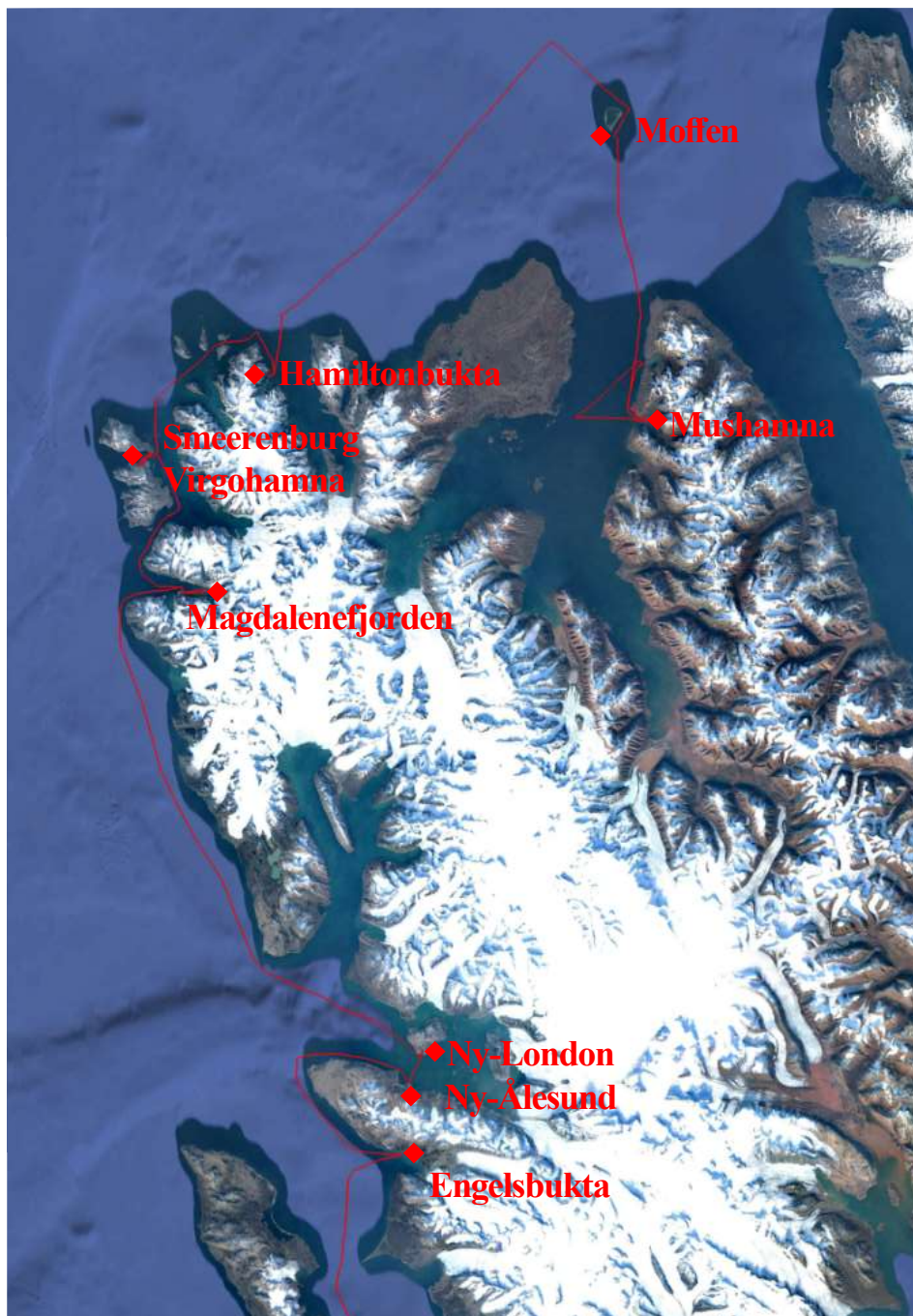


2nd Report: Engelsbukta
78°50.8'N 11°49.2'E
Mushamna
79°39.3'N 14°16.3'E
July 23 to 30, 2022

Route overview



Saturday, July 23. Everyone is up at 09:00. We have a simple breakfast and take the dinghy to shore. The weather is gray today, fog above the glacier, visibility at our level however acceptable. We take the dinghy pretty far up to keep it safe with the rising tide. Our boat is hardly moving on the oily water. Jørn-Even observes the surroundings carefully, no polar bears in sight. Nevertheless, we take one of the survival suits along, just in case. Vigdis carries it like a backpack. Even if a bear damages the dinghy while we are far away, one of us can reach the boat swim-



ming!

Heading for the cabin we passed yesterday, we first hike over tundra to a gigantic riverbed. It is almost dry now, just a minuscule brook runs down to the sea; there are big enough stepping stones to keep us

dry-footed. Reindeer antlers, flowers, moss and lichen cause me to stop and



take pictures at every other step. I take my time, let the others go ahead and marvel at those riches: the yellow saxifrage glows among the stones, the mountain sorrel stretches up its red flowers, colorful mosses and lichen cover the ground or depict



patterns on stones.

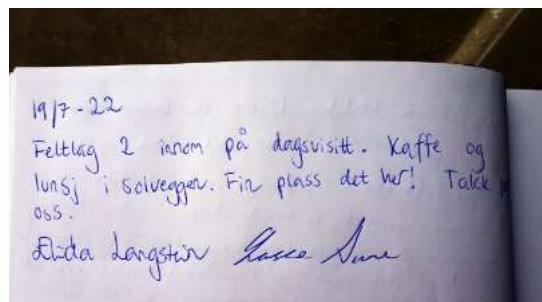
The others have already reached the cabin. I make haste; Jørn-Even is about to climb the steps to the terrace and open the door. We go inside and are surprised how warm the room is.

