

GENERAL INFORMATION AND TRAVEL TIPS

Reservation and Deposit

To confirm your reservation, a \$300-per-person deposit is required when booking a Norwegian Coastal or European voyage and a deposit of \$600 per person is required when booking any Explorer voyage including Antarctica, Greenland and Spitsbergen. Deposit is required within 24 hours of booking. Booking information must include passenger's full name, nationality, date of birth, and gender. Final payment is due 60 days prior to departure. Checks, money orders, American Express, Visa, and MasterCard are accepted as forms of payment. Hurtigruten is a Norwegian company and payments are processed in Norway. As a consequence some credit card companies may charge a Foreign Exchange fee. Please include your invoice number and booking number with all correspondence and payments.

Air Transportation

Travel is in Economy Class via IATA carriers, according to the route of the published itinerary. All airfares are subject to change without notice. SAS, Finnair, Icelandair, or other IATA carriers are responsible only for the air travel portion of the program in accordance with the terms and conditions of the airline ticket.

Group Bookings

Group bookings are welcome. Special booking conditions apply. Please inquire with our reservations department for further details.

What are the ships like?

The MV Polar Star, built in 1969, is the first former icebreaker to be fully converted for expedition cruising, and therefore ranks highly among Arctic expedition cruise ships. The ship has a comfortable restaurant, large lounge, lecture room, a library, and a bar. There are no elevators on the ship.

MS Fram was built in Fincantieri, Italy in 2007 and is owned by Hurtigruten. MS Fram is specifically designed for expedition voyaging. She operates in Spitsbergen and Greenland in the summer and Antarctica in the winter. MS Fram has multiple large public areas to enjoy during sea crossings and in between land excursions. The ship has a beautiful dining room, a large observation lounge, lecture halls, a library and fitness room.

Both ships have a fleet of Zodiacs and Polarcirkel boats for excursions

Cabin Occupancy

A limited selection of triple cabins, as well as double cabins for single occupancy is available on all ships. Four bed cabins are available on MS Fram.

Smoking

Smoking is only permitted out on deck.

What To Pack

There is no dress code on board. To be adequately dressed on shore excursions, you should pack a pair of hiking boots (except for Antarctica as hiking boots are not allowed there), waterproof and windproof jacket and pants, a warm hat, a pair of windproof gloves, inner gloves (we recommend wool), two sets of long underwear, a warm woolen sweater, and warm socks. In addition, we suggest two or three changes of indoor clothing, a pair of regular shoes to wear on board ship, a warm jacket (down), and a pair of solid rubber boots.

A small backpack for shore excursions is recommended, as are high UV -factor sun block and a pair of good-quality sunglasses. There are limited goods in the gift store on board so you should bring whatever toiletries you might need during the voyage, as well as a supply of any medications you take. In the height of summer in Greenland, mosquitoes can be abundant, so remember to bring mosquito repellent. If you plan to use any electrical equipment, an adapter and converter are required. Should you suffer from seasickness, don't forget your remedies. And last but not least, binoculars and a camera are a must! (A limited supply of film is sold on board.)

Travel Insurance

We strongly encourage passengers to purchase travel insurance. We are pleased to offer Access America travel protection insurance.

What are Arctic flora and fauna like?

To protect and preserve the environment, around 60 percent of Svalbard has been designated national parks, nature reserves, or bird or plant sanctuaries. There are only three land mammals on Svalbard—Polar bears, Svalbard reindeer, and Arctic fox—but there are a number of sea mammals, including walruses, seals, White-nosed dolphins and various whales. More than 100 species of birds have been identified in the area, and the number of plants is far higher than might be expected so far north.

What should I know about Polar bears and safety?

It is quite something to see a Polar bear in its natural habitat. Polar bears normally do not attack humans, but they can be extremely dangerous. Our tour guides have rifles and also carry safety equipment, such as signal pistols, for the unlikely necessity of scaring away bears.

What will the climate be like?

The average temperature is around 41 degrees Fahrenheit, with daylight around the clock. There is normally very little rain, but fog and low clouds can occur, especially early in the season. Chilly winds are common, and early in the season there is snow in northern Spitsbergen.

Will I experience the Midnight Sun?

Yes, as long as the weather is clear, the Midnight Sun can be seen in Spitsbergen from late April to August.

How demanding is the tour?

Most of the landings (about two per day) are by Zodiac or Polarcirkel boats, and the terrain on shore may be fairly rugged, so you should be reasonably sure-footed. Other than the landings, the tour does not make any special physical demands on the participants.

Are there tour guides on board?

We consider it a priority to have well-qualified tour leaders and guides on board who coordinate every aspect of the tour and share their knowledge of Svalbard and Arctic conditions during shore excursions and on-board lectures.

Is there a doctor on board?

There is a doctor on board, as well as access to a rescue helicopter or ship in case of an emergency or serious illness.

What are the cabins like?

On board the MV Polar Star, all cabins are outside with window or porthole. Most double cabins have two lower berths. Two suites and four junior suites with queen-size berths are also available.

On board the MS Fram most cabins are double cabins, inside or outside. There are several grand suites, suites and mini-suites available as well as some 4 beds cabins, and 2 disability cabins.

Are the ships suitable for physically-challenged passengers?

MV Polar Star is not equipped for physically-challenged guests. MS Fram has two cabins for physically-challenged guests.

Are there laundry facilities on board?

The MV Polar Star has self service laundry facility. The MS Fram offers laundry service.

What is the tipping policy?

On our Spitsbergen programs, there is no set policy regarding tipping. However, onboard the MS Fram, if you decide you wish to tip, we recommend NOK 50 (\$9) per day but only at your discretion.

How about luggage handling?

There is no luggage handling on our Spitsbergen cruises.

How about transfers?

Bus transfers are included in Spitsbergen between the ship/hotel and airport. In Oslo, you'll get vouchers for the Express Train between the airport and downtown.

Is the on-board voltage 110 or 220?

The ships have an electrical supply of 220 volts. An adapter and converter are required.

Can you accommodate special dietary requirements?

We do our best to meet special dietary needs. Special meal requests should be made well before departure.

What documents are required?

A current passport is required for U.S. and Canadian citizens to enter Norway. A visa is not necessary.

What inoculations do I need?

Inoculations are not necessary for travelers to Spitsbergen.

What currency is accepted on board?

MV Polar Star accepts Visa, and MasterCard. The gift shop on board also accepts U.S. dollars and Norwegian kroner.

MS Fram accepts Visa and MasterCard. We will also accept USD, EURO, GBP and NOK in cash.

Are there any special savings?

AARP members receive a \$50 per person credit towards pre-purchased shore excursions for 2010 Explorer products (Antarctica, Greenland and Spitsbergen) and 12 day Norwegian Coastal Voyages. \$35 per person shore excursion credit for a 7-day Northbound or 6-day Southbound Norwegian Coastal Voyage.

Are there any helpful travel guides I can read before my trip?

Most travel guide books on Norway have a section regarding Spitsbergen. You'll also find a list of suggested reading material on our website.

Norwegian Polar Institute: Polar Bears in Svalbard- free, available from Five Stars of Scandinavia.

Bradt Travel Guide Spitsbergen- \$ 20.00, available from Five Stars of Scandinavia, info@5stars-scandinavia.com