WATERPROOF
EXPEDITIONS



WINTER WHALES OF NORWAY

TRAVEL GUIDE

TRAVEL GUIDE

PREPARING FOR
YOUR EXPEDITION

"Time to start preparing for your expedition! The success of our voyages depends on the wildlife and weather conditions. Two things which are beyond our control. This is true **expedition style travel**. No two voyages are the same, embrace the unexpected and enjoy the experience!"

Marlynda Elstgeest
CEO & Owner Waterproof Expeditions







TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

It is the responsibility of each passenger to comply with the local rules and regulations of Norway. Make sure your passport is valid for at least 6 months after your trip ends, and you have all necessary travel documents.

Travel insurance with worldwide medical evacuation coverage is mandatory. We also strongly recommend taking out trip cancellation insurance. This will cover your costs in case you need to cancel your trip due to circumstances beyond your control.

WEATHER CONDITIONS

Your voyage takes you to Northern Norway, above the Arctic Circle, during the heart of winter. Daytime temperatures usually range from 0°C to -10°C (32°F to 14°F), while the sea water hovers just above freezing.
The weather is as dramatic as the landscape. Calm and sunny days are possible, but rain, snow, and even storms are not uncommon. Fortunately, the fjords provide natural shelter, protecting us from strong winds and rough seas.
During winter, daylight hours are limited, yet we'll optimise every minute of it!









TROMSØ

NORTHERN NORWAY

NORWAY | 69° NORTH | SCANDIC ISHAVSHOTEL

Your expedition starts in **Tromsø**, situated 350km **above the Arctic Circle** at 69° North.

MEETING POINT

Our meeting point is at the **Scandic Ishavshotel**, which is close to where our ships are usually docked. You will receive more detailed travel information several weeks prior to departure.

Arrive at least **one day before embarkation** to avoid issues with flight delays or lost luggage. The ship cannot wait for delayed passengers! This extra time in Tromsø also gives you a chance to explore the city center, visit the Arctic Cathedral, or ride the Fjellheisen cable car for stunning views at 421 meters above sea level. There are plenty of restaurants and shops in Tromsø. Keep in mind, there are no opportunities for shopping once we set sail.

FLIGHTS TO TROMSØ

Tromsø Airport is situated at Langnes on the western part of the island Tromsøya. The town is easily accessible by plane from most European countries, usually with a stop in Oslo. Main airlines flying to Tromsø are **Scandinavian Airlines**, **Norwegian** and **Widerøe**.

AIRPORT BUS

The red airport express bus takes 10-15 minutes to Tromsø city center and stops at several hotels.

TAXI

The taxi stand is located directly outside the arrivals hall and it takes approximately 10 minutes to Tromsø city center.

- **Tromsø Taxi**: 0047 77 60 30 00
- **Din Taxi**: 0047 40 10 20 45
- **Uber** is also available in Tromsø.

HOTELS

There are plenty of nice hotels and other accomodations in Tromsø. For example the Radisson Blu Hotel, Scandic Ishavshotel, Clarion Hotel the Edge and Enter Amelie hotel are all close to the harbour and city centre.

LUGGAGE STORAGE LOCATIONS IN TROMSØ

- Tromso Luggage Storage - Strandskillet 3
- Tromsø Port Prostneset - Samuel Arnesens gate 5
- Tourist Shop City Centre - Storgata 94

TROMSØ PORT TERMINAL

The Tromsø Port Terminal (Prostneset) is located not far from our meeting point. You'll find the tourist information center on the 2nd floor. They offer free city maps, brochures and information. Luggage storage is available on the first floor, near the exit to the bus terminal.

EXCURSIONS

Activities like dogsledding and snowmobile safaris are offered by various local tour companies. These depend on snowfall and are usually available from December. We recommend booking your excursions in advance.









VOYAGE PROGRAMME



DAY 1 | TROMSØ - EMBARKATION: 16:30
Embarkation begins around 16:30 in the afternoon. The expedition team will meet you at the meeting point which is only a short walk from the ship. After a welcome aboard, you'll receive a safety briefing before we set sail. Once everyone is settled, enjoy your first dinner on board, followed by a snorkeling gear fitting.

DAY 2 - 6 | EXPLORING THE FJORDS
We start every day with a good breakfast. As daylight appears, our expedition guides head to the bridge to scan the horizon for wildlife. The search is part of the adventure, take your binoculars and join them, either from the bridge or out on deck. Please keep in mind, you may spend several days searching without success, until an opportunity for snorkeling arises.

When whales have been spotted and conditions allow, we set out in the zodiacs for a closer look. Make sure you have your snorkeling gear ready in your room to head out quickly. You can take your camera and other items with you in a waterproof bag. If you choose not to go snorkeling, you can stay onboard the ship or join the zodiac for up-close whale watching.

