

Join Mark Carwardine & Joe Cornish on a very special expedition cruise from Scotland to Svalbard visiting Fair Isle, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, Jan Mayen, the Greenland pack ice & Svalbard 23 May - 8 June 2019



“This is a rare opportunity to go in search of some of the best wildlife of the North Atlantic and the high Arctic – beluga whales, blue whales and an impressive variety of other whales and dolphins, several of the biggest seabird colonies in the world, polar bears, walruses, harp seals, and much more – all in a single trip. We leave from Aberdeen, yet visit some of the most remote and seldom visited wildlife-rich hotspots in the region.” Mark Carwardine

We have exclusively chartered the 96-passenger Akademik Sergey Vavilov – a comfortable and ice-strengthened polar expedition ship – for this wonderful 14-night wildlife expedition cruise. We’ll visit prime sites in the North Atlantic, the Greenland Sea, and the Arctic Ocean and, along the way, will have loads of time ashore and plenty of opportunity to enjoy the fabulous variety of wildlife and wild places. We hope to visit the world-renowned bird paradise of Fair Isle, mingle with huge numbers of puffins in the Faroe Islands, explore Iceland’s moon-like landscape, sail through one of the best places in the world for blue whales, stand on the Arctic Circle, visit the home of the last breeding pair of great auks, explore the most remote and mysterious island in the North Atlantic, cruise along the Greenland pack ice and look for polar bears in the high Arctic.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Travel on Mark’s exclusively chartered, very comfortable, safe and exceptionally stable, ice-strengthened polar expedition ship – the Akademik Sergey Vavilov – with plenty of deck space, and even a top deck bar with panoramic views, for wildlife viewing.
- Wonderfully varied journey with superb wildlife watching in spectacular settings.
- A full 14 nights on board the ship – with long hours of daylight – giving maximum time to explore.
- Join the ship in Aberdeen, saving the cost and trouble of an international flight.





- Wildlife we hope to see includes huge colonies of Atlantic puffins, little auks, gannets and other seabirds, ivory gulls, king eiders, polar bears, walrus, seals (harp, hooded, bearded, grey, common, ringed and others), and a wide variety of cetaceans (including bowhead whales, blue whales, fin whales, sei whales, minke whales, humpback whales, sperm whales, belugas, long-finned pilot whales, killer whales, white-beaked dolphins, Atlantic white-sided dolphins, Risso's dolphins and harbour porpoises).
- Explore remote and rarely visited Jan Mayen.
- Cruise along the northeast Greenland pack ice – where few people get to go – to look for polar bears, bowhead whales, harp seal haulouts, and lots more.
- Exciting cruises in inflatable Zodiacs for up-close encounters with wildlife and wild places.
- Fabulous photographic and video opportunities.
- We lend you all the appropriate polar outdoor clothing – jacket, trousers and boots – to save you the trouble (and baggage space!) of taking your own.

ITINERARY

Thu 23 May: Make our own way to Aberdeen (please bear in mind that we strongly advise you to arrive a day early, just to be safe). Embark in the afternoon and set sail early evening.

Fri 24: We explore tiny Fair Isle, a beautifully rugged island roughly halfway between Orkney and the Shetland Mainland and home to just 60 people. This is the most geographically remote inhabited island in the UK, best known as a critically

important breeding ground for seabirds and a stopping-off point for migrant birds (including frequent rarities that get twitchers seriously twitching). May is the perfect time to visit. We also have a good chance of seeing the island's endemic sub-species of wren – the Fair Isle wren – and a wide variety of cetaceans (including minke whales, killer whales, white-beaked dolphins and Atlantic white-sided dolphins) live in the area.

Sat 25: At sea, looking for a wide variety of seabirds and whales, dolphins and porpoises, and enjoying entertaining illustrated talks and workshops.

Sun 26: We arrive in the Faroe Islands and have two half-day excursions at some spectacular soaring 2,000-foot vertical bird cliffs famous for their huge colonies of nesting seabirds: puffins, razorbills, guillemots, kittiwakes, fulmars and European storm petrels among them. Oh, and many more puffins! In the morning, we visit Vestmanna, on the west coast of Streymoy, and we spend the afternoon at Mykines, the most westerly island in the Faroes archipelago.

Mon 27: At sea.

