

# RESPONSIBLE EXPLORATION AND REGULATIONS IN SVALBARD

For National Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions, the safety of guests and crew, the fleet and the delicate regions where we operate is of paramount importance. Lindblad Expeditions is proud to be a founding member of the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (AECO), an Arctic membership organization, promoting safe and responsible exploration and helping to develop and define polar operation procedures for vessel personnel and guidelines for visitors.

To protect the Svalbard archipelago, in January 2025, new regulations were enacted to change the way visitors experience and interact with this fragile environment. The protection of designated landing sites and wildlife viewing are at the forefront of these regulations. Our operations in Svalbard over the last 50 years have always prioritized the conservation of this pristine wilderness and wildlife and these regulations align with our intentional stewardship.

## NOTEWORTHY REGULATIONS

- Landings in protected areas will be prohibited, except for 43 designated landing sites.
- Passenger limits of 200 will apply in all protected areas.
- Motor traffic at sea must be kept at a maximum of 5 knots speed at a distance of 500 meters from land outside bird cliffs from 1 April to 31 August.
- Motor traffic at sea must be kept at a maximum of 5 knots speed and must keep a minimum distance of 150 meters distance from walrus haulout sites.
- Breaking fast ice is forbidden, with exceptions for shipping routes to Longyearbyen, Barentsburg, Ny-Ålesund and the Coast Guard.
- It is prohibited to disturb, lure or pursue polar bears unnecessarily.
- Minimum distances from polar bears will be set at 500 meters between March 1st and June 30th.



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## LANDING SITES

Designated landing sites within resilient locations have been identified by local authorities using AECO guidelines. Dispersed use will protect these areas even further. Traveling in small groups not only reduces the strain on Svalbard's ecosystem but allows for more meaningful connections with nature and fellow explorers.

The reduced number of landing sites will not diminish the quality of our expeditions because we embrace the unpredictable nature of the Arctic. Rather than adhering to a strict itinerary, we observe nature as it unfolds, making the most of the opportunities we have within nature and always interacting with respect wherever we visit.

## The conservation of this pristine wilderness and wildlife continues to provide an extraordinary experience throughout the Svalbard archipelago.

**Your expedition team** is deeply familiar with the region. With their expertise and ability to spot Svalbard's extraordinary wildlife, they will strive to ensure that you experience satisfying and safe viewing opportunities.



## POLAR BEARS

This image was taken using a long-focus camera lens.

Polar bears—beloved creatures of the Arctic—are listed as a vulnerable species according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature. Climate change has presented these magnificent creatures with significant challenges, as it impacts their hunting and survival methods. Rules established by AECO to protect both polar bears and visitors to the region have been in place for many years. However, as of January 2025, stricter regulations will be enforced within the 12-mile zone of Svalbard waters.

- It is prohibited to disturb, lure, or pursue polar bears unnecessarily.
- AECO stipulates that members will maintain a 300 meter distance from polar bears for their protection.
- The Svalbard government regulations stipulate from March 1st to June 30th: Minimum distance from polar bears will be set at 500 meters.

**The National Geographic Photographer and Certified Photo Instructor** will be available to help you capture images that tell the story of Svalbard and the remarkable creatures who call it home.

Please speak to your expedition leader if you have any questions about these regulations and how they may impact your voyage. We look forward to welcoming you on board!