The furnishings suggest that this is a popular place for getaways: wood stove,



beds, table and chairs, a small kitchen with a gas stove still burning! Obviously scientists from Ny-Ålesund come here to spend their leisure time. Jørn-Even turns the gas off, Vigdis takes a picture of the

last entry in the guest book and they decide to tell the harbor master in Ny-Ålesund about it. Such slovenliness could torch the cabin and everything around it. We detect an outhouse attached to one of the walls. The terrace with its table and bench offer a fabulous view. A seal plays around a rock near the shore. We rest a little while.



On our way back we marvel at the mass of driftwood on the sandy delta of the river with its deeply washed out water-courses, boards and trunks, leftovers of a boat. Large amounts of dry kelp far up on



the rocky beach bear witness to violent storms.

At 11:20 we are back on the boat, the anchor comes up at 11:50 and we are on our way, 784nm after our departure from Tromsø. There is no wind.

We enjoy a second breakfast and relish our togetherness, leisurely casting a glance at the plotter or the iPad.

The entrance to Kungsfjorden offers a curious quaint picture: white clouds hide the mountain tops on the northern shore beneath a dark cloud cover. We come across the first small and tiny ice bergs, ice floes rather. More ice appears in the approaches to Ny-Ålesund. The glaciers further in the fjord have calved earlier on.



Jørn-Even calls the harbor master and inquires about a space in the harbor. He tells him to moor along the red service ship *Teisten LF4127*. The crew gets busy taking fenders and mooring lines from the holds and the helmsman steers *eXplorer-senja* carefully toward the harbor entrance, avoiding every little piece of ice.



The *Azimut* from Danzig takes the entire space at the pier in front of the service ship. The harbor is tiny, but our skipper manages the maneuver with great skill and at 15:00 our boat lies safely fast along the service ship.

A picture from the Norske Los, the Norwegian Harbor Guide 2001, vol. 7, p.242



shows how limited the space is in the minuscule harbor.

The boys get busy hosing down the boat. Alex picks up a hose with a funny end: a screw is glued in. Unsuspecting Jørn-Even simply cuts it off and immediately receives a sniff of the most disgusting stink: The hose belongs to the crew of the Polish boat who obviously have used it to

doctor their waste tank! Alex glues the screw back in place and takes the hose of the harbor and fills the water tanks. The harbor master shows up at 16:00 as promised and works the diesel pump. The jerrycans are filled on the pier, carried across the deck of the service ship and heaved on deck of *eExplorer-senja* and tied to the reeling. We now have 560l of diesel on board!!

Vigdis tells the harbor master about the burning gas stove in the cabin. He knows the culprits and will take them to task. The *Azimut* is leaving and the *Hiraeth*, an elderly Wauquiez 42 with British flag takes the place. She was moored at the floating jetty that has no access to the shore. She belongs to a young couple from England, Sally and Miles, who are on a long voyage to Australia. We haul our boat alongside the *Hiraeth*, since the



service ship will leave tomorrow morning at 08:00 and we would like to sleep late. Vigdis has prepared chicken Masala with fresh vegetables and rice. Shortly after 17:00 we are at table and enjoy the scrumptious meal. All four of us take a short nap; the bar opens at 20:00. On Saturday evenings and only then, inhabitants and sailors are welcome to gather for a drink, to dance and celebrate. The tourists in town by cruise ship are not allowed to come. What a coincidence! We certainly will take the opportunity to spend a special evening!

We briefly read about Ny-Ålesund before we go. The town was starting point for expeditions to the North Pole by airship in the 19th century. The Swedish explorer August Andrée, the American Walter Wellman and the famous Roald Amundsen together with the Italian Umberto Nobile started their expeditions from Ny-Ålesund.

The story is complicated, but very accurately documented. We have seen and read about these crazy undertakings in the Museum in Longyearbyen. Present-day Ny-Ålesund was founded in 1917 by the coal mining company Kings Bay Kull. The business was never really lucrative and was abandoned after a terrible accident with twenty-one casualties in 1962. The village eventually developed into a research station. Scientists from all over the world work here today. 30 to 35 people live in town year-round. Tourism has become a factor lately.

Shortly before 20:00 we head toward the bar. We are far too early, the place is empty! Black curtains cover the windows to keep out the daylight and table lamps in changing colors create the dusky ambiance of a bar. Slowly the tables are occupied. Sally and Miles join us, the noise is unspeakable! Of course people dance, on the floor and on the tables, very entertaining to watch. After two servings of beer, gin tonic and tea (all the beverages cost 25NOK, 2.50sfr.) and long discussions we take our leave and let the boisterous bar crowd continue the Saturday hustle and bustle. It is midnight.

Sunday, July 24. This morning I was up after everybody else; bar evenings are no longer my thing!

The weather leaves much to be desired, low stratus, fortunately no rain. A cruise ship has arrived; it is the *World Navigator*. We briefly drink coffee and tea and head for the store, hoping that it has not been emptied by the tourists. But the shelves are well-stocked; goods were delivered a few days ago. There are cheap and rather expensive souvenirs, a modest selection of provisions and toiletry. I buy two ??, we return to the boat and have breakfast. The service ship moves and lets a small



tourist ship take its place on the pier, to allow its guests to come on board. Jørn-Even and Alex are very interested in the state-of-the-art vessel. The skipper invites them on board shows them around and answers their questions.



Later on we return to the store to buy a few items. I take pictures on the main road: an old shed on the shore, old homes, the bar and the hotel.



I write a postcard for my sister and drop it in the mailbox at the northernmost post office in the world

A car sports a large sticker of the Fish Festival in Bessaker. We wonder how it arrived here. We have vivid memories of the pace and the event.



