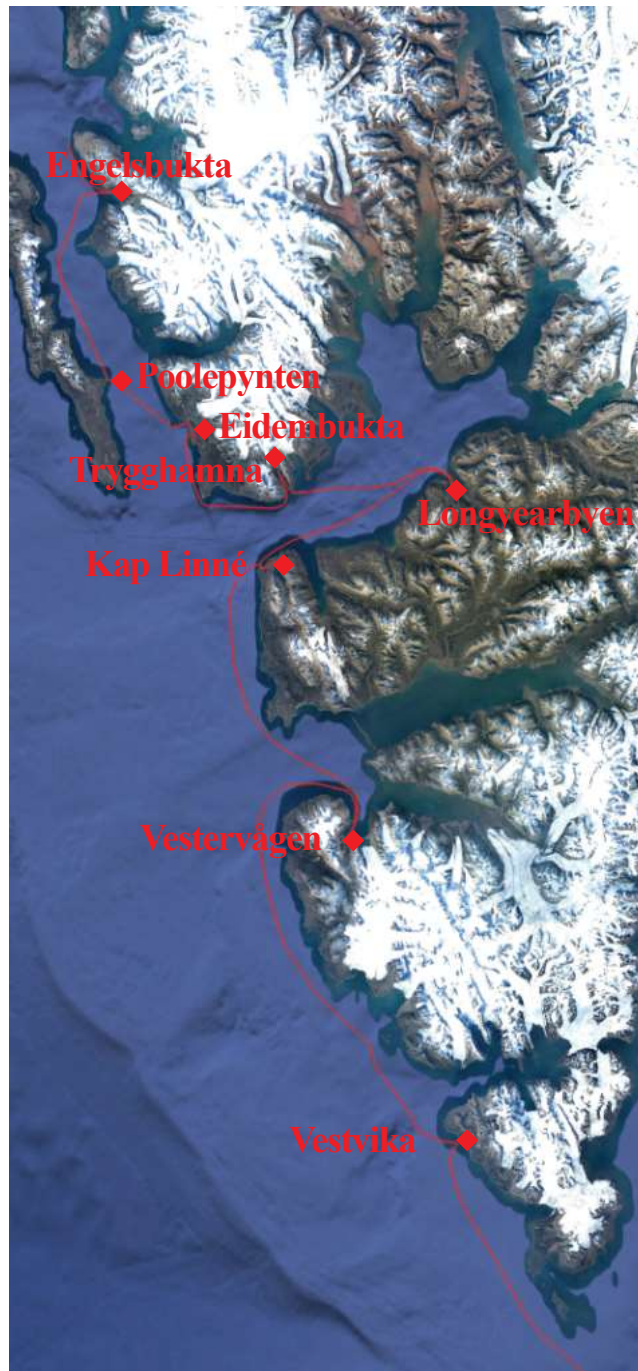


**1st Report: Tromsø**  
**69°39.0'N 18°57.6'E**  
**Engelsbukta**  
**78°50.8'N 11°49.2'E**  
**July 10 to 22, 2022**

**Route overview**



**Tuesday, July 5.** Alarm clock at 03:00, Lynn picks us up and drives us to the airport in Kloten in Diegos car. Flight at 07:15 to Tromsø, Jørn-Even awaits us and takes us to their wonderful guest apartment next to their own on the same floor with a great view on the Sandnessund at the western shore of the island. Despite the rather gloomy weather, we enjoy the first hours in the modern flat and recover from the trip.



It is exceptionally warm, 24° C! In the evening, Vigdis and Jørn-Even spoil us with a scrumptious shrimp dinner.

**Wednesday, July 6.** It is raining. In the afternoon we take a bus to the harbor and explore the *eXplorer-senja*, an X-Yacht 42, stow away the food that Vigdis had bought already and think about where and how we will put away our luggage.

**Thursday, July 7.** Vigdis and Jørn-Even are at work and we take care of a number of small chores. First we take the bus to Gjøverbukta to the shopping center, buy Velcro to mount the Iridium Go on the boat and new power packs (the airport people in Kloten took ours out of our luggage!) and board another bus to town. On the boat we test the wiring of the Iridium Go (perfect performance), buy a small backpack for me in the City Summit store (a very welcome birthday present), walk to the Art Café, the tiny bistro that we know very well and make a reservation for two for tomorrow night. While cooking dinner back in the apartment, the range suddenly utters shrill beeps and is dead. We cannot find a way to reanimate it. No success with the search for a fuse. Phone, WhatsApp, SMS and mail to Vigdis and Jørn-Even remain unanswered. We wait, hungry and frustrated and Alex starts a new search, this time for a plug. And sure enough, he detects a large one under the range, unplugs and replugs and lo and behold, the range is back in working order. Eventually Jørn-Even calls and informs us that such safety features are installed everywhere in Norway to protect old folks from incorrect handling! He did not know that we are that old!!

**Friday, July 8.** In the afternoon we take a bus to town and talk to a Norwegian in the marina, who is working on his Elan. He is very skeptical about our plans to circumnavigate Svalbard and mentions many dangers, of which we naturally are aware of. He obviously regards us as total greenhorns. We think that together with our friends we have enough experience and information to return safe and sound and are not to be deterred, of course!

At 18:00 we have dinner and savor the tasty reindeer dinner. On the way home we

buy a few items for the ship's household in the Extra store. On the path to the apartment, Alex takes a bad errant step over the curb and sprains his left ankle. Slowly and carefully we reach the apartment step by step. The foot is terribly swollen, I find Voltaren Forte and rub it profusely.