As we near the whales with the zodiac, we slow down and carefully position ourselves to allow the animals plenty of space. When the expedition guide decides it is safe to go snorkeling, you will be allowed in the water. This is your chance to get a look into the world of the whales and orcas. Enjoy every moment of it!

Daylight is sparse and we try to use every minute of it for snorkeling and whale watching. When we are out in the zodiacs, we usually stay out until it gets dark. The time we return to the ship can vary from day to day depending on the weather and daylight. You may spend several hours in the zodiac without returning to the ship for (toilet) breaks.





We usually arrive back on board in the early afternoon. After rinsing your snorkeling gear, it is time to warm up and enjoy a well-deserved lunch.

The afternoon offers time to unwind and enjoy the comfort of the ship. You might relax with a hot drink, look through your photos, or join one of the informative lectures presented by our experienced guides. Topics often include orcas, whales, the northern lights, and other fascinating aspects of the Arctic. You are always free to attend, or simply settle into your cabin to take a well-earned rest.

In the evening, dinner is plated and served at the table. Each day features a set menu, created by our chef, offering a varied selection of hearty meals.

During the darker hours, we usually remain anchored in a quiet bay. We may go ashore once or twice for a short evening walk. A good chance to stretch your legs and view the landscape from a different perspective.

Weather permitting, you might also be invited to do a Polar Plunge, a chilling jump into the frigid water!

Winter is ideal for Northern Lights sightings, and Northern Norway lies directly beneath the Aurora Oval. With some luck, you'll witness this stunning light spectacle! Our guides are happy to help you set up your camera or phone for amazing photos.

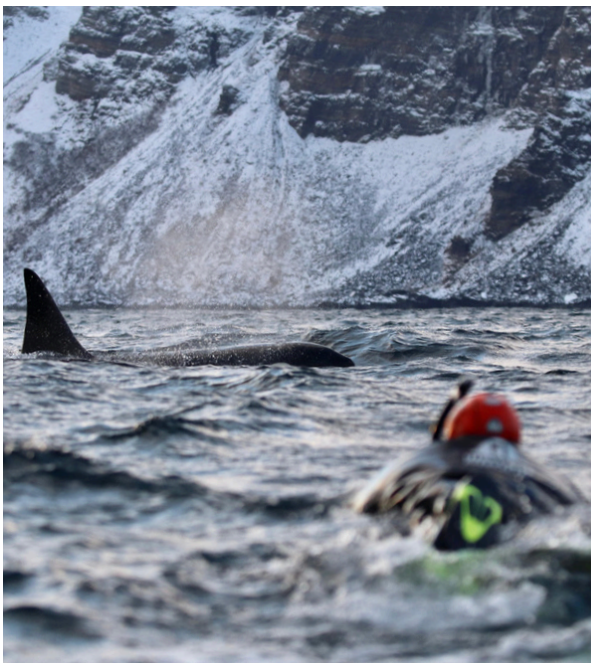
DAY 7 | END OF THE VOYAGE

Your expedition ends in the same place where it started, in Tromsø. After breakfast on the last day, you will say farewell to the crew and your fellow expeditioners. You can leave the ship before breakfast if you need to catch an early flight.

INCLUDED IN YOUR VOYAGE

- Accommodation on board.
- Full board, coffee, tea, water & snacks.
- Snorkeling activity and snorkeling gear.
- Warm zodiac suits for non-snorkelers.
- Use of the onboard sauna & hot tub/jacuzzi.
- Lectures by the experienced guides.
- All service taxes and port fees.
- WiFi is available on board all our ships but might be at an extra charge. You can usually also use the local network.









Thermal overalls



CLOTHING ADVICE

What you wear is a personal choice and depends on your comfort level in cold conditions. Opt for informal, practical garments that can be layered for warmth and flexibility. Several light layers are better than one heavy piece, allowing you to adjust easily by adding or removing layers. Ski clothing works well, and materials like wool and polar fleece retain heat far better than cotton.

WHAT TO WEAR FOR SNORKELING?

A snorkeling drysuit does not offer any insulation by itself. It must be worn with warm layers underneath. For this purpose, we supply special thermal overalls. These will keep you warm in the water and double as a comfortable outer layer for whale watching on deck.

You need at least one or two insulating layers under the thermal overalls. Avoid turtlenecks, zippers and high collars, as they don't fit comfortably under the drysuit. Make sure you bring several pairs of extra warm socks!

We provide warm waterproof zodiac suits for those who will not go snorkeling but want to join the zodiac for up-close whale watching.

