

Svalbard - Into the drift ice

May 24 – June 2 2027



Chalo Africa^{INC}



INTRODUCTION

This expedition is planned for the late winter/early summer, a time of brisk transition in Svalbard. By now, the midnight sun sets in the Arctic Circle, and 24 hours of light illuminate this vast, frigid landscape. As the sun warms the archipelago, the fjord ice begins to melt rapidly, and wildlife migrates to the drifting pack ice farther in the Arctic Ocean, away from the islands and settlements in Svalbard. The local guides estimate that 60% of the Polar Bear population on Svalbard move to the drift ice during summer in search of seals and other prey.

The main focus and timing of this expedition are to follow the wildlife to the drifting pack ice and spend as much time here as possible. Very few trips venture this far; even if they do, the time they spend on the pack

ice seldom exceeds a few hours or a night, usually at the edge of the pack ice. Using live ice charts, we will push either north or east into the drifting pack ice – the summer hunting ground of the Polar Bear. It is in these frosty conditions that we would like to encounter Polar Bears at close quarters, without any restrictions. This far out, we are mostly in International waters, which means we are not bound by the regulations applicable at Svalbard. Presently, you have to maintain a 500-metre distance from Polar Bears in Svalbard.

Polar Bears are curious and fearless! It's common for them to walk up to the ship and spend hours inspecting it. By now, the whales come into the high seas to feed in the summer months. Humpback, Minke, and Blue Whales are all possibilities and have

been seen on previous expeditions. We spent a few hours out in the zodiac following two Orcas in May 2024. Bowheads and Belugas live in these waters year-round. Belugas are the most commonly seen whale here, often observed in large pods. In the last two years, Bowheads have been seen fairly regularly by the guides in these waters, and we will certainly keep a lookout for them. Seals like Bearded, Harp and Ringed, the main prey of Polar Bears, prefer to be around the drift ice, and we should see them all resting on the ice floes. With some luck, we may even witness a Polar Bear hunt. The much rarer Greenland Seal is also a possibility here. The silence out in the Arctic high seas is deafening, broken occasionally by seabirds, the breath of a seal, or the distant blow of a Minke or Beluga.



INTRODUCTION

While the focus of this expedition is to spend as much time as possible in and around the drift ice, we will also probe the fjords around Svalbard on our way to the drift ice and return. Conditions permitting, we will sail to the northernmost reaches of the archipelago, potentially reaching the Seven Islands, to get to the walrus haul-outs. Hundreds, sometimes thousands of them, can be seen on beaches or ice floes. We will make shore landings at the best spots to photograph them at about 30 meters distance.

The seabirds by now are in full strength, and some of the cliffs around Svalbard teem with Brünnichs Guillemots, Puffins, Kittiwakes & Little Auks. It's an incredible experience to get close to these nesting colonies, buzzing with activity on zodiacs. Arctic foxes are always to be found around these bird cliffs, trying to sneak eggs or chicks. The lack of seals around Svalbard is also pushing Polar Bears to these cliffs, where they feed on eggs. We should see the Svalbard Reindeer out in the tundra.

We will arrive in Longyearbyen a day before we sail out. There is plenty of wildlife to see and photograph around here. Birds like Common and King Eiders, Long-tailed Duck, Barnacle & Pink-footed Geese, Svalbard Ptarmigan, Greater Scaup, Arctic Skuas, Arctic Terns, Purple Sandpipers, Dunlins, Snow Buntings, and Little Auks can all be photographed well; many of them have come to breed here in the summer. We should also have excellent opportunities to photograph Arctic Foxes and Svalbard Reindeer from the ground here.