**Saturday, July 9.** It is early morning. I get up and prepare the apples and potatoes for the feast tonight. It is Jørn-Even's birthday and we will celebrate. Alex gets up and we start providing family and friends with the possibilities to contact us during the trip, when we will no longer have internet. Communication will happen through Iridium Go for important messages and emergencies. There are also urgent mails concerning the sale of our home in Effingen.

In the afternoon, Vigdis and Jørn-Even come home from work and we get ready for the party. The weather is favorable; we will be able to eat in the sunshine on the patio. The table is set, Vigdis, her nephew Isaac and Jørn-Even briefly pose for a pic-



ture, then he and his son Erlend get busy at the grill, serve meat, fish, chicken and sausages and the feast begins. We enjoy a wonderful evening, experience the atmosphere in the family: humor, laughter and relaxed straightforwardness, a truly good omen for the coming weeks with Vigdis, Jørn-Even and Erlend on the boat, who is going to accompany us up to Longyearbyen.

**Monday, July 10.** We start around 15:00 leaving the marina in Tromsø heading for the diesel pumps right after the bridge. The landing is free and the boys start filling the tank and the jerrycans. Unfortunately a gasket of one of the filler necks disappears through the grate into the water. Erlend tries to maneuver the floating cover with a long narrow thing from underneath the landing to the open water. No success. What now? The only possibility is the removal of the grate. The drill comes into action, the screws are undone and carefully entrusted to Vigdis' custody, the grate lifted and Erlend, on his stomach, gets hold of the escaped lid.





After the successful rescue we cruise north and drop the anchor between the small islands around Risøya east of Sandøya, where Vigdis and Jørn-Even have spent very many peaceful evenings. We eat early and go to bed in good time. Tomorrow we will head for the open sea and start the crossing to Svalbard.

**Tuesday, July 11.** We are up around 08:00. Not a ripple on the water. The sky is overcast, but the clouds are not low. After breakfast the anchor comes up and at



09:30 we start almost due north. Jørn-Even takes us through his beloved islandworld. The southern bird island, Sørfugløya, looms on the horizon. In the old times it was an important landmark for the fishermen, when they returned home from out to sea.



In a small settlement on Sandøya, a Danish man has lived year-round for the past thirty years and so tenaciously and stubbornly secured the regular schedule of the Sandøy ferry to provide the inhabitants with necessary goods summer and winter. His home with a view to Sørfugløya and boathouse lie somewhat outside the small village.



A seal lolls leisurely on a rock.  
The sky gradually brightens, blue holes  
open in the cloud cover. Sørfugløya gets  
closer and presents vegetation on a green



hill in front of the bare sheer cliff and on  
its shores. We leave the imposing cone on  
our port side, turn east, pass the islands  
with the funny names hat islands, Storhat-  
tøy, Bukkhattøya, Hushattøya, and cruise  
along the west and north coast of Grøtøya with its many cosy bays and protected an-  
chorages on the island itself and the ilsnads on its outskirts. Vigdis and Jørn-Even are



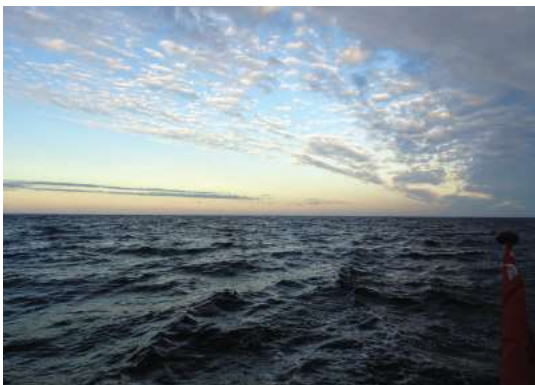
proud to lead us through the area, where they spend many days of their time off work  
during the summer.

Around midday it happens: we turn north out to the open sea toward Svalbard. The

crossing has begun. There is still no wind. Around 15:00 preparations to set the sails are under way, but it takes another two hours before we actually hoist the main sail and roll out the genoa and advance with the help of the engine with 8kts wind from astern. Jørn-Even proposes a plan for the watch: each couple will take on four hours, Erlend undertakes four hours of overlap, so everyone has the opportunity to relax once in a while during the watch. The crew approves and we will start our first watch at 22:00. Cheerful good spirits on board, the weather is quite clear and the temperature agreeable. The sun is out. We talk to each other and observe our progress.



Dramatic cloud pictures to the east and the west. Fulmars circle around us.



At 19:00 Vgdis and Erlend fix dinner, fishburgers garnished with many water melon and many other supplements. We eat in the cockpit. Alex washes the dishes. We cruise with moderate wind and rather calm sea. At 22:00 Alex and I go on watch until 02:00.



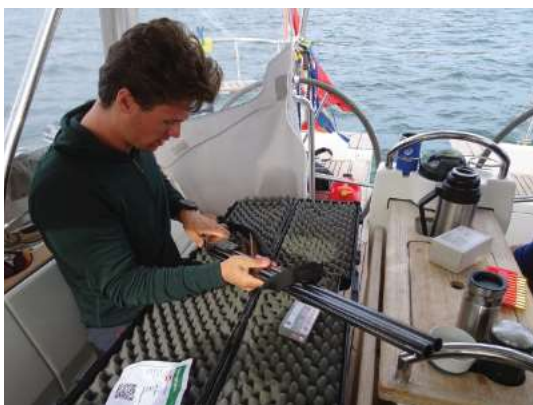
**Tuesday, July 12.** The night is uneventful and agreeable, quiet, temperate steady wind and moderate waves, intriguing cloud pictures in the sky. Unfortunately a cloud bank hides the midnight sun. After two hours I am so cold that I don the quilted over-all that Jørn-Even has put out for me. I feel like a grub in a cocoon! At 01:30 the skipper comes on deck to discuss the weather situation. The wind has increased and should blow with 20kts starting around 06:00 and continuing the entire

day. Alex and I are relieved at 02:00. And as we get up again at 06:00 we find the weather exactly as predicted, covered sky, 20kts wind and rather tall waves. The *eXplorer-senja* plows through the water with 7kts to 9kts on an ideal course. Vigdis and Jørn-Even had spotted a large fishing ship during their watch. We cross a freighter, otherwise just water, sky and us. In the afternoon we arrive at the half mark. Vigdis finishes knitting the second mitten; my socks have grown very little! Alex fights a problem charging the computer. At 22:00 it's our turn to watch. Wind and waves are supposed to diminish during the night.