Back on the pier, Alex observes the departure of a cruise ship, the mooring of another one.

Jørn-Even hoses down the deck, Vigdis makes bread dough and goes to take a shower in the service building. Then we pay a visit to the *Hiraeth* and invite Sally and Miles to come on board the



eXplorer.senja exchange sailing experiences about the pros and cons of both boats. Miles explains the three levels of fun reported : fun 1: all went well, no special memory, no incentive to report; fun 2: something went wrong; after a few weeks it is reported as a great happening; fun 3: a terrible mishap occurred; after a few months the story becomes a great tale told with fervor.

Sally and Miles take off on their planned journey. We make room for their maneuver and moor the boat at the pier in their place. Jørn-Even bakes two frozen pizzas from the store for dinner, two more are in the freezer for later. A French sailboat *Tarka* has arrived and is about to make fast. Alex helps with the lines and the electric cable. The skipper tells him that they have observed a polar bear with two cubs just in front of the boat in the **water**!! So good for the paying passengers. We go for a hike to the mast, where the airship *Norge* was fastened in 1920. A small cemetery is nearby. Back in town we catch a few glimpses of every-day life: two women relax in a hot tub almost hidden behind a wooden wall on a terrace, a woman on a kick scooter trains her sled dogs. The visit to the museum is very instructive. The exhibits show a wealth of themes and documents on life in Ny-Ålesund during the period of coal mining and exhibitions. On the first floor huge gas cylinders are on display; pictures of horses drawing sleds over snow-covered tracks show how 4800 such monsters were brought

her to fill the airship, mind-boggling! I did not take pictures, the light was not good enough. However, one great shot from the internet I want to add ((by Harvey Barrison from Massapequa, NY, USA - Ny-Ålesund_2013 06 07). It shows the impressive surroundings of Ny-Ålesund and the typical conduits on stilts, which are built in polar regions, since cables and water hoses cannot be buried in the permafrost ground.



Drinks and discussions in the comfortable cockpit conclude Sunday evening.

Monday, July 25. Alex and I go take a shower. Everybody is up rather early. Fog hides the opposite shore, where we intend to visit Ny-London. The place is famous. A wealth of old equipment can be seen of a marble quarry in operation at the beginning of the 20th century. A number of houses were moved to Ny-Ålesund after the enterprise was abandoned; They are still in good shape today. We put out to sea without breakfast; it is 08:45. Behind us another cruise ship, the *Hanseatic Spirit*, lies at the outer pier. It must have arrived late at night.



Soon fog is all around us. A few ice

floes show up; fortunately they are easily detected on the flat water despite impaired visibility. Alex goes on ice watch to detect even the small pieces. Half an hour later we reach the bay of Ny-London on Blomstrandhalvøya. A two-master lies at anchor. Part of its crew and guests romps about on land in the vicinity of the small place. One crew member is up on the mizzen mast. There must be something wrong with the radar that needs to be fixed immediately, a wise precaution in such fog.



We have breakfast, elaborate as traditional in Norway and take the dinghy to shore only after the large ship has left. A few houses stand close together quite a way up the incline. The largest of them is very well preserved. Despite Jørn-Even's effort we cannot go in. Doors and windows are locked and blocked to thwart



nosy polar bears and tourists. A vast number of rusted material from the times of marble quarrying in the 1920ies stand scattered on a large area. It is unbelievable what was brought here. We see the remains of steam engines, boilers, even some tracks of a rail road leading to the landing stage high up above the water with a wooden crane to load the ships. Jørn-Even

dares a precarious crossing!
The quarry never payed off; the marble was unusable, crumbly caused by permafrost.
Apart from rusty material I find wonderfully uplifting subjects, lustrous lichen,



A perfect exmple of alpine bistort and a



lovely pad of saxifrage snugly imbedded between warming rocks.
We return to the boat and weigh anchor around 13:00. Ice bergs of many shapes



and colors are all around accompany us, slowly drifting out of Kungsfjorden. They present a bewitching spectacle. The dark spots stem from dirt and gravel picked up on the glacier's way down to the sea. The fog has lifted, visibility is much improved.

About 14:00 the *Hanseatic Spirit* crosses



our path. She is on her way to the 14th of July glacier.

A late light lunch with yogurt and granola keeps our stomachs from grumbling.

On the shore on our right hand side one glacier tongue after another appears between tall mountains below dark wisps of fog. We can hardly look our fill at this wild strange beautiful landscape.



22nm to go until the entrance to Magdalenefjorden. The sun comes out around 17:00 and shines above the mountains; the glaciers present the lustrous blue of their ice. A sailboat crosses us on its way



south. Slowly we get closer to the entrance to Magdalenefjorden. The southern nose of the fjord appears. After rounding the cape we see far ahead across from the glacier the peninsula Gravneset; behind it we will look for a safe anchorage.



It takes another hour and Alex steers the boat to the marked point; Jørn-Even drops the anchor in 15m depth. At 19:15 we have safely arrived in the small bay on position 79°33.5'N 11°02.2'E; no one else around. 79°33.5'N 11°02.2'E. Jørn-Even takes the opportunity to go on shore



to burn rubbish. First he inspects an ice floe. Two guillemots take a rest. They are rather trustful; only one of the pair seems



to consider flight. On shore, Jørn-Even lights a fire with the rubbish. Later this evening he will get what was not burned.



Alex cooks chili con carne, I compose the daily blog. After dinner we go for walk. Close to shore a mini mountain adorns



the flat rocky beach. *eXplorer-senja* hardly moves before the spectacular panorama.

We walk to the cabin of the Sysselmann. It is one of a number of places where cabins house overseers who are supposed to make sure that visitors abide by the regulations. Both buildings are closed today; doors are padlocked and windows made safe against polar bear intrusion. A stack of wood was lately sawed, fresh sawdust the witness.