WHAT TO EXPECT IN MAY

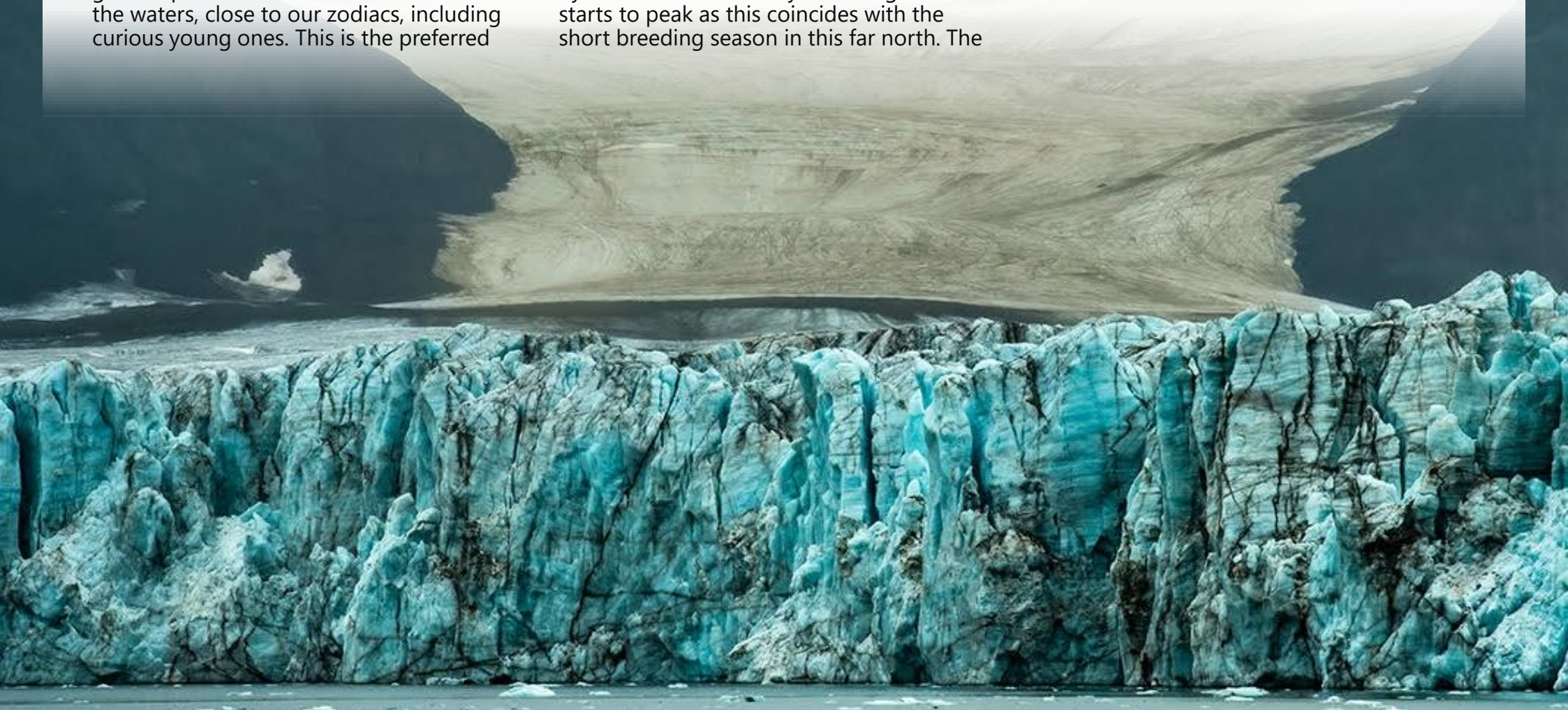
There will be 24 hours of daylight during our expedition; light conditions would be fantastic, particularly at night when the sun hangs low on the horizon for several hours.

Whilst Polar Bears would rank among our top targets, this expedition cruise is the best time to experience and photograph the full diversity of the Arctic. Many Walrus hauls should be accessible, and we will make landings to photograph these amazing giants up close. We should also see them on the waters, close to our zodiacs, including curious young ones. This is the preferred

time to see whales in Svalbard; with some luck, we may see species like the Belugas, Mink, Fin, Blue and even Bowhead Whales. Other interesting marine mammals include seals such as the Bearded Seal, often found lounging on floating ice, the Harbour Seal, and the more reclusive Ringed Seal. Around this time, Arctic foxes change their summer coats, and the endemic Svalbard Reindeer are commonly seen in small groups.

By this time, bird activity in the high Arctic starts to peak as this coincides with the short breeding season in this far north. The

cliffs would be dense with both adult and juvenile birds. Alkejellet, Svalbard's most famous bird cliff, has about 60000 pairs of Thick-billed Murre nesting, along with smaller Kittiwake colonies. While the total bird count on this trip will be small, we can hope to see gems like Ivory and Ross's Gull, Atlantic Puffins, Pink-footed Geese, Parasitic and Long-tailed Skuas, King Eiders and shore birds like Red-necked Phalarope, Ruddy Turnstone and Purple Sandpipers.