**Wednesday, July 13.** Last night after dinner the weather check revealed the possibility to avoid a zone of total calm at the southern tip of Svalbard, if we head for Bjørnøya and stay for a day. The helmsman changes course and we cruise in 20kts wind and 100° AWA at a speed of 7kts to 9kts toward the island. Alex and I take the 22:00 watch, fog around us, then clearer weather to the east later on; a light white-blue-pink hole opens in the cloud cover, a magical scene. Around the change of the watch a gorgeous cloudy sky arches above us. At 05:00 we reach the southern tip of Bjørnøya and we follow the western coast. Two hours later, everybody is



up, we drop the anchor in the bay in front of the weather station. After breakfast,



Jørn-Even calls the station; they eat at 11:00, we can come afterwards. All of us take a short nap, then the rifle and the gun

are unpacked and checked, a shot is announced, Jørn-Even takes aim and bang! Yes, the weapon is in good working order and ready for landing.

The dinghy is too small for five people; first Alex and I are to be taken to shore. For the first time we have to climb into and out of the unstable conveyance. I secretly



worry about it, but we manage tolerably, we are seated and on shore we scramble up the scree-covered steep incline without getting wet feet. A snoopy black guillemot watches our maneuver in bewilderment.

Jørn-Even fetches the others, inspects the anchoring of the dinghy once more: it is safe. Far out in the bay the *eXplorer-senja* is waiting. Our first impressions on shore witness of ancient activities on the island,



mining, fishing, whaling. Rusty machines and old buildings all over. Today Bjørnøya accommodates an important weather station Bjørnøya Radio. Nine people live here, pass on weather data



and conduct meteorological research. A friendly member of the team and an interested dog welcome us. Two animals are supposed to sound the alarm in case a polar bear intrudes into the premises. They

live in two cozy dog hutches with a bedroom and a feeding nook. The meteorological rock in the yard charms us: warm stone, sun; wet stone, rain, white stone, snow; no stone, stolen! We have come across similar delightful sense of humor on our trips in northern countries.

We are shown around all of the buildings, in and out. There is a small shop, where traditional souvenirs are on offer: engraved glassware, t-shirts, shopping bags, postcards. They have their own post office, Bjørnøya stamp!



Unfortunately I do not feel well. A sort of faintness attack forces me to sit down and rest a bit. But after a short while I am able to follow the others, to see the cafeteria, the kitchen and walk along the very long hallways. Kick scooters are available for speedy transport! Then we are invited to witness the start of a weather balloon. It must be released within the slot of four minutes. It is prepared in a large hall, filled with gas, the electronic equipment attached. The lady explains that she must be extra careful in strong winds and let go balloon and instrument at the same moment in order to prevent the fine thread from breaking. There is little wind today,



the balloon takes off at great speed; I just catch it as it is disappearing in the sky. After a short visit in the museum, I have to sit down. The others go for a short walk and I wait next to a whale bone and

recover from week knees. Alex takes pic-



tures to let me take part a little in what they have seen: a pink-footed bean goose, two eggs of a ground-nesting bird that

Alex almost trampled, tiny flowers of many colors, minuscule but so beautiful.



After the first exciting shore leave we return to the boat. I do the cooking and prepare a chili con carne served in the cockpit.

**Thursday, July 14.** Vigdis and Jørn-Even hoist anchor at 04:00 in dense fog; they cannot see the buildings of the weather station on the shore, not even the sailboat at anchor in the bay near us that that arrived last night. Alex and I are asleep until 06:00 when we take over the watch. The boat is still enveloped in fog, but the conditions are rather good, steady wind, little current against us. We cruise with an occasional glance at the radar display for many hours close-hauled in order to be able to fall off in the strong wind at the southern tip of Svalbard. Moving about in the heavily heeling boat is taxing; two reefs are tied in. Everybody gets food from the fridge. Once in a while a wave washes over deck, but nobody gets a good shower, just a few splashes: The boat sports a solid closed cover over the cockpit; we can hardly imagine how we would fare on watch in such conditions without it.

Around 09:00 we reach the southern tip of Svalbard. The wind increases rapidly as expected, we fall off as planned and so avert the most uncomfortable heeling. Further north, along the coast we suddenly meet with some difficulties in strong squally wind and turbulent choppy water, chaotic waves: hectic reefing of the genoa, Jørn-Even fights with the rudder, the luffing main sail makes nerve-racking noise, but after a few minutes the wind calms a bit, we run again on a reasonable course and discuss our next destination. We will drop anchor in a bay marked on the chart as good anchoring. There are still some hours to go.

Under a wild sky we cruise along dramatic views. Fog hides the shoreline, dark mountain tops almost reach the clouds, the first glacier lies embedded among the



rocks withdrawn from the water. The weather clears, blue sky appears in the cloud cover. Vigdis and Erlend warm over precooked very tasty bacalao! What a treat to have something warm in the stomach.

Now the engine helps the sails and we leisurely cruise toward the anchorage Letting the autopilot do the work.



It is near midnight. The anchor should be set in less than an hour.

