

Tour Report Fjords, Orcas & Aurora Photography Expedition 19 – 25 November 2025

Humpback whale



Orca



Northern lights



Humpback whale



Compiled by Sean Weekly

Wednesday 19 November 2025

Day 1:

London to Oslo

I hit the road for Heathrow Terminal 2, officially kicking off this year's Orca and Northern Lights adventure. The traffic behaved for once, and check-in plus security were just as smooth, always a good omen when an expedition starts exactly *how it should*.

Our flight to Oslo pushed back right on time and touched down almost exactly on the scheduled dot. At just two hours, it was a quick hop long enough for a much-needed coffee after my whirlwind turnaround from guiding the Zambia tour, but short enough that we were landing before I'd even fully woken up.

Most of the group appeared at baggage claim, where our luggage practically beat us to the carousel. Bags in hand, we strolled over to the Radisson RED only about a ten-minute walk, even with "travel legs."

After settling in, I met everyone again about half an hour later for dinner at the hotel restaurant. Despite being in Norway, many of us couldn't resist the classic fish and chips because sometimes comfort food wins!

The excitement in the group was already buzzing as we chatted and got to know one another. Before long, yawns were catching up with us, and we all drifted off to our rooms to recharge before the next morning's flight to Alta.

Adventure mode: officially activated.

Thursday 20 November 2025

Day 2:

Oslo to Alta to boarding Stockholm

We kicked off the day with a leisurely hotel breakfast, the calm before the Arctic adventure. After checking out, we took the short stroll back to the terminal, wrapped up against a "refreshing" feel-like temperature of -8°C. Consider it our first official acclimatisation session for the far north!

Check-in and security at Oslo were smooth as ever, and before long, we were boarding our flight to Alta. The flight ran right on schedule, and the views on approach were pure magic, snow-dusted landscapes, dramatic mountains, and that crisp northern light that makes everyone suddenly quiet in awe... or maybe just eager to get photos.

A tiny hiccup awaited us on landing, no taxi in sight. But one quick phone call later and wheels were rolling. The ride to the harbour was short, and we were greeted by our expedition dream team, Christian and Beau, who never fail to welcome us like old friends. The ship wasn't quite ready yet, so we chilled out in the harbour's waiting room for about an hour and a half, which passed surprisingly quickly.

I popped aboard early for a briefing with the expedition crew to go over the rough plan for the coming days, always useful to get the inside scoop before the action starts!

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By 4:30 pm, it was finally go-time! We boarded *Stockholm*, settled into our cabins, and gathered for Christian's safety briefing. We covered all the essentials: man-overboard procedures, survival suits, and of course Beau's graceful demonstration of how to inflate said suits. Meanwhile, the ship was already gliding north, making a two-hour crossing toward a tiny village called Sole Kvalford, tucked beneath rugged, snowy mountains straight out of a Nordic fairytale.



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After dinner, I walked the group through camera settings for night photography, perfect timing really, because the skies decided to reward us with an absolutely **epic** aurora display. We grabbed our gear and headed ashore. At first we tried composing shots with *Stockholm* as the foreground, but the streetlights at the harbour weren't doing us any favours. So we wandered about a kilometre away until we found a quiet, dark spot.

And then... Mother Nature showed off...

The aurora danced across the sky for a solid couple of hours, shifting, swirling, glowing, one of those nights where you just stand there grinning like kids. A truly incredible start to our Orca & Northern Lights expedition.



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The aurora eventually died off and we decided to head back to the ship for a well-earned rest after a rather exciting day. Roll on tomorrow!

Friday 21 November 2025

Day 3:

Sunrise, Snow Showers & a Whole Lot of Whales

We slipped away from Kvalfjord at 6:30 am, though “slipped away” might be a generous description considering most of us were still happily tucked in until our 8 am breakfast call. And what a breakfast it was: fresh salmon, creamy scrambled eggs, warm bread straight from the oven, plus the essentials: coffee (lifesaver, as always) and fresh orange juice.

Today’s plan was to head slightly south again, almost back toward Alta, aiming for a smaller bay on the approach to Talvik. We arrived around 9:30 am, just as the first dull hints of Arctic daylight began creeping in. Perfect timing for wildlife spotting... and wow, the ocean delivered fast.

Almost immediately, we saw them: multiple pods of orca, completely still, napping right on the surface. Picture a bunch of enormous, highly intelligent predators just... snoozing like floating logs. Not sure what the orca version of a morning coffee is, but they looked like they needed it.

