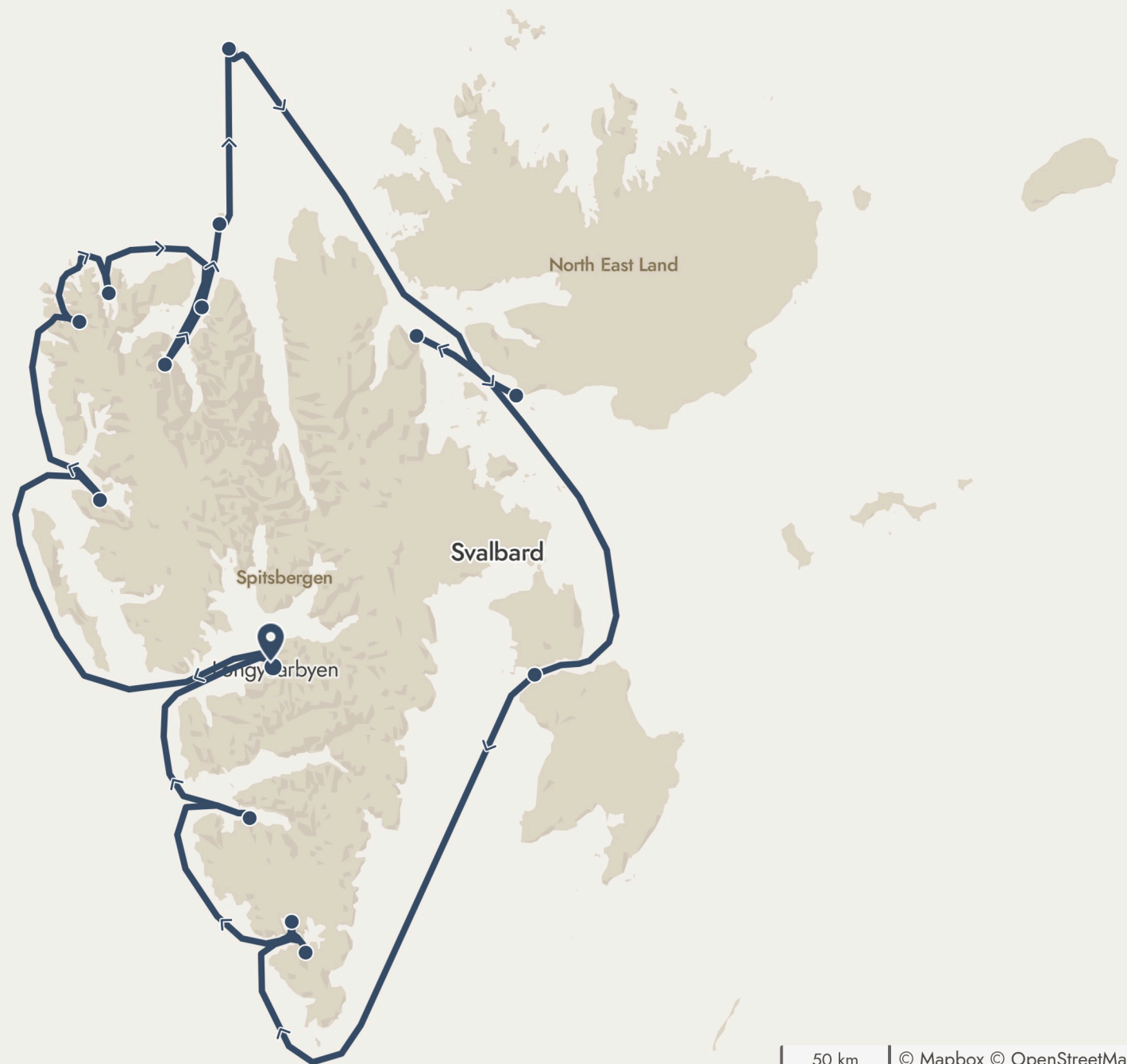




Circumnavigating Spitsbergen – In the Realm of the Polar Bear

MS Fram, 2 – 11 August 2026

inland
sea



Legend

— HX Expedition

50 km

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Day 1 — Longyearbyen

Guests boarded MS Fram at Longyearbyen, at 78° north the northernmost town of its size in the world — a coal settlement founded in 1906 that has grown from its mining beginnings into the gateway to the Arctic. The afternoon belonged to practicalities: expedition jackets and boots collected on Deck 4, the mandatory

safety drill, and the Expedition Leader's introduction to the voyage ahead. In the Explorer Lounge, a cocktail created for HX's 130th anniversary marked the occasion. By 5pm all were aboard, and as the ship slipped out of Adventfjorden the mountains of Spitsbergen opened ahead of us.