1. **Thermal underwear**



2. **Mid-layer**



3. **Thermal overalls**



4. **Snorkeling drysuit**



PACKING LIST

Our Waterproof Expeditions team has created a packing list with essential items for your expedition. You don't need many different outfits on board, most guests overpack and bring far more than they use. **Keep it simple: comfort and practicality are key!**

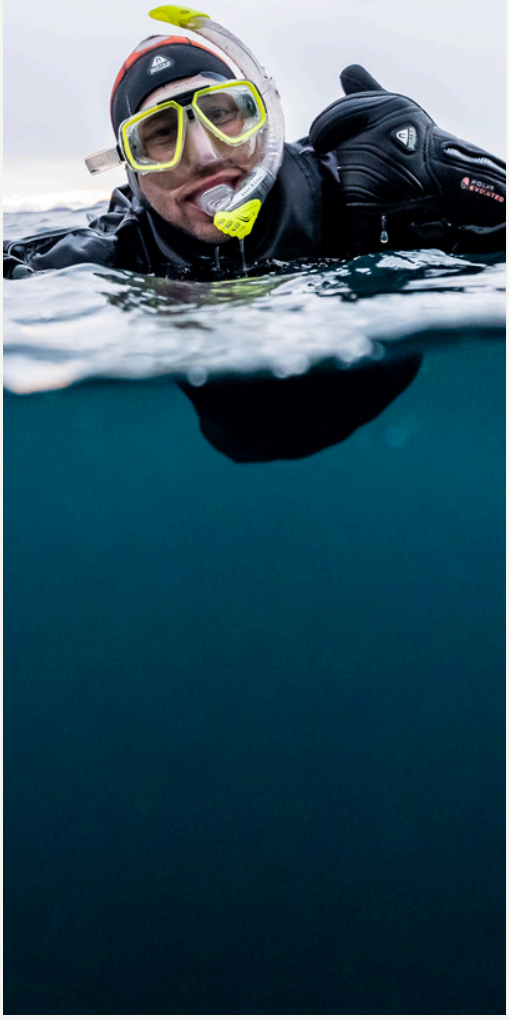
- **Parka**: Bring a warm waterproof jacket or parka.
- **Warm trousers**: Ski trousers or insulated outdoor trousers are great to stay warm while wildlife watching from the ship.
- **Thermal layers**: Thermal underwear is the base layer of your daily outfit.
- **Sweaters**: For your time onboard, and as a mid-layer when snorkeling. Preferably wool or fleece. Avoid turtle necks, zippers and high collars!
- **Sweatpants**: As an optional extra mid-layer if you get cold easily.
- **Warm socks:** Several pairs of thick socks in case the drysuit boots run a bit large.
- **Gloves**: Bring gloves or mittens, including liner gloves for handling cameras or binoculars. Gloves get wet easily, so spares are useful.
- **Hat**: Ideally a fleece or wool beanie.
- **Scarf or buff**: A buff is versatile and can be worn in different ways.
- **Shoes**: Sturdy, warm walking shoes for slippery decks, plus comfortable footwear (e.g., sneakers) for indoors.
- **Swim wear**: For the polar plunge and sauna/hot tub, also pack slippers!
- **Slippers/Slides**: Needed when taking off your wet snorkeling gear out on deck. Flip-flops don't work with socks!
- **Waterproof bag/backpack:** To store your camera and other items during zodiac cruises.
- **Luggage:** Cabin storage space is limited, please be mindfull with the size of your suitcase.

Tip! Keep some essentials (underwear, medication) in your carry-on in case your checked luggage is delayed or lost, and be sure to label your bags with your name and phone number.



ACCESSORIES

- Binoculars
- Camera / Gopro
- Extra memory cards
- Chargers
- Charging adapter for European power sockets
- Earplugs
- Seasickness medication
- Hand warmers
- Spare glasses







SNORKELING

Included in your expedition is our high quality snorkeling package from **Waterproof International** in Sweden:

- **Waterproof Snorkeling Drysuit**
- **Waterproof Thermal Overalls**
- **Waterproof Neoprene High Visibility Hood**
- **Waterproof 7 mm semidry Gloves**
- **Waterproof Marine Boots**
- **Fins, Snorkel and Mask**

The drysuit is the key component. Always remove your jewellery and keep nails short to avoid damaging the fragile neck and wrist seals. Insulating layers are required underneath. If you're not using our special thermal overalls, ensure you bring enough warm layers!

Even though you're wearing gloves and a hood, your hands and head will get wet. You can bring a hat, hand warmers or regular gloves on the zodiac for warmth.