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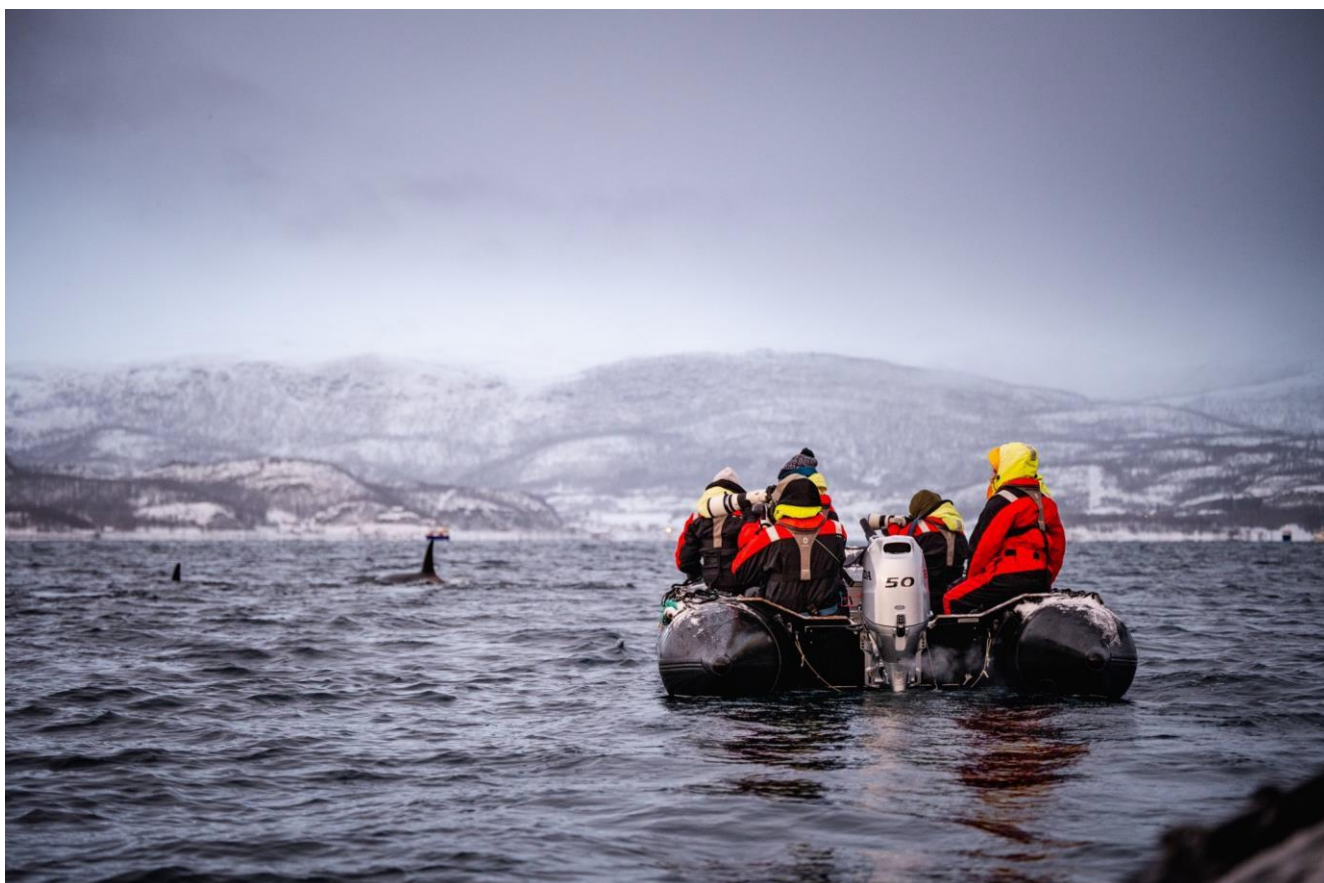


As the light strengthened (though certainly not the warmth), the pods gradually stirred. Soon they were gliding around with purpose, scanning the bay for herring in these richly stocked waters. We watched for a while to figure out whether they'd stick around or head for deeper seas. The more active they became, the clearer it was. They were gearing up for a hunt.

With calm conditions and decent visibility, the expedition team gave the green light: zodiac time. We layered up, extra thermals, gloves, hand warmers, the works and climbed down the ladder, greeted by Beau or Christian with a trusty sailor's grip before settling into our seats. Then we were off, slicing through icy cold water toward an orca pod.

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And yes... it was cold. The kind of cold that slowly, inevitably seeps through every layer, no matter how snug you were about your packing. But the world around us? Unreal. The mountains glowed with soft pastel pinks and oranges, the sea steamed gently with a thin veil of mist from the temperature contrast, and with polar night approaching, the sun hovered low and dramatic for hours, like perpetual sunrise-to-sunset lighting. Four hours of pure photography heaven.