Day 2 – Ny-Ålesund

Alongside by 8am at Ny-Ålesund, the world's northernmost year-round settlement — a coal town that traded mining for science. We led walks past the wooden houses, the old locomotive, and the little shop, and out to the mooring mast from which Amundsen, Ellsworth, and Nobile lifted off in the airship Norge in 1926, bound for the

Pole. Phones stayed silent: the settlement sits within a radio-quiet zone. Back aboard, we introduced the science programme on MS Fram and delivered the mandatory AECO and polar bear safety briefing, before the Captain welcomed guests in the Explorer Lounge.



Day 3 — Smeerenburgreen (AM)

Morning found us in Smeerenburgfjorden, cruising by expedition boat along the face of Smeerenburgreen among brash ice and drifting bergs, with kayakers paddling among the floes close to the glacier wall and the science boat out alongside. We moved slowly past the ice front, the brash grinding and shifting at the waterline as pieces calved and settled around us, the sound of the glacier working

carried clear across the water. The fjord takes its name from Smeerenburg — 'Blubber Town' — the Dutch whaling station established on Amsterdamøya in 1619, whose blubber ovens still scar the beach four centuries on. The whalers are long gone, but the ovens and the name remain, a hard trace of the industry that first drew Europeans north to these cold and profitable waters.



Day 3 – Alicehamna (PM)

In the afternoon we landed at Alicehamna in Raudfjorden, beneath its rust-red slopes, where whalers' graves and a weathered hut recall three centuries of hunters and prospectors who worked this coast long before us. Some guests joined the longer hike above the bay, climbing the slopes for a view back over the fjord and the rust-coloured stone below. The bravest among them took the polar plunge

into Arctic water — a few bracing seconds in the cold before the warmth waiting back on board. The graves and the hut stood on the shore as the last signs of human presence, the rest of the bay given over to rock, tundra, and the open water of the fjord stretching west towards the open sea.



Day 4 — Jotunkjeldene

We began at Jotunkjeldene in Bockfjorden — the 'giants' springs' — where warm water rises through one of Svalbard's few volcanic landscapes and builds terraces of orange travertine beneath Sverrefjellet. The mineral-rich outflow has been laying down these terraces for centuries, layer upon layer, in a landscape that feels less Arctic than otherworldly. The science boat ran two departures around

the landing groups, sampling the warm water that feeds this unusual geology and the microbial life it sustains in the pools below. Guests walked among the terraces and the warm springs, the ground giving back heat in a place so often defined by ice, a rare reminder that the land beneath Svalbard is still alive and working.



Day 4 – Mushamna

Later we came ashore at Mushamna in Woodfjorden, a quiet bay of driftwood and tundra with its trapper's station standing above the shore, a relic of the hunting years when this coast was worked for fur. A hike waited for guests wanting height and distance, the view opening across the fjord as they climbed, the tundra spreading out below in greens and browns under the low sun. The trapper's hut

held the stillness of a place long abandoned, the bay itself given over to driftwood, reindeer grazing the slopes, and the slow life of the high Arctic shore. The evening carried us north past Moffen Island, close to 80°, where walrus haul out on the low gravel spit, crowding the narrow beach in their resting herd.



Moffen, Svalbard and Jan Mayen - Aug 5, 2026

Ice edge - Aug 6, 2026

Day 5 – Ice Edge

We spent the morning at the ice edge, taking to the zodiacs among the floes at the northern limit of open water. Moving slowly along the margin, we followed the shifting geometry of the pack and watched for tracks and for movement against the white. The ice edge is a boundary where light, nutrients and open water meet, drawing life

upward through the column. Back on board, some of us joined lectures on polar bear biology, the structure of feathers, and the history of Svalbard, before gathering on the outer decks to keep watching for wildlife.