The chopping block is ready waiting for the next overseers to do more work. The surroundings of the cabin are special. A strange very flat green light depression is lined by sandy ground. Obviously tundra is in the process of building up. The green surface is soft and a little swampy. Visitors are asked not to walk on it. The sandy beach toward the open seas is



strewn with large round stones. Waves were busy for a very long time! Huge



piles of stones tower near the water; certainly the work of violent storms.

We walk back to the other side. A large area on the peninsula is fenced off. The remains of an ancient whaling station and burial grounds were found here. Jørn-Even approaches the wooden trestle to read



what is written. Immediately three screeching arctic terns attack him over and over again. Gun over head he takes his time unimpressed! We keep a safe distance and watch him laughing.

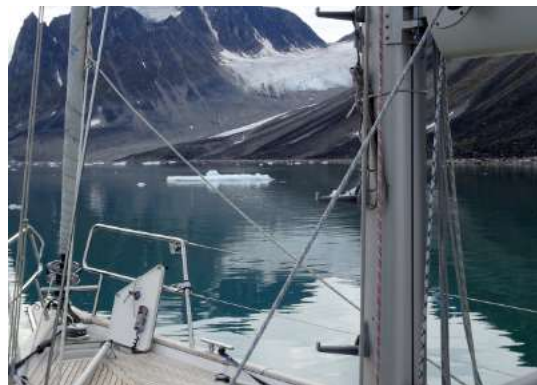
Back on the boat we enjoy a peaceful evening, talking wine glass in hand. Guillemots circle the boat. They come and go depicting funny patterns on the oil water depending on the speed of their paddling.



Tuesday, July 26. 07:00, the others are still asleep. I hear noise through the water and spy the *Nordstjernen* far back in the fjord on the opposite shore. She offers her guests the view of the Waggonbreen, the cart track glacier hidden from us. Behind us the French *Aztec Lady* from Grandville is at anchor. She must have arrived late at



night. Ice floes keep coming at us, bigger and more numerous than last night.



08:45, Alex makes coffee and tea. The others did not yet show up.

The sun shines through a layer of fleece clouds, blue sky between banks of clouds. After breakfast we observe the RIBs tak-

ing the tourists of *Nordstjernen* to shore. We are glad to have had our shore leave yesterday and were spared from sharing the place with a horde of other people. Magdalenefjorden is next to Ny-Ålesund and Longyearbyen most frequent destina-



tion for ships on Svalbard.

Around midday the tourists return to their ship, the dinghies are heaved on deck by crane with the drivers.

At 12:30 the *Nordstjernen* weighs anchor and I watch her maneuver as she turns her nose to the exit of the fjord with the help

of the anchor and slowly cruises out of the bay to the open water.

Vigdis and Jørn-Even prepare their trip first to the glacier and then back to the



sandy shore of the peninsula to hike to the Gully glacier. They are soon on their way. We stay on board, watch them occasionally. Alex sleeps, I knit.

When Vigdis and Jørn-Even are back it is

our turn to see the Waggonbreen. What an adventure. We board the dinghy and go, both a bit nervous. It is the first time for us to take the dinghy on an outing on our own. We closely observe the ice in the water heading for the northern shore of the fjord with its glacier tongue in the valley between the dark mountains.

Alex does not steer closer to the land. We stay at a safe distance from the larger icebergs, who knows what shape, maybe razor-sharp edges the water hides of the un-



derwater berg. Our dinghy is made of rubber!

The tension is rising. We should soon see the Cart Track glacier. It is very cold; we

distinctly feel the vicinity of its huge masses of ice. We cruise further along the shore. The mountain on our starboard side will soon no longer keep the glacier from

our eyes. And here it is. We advance toward it for another while; Alex stops the engine and we just marvel at this spectacle. The landscape is simply incompara-



mountain. The water in front of the collapse is covered with small bergs, floes and pieces of ice. The glacier must have calved lately. Craggy blue and white ice



we re back on the boat. The *Aztec Lady* is still here. 16:00, Vigdis serves pizza!



With the warm meal in our stomachs we weigh anchor and head out of Magdalenefjorden out to sea destination Virgohamna.



ble, the gigantic glacier stunningly beautiful. Its two tongues hug a tall pointed



and the dark nose that balances a rock is such an enchanting sight.

It is time to return. After a good half hour



It is 16:45. There are quite a few miles to cover. The wind has picked up a little. On the open water blue-white sky shines above us. We turn a bit East along the shore toward Bjørnfjorden. We pass sea marks on both sides of the narrow pas-



sage, a rare sight on Svalbard. Large ships also take the route between the mainland and the island Danskøya, probably the reason for marking difficult passages. We sight a depot of diesel barrels on the shore, ready for possible rescue ac-

tions by helicopter; the Sysselmann organizes such storing places. Above the station on our starboard side a huge glacier flows around a small mountain. How long will the hug last?



The *Scenic Eclipse* appears ahead of us. She obviously is on her way south through the narrow passage and will cross

us. On the western shore one glacier after another lies embedded between craggy mountains, all of them singular in shape



and colors. Impressive terminal moraines, huge heaped up masses of sand and gravel illustrate the dramatic melting of their ice. Global warming is all around us. In the sunshine the present glorious pic-

tures. The "eye" in the ice mystifies us: how was it formed? What lies hidden beneath it?



