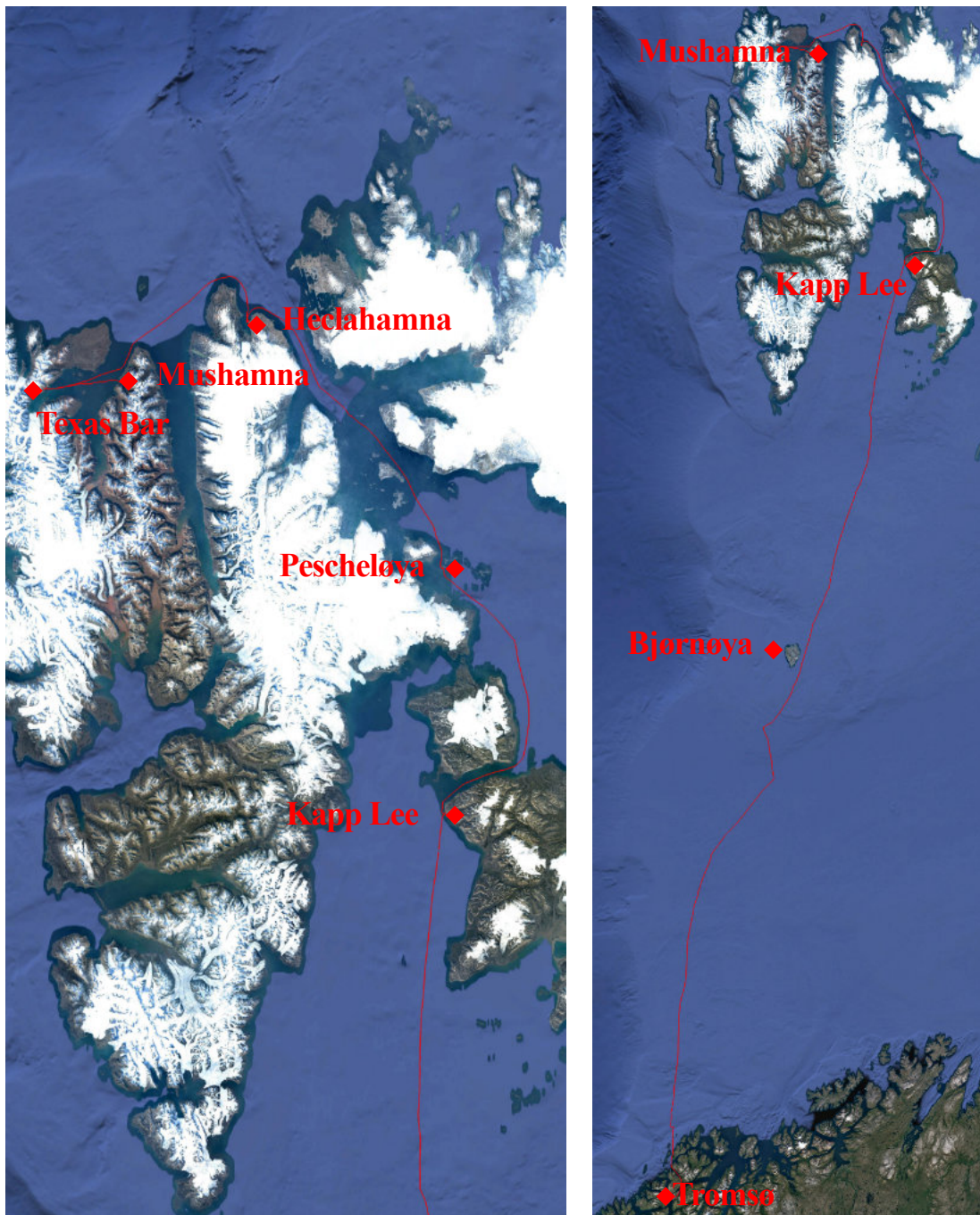


3rd Report: Mushamna
79°39.3'N 14°16.3'E
Tromsø
69°39.0'N 18°57.6'E
July 31 to August 8, 2022

Route overview



Sunday, July 31. Mushamna. 07:30, I sit in the cockpit and write. It is very warm, the sun is shining, only a few clouds in the sky above the mountains. The boat drifts slowly in wide swings. Early in the morning the alarm went off; we moved out of the preset 50m circle, but did not take action. During breakfast we observe our movements on the i-Pad. We are



pretty close to the shore, but not at a critical distance

At 11:10 we weigh anchor and cruise through the mouse hole out into the fjord. The weather deteriorates, a high cloud cover hangs over us. Jørn-Even hopes for more wind, hoists the sails, but the engine must help. The Texas Bar cabin, our des-

tinuation, lies far into Liefdefjorden at the western shore of Woodfjorden. The Monaco glacier looms before us, its ice glitters blue in the sunlight. The ice fronts of the two glaciers, the Monaco and the Seliger glacier to the left measure together 5km. A few large ice floes, rather



small bergs float before and alongside the boat, more and more blue holes in the sky above us. At 12:45 we take the sails down, there is simply too little wind. Far away a sailboat cruises south; we saw the Danish vessel in Magdalenefjorden. The splendor of the Hannabreen tongue takes

our breath away. It is 13:00. Soon the Texas bar cabin will appear. It was built in 1927 by the trappers Hilmar Nøis and Martin Pettersen about 11nm after the islands in front of Liefdefjorden on its western shore. It is still in good repair and visited by many boats and ships. Past the cabin we head for the narrow entrance to



Hornsbækpollen, an egg-shaped lagoon about 400m long. The shores are very shallow. Cliffs loom left and right of the passage, but it is not a mouse hole, we have far more leeway than in Mushamna. At 14:35 the anchor rattles down to 13m, the hole length of the chain is let out. It is a good anchorage, not too deep and not too close to the shallow embankment. A gentle breeze ripples the water. The multicolored bird cliff looms at the northern shore. Behind us the entrance to the pollen, ice bergs in front of the mountain range at the eastern shore of the Woodfjorden.



