

EPIC ARCTIC ON THE LINDBLAD *NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC EXPLORER*

JULY-AUGUST 2011

The Lindblad *National Geographic Explorer* is the first foreign-flagged ship to be allowed in the Russian Arctic since the 1930s! The approval came from Putin himself. As a pilot trip, Lindblad chartered the *Kaptain Dranitsyn*, a Russian ice breaker, in 2004, for a similar trip. We were joined on this journey by our grandson, Nathan Wendel and his new wife Casey Barger. We flew from Los Angeles to Newark where we met them in the SAS lounge then flew on to Oslo.

It was raining so we didn't feel like venturing too far for lunch. We enjoyed our \$48 MacDonald's lunch around the corner from the hotel.

What began as an interesting visit to Oslo became a rather grim experience, thanks to a crazed Christian. He slaughtered close to 100 innocent people in the name of a man who preached love and tolerance. Interesting how ultra religious people seem to feel justified in slaughtering their fellow man.

We were staying in a hotel in the downtown area within blocks of where he set off his Amfo bomb which wasn't very successful; it killed less than a dozen. To us, the explosion felt like a major structural element of the hotel had collapsed. We turned on the TV and could find CNN which was in English. Everything else was in Norwegian. After a bit there was a "crawl" at the bottom of the screen stating that there would be news upcoming about an explosion in downtown Oslo. Eventually we learned the full scope of his

slaughter at the youth camp.

Jodie, Casey, and Nathan went out for a little stroll late in the afternoon after the blast and found that most business had shut down. They were still out when suddenly hundreds of emergency vehicles were whizzing about, probably because of the slaughter at the youth camp. When they returned to the hotel there was an armed guard at the entrance. Later it was suggested that we not leave the hotel.

7/23. Oslo/Longyearbyen.

As we left Oslo the morning after this good Christian committed his noble deed, all the flags were flying at half staff. The downtown streets were very quiet for a Saturday morning. The Norwegians were quite shaken by the slaughter. They said it was the worst thing that had happened to them since the Nazi occupation during WWII.

At the airport we struggled to find our luggage among the haphazardly scattered luggage which had been trucked out earlier. We eventually found our luggage and checked-in for our charter flight. The flight itself, on a Titan Air 767 was rather pleasant. There were many more seats than people so we were nicely scattered about the plane.

When we arrived in Longyearbin we found that the bulky parkas we had been struggling with were now quite welcome in the +7° C temperature. There was a 2-hour tour of the town to allow the ship staff to restore the ship

from its previous passengers. Some of the planned tour stops were closed because of the slaughter in Oslo. Some of the kids who were killed were from here.



We finally boarded the ship and found our cabin, 326. The ship departed almost immediately. Some pack ice was threatening to close the harbor. (It did eventually close the harbor and kept two ships from entering for two days.) During dinner we bounced our way through some scattered first-year ice. Two bears were spotted during dinner however we didn't stop. Dinner was the customary first night buffet.

7/24. Isbukta.

Our morning activity was a zodiac ride along the several mile wide face of glaciers on northern Spitsbergen. The sea was calm and there was some Sunlight. We rode with Jason Kelly, the geologist on board. These are or were tidewater glaciers whose height varied from 20 feet to over 100 feet across the width of the bay. They were tidewater glaciers however they have receded to the shore line across most of their width. In addition to the glaciers there were spectacular cirrus (horsetail) clouds streaming overhead.

The daily programs usually list Sunrise and Sunset times. Today's program lists them as "NO." We were above the Arctic Circle.

In the afternoon Ralph Hopkins hosted a seminar on digital photography. Afterwards we broke up into four groups; point & shoot, Cannon, Nikon, and Sony. The emphasis in all of this was to encourage use of settings other than automatic.

7/25. Edgoya Island.

This was our first opportunity to stroll across the tundra and view the beautiful, miniature flora that hugs the earth. There were, as usual, three hikes offered; long, medium, and short. A zodiac ride was also offered.