**Friday, July 15.** It takes longer than expected, 01:05 and we are still hours away from the bay Vestvika and our chosen anchorage. The sun stands above the horizon like at 16:00 at home and keeps peeking through the cloud holes time and again.

Finally at 04:25 the anchor is rattling down and is safely set. The boys are satisfied with their work!

At 10:00 Alex and I are up. Make coffee and heat water for tea. As usual we take our time to wake up properly before breakfast and discuss the destination for the day. We decide on the Polish research



station in Hornsundet. After another rich traditional Norwegian breakfast with a large number of ingredients Jørn-Even and Erlend hoist anchor and we leave our first anchorage on Svalbard with a last

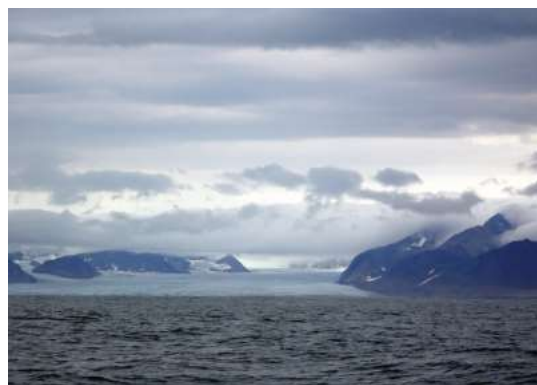


glance to north and south on absolutely flat water.

The engine is running, there is not a wisp of wind. Glaciers show on shore, one close to the other. Hardly any of them



reach the water. Global warming affects them at an alarming rate. Approaching Hornsundet, the wind picks up to a peak of 38kt, white horses ahead, the boat smashes into the waves. There is no way that we could enter Hornsundet with that kind of wind on the nose. We continue to the new destination, a bay in Bellsundet. After two hours the turbulent water is left behind, we continue north in easy conditions, Vigdis bakes raisin buns and prepares the dough for two breads. We round the southern shore of Bellsundet and head



east, the gigantic Recherchen glacier before us. The shallow shore is full of rocks; we cruise rather far out to north. Behind us rain ribbons mark dark traces on the water. After hours we reach the entrance to Bellsundet and turn into its

southern arm. Soon the mighty break of the Recherchen glacier looms ahead of us. The vessel *Recherchen* of a french expedition has named the glacier and the fjord since 1838. Our Norwegian skipper and his kindred crew mock the name: only people with a speech defect or a boiled potato in their mouths can pronounce it! We have no problem with it, of course.

It has started to rain. The glacier gets closer. We home into a small bay, round a promontory and detect a group of walrus on a sandbank. Jørn-Even navigates slowly in their direction. All five of us watch them fascinated, cameras, phones and binoculars in action. The group lies



close together. Two of the colossi are in the water, only their backs are visible. Their tusks are awesome.

It is 21:30. We continue farther into the bay of Vestervågen. Calm water and no wind promise a peaceful night at anchor.

We pass a crooked house on the forlorn beach. We intend to read about it and pay a visit tomorrow.

At 22:00 Jørn-Even indicates on the plotter, where he intends to anchor, Erlend carefully maneuvers the boat to the spot, the chain is released, he anchor set and we lie on position 7°29.64'N 14°33.79'E due west of a small island. Alex sets the



alarm, Vigdis and Erlend serve precooked whale stew and rice, an absolutely scrumptious late dinner. A glass of red wine perfects the meal.

Light rain thrums on the deck, a breeze makes a little sound in the rig from time to time and a light breeze very gently sways *eXplorer-senja*. No other noise around us.

We will have a quiet night.

**Saturday, July 16.** As yesterday, Alex and I are up around 10:00, make coffee and hot water. Shortly after that, we all sit in the cockpit and drink coffee or tea. The weather is perfect, deep blue sky, a few white clouds and almost no wind. At breakfast, it is 11:30, so rather brunch, we decide to go for a walk. Around 12 Jørn-Even takes Alex, me, the luggage and the rifle to shore a bit south of the crooked house at Snatcherpynten. We exchange the rubber boots with hikers, observe a roaming reindeer and wait. On the rocky tun-



dra I detect a funny "hill flower". The Norske Los names it Tuesildre. Small brown mushrooms sprout everywhere.

Soon the others arrive, the *eXplorer-senja*



Is hidden behind the small island, to the left far away the Recherchen glacier. We wander toward the crooked house leaving the gravel of the shore and aiming to walk on the soft tundra. All of a sud-

den, arctic terns fly up and attack us. They nest on the ground and we obviously came too close to their nests. They circle above us, plummet with ear-splitting shrieking, their sharp red beaks uncomfortably close to our heads. Each has his or her



own method of protection! We flee, helter-skelter back to the shore. Finally they stop their onslaught and leave us be. They sit on the gravel for a long time and suspiciously scout us.

In the shelter of the crooked house, we drink coffee and eat a chocolate bar. The so-called Gjøevervilla was built in 1904 by the Norwegian Consul Johannes Gjøever. Today no one remembers what



its purpose had been. We explore its interior, mostly destroyed, only the pit latrine seems to be intact. The administration tries to keep it from collapse.

Close to the house, dozens of kipper wagons lie on the shore. They were probably brought here to be stored. There are no known records of mining in this area. A little ways above the house, we find a few 20<sup>th</sup> century graves. We wonder who



might be buried under this huge wooden cross.

In the shelter of the crooked house, leaning against its warm wall, we drink coffee and eat a chocolate bar.

On our way back we studiously avoid the nesting birds and wander on the shore below a small cliff. A white vein runs



though the slate-like stone and turns the rock into a pretty relief.

Alex and I wait on the shore while Jørn-



Even takes Vigdis and Erlend back to prepare the boat for departure. A sandpiper watches us.