Vigdis and Jørn-Even go to fetch water near the cabin and to burn the garbage. They return without water, there is no brook in the vicinity of the cabin, just a humid vein where water should run, as the guide book describes. At 18:00 all

four of us climb into the dinghy and cruise back to the cabin. The windows are all blocked, but the door is open and we marvel at the furnishing: in the small and low space two pallets, a wood stove, a tiny kitchen, a few small wooden racks and of course, the impressive bar, many bottles tightly packed on a narrow shelf, most of them unopened. Visitors leave a bottle; we wonder who drinks from them. The bottle left by the Swedish friends of Vigdis and Jørn-Even is indeed on the shelf: gin without alcohol! What a misdeed! Vigdis immediately sends a message, the prompt reply: they do not understand the incrimination! Someone must have changed the tag with the name of their boat and taken the bottle of good gin or hidden it.



We sit at the table on the terrace and touch glasses with an Italian Prosecco! Vigdis spoils us with a surprise out of her backpack, so typical of her, always about to create a friendly and comfortable atmosphere.

After the welcome snack we stroll up the hill by the cabin to enjoy the glorious view. Unfortunately the sky is now overcast, the outlook to the far horizon dark.



In the foreground the mud and gravel delta of the glacier runs far out into the water. The ice has retreated long ago. A tall cairn is witness to the many visitors on the



overlook. We return to the cabin, take a few pictures and hike uphill from where we should see the glacier. Pretty flowers



enchant the brown-gray rocky desert that surrounds the cabin. The little delicate plants fascinate me with their power to sprout in the most adverse surroundings.



All of a sudden a bird attacks us. Vigdis and I are a bit behind the boys and obviously close to the nest of the screeching beast. I stand still and brandish my arms above my head, Vigdis hides behind me, her arms on my shoulders, dodging the attacks screaming and squirming. Jørn-Even takes a video of the assault of the angry Polarjo (Stercorarius pomarinus; I do not know its name in English): too funny for words our wild dance!

We turn around, The bird ogles our pull-out disdainfully

We walk along the beach to the fire pit, where Jørn-Even burnt the rubbish. The boys sift through the ashes to pick out the



unburnt metal pieces. They will be recycled in Tromsø.

Two small pieces of ice are stuck near the beach within our reach, crystal clear ice. We take them along.

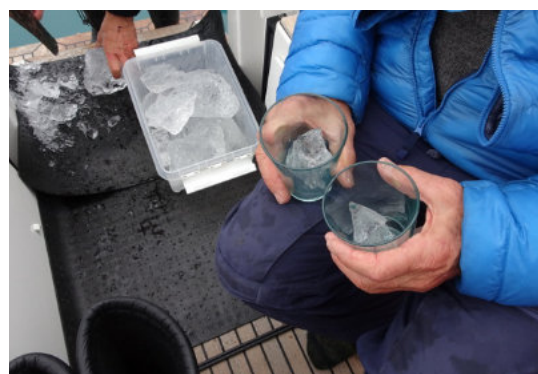
On the way back we pass a tall rock in the water. Three young seagulls watch us,



the vigilant parents circle above us. They chose a perfect nesting place, no predators can easily reach the small island and people in boats, large or small do not really intend to harm them.

On board Jørn-Even deals with the ice. The best part is stored in a small crate at the bottom of the ice chest to help conserve electricity. A few small pieces are dropped into the glasses for Jørn-Even's and Alex's regular gin-tonic in the evening.

Alex and I cook "Älplermagronen", a typical Swiss meal, pasta, potatoes, bacon, cream and cheese, and serve the pre-



cooked apple wedges, the mandatory accompaniment to the dish.

It is late, almost 23:00, high time for me to turn in. The others, like every day, enjoy a relaxed evening with a glass of wine and animated chats in the warm cockpit.

Monday, August 1. 07:30, Alex makes coffee and tea. We intend to start early and have breakfast on the way in order to avoid strong wind on the nose around Cape Verlegenhuken announced for later in the day, the most northern tip of Spitsbergen. The departure is delayed, the service batteries are almost empty; we just used too much power. The engine has to work for some time to run up the charges and so secure enough energy for the navigation instruments.

A cruise ship lies at anchor in front of the lagoon. We only see its stern. It is the *Seabourne Venture*. She unloads tourists into dinghies and takes them to the Texas Bar cabin.

At 10:00 we weigh anchor and head out of the lagoon. There she is, an almost black colossus, farther out than we had supposed. We aim at its port side in safe distance to the dinghies on their way back



and forth from ship to shore.