In addition to the flowers there were reindeer grazing on the plants. Their feeding was not disturbed by our presence since their goal is to add as much fat as possible before the snows return.

The spongy tundra was like walking on a feather bed. There were tiny flowers and inch-tall willow trees everywhere. The beach was littered with drift wood, almost all with smoothly cut ends indicating that it was



harvested but lost somewhere on the way to the mill. (There are no trees taller than an inch or so in the Arctic.) There were also quite a number of bowhead whale bones left over from an early coastal whaling operation.

Conditions were calm for the zodiac cruise to the cliffs and beach beyond where the hikers went. On the beach there were three currently unoccupied trapper's or fishermen's huts plus a modern, automated weather station. There were also hundreds of walrus skulls along with some eider ducks, pink footed geese, and the usual shore birds.



After the captain's welcome "gala" we flocked to the bridge as the ship headed into Storfjord which was covered with pack ice to search for polar bears. We stayed there until 1 am and the ship had reversed course without seeing a bear and only two seals.

7/26. Bear Island.

Bear Island is a major sea bird rookery. Its

sheer rock faces are covered with birds. Every possible nook or minuscule ledge is occupied. It was easy to spot where the birds were roosting; each was marked with a prominent white stain running down the face of the rock.



We did a long, cold, rough 1¾ hour zodiac ride along these spectacular bird nesting cliffs. There was also intermittent rain or mist. These vertical rock faces are heavily fractured and eroded, creating a vast area of ledges and holes, all of which were occupied by nesting sea birds. Scientists claim that there are between ½ to 1 million birds there. Our total ride was 7.5 miles round trip.

One interesting thing we saw was a small, wrecked Russian coastal freighter. In 2009 it plowed head-on into the cliffs since both the captain and the first officer were drunk. The whole crew was rescued and arrested by the Norwegian authorities who also removed as much of the bunker fuel as possible. The owner denied ownership and the cost to remove it would run into millions so it just sits there, slowly breaking up in the pounding seas. Although the ride was cold and rough, the swarms of birds were spectacular. In spite of the discomforts it was worth while.

I've had problems getting my old Internet card activated. I forgot the password and asked the

IT officer if he could reset it. This was last Friday. He finally said he had to contact MTN in Florida by e-mail for help. Today is Wednesday and I asked him what happened. He is still unable to reset it and had not heard from FL so he is going to call them tonight. In the meantime he gave me a 100 minute card. As of today I had used 30 minutes but after asking about my other card today he reset it to 100 minutes again. (I eventually received 200 minutes.)

In the afternoon *National Geographic Magazine* photographer Paul Nicklen showed some 80 of his photographs and discussed them with the audience. (He took 26,000 photos for the Spirit Bear story in the August 2011 Geographic. Only 12 were published.)

7/27. Kirkines. Norway

We have just arrived in Kirkines, Norway, where the ship is refueling and reprovisioning. (Kirkines means Church Point.) At least two semitruck loads of food and other stuff were delivered. So far the meals haven't been too good. Yesterday while we were on the zodiac ride some of the crew fished with hand lines and claimed to have caught 2,000 pounds of very large cod. We didn't weigh them however we saw several bins full of fish. The fish I saw were at least 2 feet long! We haven't had any to eat yet. Maybe they will turn them into *lutevisk*.

We had to advance our clocks one hour last night to get us ready for Russia which is two hours ahead. This was not the time in Norway. In fact you can celebrate New Years in about a 60 square mile area here 3 times—first in Finland, then Norway and then Russia.

After transiting the Sor-Varangerford we started our tour after the ship arrived, about 3PM. The first stop was an overview of the city whose population is about 3300. We learned that the city was heavily bombed during WWII. That, along with fire, left only 20 houses standing. We next stopped at a small Russian Orthodox church, built in 1565 where we encountered rain which continued for the rest of the tour. The next stop was what they called a waterfall which was about 5 feet high but very swift running. There were salmon jumping up the waterfall and many fisherman down stream standing in the calmer waters.