Tue 28: This afternoon we begin our exploration of Iceland, the land of ice and fire. Most people's first impression of this wonderful country – with its dark lava fields, rugged mountain slopes and imposing volcanoes – is of landing on the Moon. With more uninterrupted elbow room than any other European country (bar Greenland) it is naturalist's paradise. We begin with a short stop in the colourful capital of Reykjavik, in the

southwest. It is easy to walk around the historic old town in a couple of hours, or there are plenty of interesting birds to watch in the harbour and Lake Tjornin, right in the heart of the city. Reykjavik overlooks Faxaflói Bay, where there are humpback whales, minke whales, white-beaked dolphins and harbour porpoises. Then we cruise along the Reykjanes Peninsula to the spectacular rocky islet of Eldey, to see the largest gannet colony in the country and to pay homage to the site where the great auk officially became extinct, in 1844.

Wed 29: We wake up this morning in the shadow of the Snæfellsjökull Volcano (made famous by Jules Verne in his classic *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*) on Snæfellsnes peninsula and continue north and then east to Grimsey for another landing.



Thu 30: The small island of Grimsey is home to fewer than 100 people and more than a million seabirds. The Arctic Circle divides it, and we will get a chance to stand astride this most famous of latitudes. The chorus of kittiwakes and fulmars never stops during the long hours of daylight here, but it is the puffins that are the highlight. Grimsey (see the aerial photo top right) is home to one of the largest puffin colonies in Iceland. It also has one of the country's largest Arctic tern colonies, and there are black guillemots, common guillemots, Brunnich's guillemots and razorbills galore. Grimsey lies just outside Skjalfandi Bay, which is one of the best places in the world for blue whales – and we will be there during the peak season.

Fri 31: At sea.

Sat 1 June: Today we explore the breathtakingly beautiful volcanic island of Jan Mayen, home to a small Norwegian meteorological station, as well as king eiders, little auks, fulmars and Brunnich's guillemots. Few people get to visit this incredibly remote island in the middle of the Arctic Ocean (see the photo right). Dominated by the still active glacier-covered Beerenburg Volcano, it has no indigenous population and is only accessible by ice-strengthened ships (though supplies are flown in a few times every year by Hercules military transport planes – hairy flights that involve landing on a lava airstrip).

Sun 2: We head northwest in search of the spring pack ice, which congregates along the east coast of Greenland. We then plan to sail along its edge, looking for a variety of wildlife on the ice, including polar bears, bowhead whales, harp seals and a variety of birds from ivory gulls to king eiders.

Mon 3: Depending on our progress, some time today we will head northeast towards Svalbard, cruising over the continental shelf to look for fin whales, humpback whales and other cetaceans along the way.

Tue 4 - Fri 7: We have four full days in wonderful Svalbard, to look for polar bears, walrus, Arctic foxes, beluga whales, bearded seals and all the other Arctic wildlife for which this spectacularly wild and beautiful archipelago is so famous. For the first two days, we will concentrate on searching for polar bears on the early-season ice, that is generally further south. Later on Thursday 6th June,

we will drop off those who need to leave early, in Longyearbyen, before continuing our exploration. We hope to visit a walrus haulout, a good spot for belugas, a dramatic seabird colony, and much more. We will be making the most of the 24-hour daylight, cruising among magnificent icebergs, in front of towering glaciers and into dramatic fjords, and go ashore for short hikes in the land of the midnight sun. This is truly the high Arctic – halfway between northern Norway and the North Pole – and is one of the greatest wilderness areas in the world.

Sat 8: The expedition ends in Longyearbyen, at 78 degrees north. There is a transfer from the ship to your hotel and you can enjoy the rest of the day exploring this wonderful northernmost town in the world. The wildlife in this colourful frontier town, including Arctic foxes, reindeer, rock ptarmigan and Arctic terns, is surprisingly unphased by people, and you can get some sensational encounters and photos, against a dazzling backdrop.

Sun 9: Transfer from central Longyearbyen to airport (pick-up location to be confirmed in joining instructions). Fly home, via Oslo.

Please note: this tour is highly weather-, sea- and ice-dependent. Although we will stick to the itinerary as closely as possible, it may change to make the most of local conditions. It's part of the fun of remote exploration!