With our own dinghy in tow we cruise passed the monster to northeast out of



Liefdefjorden. Small ice floes and a few rather large bergs are on the water. They are so beautiful, blue ice, every one a unique shape. We all are intently watching the surface. And there, a slight crash, we ran over a small piece, no one noticed, the dinghy also slid over it. But no harm

done to its solid bottom.

At 10:50 we have breakfast. The engine is rumbling, there is just too little wind. The noise is not nice, but at least the batteries are charged. Passed midday thick fog envelops us. A sailboat appears in the mist, hard to say whether we came across it before, probably so.

Visibility is so bad after an hour that we cannot see the cabin on Gråhuken, where Christiane Ritter lived for a year. Too bad, all four of us read her book and are disappointed. We need to content ourselves with the picture Alex took on Saturday, July 30 as we were on our way from Moffen to Mushamna.

The wind picks up, we discuss the possibility to wait for better weather under the lee in Mosslebukta on the western side of the Mossel peninsula. The plotter marks the area as not accurately charted and we decide to round Cape Verlegenuken despite increasing winds. We cruise on, a pretty bumpy ride, but not really bad.

The *Sillage* passes us. Jørn-Even calls her up on the VHF and inquires about ice in Hinlopenstretet: little ice, no polar bears! Around 14:00 the fog is gone, soon the sun shines into the cockpit, blue sky and streaks of clouds ahead. Vigdis bakes



bread, Alex goes to sleep. We once more cross 80° North, far away from land on our way around the cape. Jørn-Even and I see a clear line on the water far ahead between moderate and strong wind, this one dark, rippled, the other sprinkled, churning with white horses.

After the cape in the entrance to Nordporten the wind blows on our nose, but the waves are not very tall. Dear *eXplorer-senja* manages with bravura to cut through the waves without hard hits. At 18:45 we roll out a scrap of genoa to stabilize the boat on our course south into Sorgfjorden. Fosterneset with its large cemetery lies on its western shore, where among many others the numerous casualties of the attack in 1689 by two French frigates on 40 Dutch whalers are buried. We spy tall crosses through the binoculars. On the eastern shore of Sorgfjorden is Heclahamna on the northern side of Crozierpynten, a small peninsula, where we will look for a good anchorage. A German sailboat lies at anchor in the northern bay. We continue to inspect the situation in the southern bay. There is just the same wind here and the shore is much steeper, not a really good place to stay over night. We turn around and drop our anchor in 11m in safe distance to the other boat. Jørn-Even lets

out the entire length of the chain. The plotter shows that our boat, her nose in the wind drifts back and forth on an almost identical track: we are safe on position 79°5.4'N 16° 51.7'E.

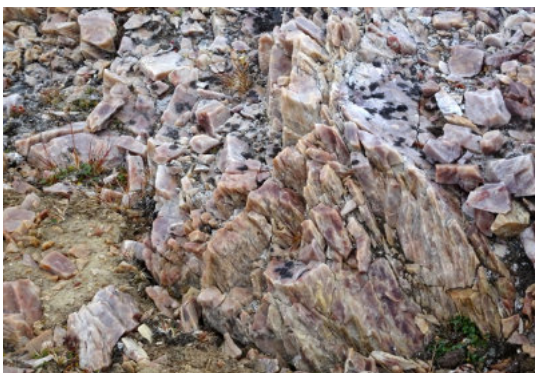
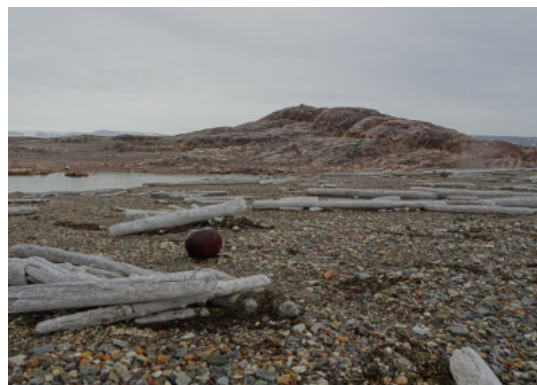
Vigdis cooks spaghetti bolognese with lots of meat and mushrooms. I look around and detect on the shore on our left the Heclahamna cabin and marvel at the imposing



mountain on our right, the Heclahuken with its bizarre traces of erosion.

At 21:00, early today, we enjoy the fine meal in the warm cockpit.

Tuesday, August 2. The boat rocks notably as I write the blog. Once in a while I hear a gust of wind, then no wind in the rig. I crawl back to bed. At 09:00 Alex makes coffee and tea. We sit in the cockpit together. 20kts wind shake the *eXplorer-senja*. The German boat has disappeared. Did they leave sailing west or into Hinlopen-stretet? We decide to wait for less wind to go on shore, with such waves the dinghy ride would be a rather wet affair. Two at the time will go to keep the boat safe from drifting unattended. Clouds move in the sky above the western shore of the fjord towards us. The weather gets worse. Around 15:00 the wind has decreased enough, so Vigdis and Jørn-Even climb into the dinghy and go for a walk. Sporadic light rain impairs the visibility. We hear them talk to someone over the radio. The conversation is difficult to make out. We assume that they have spotted the German boat and have called them up. They are back at 16:40, our turn to go ashore. Jørn-Even takes us. The dinghy is safer with



the boat. We walk toward the hill, a heap of crumbled rock. Walking takes all our concentration; there are no paths. Step by step we go on searching for solid foot hold.