We continue north along the coast of Danskøya. The sun has disappeared, dark clouds swirl in the sky. Around 18:00 we turn east into shallow water at the north-

ern tip of the island. Behind us the huge Fram glacier on the main island shows its wild face, before us the bay of our destination. The *Aztec Lady* is at anchor, her two dinghies are cruising along the shore. Carefully Alex steers the boat deeper into the bay pretty close to the shore. Jørn-Even directs him to his chosen spot and drops the anchor in 9m depth. He lets out 50m of chain and we have safely arrived on position 79°43.3'N 10°54.6'E. Very



soon after anchoring Vigdis detects a polar bear on the shore. We watch him for a long time. He romps about between the rocks, seems to eat something hidden behind a boulder. He wanders along the beach, takes to the water, swims a little and appears



to dive for something. We are terribly excited!

After the anchor dram Vigdis makes omelets. The bear is still around. We observe his movements while we eat. A third boat has anchored near us. Jørn-Even calls them on the radio and tells them about the bear on shore. The crew is British, they have been here two days ago and have already seen the roaming bear.

We enjoy a glass of wine in the warm cockpit and keep watching the bear. He starts going up the slope, carefully climbing higher and higher, one paw after another. We



can hardly believe what we see! He slowly continues zigzagging up. Step by step he approaches a bird colony as Vigdis makes out through the binoculars. He seems to strike at birds. The tiny white speck above the snow patch is indeed "our" polar bear! The increasing distance and the murky light unfortunately cause a bit blurry pictures. It is time to turn in and to review the many impressions of a rather long day.



Wednesday, July 27. We sleep late and wake up to dreary rainy misty morning. Another boat has arrived, the *Ocean-B* with a green hull and German flag, a peculiar vessel. The British boat is still here as well.



After breakfast we take the dinghy to the spot on the shore, where we have seen the

bear yesterday. He is nowhere to be seen this morning.

Virgohamna is a special place; the remains of a whaling station, activities of trappers and polar expeditions of many centuries are all around. The Norwegian authorities safeguard it against tourist invasion coupled with theft. Jørn-Even had to apply for a special permit to visit the site. The sysselmann in Longyearbyen handed out a written document. The sailboats in the bay are occasionally checked. On shore we walk around the large area steeped in history with its innumerable objects and constructions of passed activities.

The people of the *Ocean -B* are also here. It is a small group of researchers with their

spouses and the crew of the chartered boat. They are on their own geological expedition. The skipper and the crew are Polish, they talk to us, a very friendly exchange. Footpaths lead through the place, numbers indicate explanations on a poster. The circuit takes us passed a series of try pots, cauldrons to melt the blubber, that Dutch whalers of the 17th century have left, the so-called Harlinger Kokerij. The metal pots were embedded in three stone



duction and an apparatus to fill gas are left. He disappeared together with two



At some distance lie rusty parts and wood of the construction of the airship station and behind them the anchoring cairns for the balloon of the American Wellmann can be seen. He planned to fly to the North Pole in 1906, 1907 and 1909. The hangar was



constructions, two next to each other. The Swede Andrée had constructed an airship station in 1896/97. He intended to reach the North Pole with the hydrogen-filled balloon Örmén. A few parts of the hangar, nails, nuts, bolts, wire, a heap of rusted metal shavings from his gas pro-



companions. 33 years later the bodies were found and his detailed diary.



destroyed every winter and re-erected the following year. Wellmann constructed his own gas production where Andrée had his before. The leftovers are still recognizable. He never reached the North Pole as well.

And there is the stone base of Pikes' house and the oven door. He had built it



in 1888 on the site of the Dutch Harlinger Kokerij. Later on Andrée, Wellmann and a number of trappers lived in it. In 1925 it was dismantled and transported to Barentsburg.

We ponder the dangers, the hardship and the craziness of all of these undertakings. It is simply inconceivable how people could have had the courage, the stamina, the perseverance and the will power to face those self-imposed challenges.

The Swedish friends of Vigdis and Jørn-Even, Jeannette and Frederik on their *Bush-point*, a Boréal 55 have arrived in the bay.

We expected to meet them. They are moving about for a favorable anchorage. A walrus visits the bay. It sticks its head out of the water briefly, norts and disappears again.

We continue our tour and hike up the hill to the memorial for Andrée. The path leads passed a huge cairn. It is not marked with a number and we have no idea



what it stands for.

The memorial was erected in 1958.

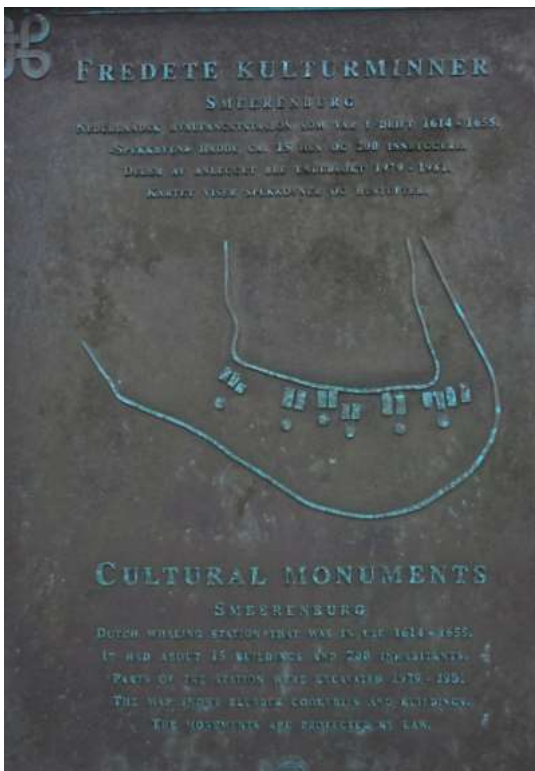


In the mean time, the crew of the *Boréal* has dropped the anchor. We finish our

visit on shore, return to the dinghy and make a brief stop at the Swedes boat and invite them for a drink at 17:00.