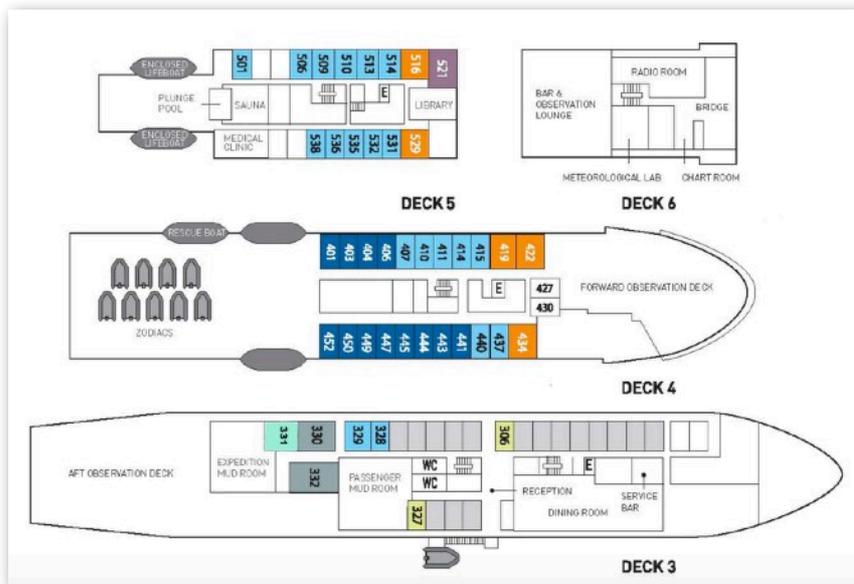
SHIP DETAILS

The Akademik Sergey Vavilov is a modern, safe, comfortable, ice-strengthened vessel, like a floating wilderness lodge. It is ideally suited for remote and polar exploration. Over the years, Mark has travelled on many of the vessels available for such adventures, and rates the Vavilov as one of the best ships working in the polar and extreme regions of the world.

Built in Finland in 1988, she is designed to be exceptionally stable – which is great news for sea crossings! Her highly sophisticated internal stabilizers and built-in ballast trimming system reduce motion significantly and ease the way. The Vavilov is also remarkably quiet, with very little ambient noise in the cabins and public areas.

There is ample deck space, with viewing areas on each passenger level of the ship, while the bridge and chart room are open





Click [here](#) for more information about the cabins

to everyone virtually 24 hours a day. The bridge is excellent for sightseeing and viewing wildlife – expedition staff will be on duty most of the time, watching for wildlife and ready to answer questions - and there are binoculars and identification guides available.

The public areas are expansive and filled with natural light. They include a fabulous bar and lounge on deck 6, with incredible 270-degree views for watching the wild world outside glide by, and a door leading directly out onto deck; tea and coffee are available here 24 hours a day. There is also a well-appointed library (with large windows overlooking the bow deck and the inevitably breathtaking scene beyond), a gift shop, a small multi-media room (with Apple Mac computers freely available), a gym and a tiny sauna. Briefings and lectures are held in a large presentation room, with the latest in digital technology. There is also a full complement of Zodiacs (rigid-hulled inflatable boats) aboard, for breathtaking ice and wildlife cruises, and to take everyone ashore.

The 117-metre vessel is maintained to the highest standards and kept immaculately clean. She has a crew and staff of 63 – the passenger-to-staff ratio is one of the highest in the industry – and there is an extremely high level of personal service. Attention to detail is second-to-none, yet the atmosphere on board is very relaxed and informal.

The Akademik Vavilov has an impressive maximum cruising speed of 14.5 knots. With a bow-thruster and a stern multi-directional propulsion unit, and twin controllable-pitch propellers, she is also incredibly manoeuvrable. It's the perfect set-up for wildlife watching – and getting into (and out of) tight corners!

Safety is a priority, of course. The Akademik Vavilov is a Russian-flagged

vessel and carries all current certifications required by Russian and international maritime law for ensuring passenger safety and well-being. An extremely experienced captain and crew, and an ice-strengthened hull (Lloyds Register 1A, Canadian Type B); provide an exceptionally safe combination for remote and polar expedition cruising. Safety and emergency equipment on board the vessel is inspected and tested on a regular basis and there are two fully enclosed lifeboats with a total capacity of 132, as well as four life rafts with a total capacity of 200. There is also a small infirmary and a crew doctor, who is available to provide a basic and emergency medical service.

And, finally, the Vavilov is built and operated to be as environmentally friendly as possible, from using Marine Grade Fuel (the highest grade marine fuel with the lowest emissions) to the ecologically sensitive cleaning supplies used by the cabin stewards.

ACCOMMODATION

There is a choice of comfortable and clean cabins (triple, twin or superior) and suites, on four different decks (**please click [here](#) for more details**). All are pleasantly decorated and furnished, with a writing desk and chair and ample storage. All of them have opening windows (except cabins on deck 3, which have opening portholes) with some of the most spectacular views in the world! Some have sofa-beds, which are the size of normal beds, and just as comfortable, but double-up as sofas during the day (they are converted every evening by the cabin stewards, while we are eating dinner).

