



Overeating in the summer

Winter in the High Arctic is a difficult time for a herbivore. Access to food is limited, and what they do manage to find may be of low quality. A Svalbard reindeer therefore makes good use of the summer, constantly grazing on the lush vegetation of the tundra. Similar to animals that hibernate in the winter, it builds up fat reserves that it can burn through when times are tough in the colder months.



A long-haul flight

About 40% of all bird species are migratory, but none match the migration of the Arctic Tern. It hatches in summer in the Arctic Circle, then leaves its breeding ground and flies all the way to the opposite side of the world, wintering in the Antarctic Circle. This distance of 30,000 kilometres is increased by the non-linear migration pattern, meaning that the Arctic Tern has the longest recorded migration of all birds.



Strong swimmers

The only bears to be considered marine mammals, polar bears spend most of their lives on the sea ice. Their insulating layer of fat helps to keep them afloat while they swim. The longest known distance swam by a polar bear without stopping is 687 kilometres, completed over nine days! Although the bear survived the trip, she lost 22% of her body weight, as well as the cub she'd been carrying.



Animals of the High Arctic

Svalbard's vast landscapes of rock, ice and sea provide a home for a remarkably diverse batch of inspiring creatures

In deep and shallow waters

Svalbard's waters are frequented by several whale species. These immense sea mammals are surprisingly agile, sometimes treating onlookers to impressive acrobatic displays. You'll most likely be able to spot whales and their flukes from the ship's outdoor deck.

The bays around Svalbard's islands are also inhabited by walrus and

various seal species. Look for bearded seals in the shallows of a fjord or find shy ringed seals hauled out on the ice, perhaps being stalked by their main predator, the polar bear.

Above and on land

One of the few mammals in Svalbard, Arctic foxes forage anywhere from the mountain ridges to the coast, even being found on drift ice. Also found on drift ice is the mighty polar

bear, with an estimated population of about 3,000. Elsewhere, you might see Svalbard reindeer grazing on tundra vegetation.

Svalbard provides prime annual breeding spots for 41 species of seabird, including the Arctic Tern, which sometimes nests in parts of the archipelago after its long migration.

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