The hillside consists of splinters of rose yellow and gray rock partly interveined with black narrow lodes.

We find a pedestal of red brick all the way up on the very top next to a large



cairn. The wide fjord expands to the far mountains, the bay and the German boat, the *Flinthoern*, at anchor in the drizzle. Beneath us the station in shambles, where Swedish and Russian scientists measured the shape of the earth in 1899 and 1900, a desolate view. The cabin stands askew, the roof is gone. We can hardly imagine that a busy group of scientists lived and worked here for many months.



The landscape shows a variety of features. Due east a number of meandering rivers



and brooks flow through a wide sandy plain that stretches for miles below tall Heclahuken with its multicolored cliffs. Due west Sorgfjorden, the near bay and solitary *Flinthoern*, the mountain range on its western shore, far away the glaciers, their water feeding a green band distinctly

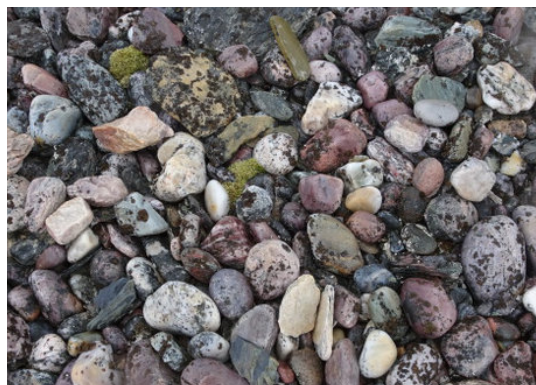
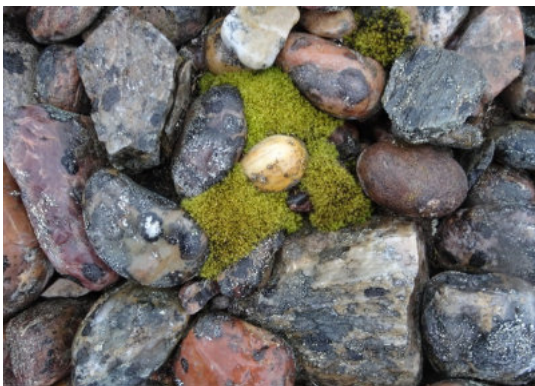


separated from the blue water of the sea. The pictures unfortunately do not reveal what our eyes can make out in the murky light. At our feet many small flowers in a

variety of colors spear out of the gravel.



There are funny rock faces, a wig stone, I even detect a black and white horse head. On our way back multicolored gravel and rocks of all sizes under foot, small peb-



bles to fist-sized boulders and large rocks. The beach is covered with drift wood, huge trunks and planks, *eXplorer-senja* a toy boat in the arch of the gigantic bay.



The shore expands due north as far as we can see; its tip reaches the open water on the horizon.

We walk in a large empty riverbed. A flock of sandpipers hops in front of us and flies off as we come close. One of them settles on a large rock and follows us with its black beady eyes, unruffled. Jørn-Even picks us up. Vigdis has prepared pizza and at 19:45 we sit in the



cockpit and enjoy the warm meal after a rather wet, windy and cold walk. The boat rocks back and forth like a cradle. Large swell enters the bay from outside. During the meal we see *Flinthoern* leave. From up on the hill we have seen her lying much calmer. So we decide to move to the southern bay and anchor at her place in order to sleep peacefully tonight. At 20:30 the anchor is dropped in 12m and 50m chain on position 79°54.9'N 16°50.5'E. We turn in early.

Wednesday, August 3. The alarm clocks are set at 06:00 for a start in good time. Jørn-Even makes coffee. Soon we are all on our feet and at 06:45 we leave. Rain impairs the visibility, no wind at all. We round Cape Fosterneset into Buldrevågen and further into Hinlopenstretet with the imposing glacier Buldrebreen on our starboard side. There is little to see, dark mountains and glaciers to the west, the whole landscape veiled in rain. Here and there a little light through the cloud cover.



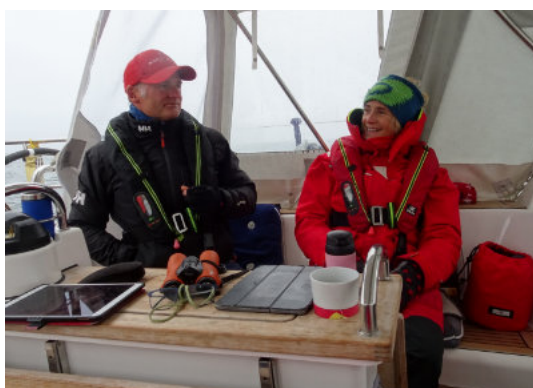
Hour after hour the engine runs. Vigdis unstintingly watches the many birds. Large flocks sit on the water, fly off or dive, when we come too close. Around noon, Vigdis warms the pizza, leftover from last night. Fulmars circle the boat. Often they come so close that they seem to ram the forestay. At one point we spot a flock of Polarjøs with their typical split tails, like the one that attacked Vigdis and me at the Texas Bar where Jørn-Even recorded the women's dance. After a good two hours we pass the entrance to Lom-



fjord with the prominent rock of Cape Fanshawe and the grandiose view of Frøyabreen. Still we have not figured out, how the "glacier eyes" originate. Now and then someone goes to sleep. We women knit or read when we are awake.