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Our zodiac adventure lasted about two hours, packed with incredible sightings: orca up close, humpbacks surfacing with those deep, rumbling breaths, and even fin whales cruising nearby. A true Arctic hat trick.

Snow showers rolled in at one point, thick, swirling curtains of white, but honestly, it only added to the wild, cinematic mood. A superb morning in every way.



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Back on the ship, we had a bit of downtime before lunch as *Stockholm* set a course for Oksfjord. In the afternoon, I ran a masterclass on exposure and understanding light, very fitting after such a photogenic morning, and everyone seemed to take away something useful.

After dinner, we bundled up again and headed ashore, walking about 1.5km to a frozen lake in hopes of another aurora display. But the weather had other plans. Clouds rolled in, snow followed, and after a patient wait we admitted defeat and trudged back to the ship.

Some nights you win... and some nights the weather gods remind you who's boss. Either way, after a day like this, sleep came easily!

Until tomorrow, Norway.

Saturday 22 November 2025

Day 4:

Today was another leisurely morning with a lovely breakfast to start the day.

We left the little harbour of Oksfjord where we spent the night and headed a little further north east to a more open fjord known as Sørøysund. Our plan for the day was to scout the area, looking for orca and also other species. It didn't take us long before we found a couple of sperm whales that were surfacing on the water. That makes this the 4th whale sighting of the trip not bad at all for the first 48 hours into the expedition.



We continued our journey and pushed into a smaller fjord where there had been previously good activity for orca. Sadly for us, it was fairly quiet except for a sleepy humpback whale.

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So we moved back out into the open where a big snowy weather system was waiting for us. The weather report showed it was not moving and was going to hang around all day, so what better choice than to head straight towards it to get through to the other side. And that's exactly what we did! On the other side, we were greeted with beautiful scenery, snow-capped mountains with beautifully pink and orange light illuminating them. Although there were no orca visible, we did get some great landscape images whilst we continued on the search for whales.



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The light is super limited this time of the year, so really, you need to find something fairly early on to make sure you have enough light available for photography.

It didn't take too long and we saw some very distant blows. Recognisable as orca, at last.

We pushed towards the blows into a fjord system known as Rognsund. And were greeted with a social pod of orca. They were playing and fairly active on the surface of the water. They were giving us a show of some tail slaps and we even had a couple of spy hops from a few younger ones.



It was an amazing encounter and before we knew it, the light was already fading. Lunch was calling so it was a good time to head back below to warm and eat yet more delicious food.

During lunch, the captain had us set sail for an area known as Kårhamn.