If you have your own snorkel and mask, you might want to bring these to ensure you have a well-fitting set. Please note, it's not possible to use a full-face snorkeling mask!

DRYSUIT & THERMAL OVERALL SIZES

We have a limited range of drysuit sizes on board, these have either attached boots or separate boots.

- **S - M - ML - L - XL - XXL** (view our size chart)

If you believe these will not fit, we recommend bringing your own. Sizes are collected ~3 months before departure. We are not liable if your chosen size does not fit!

PROCEDURES & REQUIREMENTS

SNORKELING PROCEDURES

It's our goal to observe orcas and whales in their natural habitat while snorkeling at the surface. We have two inflatable rubber boats, called zodiacs, which we use to get within snorkeling distance of the whales. Embarking the zodiacs from the ship is done via a gangway. You will receive a briefing on how to enter and exit the zodiac safely. When your guide decides it is safe, participants go into the water gently. Sometimes you might only be in the water for a short moment, but if we're lucky we can stay in the same place for hours. If the whales move away, or show any signs of disturbance, your guide will signal you to come back into the zodiac.

When you are in the water:

- Keep visual contact with the zodiac so you can quickly respond to signals;
- Keep a distance of at least 20 metres between yourself and the whales;
- Stay with the group at all times;
- Avoid diving, splashing and loud noises;
- Touching the animals or approaching to make contact is strictly forbidden.

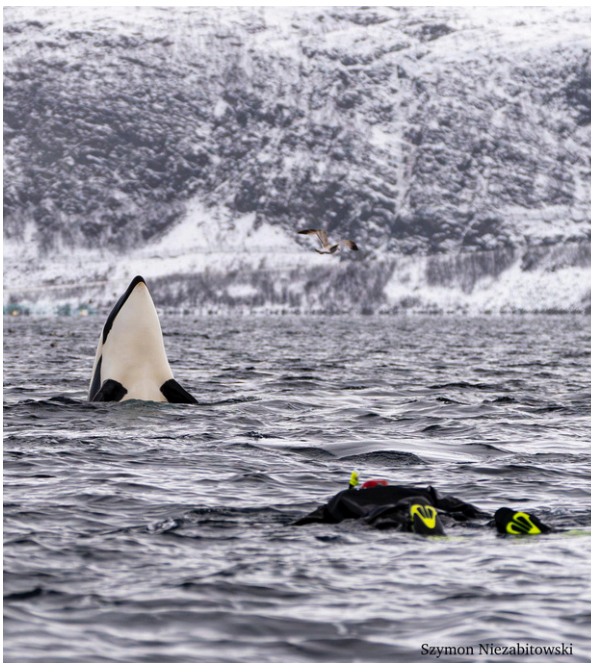
REQUIREMENTS FOR SNORKELING

Our snorkeling expeditions are intended for persons in good health. Participants should have basic snorkeling skills, and be confident swimming in open water that may sometimes get choppy.

In order to participate in the snorkeling activity, you need a certain level of fitness and strength. The water is cold and the use of a drysuit and hood will likely feel uncomfortable at first. The latex seals around your neck and wrists are tight in order to prevent water from coming in. Putting on your gear, swimming in deep water and repeatedly lifting yourself in and out of the zodiac are both physically and mentally challenging. Passengers who are not fit for such an activity for any reason that could entail a risk to their safety or the enjoyment of others, will not be allowed to join the snorkeling activities.

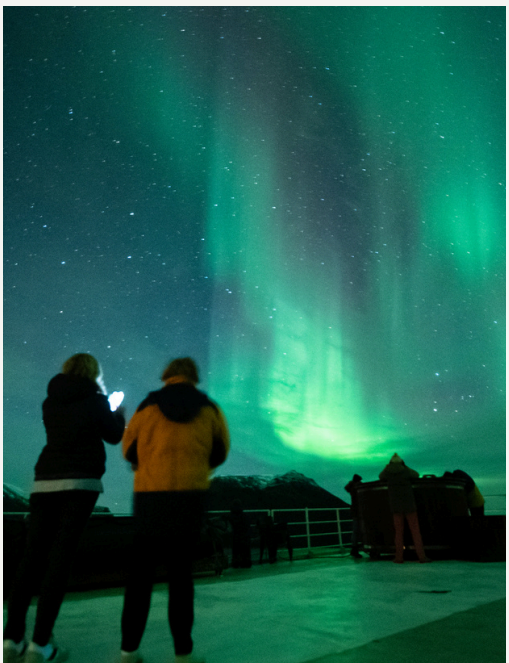
Snorkeling is not mandatory during our expeditions, if you are unable to go snorkeling you can still join the zodiac for exceptional top-side whale watching.