Jørn-Even returns to get us. In the dinghy I very uncomfortably sit on the hiking boots, knees to my breast and the banging of the waves shakes every bone in my body! Suddenly Jørn-Even shouts: a bear, a polar bear! And indeed, there he trots away from us to our left. Unfortunately, the camera is in the backpack. On the boat Alex and I quickly get out of the dinghy and the other three jump in and take off go to see the bear. They bring back great pictures and report that the bear had meanwhile swum from the island to shore! Our dinghy had been absolutely unprotected. We will have to be more careful on shore leaves.

After a self-serve small meal, we start shortly before 18:00. The genoa is rolled out; strong gusty winds are announced. While I'm resting below deck the others experience a wild dance at the exit of Bellsundet: 40kt wind, top boat speed: 14kt and tall waves.

Further out to sea the situation becomes calmer and we take course toward the radio station Isfjord Radio, where we intend to anchor. Alex and I sit in the cockpit and survey the cruise in calm sea and at a



good distance to the coast. The others are taking a rest. Before we reach the entrance to Isfjorden, we are on a shallow shelf strewn with rocks which we carefully circumnavigate. The wind decreases, Jørn-Even starts the engine, Vigdis and Erlend prepare pasta with meatballs in tomato sauce, simply unbeatable. We eat in the cockpit and

head toward the bay behind the radio station. Around 22:00 we round Cape Linné and approach the station of Isfjord Radio. It was built in 1933 to provide communication between the Norwegian settlements on Svalbard and the main land. It was destroyed during the war like all the places on Svalbard, but rebuilt later on. Jørn-Even calls the station and inquires



about landing. Their pontoon is not available. They obviously expect a boat. Erlend steers the boat into the bay, Alex



waits for the sign to drop anchor and at 22:50 he lets it go on position 78°03.83'N 13°37.68'E.

We prepare the boat for the night, Alex sets the anchor alarm and we sit in the cockpit, wine or beer glass in hand and marvel at the landscape in the glorious light of the midnight sun, just a little hidden behind a cloud, causing pink reflections on the lens.



**Sunday, July 17.** The alarm clock wakes Alex and myself at 08:00. Soon we drink coffee or tea in the Cockpit, plan the day and look forward to a tasty breakfast in the restaurant of the hotel at the radio station on another great morning. Jørn-Even has made a reservation. The dinghy ride through oily water takes us to the floating jetty of the station, which is anchored in the many-colored craggy rock. We wander up the ladder to the hotel of the station.



The buffet is exquisite, the personnel keen to replenish the many dishes, the table at the window presents a wide view out to the barren landscape and a flock of eider ducks. We indulge in the good food and

laugh boisterously at the supposed yogurt in Alex's plate. He had ladled waffle dough on his plate and sprinkled it with nuts and seeds. The waffle iron finally converts the mixture into something edi-



ble. Jørn-Even remains with the boat, we four start for a long walk to the lake Linnévatnet. On the first meters three arctic terns attack me. One of them sits on her



wide expanses of swampy tundra. reindeer are grazing, Alex gets water in his shoes as we cross a rivulet in an almost dry riverbed. Occasionally we come across strange circles on the rocky ground. We assume that permafrost has something to do with this phenomenon.

nest. I try to take her picture, but get far too close to her. Two other watchful birds help defend her territory and assail me. Screaming and wildly gesticulating I fall, struggle clumsily to my feet and run uninjured toward the others. They split their sides laughing. The walk takes us over



All of a sudden I miss my sunglasses. I probably knocked them off my head during the bird attack. Vigdis calls Jørn-Even; he is still on land and will look for them. Erlend is our guide; he chooses the way and leads us attentively over the moraine of an old glacier down to the



lake. In the shelter of a small cabin, we rest for a while and enjoy the marvelous view over the still water toward the



mountains.

On our way back we again get too close to nesting birds. This time they scream



and run before us wildly flapping their wings in panic to lead us away from their

nests, a typical performance of the ringed plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*) according to Vigdis' bird book. Bleached reindeer antlers, one with a piece of hairy skull lie



on the ground. Green pincushions with tiny flowers of varied colors bravely fight the hostile conditions of their habitat. The northern pink, the northern saxifrage and the white Svalbard papaver hold out their blossoms to the sun.



Could this be a puffball?



After a four-hour walk, we return to the station along the shore and marvel at the natural sculptures on the beach and in the flat water.

Jørn-Even waits for us at the pontoon. He did find my glasses!



An inquisitive sea gull sits on a rock nearby and watches as Vigdis and Erlend climb into the dinghy and we wait for our turn to get back to the boat. When we arrive, eX-

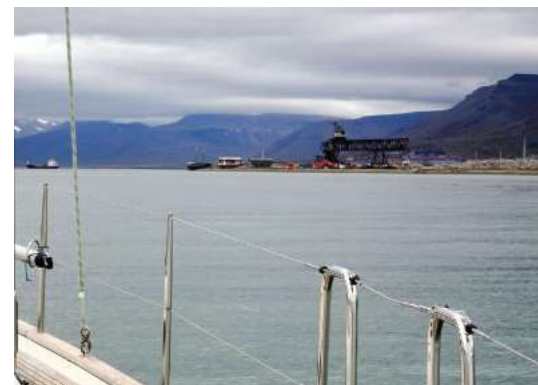
*plorer-senja* is ready and we motor shortly after 15:00 on hardly ruffled water into the Isfjord toward Longyearbyen. The sky darkens, drizzle around us, the visibility a bit hampered. The Russian mining settlement Barentsburg in the Grøn fjord appears on our starboard side. The inhabitants, Russians and Ukrainians still operate the mine, although the yield has been diminishing for years. We pass it; we might visit taking a boat from Longyearbyen.