TRAVEL HOSTS AND GUIDES

Your hosts on this expedition are Sangeeta Sahaya and Vikram Singh, travel veterans with decades of experience. Sangeeta has travelled to various regions across the Arctic. She brings a passionate drive and optimism that inspires everyone around her. Vikram has made several trips to Spitsbergen, photographing the Arctic wildlife across different seasons. With an affinity for cold places, Vikram counts Svalbard among his top destinations for wildlife and landscape photography. In addition, we will handpick two of our favourite Polar guides.



Day 1/24 May 2027/Mon:

Arrive in Longyearbyen, the world's northernmost town with just over 2,000 people. A short drive will get us to our hotel. After checking in and having lunch, we will walk down to the harbour and along the road to the dog kennel. We will have opportunities to see bird species such as Snow Buntings, Barnacle Geese, Common and King Eiders, Ringed Plovers, Dunlins, Purple Sandpipers, Glaucous Gulls, and the aggressive Arctic Terns on their breeding grounds. Overnight at Radisson Blu Polar Hotel or similar hotel. (Meals on your own)

Day 2/25 May 2027/Tue:

After breakfast, we will drive down to the Baren Valley accompanied by a local guide.

This is an excellent place to photograph Arctic Foxes and Svalbard Reindeer. Some of our avian targets would be the Svalbard Ptarmigan, Little Auks, King Eiders and Red-throated Loon. We will return to town for lunch at one of the restaurants, and later we will embark on our ship, MS Kvitningen, at 4 PM. Departure from Longyearbyen through Isfjorden, sailing north or south, depending on the drift ice situation. (B, D) Lunch on your own.

Day 3 to 9/26 May to 1 June 2027/Wed to Tue:

We set course for the areas where we know we will encounter drift ice, as the focus of this expedition is to maximise our time around it in search of Polar Bears and other wildlife on

pack ice. While we will maximise our time around the drift ice, we will also visit some of the more interesting fjords and islands in Svalbard, where we will systematically search for wildlife such as walruses, whales and seabird colonies. While the melt would have started, the fjords will still be frozen in this time of the year.

(B, L, D)

Day 10/2 June 2027/Wed:

We disembark the ship at Longyearbyen in the morning after breakfast. Drive to the airport, fly to Oslo, and continue to the onward destination. (B)

End of our services



**Price:**

Euros 14000 per person on twin sharing

Inclusions:

Accommodation for 1 night at a hotel in Longyearbyen and
8 nights on board MS Kvitungen
Meals as indicated in the itinerary
Services of two accompanying Tour Leaders
All transfers at Longyearbyen
All zodiac activities on 2 boats with certified bear guides
All applicable taxes are included

Exclusions:

Flights to and from Longyearbyen
Expenses of personal nature such as wines, liquor etc.
Tips and gratuities
Travel and cancellation insurance

