

CHALLENGE 12

SVALBARD CROSSING

Traverse the Arctic's Highest Frontier

Crossing Svalbard from east to west on skis is a formidable Arctic journey. It demands resilience, preparation, and mental strength. This 160km traverse takes you deep into the heart of the high Arctic, across remote glacier fields, frozen valleys, and dramatic mountain terrain shaped by centuries of the planet's harshest weather.

The challenge lies in the environment: sub-zero temperatures, long days of physical endurance, and sharing territory with Svalbard's apex predator – the polar bear. For many adventurers, this crossing marks a decisive step toward their polar ambitions.

As with all Pole to Pole Challenges, every element is carefully planned. From route logistics and safety to group dynamics and environmental responsibility, ensuring that nothing is left to chance in one of Earth's last true wildernesses.

Overview

Location	Duration	Month	Difficulty
Svalbard	12 Days	May	10

CHALLENGE 12 – SVALBARD CROSSING

At Pole to Pole, the Svalbard ski expedition is founded on experience gained in some of the world's most challenging environments. The expedition leaders have led teams across Svalbard, Greenland, and Antarctica, always prioritising safety, endurance, and purposeful challenge. The East to West crossing of Svalbard is no different.

The expedition begins near the Bay of Dúnér and advances westward through a vast and varied landscape of glaciers, frozen valleys, and exposed plateaus. The route presents significant environmental challenges: temperatures well below freezing, the constant threat of whiteouts, and the ongoing danger from polar bears. The team will carry deterrents and follow strict safety protocols throughout the Challenge.

With decades of combined experience in polar expeditions, our guides and instructors carefully plan every detail. From kit lists and training in Northern Sweden to route planning, nutrition, and on-the-ground safety, we support our participants with thorough resources. Supported by our trusted logistics partners, we maintain contingency plans, tracking systems, and emergency communication channels throughout the Challenge.

This is not just a physical undertaking. It is a deep mental and emotional journey through one of the last true wilderness areas on Earth. For those prepared to face the terrain, solitude, resilience, and bears, this is polar travel at its most primal and rewarding.

Itinerary

This itinerary has been designed based on numerous seasons of polar training and expeditions. As with all adventurous activities in remote regions, circumstances can change, and Pole to Pole may need to make adjustments, possibly at short notice. We, along with our partners, strive to follow the published schedule; however, we ask for your patience if unforeseen circumstances require adjustments.

Please note that delays are common in expedition travel. Because of this, we suggest you avoid planning any important meetings, events, or other trips for at least one week after your scheduled return. We also recommend purchasing a full-fare, flexible airline ticket that allows date changes without penalty.

Pole to Pole Expedition Foundation Course – Sweden

Day 1

Arrive at Skellefteå Airport and transfer to the Pole to Pole Academy to settle in and meet the rest of the course.

Day 2

Equipment issue and a mix of classroom and practical lessons.

Day 3

A mix of classroom and practical lessons with a focus on skiing.

Day 4

Final lessons and deploy on the training expedition in the local area with a night in tents.

Day 5

Continuation of skiing lessons and training on the expedition with a night in tents.

Day 6

Final expedition practice and back return to the Pole to Pole Academy to de-service the equipment.

Day 7

Final feedback from the instructors before departing for Skellefteå Airport.

The **Pole to Pole Expedition Foundation Course** is a progressive programme that combines classroom instruction with practical lessons, equipping you with the essential skills needed to undertake Challenge 12 – Svalbard Crossing.

This course is a mandatory requirement for adventurers with little to no prior experience in polar expeditions before participating in Challenge 12.

Pole to Pole Challenge 12 – Svalbard Crossing

Day 1

Arrive at Longyearbyen, Svalbard.

Day 2

Pre-departure day with equipment and clothing checks.

Day 3

Departure day with packing and travel to the start location.

Day 4

Begin the expedition and expedition skiing.

Day 5

Expedition skiing.

Day 6

Expedition skiing.

Day 7

Expedition skiing.

Day 8

Expedition skiing.

Day 9

Expedition skiing.

Day 10

Expedition skiing.

Day 11

Expedition skiing.

Day 12

Arrive back at Longyearbyen and deservice equipment

Challenge Day 13

Day in Longyearbyen.

Flexible Day

Fly home.

What's included

Pole to Pole have handpicked our partners and providers based on their experience, quality, and reliability. The following list is included in your booking:

Sweden – Expedition Foundation Course

Fitness programme	Support in planning and preparation for training and the Challenge
Airport transfers from Skellefteå Airport, Sweden	Training expedition equipment and skis
Comfortable shared accommodation in the Pole to Pole Academy	Expedition nutrition
Full board, fika, and hot drinks in the Academy	Pole to Pole down jacket and outer jacket

Pole to Pole Challenge 12 – Svalbard Crossing

All emergency equipment	Expedition team and skiing equipment
Glacier equipment	Administrative costs for applications with Sysselimesteren på Svalbard
Expedition nutrition	Mandatory search and rescue insurance
Transport to the expedition start point and finish point	

Not included

Sweden – Expedition Foundation Course

Insurance coverage – personal, medical, evacuation, or otherwise

Flights to Skellefteå, Sweden

Accommodation other than the Pole to Pole Academy

Personal clothing and equipment

Pole to Pole Challenge 12 – Svalbard Crossing

Insurance coverage – personal, medical, evacuation, or otherwise

Commercial flights to and from Longyearbyen, Svalbard

Meals and accommodation in Longyearbyen

Personal clothing and equipment

Expenses incurred due to delays

Personal satellite phone charges

Equipment

The nature of a polar expedition will require the purchase of some specialist personal equipment. Please see below for the full kit list for Challenge 12. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask a member of our team.