The highlight of the tour was a visit to a Saami "village" which was really a fishing resort. There was a large tent, called a lavu, with tables and benches around the perimeter and a fire in the center. There was a vent hole at the top of the conical tent to let the smoke escape. Our meal of traditional Saami food was prepared in the resort kitchen. We had Reindeer stew served over mashed potatoes, carrots, and grilled onions followed by cake topped with whipped cream and cloud berries, and tea to drink.



Following the meal they explained the various elements of their native dress and briefly sung and danced. The guide said there were about 18 Saami in the area. The Saami are the only Norwegians allowed to own reindeer. It was an enjoyable experience even though staged. The professional photographers gave us tips on how to handle the low light.

7/28. Murmansk.

This was our Russian entry port so we expected a long wait before being allowed off of the ship. We arrived in rain that varied from light to heavy. The ship picked up the pilot around 3 am at the mouth of the Kola Fjörd and we were alongside around 7. We left on tour around 10 am.

We had to pick up our passports before we could leave the ship and carry them, along with a two-part card to the gangway. There an immigration inspector compared our face with the passport photo and then collected the blue half of the card. Then we could walk to the buses in the rain.

Our first stop was at the site where the first corner stone was laid in the town in 1916. It is now the site of the Palace of Culture. I stayed on the bus while Jodie did the photography honors with her waterproof camera. She never saw the corner stone.

The town consists of the usual blocks of monolithic, concrete Soviet apartment buildings, all of identical designs, with the number of stories indicating the political era in which they were built. Any area not covered by buildings or paving was covered with lush growth ranging from fireweed to birch trees. Most monuments were surrounded by so many trees that they were

concealed from the street.

We saw no real shopping area and few people walking along the streets. There were lots of cars, the newer ones mostly Toyotas and VWs. Murmansk is described as the major Russian port however we saw no shipping containers that are common in other major ports. We also saw no container ships nor the cranes designed to handle shipping containers.

The second stop was at a monument to WWII military, called "Alyesha," placed on top of a hill from which there was a panoramic view of the city. The Russians call WWII "The Great Patriotic War." The monument was huge concrete statue of a soldier. There were a number of floral wreaths affixed to the base behind an eternal flame. There were also a couple of WWII antiaircraft guns to commemorate the Ack-Ack batteries that were on the hill-top during the war.



The rain had mostly stopped by this time.

Our next stop was a brief visit to a new (2004) Russian Orthodox church which was next to a monument to the Russian submarine *Kursk* which

sank August 12, 2000 with its crew of 121. Approximately 20 survived the explosion of a torpedo but eventually died since the government made no rescue effort. The submarine was eventually recovered by a

consortium of Dutch companies and after some investigation the parts consigned to a junk yard. Someone discovered them and raised money for the memorial which consists of part of the conning tower mounted on a granite wall with a memorial plaque.



Murmansk was built as a working city, not a residence, according to our guide, Vera. As a result, and also since religion was forbidden under Communism, there were no churches. The Russian Orthodox church has been recently constructed and is the first in the city. There are now also a Catholic church, some Protestant churches, a synagogue, and a mosque will soon be built.

Murmansk suffered greatly during WWII. Since it was the only port through which lend-lease shipments flowed, the Germans tried valiantly to capture it, but failed. Vera never referred to the attackers as Germans but rather called them "fascists." The Allied convoys which brought these life-blood shipments to Russia also suffered greatly from Nazi submarines and the weather.

The last stop before lunch was the natural history museum. It featured the usual array of stuff, starting with a rather large mineral display. There was also a number of stuffed

local animals, birds, and fish. A history of the Saami people and finally a history of the local Russians from pioneering days to near present comprised the top floor exhibit.

Lunch was a rushed, chaotic affair provided at a local hotel, Polyarnya Zori. It was in buffet form with no structure or attempt to organize an orderly line. Many people were still standing in line when they were supposed to leave. Entertainment during the chaos was provided by a quarter singing typical Russian folk songs.