LIFE ON BOARD

Our expeditions are very much a **shared experience**. We enjoy all meals together, help eachother with the snorkeling gear, and gather for briefings and lectures at the end of the day. This creates a warm, friendly atmosphere and allows everyone to share in the excitement of our daily encounters. Of course, you are always free to skip any activity.

Mealtimes will be announced by the expedition leader and can vary depending on daylight and unexpected changes in the schedule. Breakfast and lunch are usually buffet style, dinners are served at the table. Several months before departure, you will receive a personal information form where you can share any dietary preferences or medical requirements related to food.

We maintain an **open bridge policy** on board all our ships. You are welcome for a chat with the captain and join as we search for orcas, whales, and other marine life. Please remember that the bridge is a working place. When in port or during rough weather the bridge might be closed.

Weather permitting, you are free to go outside on deck to watch for wildlife and take in the stunning scenery. Please wear sturdy shoes and remember the golden safety rule at sea: **always keep one hand for the ship.**

All briefings and instructions will be in **English**. It is very important that you understand English sufficiently in order to participate in our expeditions!

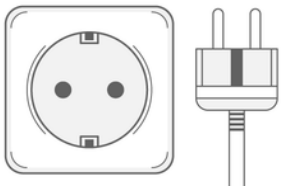
FACILITIES

WIFI: Wi-Fi is available on all our ships and may come at an additional charge. Coverage is not guaranteed and stability and speeds can vary. Local roaming networks are often available close to shore.

Cabin Amenities: Each cabin has a private bathroom featuring a shower, toilet, and sink. Shower gel and towels are provided. Hair dryers are available on board, if you don't find one in your cabin, simply ask a crew member and they will be happy to provide one.

Wellness: Use of the sauna (available on all our ships), as well as the hot tub (on Polarfront, Explorer, and Vikingfjord), is included. We recommend bringing slippers for walking between your cabin and the sauna or hot tub.

Electrical Power: All cabins have European type C/F power sockets
with two round pins:



Bar and payments: Water, coffee and tea are included. Soft drinks, wine, beers, spirits, etc. are available at an extra charge. Depending on the ship, we will either have an honesty bar for guests to record their own purchases, or the crew will keep an account for you. The bill should be settled on the final night of your expedition, preferably by credit card.

Alcohol: It is not allowed to bring and consume your own alcohol on board.

Gratuities: Tips for the ship's crew and expedition guides are handled separately.

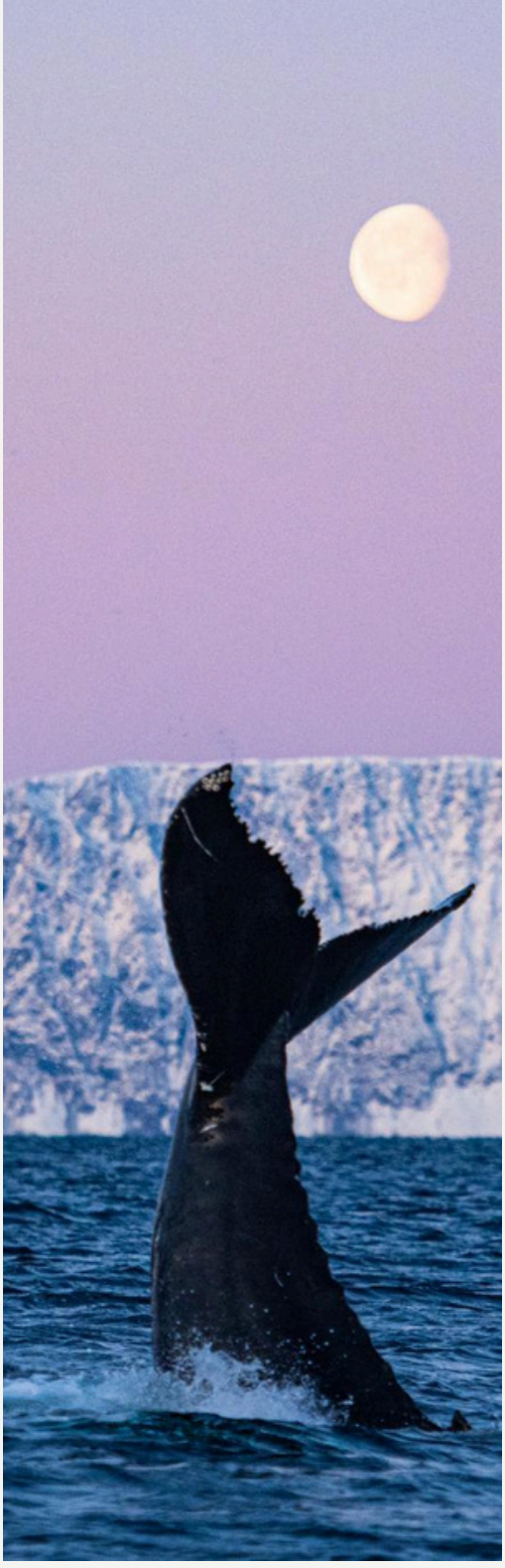
The customary tip for the crew is distributed among all crew members, and preferably in cash (EUR/USD/NOK).
Tips for the two expedition guides are also preferably given in cash (EUR/USD/NOK).