Triple cabin (2 available): two bunk beds and one sofa-bed, washbasin. Shared facilities.

Twin share cabin (6 available): two bunk beds, washbasin. Shared facilities.

Twin semi-private cabin (12 available): one single bed and one sofa-bed.

Facilities shared with one other cabin (the bathroom is in-between the two cabins – so you don't have to walk through a public area).

Twin private cabin (18 available): two single beds. Private facilities.

Twin private cabin-plus (1 available): two single beds, sofa. Private facilities.

Superior cabin (2 available): two single beds, sofa. Private facilities.

Shackleton Suite (5 available): very spacious with separate sleeping quarters, with one double bed and one sofa-bed. Private facilities.

One Ocean Suite (1 available): very spacious with separate sleeping quarters, with one double-bed and one sofa-bed.

Private facilities with a bathtub. This cabin has windows (which can be opened) overlooking the bow.

MEALS

All meals aboard ship are included. The window-lined dining room (which can seat everyone in one sitting) is catered by international chefs, offering a daily choice of cuisine. The food is excellent, varied and tasty, with plenty of healthy options made with fresh ingredients.

LEADERS

Mark Carwardine will be hosting the trip and will also give lectures and run workshops. He will be accompanied by Britain's best-known landscape photographer Joe Cornish (owner of his own photographic gallery and author of many books). They will share their extensive knowledge, expertise and stories during the trip. There will also be a highly experienced resident expedition team on board, and Rachel Ashton (Mark's Project Manager since 2004, and trip administrator) will produce a film and slideshow of the trip for everyone to take home afterwards.

GROUP SIZE

There will be approximately 96 passengers on the ship altogether, plus Mark and his team.



PRICES PER PERSON (excluding flights)

- £5,495 (sharing Triple Cabin with Shared Facilities)
- £5,895 (sharing Twin Cabin with Shared Facilities)
- £6,295 (sharing Twin Cabin with Semi-Private facilities)
- £6,995 (sharing Twin Cabin with Private Facilities)
- £7,195 (sharing Twin Cabin-plus with Private Facilities)
- £7,395 (sharing Superior Cabin with Private Facilities)
- £7,695 (sharing Shackleton Suite with Private Facilities)
- £8,595 (sharing One Ocean Suite with Private Facilities)

We can guarantee that there will be no currency surcharges to this trip – whatever happens with Brexit!

Price includes: Aberdeen-to-ship transfer pre-voyage; ship-to-hotel transfer Longyearbyen, and transfer from pre-arranged location in Longyearbyen to airport; 14 nights' accommodation in comfortable cabin on the Akademik Vavilov, with daily housekeeping; all breakfasts, lunches and dinners, tea and coffee, throughout the voyage; guide services of Mark Carwardine, Joe Cornish and Rachel Ashton from embarkation at Aberdeen to disembarkation at Longyearbyen; resident Expedition Team throughout the voyage; all shore landings and excursions during the cruise; comprehensive pre-departure advice and information; all miscellaneous service taxes and port charges throughout the voyage; loan of polar jacket, trousers, Wellington boots, waterproof rucksack and binoculars for the duration of the voyage.

Price does not include: Transport to Aberdeen; flights home from Longyearbyen; transfers airport/government arrival and departure taxes; hotels, transfers and other land arrangements pre- and post-voyage (ie not listed in 'Price includes'); passport and visa expenses; excess baggage charges; cancellation, baggage and travel insurance (compulsory); meals on shore; alcoholic and soft drinks; items of a personal nature such as laundry and telecommunications charges; medical expenses; crew and resident expedition staff gratuities (we suggest about US\$10-\$12 per day – it's usually collected just prior to the end of the cruise).

PAYMENT SCHEDULE (per person):

- Non-refundable deposit due on booking: £1,600.
- First-stage payment due on 14 September 2018: £2,000.
- Balance due on 22 February 2019: varies according to cabin.

FLIGHTS AND HOTEL

You will need to make your own arrangements for getting to Aberdeen and staying overnight on 22 May, and returning home from Longyearbyen via Oslo (we strongly recommend Trailfinders if you prefer to use an agent) and we will, of course, give you advice for both flights and hotels.

This trip's bonding and liability insurance is provided by Wildlife Worldwide – so the money you pay is safe even in the highly unlikely event of cancellation or insolvency.
ATOL: registered member 10544
ABTOT: registered member 5199



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