Day 6 – Torellneset

We came ashore at Torellneset in the morning, on the gravel spit at the southern edge of Nordaustlandet, where walrus gathered on the shingle in a resting herd. Keeping our distance, we watched them shift and settle, tusks and bodies rearranging themselves in the slow, deliberate way of these animals, the herd breathing and dozing in the thin Arctic warmth. We walked the raised beaches among driftwood

carried here by Siberian rivers and Arctic currents over distances hard to imagine, each log a traveller from another continent washed up on this remote shore. The spit held little but shingle, walrus, and driftwood, and that was the whole of its appeal — a place where the land meets the sea and both are given over to the wildlife that belongs here.



Day 6 – Alkefjellet

Afterwards we cruised beneath the dolerite columns of Alkefjellet, where tens of thousands of Brünnich's guillemots nest on the ledges, the cliff face alive with birds coming and going in a constant stream of wings and calls. Kittiwakes shared the rock, glaucous gulls patrolled above, and Arctic foxes moved along the scree below, waiting for whatever fell from the colony above — eggs, chicks, the

careless or the unlucky. The columns themselves are volcanic, sheer walls of dark rock that rise straight from the sea, and the guillemots have claimed every ledge and crack they can hold. We drifted along the base in the expedition boats, looking up at a city of birds built into stone, the noise and the smell of it carried on the wind off the fjord.



Day 7 – Sundneset

The morning passed with guests on the outer decks watching for wildlife, while lectures on Arctic geopolitics and the birds of Svalbard, along with a session on species evolution in the Science Centre, filled the hours between. In the afternoon we approached Sundneset on Barentsøya, where a landing was planned. On the approach we counted eight polar bears along the shore — among

them two females with cubs, one accompanied by two and the other by one, and a further bear resting close to our intended landing site. The landing was set aside, and we remained on deck, watching the bears from the ship as they moved along the shore in the low Arctic light, undisturbed by our presence and going about their own business.



Day 8 – Samarinbreen (AM)

Our morning took us deep into Hornsund, where expedition boats carried us towards the front of Samarinbreen. We drifted among brash ice and growlers, listening to the glacier crack and settle, while seabirds fed along the meltwater lines where fresh water met the fjord. Some guests set out by kayak, paddling between the ice; others joined the science boat to sample the water column, drawing up

water from depth to read the fjord's story in its chemistry. The glacier face rose blue and white above us, and the ice around the boats was the colour of something very old and very cold, the whole scene holding a stillness that the occasional crack and splash broke without breaking.



Day 8 — Burgerbukta (PM)

In the afternoon we crossed to Burgerbukta and stepped ashore beneath Paierlbreen and Mühlbacherbreen, walking over moraine and tundra at the head of the bay. The ground here is the debris of glaciers that have retreated and advanced over millennia, and it carries the rocks and the bones of that history underfoot. Among the loose rock we found an ammonite, its coil pressed flat into the stone

— a relic of the ancient sea that once covered this land, long before any ice or any footfall. We walked the tundra and the moraine in the low light, reading the land through what it held, and returned to the ship with Hornsund closing behind us, the mountains still holding the light.



Day 9 — Bamsebu

Our final landing brought us to Bamsebu, on the shore of Ingebrigtsenbukta in Van Keulenfjorden. Along the beach lay hundreds of beluga bones, bleached and half-sunk into the gravel — a stark record of the hunting carried out here from 1930. The small hut still stood behind them, weathered but upright, the last structure holding the memory of the trappers who worked this coast in those

years. Some guests walked the shoreline slowly, reading the place through what it had left behind; others set out on the longer route towards Fleur de Lyshamna, crossing tundra and moraine above the bay. Reindeer grazed on the slopes as we passed. Back on board we turned north, the archipelago drawing away astern, the voyage nearing its end.





Day 10 — Longyearbyen

After 10 days among the fjords, glaciers, and tundra of Svalbard, the voyage came to a close in Longyearbyen, where it had begun. Guests stepped ashore carrying more than their luggage: ice stretching to the horizon, 13 polar bears crossing snow and shoreline, an ivory gull passing overhead, a blue whale surfacing 30 metres from the ship, and landings on beaches where history lingers in weathered timber

and bone. They exchanged farewells with the crew, the Expedition Team, and the fellow travellers who had shared it all — the mornings on deck, the landings on remote shores, the evenings that ran long in the Explorer Lounge — and left hoping their paths might cross the archipelago, and each other, again.



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