After about two hours, we reach the approaches to the harbor; the first buildings, a



huge crane and left overs of the mining period appear. At 19:30 we reach the entrance to the harbor, a two-master runs before us, the Hurtigruten ship *Spitzbergen* is moored at the outer pier. The skipper knows exactly where he intends to make



fast. After searching for a good spot for some time, we find a favorable place with shore power and water nearby alongside a

green boat. Landing takes some time; the forecast announces gale for tomorrow, so boat and dinghy need to be secured. The two elderly Bretons are very friendly, but also eager to keep their beautiful boat from any damage. We faithfully follow



their propositions. Alex and I wait for Jørn-Even to pick us up with the car of their friends and to drive us to the restaurant Stationen. A scrumptious meal and after-dinner drinks in the cockpit accompanied by lively discussions add a perfect conclusion of a wonderful day.

**Monday, July 18.** Harbor day. I start writing before 08:00; the others are still asleep. Around 10:00 we have coffee and tea in the cockpit and the chores are distributed: the boat needs to be cleaned, the laundry washed in the apartment of Vigdis' friend, the trash taken away. But first Jørn-Even organizes a piece of wood to make a fender board for our neighbors. And then we all get going. At 15:30 the boat is spic and span, Vigdis, Jørn-Even and Erlend ready to take some time off together. Alex and I go shopping, indulge in coffee and cake and check out what there is to possibly take home as a souvenir or gift. On our way back to the boat I take dozens of pictures. It is warm, far too warm! The display at the gas station shows 15°C and incredibly low prices for gas and diesel. Longyearbyen is tax free. We see the leftovers of the past mining days: the old wooden pylons of the conveyor system soar toward the clouds, rows of multi-colored apartment buildings invite to stay for an extended visit, hundreds of snowmobiles wait for winter time and many dozens of barnacle goose families feed on every grassy spot all over the settlement rest,



feed, watch their young and warily follow us with their eyes.

Toward evening we say goodbye to Er-



lend. He leaves us to spend a second week of vacation with his girlfriend in Oslo. Vigdis and Jørn-Even accompany him to the airport. Later on Jørn-Even picks us up and we take a long shower in the apartment of Vigdis' friend. The washing machine is still in operation. We talk about our voyage north. Before we return to the boat, the two spoil us with a car ride to the last coal mine in operation up in the nearby mountains. The view is simply breathtaking.

From high up the wide valley unrolls to the bay and beyond in the curious cloudy evening light. Behind us the valley disappears in the mountains.

Firn ice and rocks depict a wild impressive tableau on the mountain slope.



Time and again Jørn-Even stops the car and lets me take dozens of exceptional pictures. We pass several large kennels, where professional attendants take care of the hundreds of sled dogs during summer who will make lots of tourists happy on extended excursions during their winter vacation.

And huge flocks of barnacle geese everywhere on the wide valley bottom. profit during the short summer months to raise



their young.

Close to the road along a small riverbed in the midst of cotton grass the per-



mafrost, like a monster raises up and bares its sharp icy teeth in the earth mouths.

A short tour to the airport takes us passed the campground. Next to the official

tents, tourists pitch their own tents. Vigdis tells us that accidents with polar bears



happen every year. The camp site lies outside the city limits, where no polar bear warning system is installed and visitors are often unaware of the great danger coming from famished bears. There has been a fatal accident last summer, certainly not the



last one!

This last loop concludes the sightseeing tour of Longyearbyen and vicinity. Tired from all the work and the many new unforgettable impressions we go to bed early. It is 23:30.

**Tuesday, July 19.** Breakfast in the cockpit and discussion of the plan for the day. Vigdis and Jørn-Even are in charge of the wash, the food, several other errands for the boat and safety stuff. Alex and I walk to town; we also have a list for errands, camera cable, pharmacy, post office, wool, maybe presents and a jacket for myself. We meet Vigdis by chance at the checkout, as she fills plastic bag over plastic bag with provisions! We carry everything to the apartment. Alex and I pay a visit to the museum although we are both already tired. But it is well worth the effort; the exhibits are exquisitely done, many stuffed animals, descriptions in English, a host of information on innumerable topics. We go back to the center, where Alex profits from the good internet connection in the restaurant. He keeps fighting com-



puter problems (Garmin charts). For days he has pondered over them, written mails



and made phone calls. He so came to some hopefully fruitful conclusions. I go to the apartment, where we revise the menu plan Vigdis has prepared for the next 25 days. We fill the gaps with my menu ideas and mark down what we still have to get. We meet Alex in the store, wander through the alleys list in hand. It is unbelievable how it all adds up. We carry everything to the apartment, sort the purchase and stow the fridge. Vigdis prepares more food for freezing, Alex is at the computer and I rest, half dead in an easy chair! Jørn-Even arrives around 19:30, we carry some bags to the car and go to eat. In the Kroa we have drinks on the terrace, while we are waiting for a free table. Soon we are called in, order clipfisk for all four of us and indulge in a delicious meal. Alex and I wander back to the boat, Vigdis and Jørn-Even remain in the Apartment. Driving with so much alcohol does not seem advisable here and our own stomachs do need some exercise!!

**Wednesday, July 20.** Right after 10:00 Vigdis and Jørn-Even come on board with fresh bread. During breakfast we decide to leave toward evening. Last chores are assigned. Alex and I will rent bikes. The procedure is complicated. After a very long phone call Teresa, the Czech girl in the harbor office finally succeeds in liberating two bikes for rent, although she is not in charge of this task. We pedal to town, buy a few things and wait for Vigdis and Jørn-Even. Sitting in the sun on a log in front of one of the buildings we get very warm, almost hot and get rid of jackets and sweaters. Unbelievable t-shirt weather!