The optional afternoon tour included a visit to the MSCO (Murmansk Shipping Company) private museum. MSCO was organized to open the northern shipping line across the top of Russia. As such it operates a wide variety of vessels including a fleet of ice breakers. Although once a governmental organization it is now privately held. The museum contained models of their various ships through the ages. Our group was too large for the size of the rooms.

The final stop of the day was a visit to the first atomic powered ice breaker, the *Lenin*, launched in 1959. When it was retired in 1989 it just sat at anchor for years until someone decided to turn it into a tourist attraction. It was retired because the ice had worn away too much of the hull.

It was quite large with a crew of around 250 and almost 1,000 compartments. We visited the engine room, the engine control room, peeked into the chamber where the reactors were, and finally the expansive bridge. Much of the interior was quite elegant with wood paneling. In spite of the fact that it was anchored for years, rusting away, it is now considered an active ship and even has a

captain assigned. The reactors were removed when it was retired. The first set of reactors failed and were replaced. The old reactors were dumped into the ocean off of Novaya Zemlya. The replacements probably were too.

It was an interesting all-day tour but excessively rushed and with many stairs. Vera frequently ordered, "No souvenir shopping, this is a tour."

There was a bit of a cook-out on the stern as we traveled back down the fjörd. This was so we could photog along the way. Dinner was a delayed buffet at 8 pm.

7/29. Morozovets Island.

An expedition stop was made at this island. It is now a meteorological station with a staff of around 20 scientists plus children. They welcomed all who went ashore since they get few visitors.

7/30. Solovetsky Island.

We spent most of the morning touring the remarkable monastery. Habitation by monks began in 1429. By the 1460s the monastery was recognized by ecclesiastical authorities and over the years became a large, self-supporting complex. When the Bolsheviks came to power in 1920 they converted it into the first gulag which lasted until 1939. With the collapse of Communism it was returned to the Russian Orthodox Church and is being restored with government funds.

Its use as a prison originated during the Czarist era. Political prisoners were sent here to languish in the dank chambers under the chapels and churches. During the Stalin years, approximately 100,000 prisoners were sent to

Solovetsky but only 80,000 survived. It was the prototype for the whole Gulag system.

The first Gulag project was the digging of the Belmor Canal from the White Sea to the Baltic. This was a gift to Stalin for his 50th birthday. It is not known how many died during its construction. It may not be very usable because of silting.

Strange, with religious activities officially banned from around 1920 to the late 1960s, there is now a large and active Russian Orthodox presence in Russia.

This is considered the pre-eminent monastery in Russia and a desirable pilgrimage site for the faithful. Toward this end there are four flights a week to the island from Arkhangelsk plus a ship that connects with the Moscow/St. Petersburg train at Kem. Since our visit was on a Saturday, both the town and the monastery complex were quite crowded.

Not all of the visitors are religious pilgrims. Many seem to be young "backpackers" whom are looking for an outing. (The shelves of the two small grocery stores contain a nice selection of vodka.) There are six hotels, a campground, and some rental shelters available for the visitors. Some of the visitors are neither religious pilgrims nor campers; they are relatives of the gulag victims searching for some connection to their lost family members.

We were picked up at the pier by a small fleet of basic transpiration vehicles generously described as buses. It was a short ride to the entrance at the Holy Gate. The complex consists of a number of buildings, some churches, some workshops. The whole assembly is surrounded by a defensive wall

(kremlin) with five towers. This wall has been successful in protecting the monastery over the centuries.

The tour consumed the entire morning and omitted only the living area of the current monks. As part of the tour we visited two remarkable sanctuaries with floor to ceiling walls covered with copies of icons that once were present. The originals were taken by the Bolsheviks for their gold. We also visited the Refectory which is the biggest single-pillar chamber in Russian monasteries.



There were small souvenir shops in each of the sanctuaries. Our tour did not allow enough time for shopping so we walked back in the after lunch. There were three tiny shops along the way which we checked out.

The monastery was originally built of wood but after being destroyed several times by fire it was rebuilt using massive boulders and self-made bricks. This resulted in massive walls. Wood was still used for the roof. These large beams must have been imported from further South in Russia since there are no local trees of that size.