Vigdis has taught me the pattern for two-colored mittens to be felted. That's what I'm busy with now, the socks will wait. It is cold, with 6°C in the cockpit we need many layers of clothes. Hands are tucked away in mittens, the red bag with Vigdis' knitting is closed. It is raining again, slight fog impairs our visibility and stray ice floes drift in the water. The others take turns to watch for ice. No one asks me whether I would want to participate. The old woman is spared without a word.



Towards evening, Alex detects a huge tree trunk in the water frighteningly close to the boat. Luckily he manages to avoid it at the last second. Our anchorage is not far now. It is almost 18:00. Small icebergs float among the smaller pieces. The dark parts are encased earth or gravel the glacier picked up dur-

ing countless years on its slow-motion descent to its collapse at the water's edge. The small island Pescheløya emerges in front of us. We intend to anchor in the southern bay. With great attention we enter the bay. We do not really trust the



depth sounder.

Alex drops the anchor at 19:00 in position $79^{\circ} 00.1'N$ $20^{\circ} 63.8'E$; we have 11m depth if the sounder is accurate and all of the 50m chain are out. Swell rocks *eXplorer-senja* considerably.

It is my turn to cook tonight. The experiment with the pressure cooker fails sadly; I do not know this model. Alex studies the weather, he cannot help. The result: the potatoes are far too soft, the "Spekröshti" is difficult to turn in the pan and comes out dark on one side and mushy on the other! Disastrous meal, I am ashamed of my cooking.

It was a very long wet gray day. The disappointing dinner dampens my mood. Tired as all four of us are, we forgo eating in the cockpit. Setting the table and serving in the cabin is easier and faster, avoids the up and down on the steep stairs.

Thursday, August 4. The alarm clocks go off an hour later than yesterday. Rather dismal weather greets us, murky, cold and wet. A pretty large iceberg floats in the bay in front of the boat. It sneaked in during the night. Many birds rest on the two peaks. The gas bottle needs to be changed before we get coffee and tea. We briefly sit in the cockpit, weigh anchor at 08:15 and get going. Jørn-Even takes the first watch. Ice pieces and here and there a little berg crop up. Light fog impairs the visibility. In such conditions Jørn-Even



steers by hand on our course southeast between two small islands. At 09:50 Alex takes over, I sit in the cockpit near him and help watching the water. Soon there is no more ice, wind and swell rock the boat.

We will not be able to pass through the Helyesundet running southwest between

Spitsbergen and the northern tip of Barentsøya; it is blocked by ice. We see this clearly on the latest ice chart Renzo sent in an e-mail by Iridium Go. We will take the route through Freemansundet a little south between Barentsøya and Edgeøya. It is open, probably completely free of ice.

Walrus on starboard! I react immediately, but even rushing out of the cockpit head-long I am still too late. Only Alex saw it.

At 11:00 it is Vigdis' and Jørn-Even's turn to watch. Alex and I eat something, upload the blog and go to sleep. Another change of the watch at 13:00. Before she goes to rest, Vigdis prepares bread dough, Jørn-Even retires. We cruise along the coast of Barentsøya, we cannot see one single one of the huge glaciers, although the mountains are covered with them. The landscape disappears in the fog. We concentrate on watching the water and the course. But no more ice in sight, no obstacles. Our plotter in the cockpit shows charts again since yesterday. That simplifies the surveillance considerably when only one is on watch.

At 15:00 Vigdis and Jørn-Even are up. We have arrived at the entrance to Freemansundet. The weather is improving a little, the fog has lifted and at 17:00, when Alex and I are up on deck, we detect far behind us the tongue of the Free-



man glacier on Barentsøya and the flat gaunt hills of Edgeøya. Striking black



vertical rock layers appear next to each other in the brown cliffs, typical dolerite columns everywhere around here. There is not one single fault, only a deep washed out trench reaching far back into



the hills once in a while. Ahead of us toward the exit of Freemansundet into Storfjordet the sun sends rays of white light through holes in the cloud cover. We approach the station on Cape Lee with its octagonal cabin, that was prefabricated in Norway and erected here in 1904 and the two other ones built in 1929. There are two anchorages marked on the chart,



north and south of the cape. We go a bit closer to the northern shore, where we can just make out the large walrus colony on the beach, but proceed around the cape to the southern bay. At 19:15 we find an adequate spot and release the chain in 8m depth, let it all out and are safe on position 78°04.5'N 20°48.4'E. Jørn-Even empties a couple of jerrycans into the tank. Walrus swim around the boat, two and two together. They are very curious. First I only see the backs, then their for-



bidding tusks. They come incredibly close. This one is just 2m behind the

dinghy. But no panic, the animals are peaceful beasts; with their tiny almost blind eyes they only want to see who has arrived in their territory.

It is 20:00. Vigdis serves a truly scrumptious meal: fishcakes fried potatoes, carrots, pasta and homemade yogurt sauce. More walrus appear as we eat. They dive, come up with a snort to draw breath and dive again. They are feeding. According to our book, they burrow in the sand for mussels and suck them out of the shell with their strong lips.