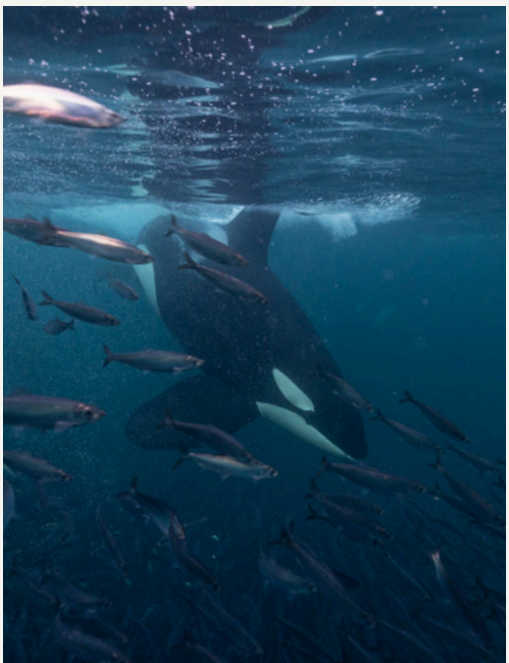
Your guides will provide practical instructions towards the end of the voyage. The amount you wish to give is entirely at your own discretion. As a guideline, the average amount left by our guests is €100-€150 per passenger.













ORCAS & WHALES

Each winter, off the coast of northern Norway, a spectacle of nature unfolds. Over a billion spring-spawning herring gather in the ice-free fjords, creating a massive feeding frenzy for top ocean predators. Among them are orcas, humpback whales, fin whales and sperm whales, all drawn to the rich hunting grounds.

Orcas have long followed the herring to their wintering grounds, but the arrival of large numbers of humpback whales is a more recent phenomenon. They migrate across the Atlantic, pausing in Norway's fjords to feed before making their long journey back to the tropics.

North Atlantic orcas are known for their remarkable 'carousel' feeding technique. Working together, they corral herring into tight bait balls, then stun the fish with powerful tail slaps before consuming them. Interestingly, humpbacks appear to have adapted to this hunting strategy, often following orca pods and seizing the opportunity to feed on their hard-earned catch. Both species feed side by side without much conflict, even though orcas are known to prey on humpback whales in other parts of the world.

Besides being formidable hunters, orcas are also highly intelligent and social animals. Their strong family bonds and complex communication allow them to develop specialised hunting techniques, which are passed down through generations. These strategies vary from region to region, adapting to local prey and conditions, demonstrating their incredible adaptability.

WHALE WATCHING GUIDELINES

MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

Rule number one when it comes to wildlife watching: Nothing is guaranteed! We deal with wild animals and unpredictable weather conditions. Therefore, we ask all our guests to set realistic expectations.

Our guides are constantly on the lookout for orcas and whales. However, they are not always in the same spot and it might take some time to find them. The search is part of the adventure. Some days you might not see any whales or orcas at all. Don't let this get you down. Enjoy the beautiful scenery, the facilities of the ship and the company on board.

We believe the success of our expeditions is not measured by how many times we enter the water, nor by how close we can get to wildlife. Most often, it is a single special encounter or unique interaction that stays with you forever. In our experience, these moments happen when wildlife behaves naturally and on its own terms, with us as respectful observers.

SAFETY FOR WHALES AND SNORKELERS

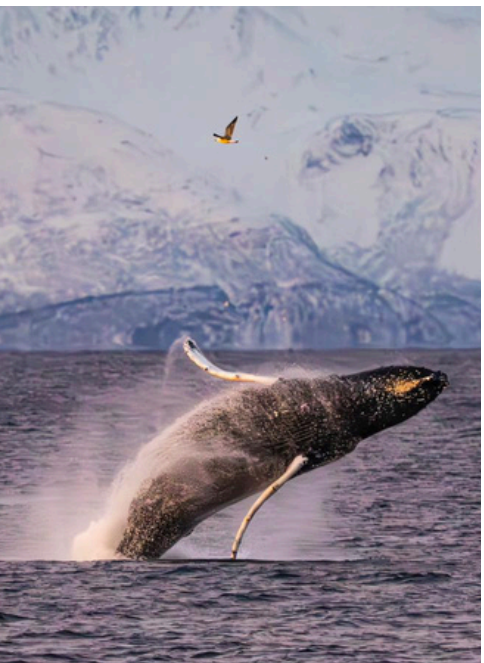
Our experienced guides continually assess each situation and make decisions based on what is safest and most responsible for the animals, as well as for our guests.