7/31. Bolshoi Zayatsky Island.

Early in the morning the ship moved to nearby Bolshoi Zayatsky Island. This island, like many in the area, contains religious structures or monasteries. This one contains a tiny church, a cookhouse and a dormitory. There is also a stone-wall protected harbor and a fine modern dock which we did not use. After visiting the church we strolled up a slight rise, visiting some Neolithic structures dating a couple of thousand years BC. These were labyrinths constructed by piling the stones into the spiral. There were also many rock cairns which may have been graves. The purpose of all of this is unknown.

The church is famous because it was built by Peter the Great. I suspect he actually didn't build it but rather ordered it built. One remarkable thing is Phillips screws were evident in its construction. I didn't think they existed in Pete's time.

We also stopped at Anzersky Island, site of a 17th century hermitage. It is now being reconstructed. There were "correction" camps on the island during the Stalin years.

8/1.

On our way out of the White Sea we made a random stop along the Kanin Peninsula for a brief tundra walk. The ride over to the beach

was quite rough but it ended in a tiny, enclosed bay with a sand beach.

8/2. At Sea.

Other than a talk by Magnus Forsberg about the exploration of Franz Joseph Land, most of the day's formal activities centered on photography. At 9 am, those who wanted could turn in one photo in digital form for formal analysis by four of the professional photographers on board. Then at 10 Mike Nolan presented a spirited discussion on composition. After this the group split with Mike leading a hands-on session about learning to use white balance, exposure compensation, and histograms. Ralph Hopkins had a separate session where he presented a new program called Adobe Light Room.

At 5 pm, Mike, Ralph, Paul Nicklen, and Christina Mittermeier critiqued the 84 photos that had been submitted in the morning and were now projected in the lounge.

8-3. Northbrook Island.

After being delayed by two Greenland whales or bowhead whales, we made our first landing in Franz Joseph Land at Cape Flora. This was the location of several explorers' camps. It is also the location of the "famous" meeting between Nansen and Jackson.

Fridtjof Nansen was a famous Norwegian explorer who postulated that a properly constructed ship could be deliberately frozen into the west side of the polar ice, which, because of drift, would then carry it across the North Pole. Toward this end he had the *Fram* (Forward) constructed with massive timbers and a round bottom so that the ice could not

crush it. The ship entered the ice in 1893. In March, when it became obvious that the ship was going to miss the pole he set out with Hjalmar Johansen with a dog team and kayaks to go to the pole overland. By April he realized that they weren't going to make it so they turned around. Winter caught up with them in August so they built a crude shelter of rocks and driftwood with a walrus skin roof where they lived until May 1896. In June they encountered Frederick Jackson who took them back to civilization.



Jackson's camp buildings were on a plain at the base of sheer basalt cliffs that are covered with nesting birds. This plain is the result of rocks falling from the cliff face over the eons. Plants and moss cover most of this area, encouraged by the bird droppings. Access from the zodiac landing point was over 100 feet of well rounded rocks ranging in size from oranges to grapefruit to bowling balls. Walking became somewhat easier once this difficult area had been traversed. The surface was mostly tundra but with some very boggy areas. There were beautiful, tiny tundra flowers everywhere.

We made our way over to the site of the huts. There was little there other than some scraps

of lumber, bricks, and a few pieces of metal. There were also a couple piles of polar bear bones. We were reminded to not pick up any souvenirs. This admonition was easy to follow since there was so little there.

8/4. Alexander Island and Jackson Island.

We have spent the day in vain search of wild life. The first stop gave us a distant view of what was purported to be some narwhals, beluga whales, and walrus.

After a special Russian dinner the ship landed at Jackson Island at the recently discovered site of Nansen's and Johansen's overwintering site. As mentioned before, they spent the whole winter sharing a reindeer skin sleeping bag in a stone hut they constructed which was roofed with a driftwood pole and walrus skins.



I said that the ship landed since the bow was firmly aground. The zodiac ride ashore was 50' at most. Those ashore were

treated to hot, spiced wine.