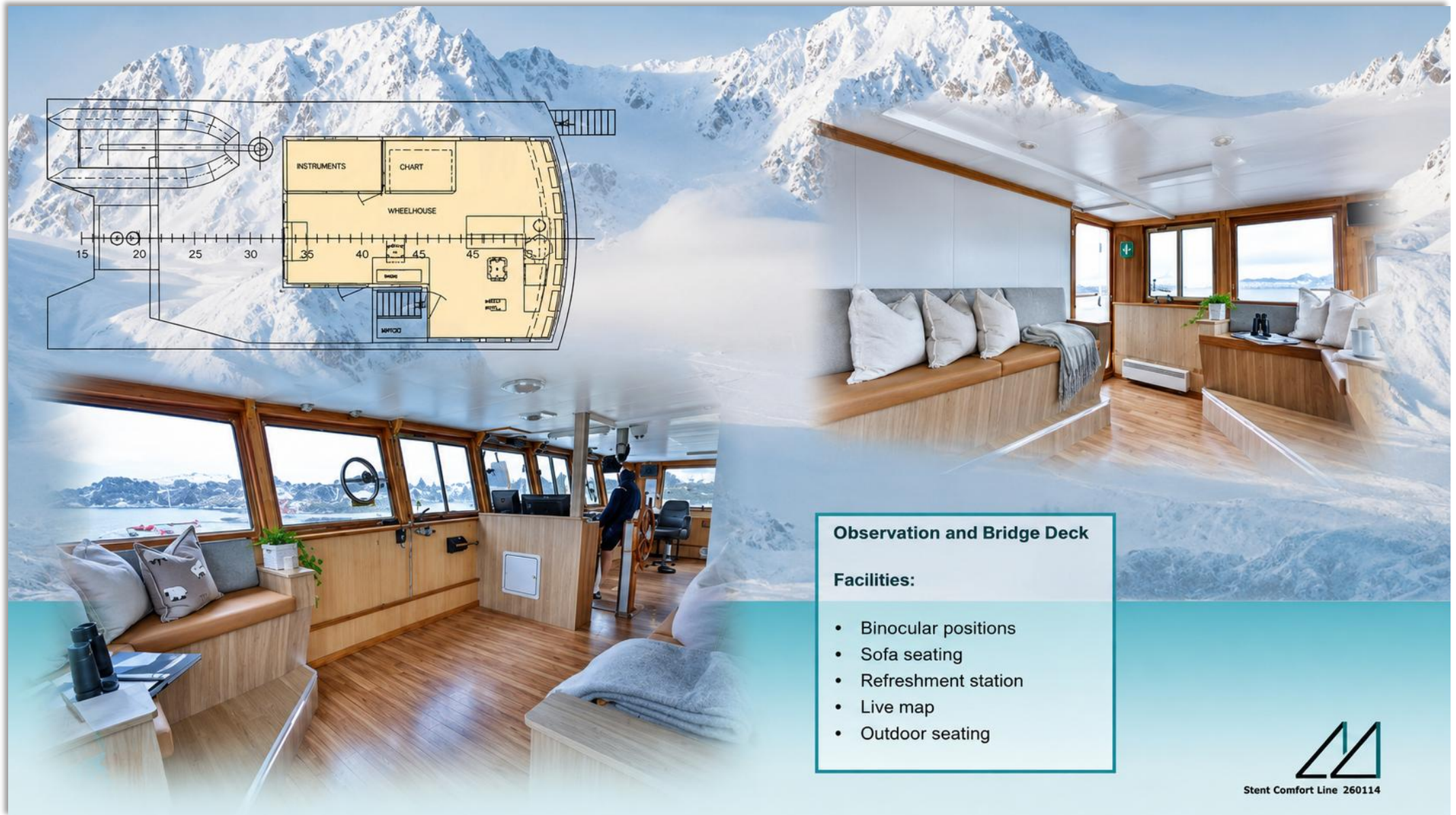
MS KVITUNGEN

We will exclusively charter M/S Kvitungen for this expedition, a small ship like no other in the Arctic. This Norwegian expedition ship was originally built for seal hunting purposes off the remote coast of eastern Greenland. With an engine capacity three times more than that of other ships in its category, it has the strongest possible ice class for a small vessel. Since the ship was built for working on dense pack ice, both rudder and propeller are reinforced and protected from moving ice, and the hull is constructed as a genuine ice-breaker. This allows us to push deep and spend extended time in the drift pack ice, where other big or small ships wouldn't dare.

The ship has been sailing around Svalbard on expeditions for two years now and has undergone several upgrades. Her modern interior offers first-class comfort, with 5 twin cabins and 2 singles, a dining room, and a lounge, accommodating 12 guests. The ship's viewing decks and bridge remain open to guests at all times. With two Zodiacs on board for cruises to get us close to the action or go for shore landings, there is no better way to experience the Arctic wilderness than this.

Since we have chartered the entire ship, we control every aspect of the itinerary. Our day-to-day schedule remains totally flexible, depending on weather conditions and the wildlife we encounter. If conditions at night are more suitable and the light is better, which is often the case, we will adapt accordingly. Being a small group, we will endeavour to make as many landings and zodiac outings as possible.





Observation and Bridge Deck

Facilities:

- Binocular positions
- Sofa seating
- Refreshment station
- Live map
- Outdoor seating



Stent Comfort Line 260114



Photographer or non-photographer?

Non-photographers are part of all our trips, as we focus on providing a great experience and the best wildlife viewing opportunities. So you will have a great time either way.

Expedition Payment Terms

A 30% non-refundable deposit confirms the reservation.