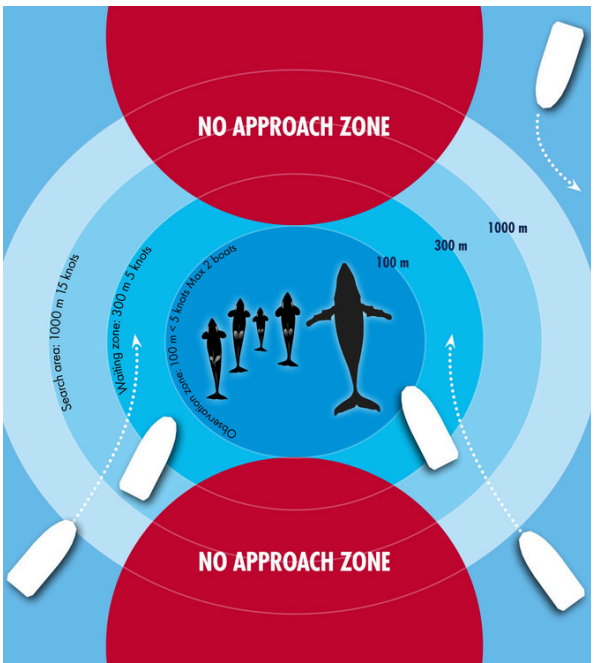
Approaching whales will always be done cautiously, at a low speed towards the side of the pod. When snorkelers of other boats are already in the water, zodiacs must wait at least 50 metres away.

If we encounter a situation where too many boats are surrounding a pod of whales or orcas, we will withdraw from the area. This may mean that we do not enter the water, even when snorkeling opportunities appear possible. We understand this can be disappointing, and we greatly appreciate your understanding.

The fjords of Northern Norway offer an extraordinary wildlife experience, and while snorkeling with orcas and humpback whales is a highlight of our expeditions, responsible wildlife viewing must always come first.

Note: We don't offer diving or free diving activities as we don't want to disturb the animals, make them deviate their course or interfere with their feeding behaviour.













PHOTOGRAPHY

Our expedition guides are experienced photographers and have listed their recommendations for photography:

TOPSIDE PHOTOGRAPHY

- **Lenses**:
  - 70-200mm for photography from the zodiac
  - 100-400mm for photography from the ship
  - Wide angle lens for scenery & northern lights
- **Battery**: Batteries tend to drain quickly in cold temperatures, make sure to bring spares.
- **Storage**: Bring several memory cards and something to store back-ups of your photos.
- **Waterproof bag**: To safely store your camera while you are in the zodiac.
- **Tripod**: Essential for Northern Lights photography.
- **Headlight**: To set up your camera gear in the dark.

UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY

You can use anything from a professional camera to a Gopro or smartphone in waterproof casing. Make sure it floats, and keep in mind the gloves will make it hard to use a camera in the water. Don’t stress about getting the perfect photo, make sure to enjoy the moment! Our guides and guests are often happy to share their pictures.

DRONES

In Norway, you can fly a drone under the open category if you're a registered operator. However, opportunities are very limited! You’ll only be able to launch from the main ship during daylight, which usually overlaps with our snorkeling activities, after permission from the captain. Notify us upfront in case you want to bring a drone!

NORTHERN LIGHTS



To witness the Northern Lights, or Aurora Borealis, we need a dark, clear sky. Light pollution and cloud cover are the biggest obstacles to a good display. In addition, solar activity plays a crucial role. The more active the sun, the higher your chances of seeing bright, powerful auroras. You can use an "Aurora notification app" to track solar activity and viewing conditions.

Our guides and crew will keep an eye out for the Aurora when it's dark. Even on an overcast day, a little break in the clouds can be enough to see the dancing lights

During episodes of high solar activity, the Northern Lights will be strong and you can see them clearly with the naked eye. At other times you might only see a faint green glow, like a cloud, or you might not see anything at all untill you take a photo.

The best time to see the aurora is during the winter months at high northern latitudes. The Northern Lights typically appear in a ring around the North Pole, known as the Auroral Oval.

Northern Norway sits right within this zone and light pollution is minimal, making it one of the best places on the planet to experience this breathtaking phenomenon!

