

Help Keep the Arctic Wild

Positive Impact Ski Tour to the Arctic Island of Spitsbergen

with Svalbard Villmarkssenter, April 12 – 23, 2009

Dog sledding, Backcountry skiing, Snow kiting, Polar bears, and Arctic midnight sun

Professional Ski and Snow Kite Instruction

Learn About the Science of Climate Change and Arctic Ecology

Embark on a unique “positive impact” Arctic ski adventure with Svalbard Villmarkssenter, Norway’s first certified eco-tourism company that also won the prestigious World Wildlife Fund Award for Linking Tourism and Conservation. Access remote untracked slopes in silence with dogsleds, snow kites, and of course your own two skis. This trip goes beyond ‘low impact’ eco-tourism as your participation supports the Svalbard Villmarkssenter’s active political engagement in conservation of this pristine and sensitive Arctic wilderness. Rather than “leave no trace”, you can leave a positive legacy (and a few ski tracks too).

This trip explores the island of Spitsbergen in the Arctic Archipelago of Svalbard. With 24 hours of daylight, you will move with the clock-free rhythm of midnight ski descents. You will be accompanied by a dog guide, a professional mountain guide, professional telemark ski and snow kite instructors, and scientists who together will help you learn more about Arctic wilderness survival, Arctic ecology, and the state of the science of climate change.

After arriving in the town of Longyearbyen, you will leave with dogsleds for a 10 day tour into a part of the island that is only accessible by non-motorized travel. While the journey is our goal, we will reach the Van Mijenfjorden fjord and a wooden hut after about three days. This inlet is still covered with sea ice, and you have the chance to spot seals, and possibly polar foxes and polar bears. On the way to the hut you will sleep and eat in a large double-walled group tent on a mat of reindeer fur. There will be ample time for ski tours from these base camps to climb the surrounding table mountains for breathtaking views over the island and up to 1000 meter powder descents down to sea level. You will also have the opportunity to learn and practice snow kiting on skis in the flats and on the frozen fjord. Wilderness survival training, including ice fishing, basic first aid, emergency gun use (for polar bears), and dog handling are all part of this adventure.

Trip: 12 April – 23 April: Twelve days total on Spitsbergen island, consisting of pick up from the airport in Longyearbyen, ten days round trip by dog sleds with all meals fully catered, and one cultural and scientific day in Longyearbyen, ending with an evening in the round house lodge with a celebratory farewell dinner. The dogsleds will carry the equipment and can pull up to four skiers. Depending on weather conditions and terrain, you will sometimes

be pulled on your skis by the dogsled, while other times you will travel by snow kite or by skiing/skating.

Overnight: The first and the last night will be spent in a guesthouse in Longyearbyen in double rooms. On the trip the group will eat and sleep in one big group double-walled tent, sleeping bags and mattresses must be brought. After three days in the tent, the group will stay another three days in a wooden hut, and then another three nights in the tent for the return to Longyearbyen by another route.

Food: All backcountry meals are prepared by the outfitter, who also runs a small restaurant in Longyearbyen that is a favorite among locals. There is much to learn about Arctic backcountry cooking by helping the chefs! Please indicate if you are vegetarian.

Skiing/climbing: A ski instructor and mountain guide will offer trips from the tent camps up the surrounding mountains with non-technical ascents and descents of up to 1000m vertical. Downhill skis with touring/telemark binding and skins can be rented but should be brought. Avalanche gear (beacon, shovel, probe) can be rented but should be brought as well.

Snow kiting: A snow kite instructor will teach the basics of snow kiting. Snow kiting is great fun on the frozen Van Mijenfjorden, it is even possible to kite up parts of the mountains if winds are right. For travelling to the hut at the fjord it is a fast alternative to dog sledding if the weather conditions are right. Snow kites are provided, as well as harnesses.

Wilderness training: Wilderness training will include basic outdoor first aid, ice fishing, and handling of a gun for emergency purposes (as you will be in Polar bear country).

