continued north to Moffen, famous for the walrus colony that hauls out along its shores. Respecting its protected status, we remained on board, observing the walrus on the beach through binoculars and the ship's camera.

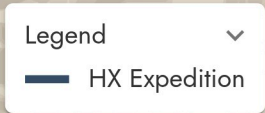


Day 6 - Kinnvika (AM)

We awoke with plans to visit Kinnvika, one of the most historic sites on Nordaustlandet, renowned for its scientific heritage and beautiful Arctic landscapes. As the Expedition Team headed ashore to prepare the landing site, anticipation grew among guests. The Arctic, however, had other ideas. During the reconnaissance, a polar bear was spotted near the landing area, making a landing impossible. As always, the welfare of guests and wildlife took priority, and plans were

promptly adjusted. Although we were unable to go ashore, the sighting served as a reminder that we are visitors in a landscape ruled by nature. Back on board, we embraced the flexibility that defines expedition travel and settled into a pleasant morning at sea. Guests attended presentations while others enjoyed the scenery on deck as we sailed south through the Hinlopen Strait, its dramatic coastlines and distant glaciers a constant backdrop toward Torellneset.





10 km © Mapbox © OpenStreetMap

Day 6 - Torellneset & Bråsvellbreen (PM)

We arrived at Torellneset in the afternoon under near-perfect Arctic conditions. Clear skies, calm seas, and an almost complete absence of wind created an ideal setting for one of eastern Svalbard's renowned wildlife sites. With the landscapes of the Hinlopen Strait surrounding us, we went ashore eager to explore. Most guests joined a perimeter landing, making their way across the broad raised beaches toward the walrus haul-out. Keeping a respectful distance, we observed these remarkable animals through binoculars and spotting

scopes, enjoying excellent views of their social behaviour as they rested along the shoreline. An extended hike led beyond the perimeter and into the stark beauty of the Arctic desert. We then continued south toward Bråsvellbreen, admiring from the ship this immense glacial wall stretching across the horizon, its waterfalls cascading from the ice under the evening light, a breathtaking conclusion to a day of wildlife and fine scenery.





Barents Island

Sundneset

Legend

— HX Expedition

5 km

© Mapbox © OpenStreetMap

Day 7 - Sundneset

We arrived at Sundneset, at the western entrance of Freemansundet, to a morning of fresh Arctic air and slightly windy conditions. Despite the breeze, operations proceeded smoothly and we went ashore to explore this remote corner of Edgeøya. With the Expedition Team, guests visited the nearby lagoon and the historic cabin, taking in the open landscapes and the vast wilderness of eastern Svalbard. As the morning progressed, nature presented an unexpected challenge: wind and strong currents made it necessary to relocate to a secondary

landing site. The change required an unplanned walk between the two areas, offering the chance to see more of the landscape than anticipated. Following the guidance of the Expedition Team, everyone made their way safely while enjoying the spectacular views, the impromptu hike a highlight. In the afternoon, we settled into a relaxing onboard programme as the ship turned westward toward the fjords of Hornsund.



Burgerbukta

Legend

— HX Expedition

2 km

© Mapbox © OpenStreetMap

Day 8 - Burgerbukta (AM)

We awoke to the dramatic scenery of Hornsund and made our way into Burgerbukta for a morning among some of southern Spitsbergen's most impressive glacial landscapes. Conditions were pleasant for the Arctic: the skies remained mostly overcast, but the weather was calm and visibility good. Boarding the expedition boats, we set out toward Mühlbacherbreen, one of the glaciers that flows into the bay. Approaching from the water gave an excellent perspective of its towering ice front, where intricate formations of

blue and white ice revealed the forces that have shaped this landscape over centuries. The silence of the fjord was occasionally broken by the sound of cracking ice, a reminder that these glaciers are constantly changing. Beyond the glacier, the scenery of Hornsund was spectacular, steep mountain slopes, rugged peaks, and glacial valleys surrounding us on all sides as we cruised quietly through one of Svalbard's most breathtaking fjord systems.