We continue cruising to the flat sandy headland of the island Amsterdamøya across the Danskegattet opposite our bay to see the walrus colony. It is very cold



on the water, steady drizzle and fog just above us. We land on the gravel shore near a sea marker, an orange wooden pyramid its red paint flaking off.

A plaque calls to mind the Dutch whaling station Smeerenburg, the home of about 200 people living in 15 houses between 1614 and 1655. Parts of the station were

excavated in 1979 to 1981. The laid open remains of a huge ry pot are protected by law, meaning: please, do not take away anything.

We hike along the beach to the walrus colony. We spot them from far away, a group of many animals closely huddled



together. One of the colosses shows the pink spots of his obviously warm skin.



Another one scratches his belly with fervor. They let us approach to about 30m. They show no sign of nervousness. We hear their grunts; favorable winds spare our noses from their ghastly stink.

On the way back we come very close to two smaller walrus playing with each other in the water. The camera is safely stowed in my backpack!

We are back on the boat at 15:30 and warm up with a soup and omelets. I take a nap, Vigdis makes an apple pie for our guests. The polar bear is back on the shore. The neighbors on the funny green boat are also observing it.

Alex takes great pictures and videos. Could it be a pregnant female? The animal has a pretty round belly. But is it the proper season? NO internet, we cannot easily read up on the subject. Too bad. Like yesterday it plods among the rocks, tampers with





something behind the same boulder and walks to the water.

We are fascinated with a breath-taking unforgettable spectacle.

Jeannette and Frederik come on board at 17:30. We talk about sailing experiences, weather programs, what animal we have seen so far, anchorages and plans for the continuation of our trips, very entertaining two hours.

The guests return to their boat and Vigdis prepares rice and sausage for dinner. Jørn-Even studies the Norske Los, Alex is about to repair his dead Tolino the e-reader with a pen knife and I write the daily blog. Sipping a night cap we spend a very quiet evening every one digesting the events of the day.

Thursday, July 28. 07:00, Alex is up before everybody else. He resets the anchor point in the alarm program, since the boat has almost drifted out of the set circle. Gusty winds in changing wind directions probably loosened the anchor in the kelp forest on the seabed. At 10:00 we sit at breakfast in the cabin. It is cold, foggy and windy. For the first time we refrain from eating in the cockpit.

At 10:30 Jørn-Even starts the engine, the outboard is heaved on deck, at 10:50 we weigh anchor; it is richly garnished with long strands of kelp. Jørn-Even and Vigdis quickly remove the salad with dash. I only catch the last few seconds of the action. We turn north out of the bay,



the genoa close-hauled in 28kts wind and 150° AWA. There is a little rain. Jørn-Even takes a selfie for his mother. His picture probably looks similar to mine

taken of him through the windshield of the cockpit: rain drops in front or on the lens! Our route lies around Fugløya to northeast. The weather clears somewhat. The day becomes brighter. In front of us the area of Fair Haven opens, where whalers used to



ride out storms, as our book tells us. Indeed, the waves diminish among the islands and soon after Cooksundet and the flat Norsksundet we reach the open sea. It is cold. Vigdis untiring observes the wa-



ter. She keeps spotting seals and birds time and again.

Around midday we turn south into Raudfjorden. We plan to lay Hamiltonbukta. The book promises a spectacular anchorage surrounded by the tongues of the gigantic Hamilton glacier and towering bird cliffs. The wind is in our favor, we sail under a glorious white-blue sky down Raudfjorden. Far away the two glacier tongues and the mighty bird cliff show up. As we come closer we detect that the entrance to the bay seems blocked by a cone of gravel and a flat headland formed by erosion of wind and water in front of the bay. We take the sails down, approach the entrance and carefully search for a safe passage to the anchorage between



the many islets, cairns and rocks. At 14:00 the anchor is dropped in 16m depth, 45m of are out. Vigdis prepares fish burgers and we enjoy another

scrumptious meal so incredibly enhanced by the breath-taking backdrop of the Hamilton glacier surrounded by dark mountains on our left and the multicolored huge truncated cone of the bird cliff



under the brilliant fair weather clouds. We do not stay for the night. The book warns against capricious strong katabatic winds. We certainly do not crave such an outlook. At 16:00 we leave. We continue north out of Raufjorden with the new destination of Mushamna.

Behind us a gorgeous panorama presents itself, a tableau of uncanny beauty.



The wind pushes us all the more to north-northeast instead of east toward Woodfjorden and Mushamna; and at 18:30 we are so far out, that our route had to be reconsidered. The skipper proposes to keep course and head for Moffen directly and then sail back to Mushamna, since we had planned to visit the famous island and its walrus colony anyway. The crew agrees and we prepare for a very long day. Vigdis and Alex go to sleep, Jørn-Even and I keep watch. The sun shines into the open cockpit and warms it to unbelievable 17°C. Around 19:39 we cross 80° north, congratulate each other happily grinning.



Changing of the watch before we reach Moffen. Vigdis and Jørn-Even cook bacalao despite considerable pitching, rolling and yawing. Gratefully we enjoy the warm meal. We cannot see the island. It is extremely flat, just a dark line on our starboard side. We furl the genoa and take the main down northeast of the island and slowly continue south along the coast outside the required distance from land of 300m. We can see the walrus colony, a group of animals crowded together on the shore, a few of them in the water. Good pictures? Wishful thinking! We are content having circumnavigated the island so far out to sea



and celebrate with a bottle of Italian Prosecco. The genoa is unfurled and the engine helps to keep course toward the entrance to Woodfjorden. The hours seem to stretch to more than 60minutes! Just before Gråhuken, the northeastern tip of the fjord the genoa is furled; we continue under engine.