On booking, the team will provide you with a checklist.

Clothing

Warm hat

Balaclava – full face optional

Hardshell salopettes/trousers – good quality and suitable for skiing

Face mask – can be attached to balaclava or separate

Insulated trousers – can be insulated over-trousers or thick ski salopettes

Buff

Hard shell jacket – good quality and with a hood

Sunglasses – Cat-3 UV protection

Cold weather liner socks x 3 pairs

Goggles – Ideally with interchangeable lenses or two pairs. One set of lenses with clear/yellow and one cat-3 protection

Cold weather mid socks x 3 pairs

Underwear – Lycra or merino sports shorts – **not cotton**

Cold weather thick socks x 3 pairs

Long sleeve baselayer top – to be of wicking material (synthetic or merino)

Boots – either NNN BC compatible or sturdy walking boots with ankle support for universal bindings

Long thermal bottoms – to be of wicking material (synthetic or merino)

Thin liner gloves – silk, wool, or synthetic. Consider touch screen compatible gloves for using technology

Midlayer jacket – PrimaLoft or fleece etc.

Insulated gloves/mitts – warm glove with a weatherproof outer shell

Insulated jacket – natural or synthetic down. Suitable to -20°C

Weatherproof outer mitts – a shell mitt that can fit over insulated gloves or mitts

Personal Equipment

Dry bags – various sizes to waterproof and store equipment

1L vacuum flask x 2

1L wide mouth bottle – Nalgene or similar style for drinking

1L+ wide mouth bottle –Clearly marked wide mouth water bottle for urinating in. A ‘She-wee’ s recommended for women

Long handled spoon – long handled camping spork/spoon

Lighters – not electric

Whistle

Closed cell foam mat – Svalbard only

Inflatable mattress – Svalbard only

Down sleeping bag – Svalbard only - rated to – 30°C

Carabiners – several strong for attaching equipment. They do not have to be rated for climbing

Multitool – to have a knife and pliers

Toothbrush & toothpaste – manual toothbrush

Toiletries – expanding wipes, sanitary products, Sudo crème etc.

Personal first aid kit – plasters, balms, pains relief, foot tape, antiseptic, scissors, anti-bac hand gel, lip balm, sun cream
Earplugs

Notebook & pencil

Electronic

Headtorch – Preferably rechargeable

Power bank – for charging electronics

Batteries – for personal electronic devices

Charging cables – for personal electronic devices

Watch

Phone – not essential but good for music and photos

Headphones – not essential. It is recommended to bring wired headphones

Equipment Provided by Pole to Pole

Camp equipment – expedition grade tents, snow shovels, tent brushes, and repair kit

Skis and pulks – cross-country skis, ski poles, pulks, harnesses, kit bags, polar bedding.

Communications – solar panel, battery pack, safety phones, and navigation equipment.

For personal phone calls in Svalbard, you will need to purchase a satellite phone card.

Toilet – toilet paper and toilet bags

Meals – expedition food, packing zip lock bags, stoves, stove boards, fuel, fuel bottles, cookware

Medical – comprehensive team first aid equipment

Training

Training for an expedition in austere conditions requires a good level of physical and mental fitness. While you do not require Olympic levels of strength and endurance, we recommend that you follow the fitness programme that we provide you, as well as increase your daily walking activity, preferably with a weighted backpack or hauling tyres.

If you would like more guidance on training, please speak to one of our team members.

Payment

You can pay your deposit and balance using the links on the invoice or via bank transfer. If you send money by electronic bank transfer, you are responsible for covering the cost of any associated transfer fees.

Cancellation

A non-refundable deposit of 20% of the total trip fee is required on booking.

In the event the client decides to cancel their trip at any time between booking and the trip's commencement, a deduction will be made from the advance amount. This is due to Pole to Pole's obligation to pay providers, personnel, and resources during the planning process.

The cancellation will only be effective from the date that the cancellation is received in writing by email. Cancellation charges will be payable as follows:

- A non-refundable deposit of 20% is charged on booking.
- A cancellation fee of 60% is charged if cancelled 150 days or less from the Challenge departure date.
- A cancellation fee of 100% is charged if cancelled 90 days or less from the Challenge departure date.

RESCHEDULING

We do not routinely offer rescheduling, but if there is flexibility, we may be able to facilitate a request if the course is rescheduled in the same season. However, if you are unable to attend the date you booked in the same season, you will need to cancel your booking.

Cancellation will only be effective from the date that the cancellation is received in writing by email. Cancellation charges will be payable as previously stated.

Insurance

We recommend that all guests have appropriate travel insurance that covers the nature of the activity being undertaken on the booked course and protects them from cancellation.

For Svalbard, you will need specialist insurance that covers the location and medical evacuation. In the case of a medical problem arising during the expedition, which results in costs for evacuation, including, but not limited to, the use of aircraft or repatriation, responsibility for payment of these costs belongs solely with you. You must provide proof of adequate insurance or have other arrangements in place to cover costs associated with medical care and evacuation. Please refer to your experience and determine the amount of coverage you will need. Responsibility for all fees is yours, and you will be billed for such costs in Svalbard.