We visit the Polar expedition Museum together. Innumerable documents, newspaper clippings, videos, comments and objects tell the incredible stories of Nansen, Andrée, The Duke of Abruzzi, Cook and Peary, Wellmann, Amundsen, Ellsworth, Nobile and the airship "Italia". For lunch we return to the shipping center and eat a bowl of soup in the café Fruenen. Jørn-Even and Alex go to the store to shop for tonight's grill dinner at anchor, Vigdis needs another pair of woolen socks and then we go to the apartment, pack the frozen food and the rest of the clean cloths and bring everything to the car (Vigdis has prepared everything and cleaned the apartment!). Alex and I start on our bikes. Alex takes a putative shortcut, a well-known procedure, dead end, back to the starting point and as fast as possible follow the car. Jørn-Even is waiting for us, Alex proceeds to the parking lot, where the car will remain, leaves the bike and gets into the car. Jørn-Even will take it to the marina after depositing the car. I take the bike back to the harbor office, where it belongs.

On the boat everybody is busy stowing things away. Vigdis manages the food, serene and focused, she finds places for everything in a short time. Admirable. Jørn-Even organizes two boards for the jerrycans at the reeling, Alex helps with filling the water tanks, lashing the jerrycans, I help where I'm needed.

At 18:15 we are ready to go, happy to soon flee the turmoil of busy Longyearbyen and its harbor. A large cruise ship is moored at the outer pier behind us, another one has just left, disappears on the horizon; in the bay a number of cargo vessels are at anchor.

The friendly French neighbor thanks Jørn-Even again for the fender boards, waves and wishes a safe trip.

The Dutch *Noorderlicht* leaves right behind us.

Heading for Trygghamna, Safe Harbor



across the Isfjorden in a short fjord at its northern entrance, we say goodbye to Longyearbyen and the many tourists.

Now we are on our own. There will be no more shopping. Only Ny Ålesund pro-

vides diesel and water and has a small souvenir shop.

Our destination is only 20nm distant. It is cold in the cockpit and getting late. The



sky is covered with dark clouds; we postpone the grill dinner to tomorrow.

Toward 20:30 the striking horn of the mountain Alkhornet marks the entrance to

Trygghamna, the Safe Harbor. It gives the mountain its name, a prominent bird cliff like a horn and a large colony of guillemots breeding on it, also the hatchery of hun-



dreds, maybe thousands of kittiwakes. The cabin right below the horn was probably built by Karl Eliassen from Tromsø during World War I. It was sold to the trapper Hilmar Nøis in 1920, who spent the winter here.

Alex takes the helm to the anchorage, Vigdis and I prepare a vegetable soup for dinner.

On our way deeper into the bay, a tree-masted old sailing vessel lies at anchor, where the chart marks a historical wreck, a place that attracts divers. In the distance ahead of us the Kjerulfbreen appears. The book tells us that we will find good anchorage all the way at the end of the fjord. An enchanting landscape spreads



before us, dark mountains with the typical pinnacles, soaring peaks of hard rock that



withstands erosion far longer than the softer rock around them; they gave the island its name, Spitsbergen, pointed mountains. There are bleak hillsides



showing the deep ruts of erosion and the glacier tongue that almost reaches the water. Jørn-Even prepares the anchor and drops it in 13m depth on position 78°16.0N 13°46.0E. It is 21:45.

Alex installs the anchor watch, the test is successful, a piercing howl just a bit softer than a fire engine; we laugh and quickly cover our ears.

Four other boats anchor here, Two rather large ones, tourist ships, the two sailboats on our port side, tiny dots below the mountain in the soft evening light.

Arctic terns hunt *eXplorer-senja* and a very active flock of guillemots chase each other playfully nearby.

With the mighty glacier and the impressive mountains in view we enjoy our dinner in the gas-oven-heated cockpit, veg-



etable soup and sausage, quite prosaic considering the magical panorama.

**Thursday, July 21.** Time for me to write the blog. The others are still asleep.

Before they wake up I take a few pictures of our anchorage. Our boat rocks gently on



the flat water

One of the neighbors on our port side has already left; there is nobody on deck on the other one, the crew probably still asleep or having breakfast.

In front of us the still water reflects the mountains with their typical pinnacles.

Behind us distant mountains at the horizon way outside the bay.

The sky is covered, but the clouds are not



too dark and two huge blue holes show above us and spend light. We are so incredibly lucky with the weather. We weigh anchor at 11:40. Huge garlands



of kelp come up with it, meter-long and paperback-wide. Vigdis vigorously fights off the salad. I can only see her back and Alex watching and intending to help if

necessary. We are ready to move and head out to sea. The anchor alarm goes off; Neither Alex nor I had thought of deactivating it. I manage to quiet it only after a full minute; Jørn-Even at the helm is watching my fumbling, a broad grin on his face.



Tiny pieces of ice float on the water. Our wake shows a quirky pattern. At the entrance to Trygghamna the Norwegian tourist ship *Sjøveien* has unloaded a group of its guests on the shore. We do not begrudge their outing and are looking forward to our next destination, the bay of Farmhamna. Out of Isfjorden we veer to north-northwest and reach the bay, where the Lund's Cabin is located, planning to try and meet the Danish family who lives here. The anchor is set, we climb into the dinghy and beach it to the left of the cabin complex. Three people have emerged and walk toward us, two adults



and a little boy, about five years old. The parents hold sticks above their heads; arctic terns must nest on the ground close to the cabin. They attack with piercing cries. As we go on shore, the three turn and walk back. Jørn-Even follows them. The man just tells him that this is private ground and no visitors welcome, but yes a stroll away from their quarters is O.K. We arm ourselves, Jørn-Even carries the gun, Vigdis and Alex grab an oar and I keep close to Alex. The birds follow us only a short way; we walk south on the small peninsula along the water. The vegetation is similar to that on Bjørn Island, tundra, rocky patches, small flower cushions, mushrooms, various mosses and lichens, reindeer droppings at every step, but no animals, a few bones and pieces of antlers. We come across some rocks in funny shapes, a camel head on Svalbard? In about a kilometer we see a small cabin and head toward it. Watercourses and small lakes pervade the level ground. Now at low tide, they are mere trickles and puddles. A jumble of driftwood, small and large, lie far from the shore witness violent storms with tremendous wind speeds. The supposed cabin is a kind of cage or shipping crate, hard to tell what it really was used for.

