

Daily Expedition Reports

- [Home](#)
- [Daily Expedition Reports](#)**
- [Photos](#)
- [Staff Biographies](#)
- [Guest Slideshow](#)
- [From the Staff](#)
- [Sharing the Memories](#)

North Svalbard

Jun 23, 2016 - National Geographic Explorer



The day began calm and cool on *National Geographic Explorer*. The ship was in the extreme north of Svalbard, the Norwegian Arctic archipelago, and we were searching for bears.

Svalbard's northern section sits at about 80.0 degrees north, only about 700 miles from the North Pole. The northeast is still holding sea ice this week, and with slow precise maneuvering, the expedition staff and bridge team searched tirelessly for the epicenter of Arctic wildlife: polar bears.

While the search continued through the day, several remarkable talks were given in the ship's lounge. First Andy Clarke, a man who has spent most of his illustrious career as a biologist in the polar regions, spoke about climate change, and specifically how it is exponentially affecting the poles. Next on was Lera Aurabach, a Russian composer who is aboard gathering sound and inspiration for her next project: *Arctica*. Lera is quite an unusual treat aboard the *Explorer*, as she is not a naturalist, biologist, or historian, but instead an artist. She has been extremely successful in her young career as a visual artist in addition to composing several entire symphonies. *Arctica* will attempt to bring together the sounds of the Arctic by instrumentation. After Lera's talk, naturalist Magnus Forsberg followed a barbeque on the back deck with a lecture focused on polar bear biology, very important for events to follow.

The day went on, and there were no bears to be seen! The night's Recap began and ended uninterrupted, and the guests headed to dinner with heads full of knowledge and bellies full of libations. Just around dessert—while guests were drinking their coffee and conversations were comfortably rolling along—the voice of Lucho, our fearless expedition leader, came over the PA system; a bear had been spotted, and not far away! The guests quickly abandoned their dessert and donned exposure gear, silently stepped outside onto the bow and enjoyed the best dessert possible, charismatic wildlife exactly where it belongs. The captain maneuvered the ship wonderfully around the animal, giving it the distance to feel comfortable while still allowing the guests incredible looks.

When the bear decided it had seen enough of the ship and the *Explorer* went on her way, the lounge became alive with happy chatter. A few of the younger guests even played piano and sang, in true cheerful spirit. Thursday in the Arctic was another happy day on the ice.

About the Author



Alyssa Adler · Undersea Specialist

Originally from Oregon, Alyssa has always had a strong relationship with nature and the outdoors. In search of a life full of adventure, she found her passion for the ocean while studying at Oregon State University. She graduated in 2012 with a B.Sc. in marine biology, a minor in chemistry, and a PADI divemaster certification. The year following graduation included extensive traveling and diver training, gaining experience in Greece's Ionian Sea, the Caribbean waters of Honduras and Bonaire, and the Galapagos Islands of Ecuador.

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