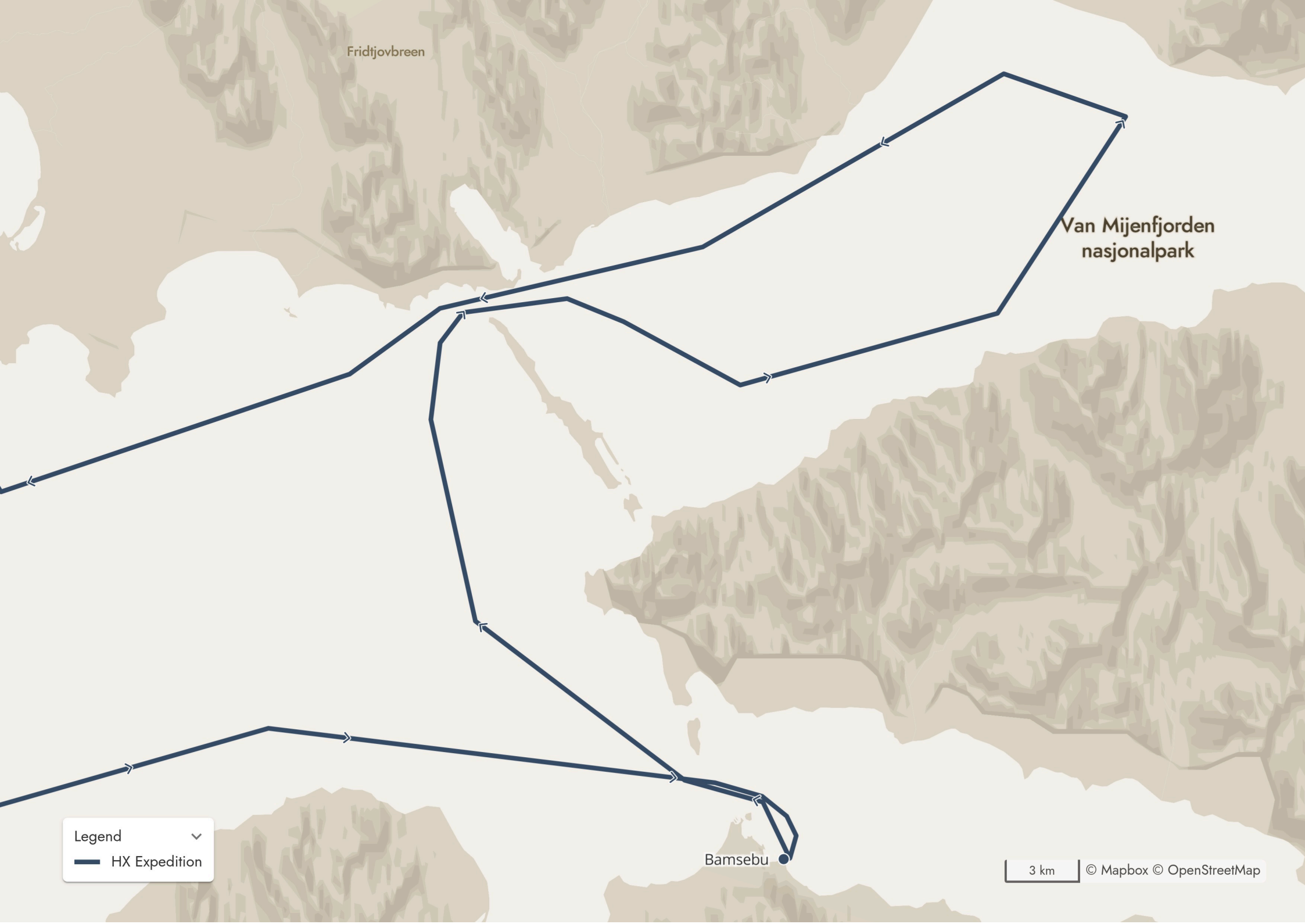


Day 8 - Gnålodden (PM)

In the afternoon, we sailed a short distance and arrived at the landing site of Gnålodden. The surrounding mountains stood out clearly against the sky, their rugged slopes framing one of the most picturesque locations in southern Spitsbergen. Although the wind remained fresh, conditions allowed us to carry out the landing. Once ashore, guests explored within a designated perimeter, taking in the dramatic scenery and the rich birdlife of the towering cliffs of

Gnålberget. The movement and calls of the seabirds brought life to the landscape, while the views across the fjord reminded us why Hornsund is one of the highlights of Svalbard. A special part of the visit was the historic cabin of Wanny Woldstad, the legendary trapper who became one of the most famous women in Svalbard's history. Standing near her former home, we reflected on the determination and resilience required to live in such a remote environment.





Fridtjovbreen

Van Mijenfjorden
nasjonalpark

Bamsebu

Legend

HX Expedition

Day 9 - Bamsebu

We arrived in Bamsebu, deep within Van Keulenfjorden, for our final landing of the voyage. Under favourable conditions, we went ashore to explore this historic site, once linked to Arctic hunting and whaling. The weather invited us to take our time, surrounded by the broad fjord, distant mountains, and the quiet of this remote part of southern Spitsbergen. While many guests remained within the landing area to learn about the history of Bamsebu, a group of hikers set off beyond

the perimeter, their route offering expansive fjord views and a final immersion in the Arctic wilderness. For the bravest, the landing brought one last polar plunge. Back on board, our attention turned toward the conclusion of the expedition. As guests packed, we gathered for the Science Recap before the Captain's Farewell, a lively end-of-voyage quiz, and the photographer's slideshow of glaciers, wildlife encounters, and landscapes explored around the archipelago.





Day 10 - Disembarkation in Longyearbyen

MS Spitsbergen returned to Longyearbyen, where the voyage had begun on 26 July, bringing the circumnavigation to a close. Over nine days, the expedition had taken us from the research settlement of Ny-Ålesund to the ice edge north of the archipelago, through the Hinlopen Strait, past Nordaustlandet and Edgeøya, and into the fjords of Hornsund and Van Keulenfjorden. Sightings of polar bears at

Smeerenburgbreen, Smeerenburg, and Kinnvika, walruses at Moffen and Torellneset, the hot springs of Jotunkjeldene, and the trapping cabins of Mushamna, Gnålodden, and Bamsebu marked a journey shaped as much by the Arctic as by any plan. Guests disembarked in Longyearbyen with memories of the glaciers, wildlife, and landscapes of Svalbard.



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