Like every evening we sit in the cockpit after cleaning up and talk about tomorrow. The weather will get worse in the coming days and we ponder how this affects our plans. We need a favorable at least three-day weather window for the passage to the mainland. Tomorrow we want to visit the walrus colony in the northern bay and to see the monsters from close up. The decision for the continuation of the journey is postponed for breakfast time tomorrow.



Friday, August 5. In the middle of the night, the anchor alarm goes off. It is only 02:00. We are all up, the boys check the track on the plotter; there is hardly any wind, currents must have carried the boat outside the set circle, but we are nowhere near the shallow shore. No panic, a new circle is set and we all go back to bed.

Alex and I get up around 0800. It is raining. A little later we discuss the day in detail. One more time Alex downloads the weather report. As expected, the outlook for the next days is not good: unstable windy weather, difficult to predict. So, we decide to tackle the passage after the visit to the walrus, even if many hours under engine will be necessary; but we can avoid strong wind on the nose in three days. This is our last anchorage on Spitsbergen.

We enjoy a rich breakfast to fortify ourselves for the outing to the walrus colony north of Cape Lee. The chart shows that only our bay offers reasonable beaching with the dinghy. Closer to the colony the water is far too shallow for a short walking distance to the land. On our way to the beach we see from far away that landing will be anything but easy: the low tide has laid free quite a stretch of rocks covered with dense seaweed. Jørn-Even steers very warily around and over larger and smaller boulders and finds a favorable spot without endangering the dinghy bottom. Nevertheless, disembarking and finding purchase is not easy. It takes time until all four of us stand firmly on the slippery rocks. On Jørn-Even's command: one-two-three we hoist the dinghy forward, meter by meter to a good place, where we can tie it to a large boulder far up secure from the incoming tide. We start hiking over swampy tundra. The ground is very green and littered with reindeer droppings,



which obviously acts as ideal fertilizer that makes for such unusually lush vegetation.

We find huge whale bones. They must be very old, their surface looks and feels al-





most like petrified rock. Reindeer antlers lie scattered, tufts of hair and pieces of fur all around.

We reach the elevation and overlook the wide bay, where the walrus colony lies on the beach, tightly packed enormous bod-



ies. The wind carries their offensive odor to our noses. Down below somewhat

above the octagonal cabin a group of animals rests separated from the large herd. They hardly move, only a grunt once in a while proves them to be alive. Fortu-



nately the wind down here carries their stink away from us. At the beach one of the monsters climbs



out of the water. Despite the fearsome tusks and its impressive bulk a quite gentle face gazes in our direction. We stay for a good while and inspect the



octagonal cabin. It was built in 1904 as a hunter's lodge, restored in 1929 and serves today as refuge. The trappers called it the merry-go-round.

Jørn-Even goes inside, we follow him. A stove stands in the entrance, inside we



find clean sleeping benches, a small kitchen and all kinds of utensils. The other two cabins were erected a bit



further north in the bay. They are locked; we cannot go inside.

On the way back we come across a few reindeer feeding or resting and chewing the cud. They are well-fed, sport a lustrous



coat, bursting with health.

Gorgeous natural still lives catch my eye. Everywhere I detect signs of transiency and

sprouting life in touching intimate togetherness in this rough unforgiving landscape.



We climb the tallest hill, *eXplorer-senja* below us drifting gently to our right on the calm water. On the way back to the



dinghy we stop for a snack
One of those balls lies on the beach below of which we still do not understand



what they were used for.
Then we scramble over the rocks to where our dinghy is tied up and prepare to get a foothold, keep our balance and with combined forces on the command one-two-three to tug the dinghy into the water. Alex and I remain on board *eXplorer-senja*, Vigdis and Jørn-Even go to fetch water.
And what do we detect further north in



front of the bay with the walrus colony? It is the same cruise ship we already met near Texas Bar, the *Seabourne Venture*. A rib tows a round dozen of kayaks into our bay. We wonder where the tourists will climb into the easily capsizing conveyances on this rocky beach, since they are empty!

We cannot see, whether other tourists are brought to the beach in the walrus bay.

But this seems rather probable and we are happy to have visited the cabins and the colony this morning and to have been able to explore everything by ourselves. Vigdis and Jørn-Even are back from fetching water and the preparations for the departure can begin. It is now 16:00. I take pictures to remember our last anchorage on Svalbard. In front of us widens the bay to



south, behind us Cape Lee, the promontory of Dolerittneset stretches its flat spurs into Storfjorden. After a light meal

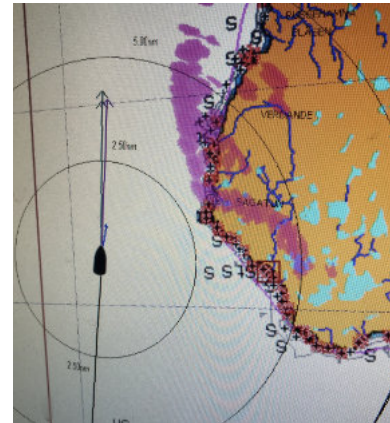
Jørn-Even hoists the anchor and shortly after 17:00 we are on the crossing south toward the mainland, around 500nm as the crow flies. We will take turns on watch, changing every three hours. Alex and I begin with the first vigil from 18:00 to 21:00. Vigdis and Jørn-Even retire. Nothing of importance around us. At 21:00 Vigdis and Jørn-Even take over. Black water as far as we can see, a few whitecaps, drifting clouds, a small clearing behind us. At midnight, change of watch again, we set the sails and kill the engine before Alex and I go to sleep in restful piece and quiet.