8/5. Appolonoff Island.

81° 48" north (furthest north) and still no polar bears. Lindblad's previous furthest north was 81° 32.88" achieved by Capt. Skog in 1999 aboard the *Caldonian Star* (now the *National Geographic Endeavour*.)

Throughout the morning we had rain, sleet, and intermittent snow; frequent high winds; generally not nice weather.

Our lack of marine polar mammals was finally cured today. As we cruised south through the archipelago we finally encountered a polar bear in mid morning. Jodie and I had taken up residence in the observation lounge which is at the very top of the ship. When the announcement came that a bear had been spotted, the lounge and the library quickly emptied. The ship manouvered to get downwind and then approached the ice upon which the bear was resting. I girded myself for the outside and went to the open deck above the bridge. I was greeted with a cold, intense wind and some sleet however I pressed forward and saw a distant bear of which I took three quick pictures and retreated to warmth.



Jodie started dressing for the outside when the bear obligingly strolled down the side of the ship, offering lovely views through the windows of the lounge. The bear even swam across a lead and then rolled in the snow to dry off and leapt across some other leads. The experts on board decided that she was probably about 4 years old and in good condition.

By that time it was noon so we had lunch in the lounge which we hadn't done before. Our usual steward from the dining room, Christian,

came up to assist since there wasn't the usual crowd in the dining room.

Later in the day the ship moved to Appolonoff Island. Our Russian observer, Marria, knew that there was a walrus haul-out there. There were no walrus at the haul-out because ice had blocked the beach. But the walrus had moved outside the ice and were frocking in the sea. The group was mainly females and their pups. The offered zodiac rides took us near the walrus cavorting in the water. Some came alarmingly close to the zodiacs.



8-6. Hayes Island and Champ Island.

Our breakfast was rudely interrupted by the sighting of a bear. We found a placid bear resting near the remains of his kill, or at least the bloody ice where he dined. It was possible that the rest of the kill was buried in the snow or in a hole in the ice. The bear strolled around a bit then sat, then laid down. He took no apparent notice of the ship.

We spent a lot of time in the ice, slowly moving this way and that. There were several mother/pup walrus pairs lounging on ice floes that were not much larger than they were. As

we passed Hayes Island we spotted a walrus haul-out so the ship moved to the far side of the island and landed some hikers to view the haul-out from a distance.

The final stop of the day was Cape Fiume on Champ Island to view the Trolls' Bowling Alley. There are a number of round sandstone balls arrayed on the hillside ranging in size from oranges to several feet in diameter. Jason Kelly gave a nice description during recap about how they form, centered on a small mostly iron inclusion in a sand deposit.

8-7. Hooker Island.

We visited Rubini Rock, a spectacular bird cliff at Hooker Island. Even without the birds, Rubini Rock is a geological wonder. It is a dyke with assemblies of classical basalt columns tumbled this way and that.

Since the water was fairly calm there were both zodiac rides and kayaking. The kayak platform was rigged at the port side gate. Suddenly it had to move because a very large ice floe came sweeping down the side of the ship. It also had to move because the kayaks were experiencing difficulty returning to the ship so they were picked up where they were.

From lunch to 5 pm we traveled through ice-free waters. At 5 Magnus resumed his exploration history of Franz Joseph Land but was interrupted when a distant bear was spotted. This put an end to his presentation. This bear was content to lay on the ice and ignore the ship. Eventually we moved on, only to find another bear with a kill. Then another bear emerged from the ocean and approached the sleeping bear to within 100 feet but then left.



All this activity effectively killed cocktail hour and recap. There was also an early termination of dinner by another bear sighting. This one still had some of his kill on the ice.

8-8. Hall Island.

The morning ride at Cape Tegetthoff was cold, wet, and breezy. After that we wandered about looking for pack ice and polar bears. In the course of the day we saw three, all at some distance and either ignoring the ship or moving away from it. The ship has never approached any of the bears very closely. Unlike our previous trip around Svalbard where we got quite close to the bears. Perhaps this is because we have a Russian naturalist/observer on board.