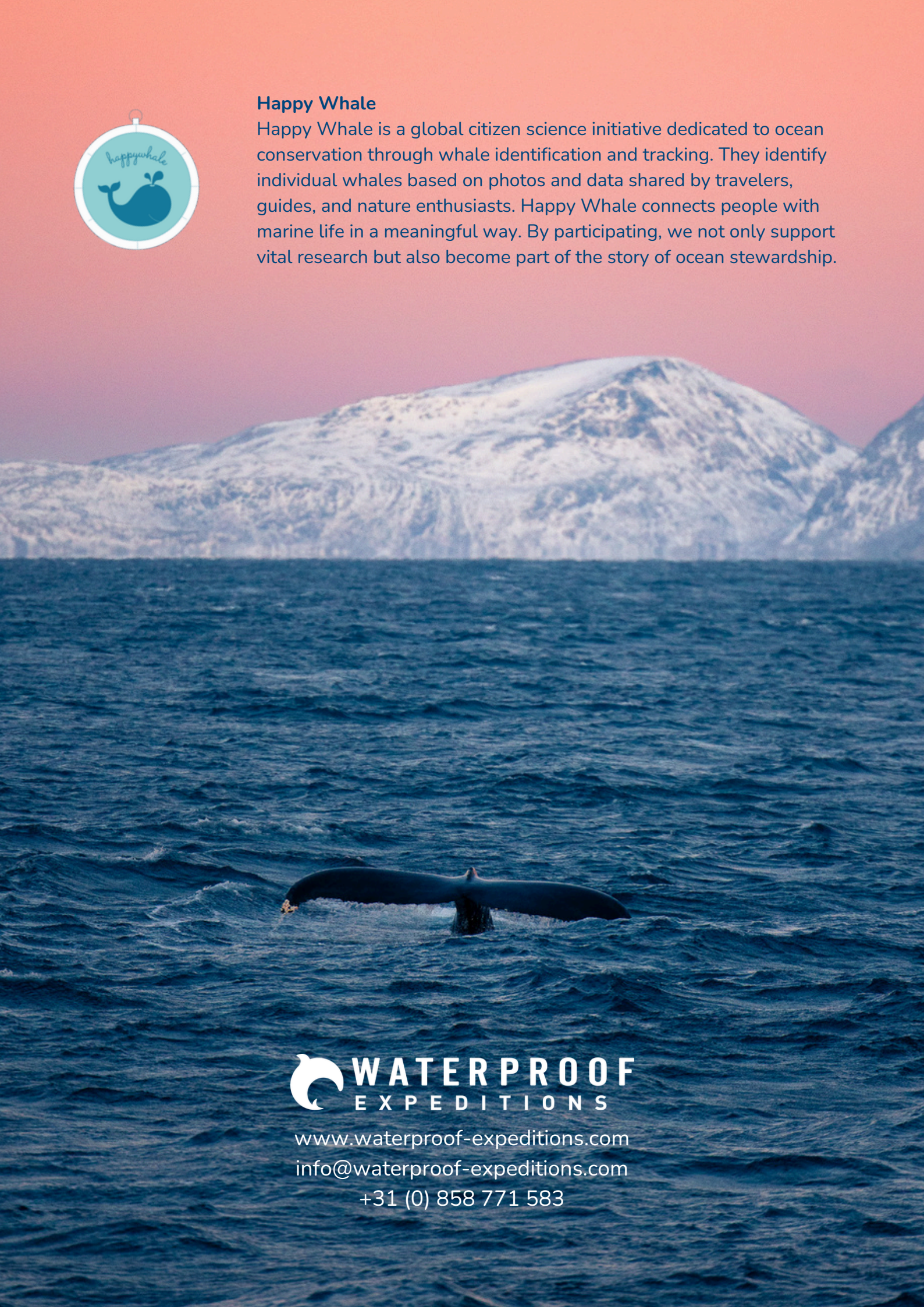
The solar wind is the outermost layer of the sun’s atmosphere. Extreme heat causes the sun to continuously release a thin stream of charged particles into space. When these particles reach the Earth's magnetosphere, they interact with atmospheric gases, creating the the Northern Lights.

The composition and density of the atmosphere and the altitude of the particles determine the colours, ranging from red to green and even violet. We often see green Aurora, because this colour is produced when the particles collide with oxygen and green is a color our eyes can see well.



Happy Whale

Happy Whale is a global citizen science initiative dedicated to ocean conservation through whale identification and tracking. They identify individual whales based on photos and data shared by travelers, guides, and nature enthusiasts. Happy Whale connects people with marine life in a meaningful way. By participating, we not only support vital research but also become part of the story of ocean stewardship.



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