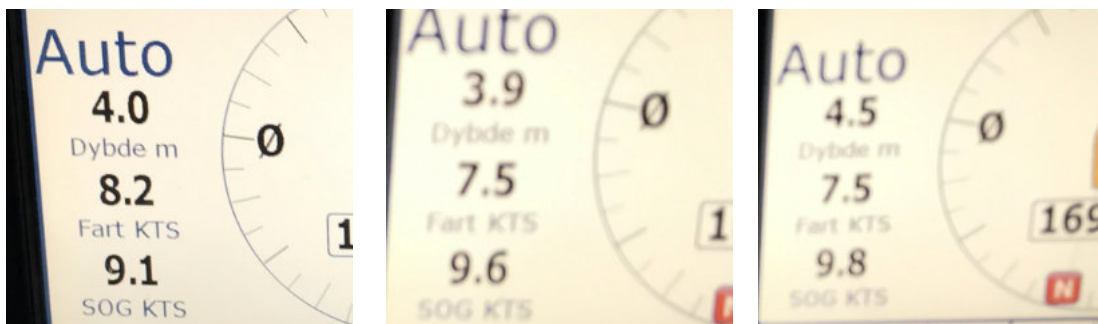
Saturday, August 6. During our next watch from 03:00 to 06:00 we still see the

same picture: dark clouds, the silhouette of the mountains on the shore of Torell Land in the southeast of Spitsbergen. At 01:50, 6.6kts wind, we hoist the main and unfurl the genoa, timeout for the engine. After our watch I cook porridge with lots of dried berries for all of us, a miracle cure against weariness and cold. Invigorated, Vigdis and Jørn-Even start their watch, Alex and I turn in satisfied with full tummies. After another change of watch, around 10:00 the wind dies, Alex starts the engine. It must help for the next 50nm, droning and stomping far into the evening. Fortunately we can set sails again around midnight. Peace and quiet are so relaxing!

Sunday, August 7. Alex and I begin the seventh watch since we left Cape Lee yesterday. We enjoy sailing without the engine. After two hours at the latitude of Bjørnøya, thick fog envelops us. The radar is on, but does not outline the land where it really is. Alex will show Jørn-Even, when he gets up and propose to change the misreading in the software. We hear a foghorn hooting; probably one on Bjørnøya. But we cannot see a thing. The plotter shows a sailboat with its AIS switched on at anchor in the bay of Radio Bjørnøya on the same spot we have anchored on the passage from the mainland to Spitsbergen.



Current pushes us considerably; we run speeds of over 9kts. Jørn-Even is very proud



of his fast boat and enjoys checking the instrument every few minutes! And we are still surrounded by fog; it is cold, only 6° in the cockpit. And at every change of the watch the same question crops up: you see anything? And always the same answer: just water and a few fulmars circling the boat in the fog. At 07:00 the fog has disappeared, ahead of us the faint outlines of mainland mountains on the



horizon, behind us the first delicate rose clouds proclaim the sunup.

We cruise too westward of the ideal course so to keep the sails from flapping. Two jibes take us back on course. Three fishing boats cross far ahead of us. Since 12:00 the engine is mute, wonderful silence on board. The temperature in the cockpit has risen to 14°C. The wind dictates where exactly we will start our cruise inland.

Monday, August 8. The last day of the passage begins with our watch from 24:00 to 03:00. The sky and the water present agitated pictures. We have strong wind and see churning clouds. Shortly before 02:00 I detect the tack of the genoa is loose; something must be broken. We weigh the possibilities: should we wake up Jørn-Even or just let the lowest part of the genoa flap? Both options make us feel uneasy. The skipper needs his sleep, but the genoa could get damaged where the luff runs into the forestay. After some deliberation we decide to furl the genoa. Although the electrical winch is noisy, fortunately no one wakes up. We continue just under the mainsail and still make good speed with aft wind of 16kts to 20kts. The dense clouds have dissipated somewhat; even blue sky and scattered pink spots show through gaps in the



cloud cover. The first sun rays in a very long time gleam on the waves in our wake. It is shortly after 02:00. One more hour to go, then Alex and I take a last nap and start

our watch again at 06:00. Everybody is up; we want to return to a regular daily routine. A huge gas tanker crosses us around midday. According to plan, we should arrive in Tromsø this evening. We keep observing our course, the wind and the possible places where we could pick our way among the many islands to Tromsø. A number of rain cells and threatening squalls hamper the decision.



The skipper proposes three possibilities:

the shortest route runs on the direct course due east of Sandøya; the second one is a little more complicated leading among the islands and the rocky water a bit more to east but also in the direction of Sandøya; the third one would take us east of Grøtøya. There is a lot of wind from northwest and squalls with blinding rain time and again. Before Jørn-Even decides, we try to scud before the wind for a few miles as due east as possible. Ahead of us looms the conspicuous rock of the southern bird island, Sør-

fugløya, below a wave of a huge cloud. To the left of it Sandøya; we plan to take the route along its eastern coast.