A little later Alex takes a picture of the

cabin, in which Christiane Ritter, her husband, hunter and trapper and a trapper friend lived during the entire year of 1934 (her book is fascinating). He is the only one to see it, we others are asleep! It is just passed midnight.

Friday, July 29. The engine must work



very hard against 2kts current all along the barren east coast of Woodfjorden. The glaciers have withdrawn far into the



mountains. Around 01:45 we reach the approaches of the entrance to Mushamna. At 03:00 we turn in front of the sunlit mountain into the bay, poke along through the extremely narrow entrance into the lagoon, drop the anchor in 17m depth, release 45m chain on position 79°39.7'N 14°16.4'E in the vicinity of the *Aztec Lady*. She has beat us again to a nice place. A motor boat is moored near a fire place. The log shows 85nm from Virgo-hamna. We go to sleep. At 07:00 the anchor alarm goes off. The boat has drifted out of the set circle. Jørn-Even and Alex take the anchor up, look for an other spot. They send us women back to bed. At 11:30 the crew is awake, enjoys a first cup of coffee or tea in the cockpit. The *Aztec Lady* has disappeared. Vigdis and Jørn-Even prepare a wonderfully rich traditional breakfast: brown trout, scrambled egg, ham,



cheese, butter, crispbread, home made bread, jam, tomatoes, juice. The weather is beautiful, the view very special: much eroded barren mountains, gravel-covered slopes, scattered snow patches and the glacier far back in the valley.

Vigdis and Jørn-Even want to hike to the Sysselmann cabin. Alex takes them on



shore; the dinghy will be safer back by the boat. Jørn-Even points to the spot



where they will land. In no time Alex is back, concentrates on landing, carefully makes the dinghy fast. All is well.

The *Noorderlicht* arrived on the lagoon. What a great ship!

After two hours Jørn-Even calls on channel 16 and Alex goes to bring them back. They tell us that two men were there, preparing to leave. They talked about the cabin, who built it and other trappers who have lived in it over the years.

Vigdis bakes more bread, Jørn-Even and Alex clean the boat, I write on the blog. We have muesli with nuts and dried fruit for a very late lunch. It is 18:00. And it is our



turn to go for a walk. Jørn-Even takes us to the landing place where the boat of the Sysselmann was moored. The two men have left for Magdalenefjorden.

Alex and I wander between the sea and the lake on loose gravel in the direction of the cabin. Walking is a bit laborious, two steps ahead, one back or sideways. Moreover, rubber boots are not really ideal for hiking. But it is good to exer-

cise. And taking pictures has two advantages, interesting shots and short restora-



tive moments to catch my breath. There are huge piles of drift wood logs, smaller pieces, a skull of a horse? An ostrich? Rocks make fascinating pictures, natural



or man-made. We are walking where the Syssemann of other tourists came along. Our path to the cabin leads us up a hill and across a plane. On top of the incline we walk on pebbly tundra, just the ground where the aggressive arctic terns



up aiming at our heads with their sharp red beaks soaring up and swooping time and



like to nest. Alex braces himself for an attack, gun in the air. And indeed, it does not take long and two troublemakers twang above us. I run for shelter close to Alex. The tow birds plummet from high



again. I manage to capture one of them as both abandon their charge.

The cabin looks just like Vigdis and Jørn-Even have described: a rather large three-part building built with driftwood logs.

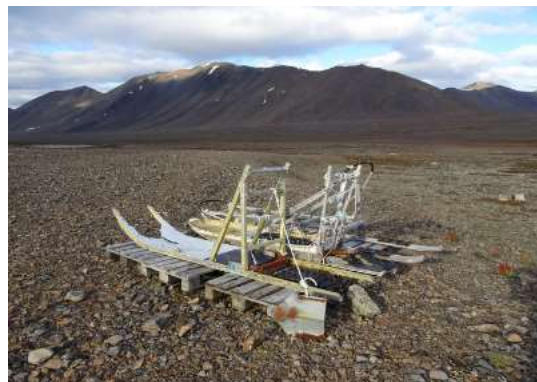


All the windows are blocked with sturdy boards, the entrance door is metal and pad-locked. Stone slabs and coarse wooden steps lead up to the narrow plank of the terrace. Two shovels hang on the wall. Huge reindeer antlers adorn the gable.

The man cabin is surrounded by several smaller huts, all of them barricaded



against polar bear intrusion. A long row of red diesel barrels stand lined up at a short distance near the lighthouse, the depot for the Sysselmann's helicopter. Ancient equipment lies scattered, a four-



wheeled wooden cart, three dog sleds parked on pallets. A tall wooden rack is erected on the beach. It serves as a food store out of reach of polar bears and other predators.

Attached to the cabin we find a piece of



driftwood with the names of the couple Linda and Oddbjörn who have stayed over winter in 2008/2009.

We rest for a while and imagine how they fared, collecting drift wood, sawing the logs, chopping the pieces, making a fire in the oven, cook, shovel snow, go hunt-

ing; all of it in darkness, howling storms and icy temperatures.

We return on our own steps, call Jørn-Even by the Sysselmann's landing place, he picks us up and around 21:30 we are back on the boat. Vigdis spoils us with still warm cinnamon rolls.

eXplorer-senja is spic and span. Next to baking the two have cleaned the boat thoroughly, even brushed out the carpets and shook out the blankets over the water.

Vigdis serves fresh bread, cheese, jam and dried sheep meet, the Norwegian specialty *Fenalår* we relish, for the last meal of the day. It is now 23:30. I say goodbye to the cozy company and turn in. Like every evening the three have much to talk about and



enjoy another glass of wine and the stunning midnight scenery.