At 18:15 we are back on the boat, get up the anchor and move a bit north to stay over night in very calm water in Eidembukta. In less than half an hour we reach our destination and drop the anchor in the neighborhood of a beautiful large boat,

position 78°22.1N 12°46.2E. Jørn-Even believes it to be a Swan, Alex checks its AIS, it is 59 foot long, its MMSI number is 316. We will have to check its flag when we are back where the internet works again.



The crew is on shore, we see them far away through the binoculars on the shore left of the glacier. Someone is in the water!!

We enjoy before dinner drinks in the cozy cockpit, a HR 42 from Bodø joins us, third in the anchor bund. Jørn-Even prepares the grill on the reeling, but he takes

his time to fire up. Our hosts are used to eat late. Vigdis makes a wonderful salad, salmon, spareribs and sausage are ready for the grill. As Jørn-Even serves the fish and the meat from the grill, one of the sausages falls into the water! In a dangerous looking stunt he manages to retrieve it. We can eat. It is almost 22:00. Shortly after dinner I go to bed, the others keep chatting for a long time yet.



**Friday, July 22.** Everybody is up a bit earlier than usual. A fourth boat has arrived late at night. We already have tea and coffee in the cockpit at 09:00 and observe the Swan as it weights anchor and heads south. The crew of the HR from Bodø comes along side in their dinghy, a man and a couple. He is Norwegian and the couple does speak the language but with a foreign accent. Vigdis and Jørn-Even talk to them for a good while. They report that there is a lot of ice in Kungsfjorden to the north. They want to go on shore for a walk and take off. We take the anchor up and get going. Our destination is the walrus colony at Poolepynten at the eastern shore of the long Prins Karls Forland Island in the Forland sund. The sea is flat like oil. We cross the sound with the noise of the engine! A cruise ship appears on our starboard side obviously also heading for the walrus. Around 13:00 the *Scenic Eclipse* overtakes us. She is an exceptionally nice looking ship. About an hour later, Jørn Even steers behind her stern north toward the shore of the island. The crew of the black colossus opens huge hatches and prepares the RIBs for the shore leave of its guests. We fear a mass exodus, but for the time only five people man the vessels



and go to shore to watch for polar bears, an absolutely necessary safety precaution. Nevertheless we deiced against going to shore ourselves and observe a few animals, six or seven of them, closely huddled together on the sandy beach. Once in a while one of the gigantic beasts moves a little. In our book we read that the color of

their skin changes with its temperature: normally they are brownish, when leaving the cold water they are gray and when they lie on the relatively warm sand in the sun they turn pink. Indeed, one of the animals shows its pink belly. It was not in the water lately. There is not much more to see, so we cruise on toward Engelsbukta, where we intend to stay overnight. I cook porridge with raisins, nuts, a spoonful of butter on each serving and sprinkled with cinnamon and sugar, a welcome warming lunch.

The mountains of the Prins Karls Forland



Island are covered with many glaciers that ornament the dark range with bizarre patterns. The sun sends a few rays through a hole in the cloud-cover and the enchanting black-white-blue-gray shades

shine only sporadically. Most of the time we relish the black and white images and make out figures, faces and all kinds of animals, while heading for the narrow and flat passage on the western side of the sound we must cross in the distance on our way to Engelsbukta. Around 16:30 we reach the Forlandrevet, where only small boats can pass. We furl the sails for the crossing. Jørn-Even takes the helm, Vigdis and Alex with phone and iPad follow closely the course through the 4m



deep and narrow channel. I knit and leave the charge to the others relaxed!

After the channel we unfurl the genoa and for almost an hour and a half we cruise northeast, close-hauled, wind 10 kts, the engine helping once in a while, speed 5.6kts over ground across Forlandsundet toward Engelsbukta. Fog hides the shore beneath the mountains on the island. A cloud bank moves below the top in front of the dark inclines.

At 17:30 the bay is close, we turn into it toward the spot Jørn-Even has marked for anchoring. A cabin stands on the northern shore. Empty rivers meander out of the stark valleys down to the sea.

After 46nm on the water Alex drops the anchor, Jørn-Even sets it and we hang safely on position 78°50.8'N 11°49.2'E at



the northern side of the bay. Peace and quiet around us. *eXplorer-senja* floats on

flat greenish glacial milk, colored rocks adorn the slopes in pale light, the binocu-



lars reveal a reindeer with her calf on the shore grazing on the sparse vegetation. Alex moves the dinghy away from the stern and out of the range of the grill on the reeling. Jørn-Even fires up, I prepare a



salad and in little time we enjoy a scrumptious meal with chicken breasts and sausages in the warm cockpit. It has been a long day. We postpone the walk to



the cabin. Tomorrow we will take our time to hike along the shore and inspect it. We are tired. Not long after the meal and a few moments chatting we turn in, the magical scene of the dark mountains

and the imposing tongue of the Comfortless glacier that almost reaches down to the water in our minds.