We cannot keep the course, the wind is strong and squally, the ride bumpy. Around 18:00 Jørn-Even studies the situation one more time. Vigdis helps and Alex calculates a tacking point where we will venture a jibe despite the churning sea and the stiff breeze. Sørfugløya is already close; we clearly see the green at the foot of the steep cliff.

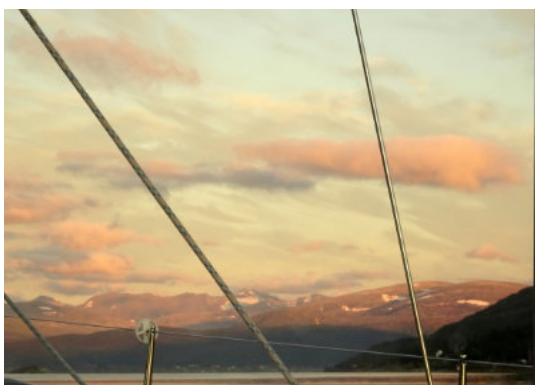
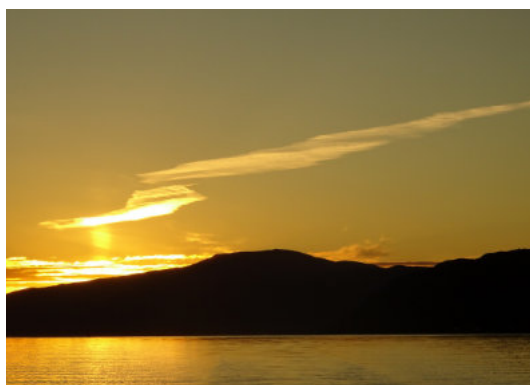


Well prepared the jibing maneuver goes smoothly and we cruise on the direct course toward Sandøya, ahead of us the entrance of our route between the islands.

The last time we took down the main sail, there was a problem: with me at the helm the three had a difficult time to get it down. Something was stuck and the three only managed to yank it down with combined effort. Now we discuss the procedure: I will turn the nose into the wind, stabilize the boat as best I can, Vigdis will release the main halyard in the cockpit on Jørn-Even's command, Alex will pull down at the leek above the boom and Jørn-Even will grab the leek and the sliders from three steps up on the mast. Now, in the lee between the islands east of Kvalhol-



men Jørn-Even decides that this is the best spot for a successful maneuver. He beckons to turn into the wind, I react immediately and shout O.K., the others are ready, Vigdis releases the halyard and the main swooshes down all on its own! What is going on? All the way up a tangled clew of thin cord hangs on the halyard. Jørn-Even inspects it with the binoculars and after some deliberation he comes to the conclusion that it must be a messenger line from inside the mast. Laughing and greatly relieved I slowly turn the boat back on course, the three fold the sail, pack it into the lazy bag and we are on our way to Tromsø. It is shortly after 20:00, the ambiance on board and in the sky could not be better. A beautiful sunset accompanies us. The sun is still quite far up among the clouds, descends slowly to-



ward the horizon, conjures magic glowing light an hour later, disappears, sends last rays and colors the clouds pink.

Seagulls circle the boat, almost silhouettes in the dusk. They doggedly follow us toward the city. Do they mistake us for a fishing boat cleaning the catch and throwing out offal on the way to port? We soon arrive at the northern point of Tromsøya. Just another hour and we will

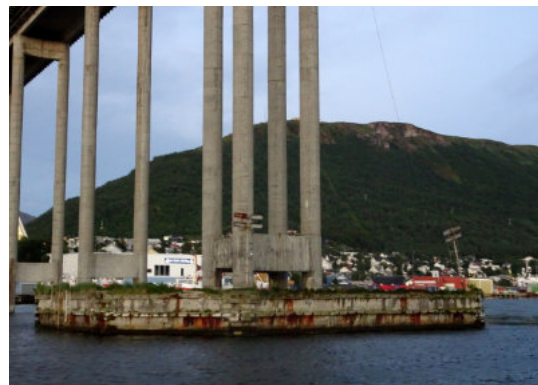


be back from our great trip. Our wake shows the strangest patterns, undulated flat water striped by the shades of last light left and right, ripples and gentle swell right behind, probably caused by the hull and the propeller of *eXplorer-senja*. We pass the gigantic dry dock on our starboard side. An outgoing



fishing boat crosses to port. The dazzling white of the Arctic Cathed-

ral catches our eyes just before we arrive at the bridge. We are under it and shortly



arrive at the entrance to the city harbor. A large fishing boat is moored at the pier, not a fish factory like the one we passed earlier, probably a private fisherman. In the background looms the red building of the Rorbua. Alex and I know Tromsø so

well, we actually feel like coming home!

At 23:35 sharp the boat is made fast in box 23, her usual place. We are tired, grant ourselves a last anchor dram and go to bed happy and content. Our trip has come to an end. Alex and I spent an unforgettable time with Vigdis and Jørn-Even. They spoiled us thoroughly, happy atmosphere, scrumptious meals and loving care for our old bones, very day! Thank you, Vigdis, Jørn-Even and Erlend with all our hearts.