Saturday, July 30. 07:00, everybody else is still asleep, time for a nice shot. There is not a breeze in the lagoon, the oily surface of the water mirror the *Noorderlicht*, the mountains and the glaciers behind her. I sit at the navi desk and write. It is cold in the boat. After an hour I am so cold



that I need to warm up, crawl under the bed cover and fall asleep again. Around 10:15 we are up. Soon after coffee and tea, Vigdis and Jørn-Even leave to get water in the river and to fish



with a net in the vicinity of the Fiskebay Hytta on the Vårfluesjøen, the Spring Fly lake.

Alex and I sit in the cockpit, read, knit and observe what is around the boat. A seal pokes its head out of the water, peeks at us and dives again. A gray-black-white pomarine skua chases a white one, probably a kittiwake that desperately tries to flee. It drops something three times, the aggressor plummets like lightning and picks it up. The poor pursued bird cries pitifully, like an unhappy baby.

I take the time to document the interior of *eXplorer-senja*. The 42 foot X-Yacht is just 1m longer and a little wider than *Silmaril*, but this makes quite a difference in



space. The foreship and the cabin are similarly arranged as our boat. Vigdis and Jørn-Even sleep in front as we do. The table is not in the center as in our boat; a large chest is placed in front of it, much space for large objects, boots and stuff. The sec-



and sofa and the navi desk are on the starboard side. The kitchen is also L-shaped, but much bigger, lots more space. Despite less space, the aft cabins on our boat are far more comfortable. We have one aft cabin with a bed and lockers on the port and a storeroom on the starboard side. Here the port cabin also serves as stowage; the sleeping space may be ideal in heavy sea, but it is not really comfortable. Erlend was happy with it on the passage from Tromsø to Bjørnøya. Moreover the aft



cabins are very low; lockers accessible from the cockpit restrict their volume. The starboard cabin, our sleeping quarters, is conceivably awkward for old guests. There is very limited space to stand upright in front of the bed; to crawl in requires considerable contortions in little space to get the feet back and keep the

head in front. And height of the right side of the bed only allows small shoe sizes to fit under it upstanding, Alex kept hitting his toes! He very early on the trip opted for the sleeping space on the port sofa in the cabin.

It goes without saying, that on a boat guests adapt without muttering to what is available. That's the spirit.

The two are back around 12:30 and we have breakfast and organize the day. Next destination is Texas Bar across Woodfjorden due west. Two hours later, the anchor



comes up and we approach the narrow exit with care. Behind us the eastern spit reaches into the lagoon, in front of us the western shore. Vigdis keeps a lookout at the prow taking pictures and observing



the shoals left and right. There is a 7m groove between the stony beaches. Jørn-Even takes the helm; in critical situations the skipper trusts himself alone. The depth finder functions on and off, today it keeps blinking, normally indicating depth over 100m, impossible, therefore abso-



the fjord we turn north along the coast back to Fiskebay. Vigdis and Jørn-Even



go to get some more water and to retrieve the net. Landing is tricky, but finally the dinghy lies on the beach and the two head toward the river to fill another jerrycan.

Meanwhile Alex keeps *eXplorer-senja* more or less on the spot. He practices maneuvering, back and forth, to heave to, plate



lutely unreliable. Utterly concentrated, one eye on yesterday's track on the plotter he steers the boat at snails pace. Made it! The narrow passage lies behind us. Out in



turning. I look around and detect far away at the most northern point of the shore, on Gråhuken, Christiane Ritter's cabin. I want to read more about her life after her return home.

Vigdis and Jørn-Even are back on shore, load the water, push the dinghy into the water and climb on board; they find the net and proceed to get it up. We watch



how Jørn-Even laboriously picks one fish after another out of the mesh

one

two

three,



beautiful sea trouts.

He quickly rinses the net to get rid of all kinds of unusable creatures, ooze and kelp and he two return to the boat with thier catch and two jerrycans of fresh river water. .

At 16:20 we are on our way to Texas Bar. The genoa is rolled out and in 20kts wind from port and 33°, *eXplorer-senja* struggles through chaotic short waves, a rather bumpy ride. We sight fog and dark rain clouds over the bay of Texas Bar. Around 17:00 we ask ourselves, whether we really want to risk the bad conditions in inclement weather or simply return to the calm lagoon of Mushamna. For a few moments each considers the options, then we decide unanimously: good idea, we postpone Texas Bar until tomorrow. Without further ado Jørn-Even jibes and we aim at the mouse hole. An hour later we reach the entrance, poke along through the narrows, maneuver to a good spot and drop the anchor.

A motor boat has arrived, a fire is lit on the shore, the two people obviously intend to eat and stay over the weekend.



We are hungry as well and start preparing dinner. Jørn-Even is equipped with a bucket, a board and a sharp knife. The three fine specimens are ready to be cleaned.



A seal is interested in the innards; it keeps poking its funny head out of the water, watches Jørn-Even's movements, surveys the water surface and dives away. Did he catch something?



After cleaning, Jørn-Even and Alex fillet the fish, I prepare the vegetables, potatoes and carrots, chop and stew celery, onions and garlic, Jørn-Even mounts the grill on the reeling, Vigdis adds special ingredients and loads the trays. The time-consuming preparations cause us stomach growling.



Finally at 19:30 Jørn-Even lights the grill, we impatiently wait for the feast wine glass in hand and talk about tomorrow.

We will visit Texas Bar. Jeanette and Frederik, the Vigdis' Jørn-Even's Swedish friends told us that they have deposited a bottle of Gin on the shelve in the cabin, a habit that many visitors seem to observe.

Quite a heap of rubbish has accumulated, the aft locker is getting full; Jørn-Even intends to burn it tomorrow if we are alone in the bay.

We enjoy the wonderful meal, look forward to an exciting visit and remind each other time and again how lucky we are to be able to sail together, to be in good health, to see such amazing places and to be free of tribulations of all kinds at least right now and hopefully in the near future.