



WildWings

The Arctic

THE FROZEN PLANET – watch it on BBC TV, experience it for yourself with WildWings!

Introduction

WildWings are agents for many of the vessels that visit this vast area, and generally recommend the 'small ships' (up to 110 passengers or so) for the best Arctic wildlife experience. Tourism has been increasing in the last few years and all our vessels are members of AECO and collectively work to ensure the continued protection of these unique environments. Over 15 years experience of sending travellers to the far north allows us to offer unrivalled personal advice, the best choice and the best prices. We are selective about the ships we work with, we do not necessarily offer all the vessels our partner shipping companies operate, we only offer the ones that give the best bird and wildlife experiences.....

Join the still relatively small number of adventurers and travel above the Arctic Circle to a region of wild beauty, teeming wildlife and frozen wastelands. In some of the most sophisticated vessels afloat, follow in the footsteps of the early explorers, many of whom perished in their quests for discovery and knowledge in simple wooden boats. Many of these voyages will also visit sites of these early expeditions and encounter some of the current human population, many native to these remote lands.

Polar Bears, Walruses, seals, whales, dolphins and other marine wildlife roam the icy seas of the north, whilst the landscape holds land mammals such as Elk, Reindeer and Arctic Foxes. A myriad of birdlife can be seen including Ivory, Ross's and Sabine's Gulls and breeding seabirds and shorebirds galore; species dependent on the itinerary. Photographic opportunities are superb. For bird and wildlife enthusiasts, our Spitsbergen tour, led by Dick Filby, offers one of the best itineraries available in this region. Make the most of 24 hours of daylight, marvel at skies with their unique light and cloud patterns unseen in lower latitudes.

All our recommended ships carry a team of expedition staff, whose services are available to all passengers. The Expedition Leader is the person who runs the trip from the passenger side, and decides where you will go each day and supervises the rest of their

team and the landing staff. The captain is ultimately in charge and safety is of paramount importance. Exact itineraries are subject to weather and ice conditions on the day, no ship 'guarantees' the exact planned itinerary but in practice most make the majority of planned landings and alternative sites are usually never far away. An optional series of lectures and film shows on the region are shown onboard to make your Arctic experience as complete as possible. The team usually includes a specialist for birds and marine mammals, the exploration history of the region and geography and geology. Briefings are made usually before each landing and most evenings, the team will hold a recap of the day's events. You will be sent a souvenir log of your voyage after you return home, often illustrated with images to help you treasure your memories. Members of the team go ashore with you for the Zodiac landings, some even driving the Zodiacs too. In general terms, you will have more time ashore than during Antarctic voyages, with opportunities on occasion for a good hike for those that want one. Please note though that you have to stay in groups ashore, the major wildlife highlight for most people is also a serious threat!

Comprehensive pre-trip information will be supplied, giving details of clothes and footwear etc required. In practice you will not have to go out and buy a lot of new gear, the 'layer' principle is the key, along with a pair of wellington boots and a wind and waterproof jacket.

Pick up the phone and call us to discuss your plans, our advice is free, 0117 9658 333.

Special offers! Ships with berths to fill do sometimes discount them, for departures within 2 months of travel, always phone us!

Wildlife guide

Spitsbergen, Franz Joseph Land and Greenland

The most accessible part of the region and part of the true Arctic. Polar Bears, Walrus, various seals plus seabirds in vast colonies, Little Auks and Brunnich's Guillemot along with more familiar species such as Puffins, Long-tailed and other skuas patrol the tundra and fjords looking for chicks and lemmings. Arctic Terns will dive bomb the human who gets too close! Grey Phalaropes swim in the shallows whilst the beautiful King Eider can also be found. The pure white Ivory Gull nests in small colonies and Sabine's Gull are also regular. Reindeer and Arctic Foxes walk the landscapes. Delicate flowers carpet the land in spring and summer and at least one species of butterfly can be seen. Whales have been sadly heavily hunted out in the past but Belugas are a possibility along with other species on occasion. See pages our Escorted Spitsbergen Bird and Wildlife Tour led by Dick Filby. Greenland has suffered in recent years from the sad continued slaughter of much of its wildlife but offers dramatically different scenery, much softer, with steep-sided fjords cut by glaciers. Musk Ox still roam the land and Snowy Owls can sometimes be found. Voyages which visit are usually later in the season and offer a good chance of seeing the Northern Lights (Auroras) plus whales and dolphins during the final run down