An additional 40% deposit is due before 15th November 2026

Remaining 30% due before 15th February 2027

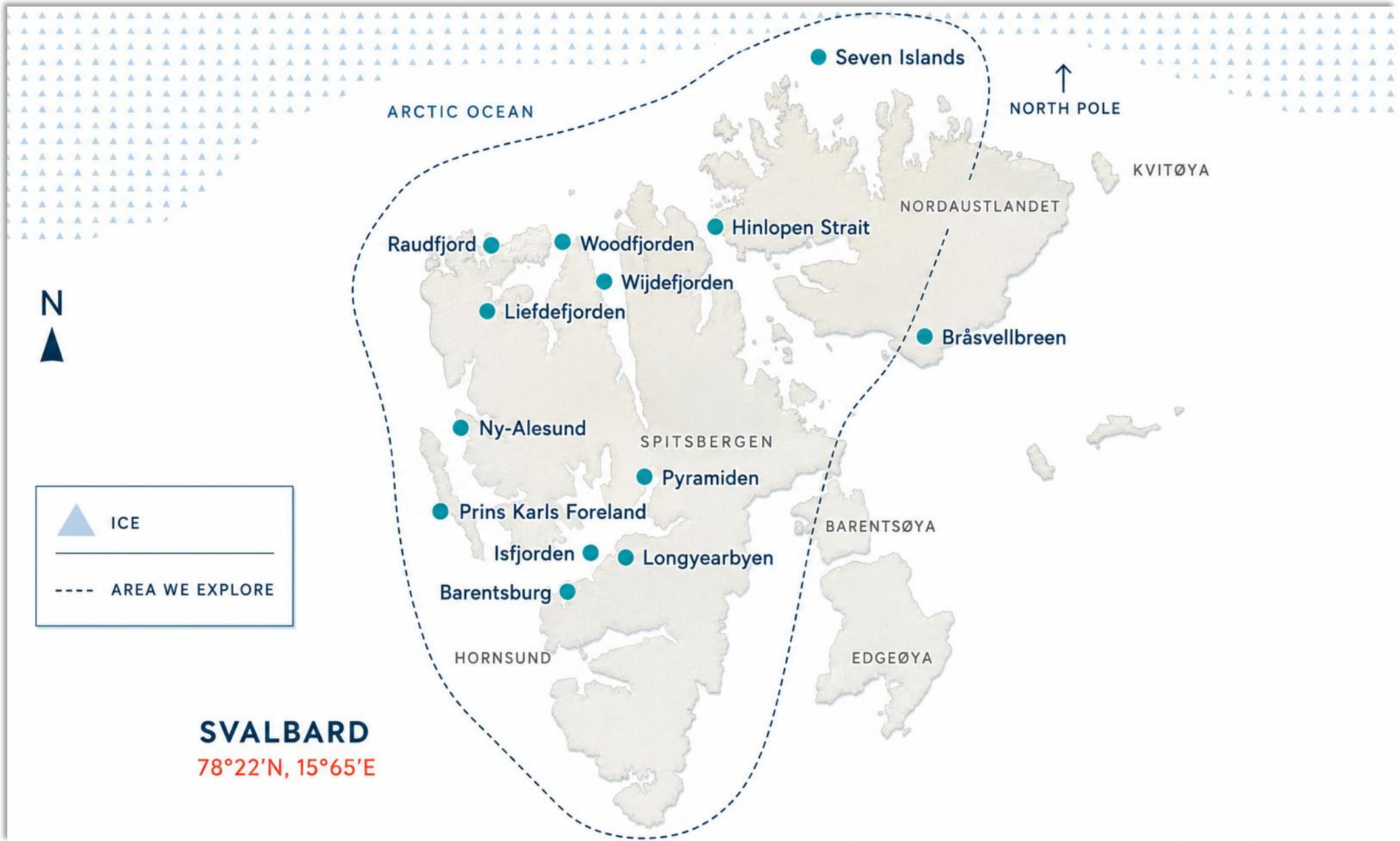
Cancellation

Cancellation from confirmation date until 181 days from trip date – forfeit the 30% deposit.

Cancellation from 180 days to 91 days from trip date – forfeit 70% deposit

Cancellation 90 days or less from trip date – forfeit 100% of trip cost.









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