8-9. Cambridge Sound.

As we entered the Franz Joseph Land archipelago, Maria Gavriilo, the Russian naturalist from the Arctic Research Institute, and government observer on board, spotted a previously unknown ivory gull nesting site. So we made our final stop there this morning for a zodiac tour. The precipitous cliffs were on Alexander Island and held an estimated 150 nesting pairs of ivory gulls along with a larger number of kitty wakes. The seas were fairly

calm and the Sun eventually emerged from the fog and low clouds that have been with us for most of our visit to Franz Joseph Land.

When we grew tired of gulls we moved over to the adjacent glacier and toured along the front, all the time hoping for a spectacular calving. Nothing happened.

We are now headed straight back to Murmansk to check out of Russia.

8-10

We are scurrying south just as fast as we can with no stopping for anything. We have a rigid appointment with a Russian pilot to lead us into Murmansk. If we miss our appointed time, who knows when we might get in. We are due there tomorrow afternoon and will spend a few hours there then head back to Svalbard.

8-11. Murmansk.

We arrived at the entrance to the channel early in the morning. A Russian ballistic missile sub was leaving as we came in. Jodie photographed the first Sunrise we have experienced for several days. The light mist turned into a steady rain as we moved closer to town. Along the way we photographed various naval installations and many curious vessels, including several nuclear ice breakers.

The ship was quickly cleared during lunch and a large number of people took the bus to town. A Russian TV crew showed up and interviewed some passengers as they were leaving the ship.

This is Lindblad's second sojourn into this area but the first on one of their ships. In

2004 they chartered the *Kapt. Dranitizan* and toured Franz Joseph Land. Our trip was the first by a non-Russian ship into the area since the Bolshevik. Hopefully this will open the door to more voyages; a Northeast Passage on the *NG Explorer* for example.

8/12. At Sea.

8/13. Hornsund.

We celebrated our return to Svalbard with a visit to spectacular Hornsund on Spitsbergen Island. The jagged, dark cliffs surrounding the bay were frosted with a light dusting of fresh snow. Winter is coming but we are leaving. We will be back in Oslo tomorrow. During the Captain's Farewell cocktail party, Capt. Skog related some statistics from our 22-day voyage. We traveled 5200 nautical miles during which the ship consumed 4,400 gallons of diesel fuel. A total of 96,800 gallons of H₂O was also consumed. He didn't mention how many gallons of Cookies 'N Cream ice cream Nathan consumed.

8/14. Longyearbyen.

We spent a few hours in Longyearbyen killing time until the charter flight arrived. A conference room was set aside for us at the Radisson Blue Polar Hotel which was provided with snacks and soft drinks. It was big enough to hold about half of the passengers. Lindblad provided us with tickets for the Svalbard Museum where we spent some time. It is a new facility with quite good exhibits covering both natural history and current history.

Finally it was time to go to the airport. We found our luggage which had been taken directly from the ship and stood in line to

check-in. Then we stood in another very long line to slowly pass through security.

Eventually we boarded the plane, a very packed SAS 737 rather than the lovely, spacious 767 that we rode coming up. It seems that Lindblad is required to use SAS unless SAS cannot provide the service. This flight had the worst cabin crew I have ever experienced. These old women were rude, disrespectful, and quite unpleasant. It is obvious they felt that since it was a charter they didn't need to be courteous to the passengers since they had no say in choosing the flight.

When we arrived in Oslo the plane parked some distance from the terminal and we were rushed off of the plane and onto a bus in the rain. Although Svalbard is Norwegian we still had to pass through immigration control. We loaded our bags on a luggage trolley and trooped off to the Radisson Blu hotel at the airport. We took the trolleys to our room.

We had been advised by one of the naturalists to avoid the hotel dining room and rather go back to the terminal where there are many places to eat. We choose Peppes Pizza and had an excellent pizza, wine and soft drinks, all of which cost \$88

All that was left was the long, long flight home through "lovely" Newark where a luggage trolley costs \$5!