

SUMMARY

Spring 2010: Arctic, the last degree

Every year, I am taking a lucky few to the North Pole. We walk what we call in our polar jargon "the last degree"; this is in fact the last degree before the pole -about a distance of 111 km. Many have dreamt, perhaps with trepidation, of one day reaching the North Pole, but few have ever been able to realise the desire to reach this fabled place.

However, thanks to the enormous experience of the Russians in Arctic logistics, it is now possible, for a small number of hardy souls to be able to experience a unique voyage to one of the furthest reaches of our planet, at a not too exorbitant cost.

The first staging point will be Longyearbyen in the heart of Svalbard, from where both Amundsen and André started for their expedition. A specially chartered plane will then transfer the party to a Russian base (Barneo) on the Arctic Ice, close to the 89th degree. From there, the group will set out on foot to cover the remaining 110km to the North Pole. Each participant will be provided with part of the equipment needed for the 8 to 9 days of the trek. Each sledge will approximately weigh 38kg.

We will set up our tents every night on the floating ice, in the midst of some of spectacular Arctic phenomena: midnight sun, compression ridges, and open water channels between perpetually moving ice floes. Air temperatures will fluctuate between -20°C and -30°C . This is a universe that I love profoundly, and I will guide you through it, so that you too can partake of the glories of this icy universe.

My hope is that you return home with the urge to protect these marvels by changing your way of life and that you share your experience with others and convince them to act now.

Itinerary

- Departure from Brussels or where ever
- **April 11th or 12th**: arrival at the “Mary-Ann Rikken” guesthouse at Longyearbyen (Spitzbergen, Svalblad).
- **April 13th**: Training and last check of the equipment in Longyearbyen
- **April 14th (Day 1)**: flight Longyearbyen – Barneo (drifting station) on a dedicated airplane Antonov 74.
- **April 14th to 22nd (Days 1 to 10)**: ski trek to the North Pole, with overnight on the ice. Flight back to Barneo by helicopter MI8.
- **April 22nd**: flight back to Longyearbyen.
- **April 24th**: Return flight to Oslo (in transit to your final destination).

Notes

A medical certificate will be required from all participants, attesting to the fact that they are physically fit enough to undertake the proposed journey. Evidence of travel insurance to cover medical risks should also be presented. The organizers cannot take any responsibility for any harm to participants arising from their lack of physical condition prior to undertaking the proposed expedition.

Every participant must have rescue travel insurance (like Europe-assistance or whatever). A copy of the contract has to be showed prior the departure of the expedition. Most of the travel insurance only covers your travel until Longyearbyen. The easiest is to check with your company if they can extend your insurance coverage to the North Pole for the period of the trip.

Despite the fact that we will guide this trip to the best of our ability, it is important to emphasize that this expedition cannot be compared with normal organized travel, and that special conditions apply. It is also important to make clear that accident and injuries can occur and that all parties join at their own risk, and participate in the full knowledge of these facts. All participants must sign a waiver stating that they fully understand this and that they participate on this trip at their own risk.

As Air travel from Oslo to Longyearbyen could be a bottleneck, you should book your ticket well in advance.