Scientific guiding: The trip guides include a climate change scientist and an environmental economist who can help answer your questions about climate change and its impacts. In Longyearbyen we will visit the Polar research centre to learn about ongoing climate change science.

Documentation: A photographer will document the trip and provide a picture disc to all participants.

Price: NOK 40100 (€ 4200, US\$ 5700) per person. The price includes the dog sled tour with accommodation in a group tent during the trip to the fjord and in the hut during the time at the fjord, as well as two nights in a double room in Longyearbyen. The number of nights spent in the hut will depend on the weather. Further included is food and cooking, ski guiding and instruction by a professional ski guide, snow kite training by a kite instructor, kite rentals, wilderness training, scientific guiding, and a professional picture disc of the trip.

Dates: 12.-23. April 2009 (Sunday through Thursday)

Group size: 8 guests, plus musher (trip leader) and three guides (12 in total)

Detailed description:

Trip length: 12 days (10 days trip) with arrival on Sunday and departure on Thursday.

Day 1, Sunday: arrival. Pick up at the airport and transport to hotel. At 7 PM, information about the tour at the hotel. Packing individual equipment.

Day 2, Monday: start of tour. Pick up on the hotel at 10 AM and packing sleds, instructions and start tour. Fill up thermos with hot water. We will drive on dog sleds and need the full day to reach the first camp.

Day 3, Tuesday: camp day with skiing and kiting. We stay the whole day in this camp to learn snow kiting and to ski the surrounding mountains. This is non motorized area, so there will be no snow mobiles.

Day 4, Wednesday: transport and kiting, skiing in the evening. We drive the dog sleds to the next camp. If winds are ok, we can use snow kites. In the evening (there is 24 hours of daylight) we can ski the surrounding mountains.

Day 5, Thursday: We have reached the Van Mijenfjorden and the hut. Skiing, kiting, ice fishing, depending on the conditions.

Day 6, Friday: Day activities from the hut. Skiing, kiting, ice fishing, depending on the conditions.

Day 7, Saturday: Day activities from the hut. Skiing, kiting, ice fishing, depending on the conditions.

Day 8, Sunday: Day activities from the hut. Skiing, kiting, ice fishing, depending on the conditions.

Day 9, Monday: start to drive the dogs back towards Longyearbyen. On the way back we can kite and ski.

Day 10, Tuesday: on the way back towards Longyearbyen. Ski and kite.

Day 11, Wednesday: arrival back in Longyearbyen. Transport to hotel. At 7 PM pick-up for dinner and slide show on Villmarkssenter round house.

Day 12, Thursday: individual cultural and shopping morning in Longyearbyen with a possible visit of the museum and of the Polar research centre. Drop off at the airport and flight in the afternoon.

Pictures/movie at www.svalbardvillmarkssenter.no and for the trip <http://www.svalbardvillmarkssenter.no/index.asp?action=dest&destid=617&intOpenID=295&catid=295>.



The upper arrow in this google maps picture indicates the settlement of Longyearbyen, the lower arrow indicates the hut at the Van Mijenfjorden this trip is leading to.

Why eco tourism?

Tourism has impacts on the environment, and most of this originates from air travel. Nevertheless, in this wild part of the world, as in many others, commercial and conventional tourism is picking up, threatening the environment even more by its very presence. Up to seventy snow mobiles can be spotted per day, leaving the settlement of Longyearbyen for one day and multiple day trips into the wild, causing noise and air pollution, disturbing the fauna, and carrying oil and gasoline in the Arctic soils. Still, the boom in this kind of tourism has economic clout, and alternatives of eco tourism must be proven as viable economic alternatives. We therefore need to foster, develop and manage eco tourism with low impact activities, so that areas can be closed to motorized traffic – and as a tourist booking with us you will play your part in preserving the Arctic wilderness of Spitsbergen.

Booking with: <http://www.pathfindertravels.se>