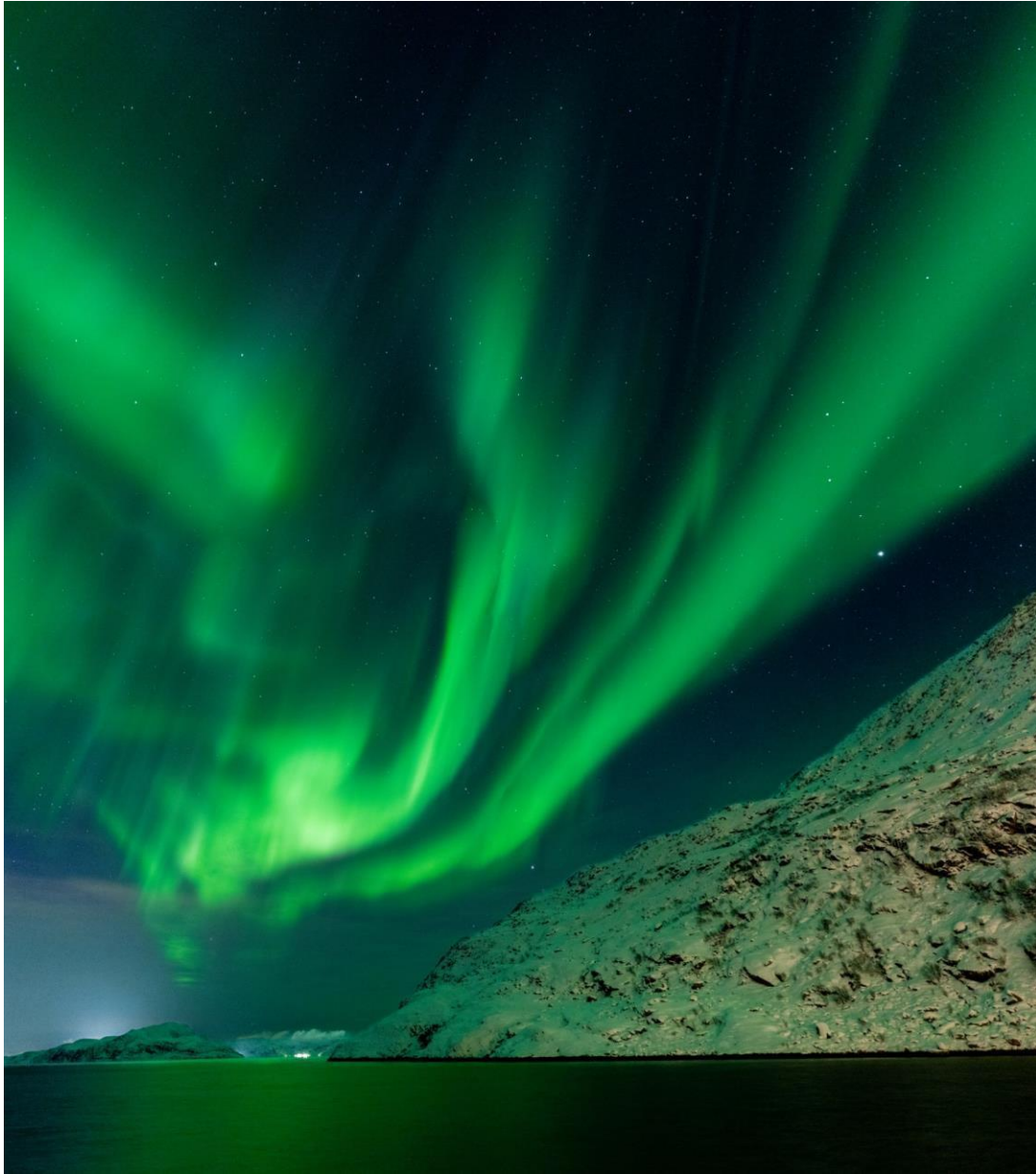
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Okay, so... wow. Last night we got treated to the most epic northern lights display imaginable. I mean, the sky basically turned into a full-on cosmic disco. Greens, pinks, purples, rippling, dancing, doing their thing like they knew we were watching.

Even our expedition leaders, who have literally seen everything, were losing their minds. They said it was one of the best shows they'd witnessed, and hands-down the highlight of the season so far. When the crew are impressed, you know you've struck aurora gold!

So yeah... safe to say the bar for "coolest night ever" has now been set extremely, almost unfairly, high.



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Sunday 23 November 2025

Day 5:

Another Day in the Arctic Circle - Northern Norway

Morning came far too quickly today. As usual, the boat's engines kicked into life around 7 am, rattling the whole ship like an overenthusiastic alarm clock. It was a tough wake-up call after just four hours of sleep... but honestly, I only have the aurora to blame. If the sky is dancing, there's simply no going to bed early.

By 8 am, breakfast was served, and unsurprisingly, I was first to the coffee, practically hugging it at this point. It was definitely shaping up to be a multi-cup kind of day.

The plan for the day was relaxed: head out, see what the ocean wanted to surprise us with, and follow the wildlife. We cruised back into the broad stretch of water known as Sørøysundet, the same area we powered through yesterday under thick snow clouds. Today, though, the visibility was far better. Shortly after entering the strait, someone spotted a distant blow. A few moments of focused watching confirmed it: a sperm whale taking deep breaths at the surface.

We eased closer, giving it plenty of respectful space, and after a few minutes, down it went lifting a perfect, textbook tail fluke as it slipped into the deep. Always such a treat to witness. Then the ocean delivered again... and again. Another sperm whale. Then another. And another. Before long, we'd counted **ten** individuals, an unusually high number for one area!

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Sperm whales are deep divers, spending much of their time hunting giant squid in the inky black depths. But seasonal herring seems to bring large numbers into these fjord systems and open waters. Our best guess? They're going after large cod or halibut that are feasting on the abundance of herring, a whole Arctic food chain unfolding beneath us.

It was a magical, icy start to the morning. The deck temperature hovered around -10°C , and with windchill, it felt even more bracing, proper Arctic face-freeze conditions. We pushed onward in search of a more sheltered area, somewhere calmer and a little less brutal. The hope was to enter a fjord with lots of hungry orca... wishful thinking, but in the Arctic, you never know.

We made our way back into a fjord we'd briefly scouted yesterday, called Store Kjerringfjord, home to the sleepy humpback we'd seen dozing. And today? It transformed into something truly spectacular.

The fjord was alive!

Orca, lots of them, were pushing deeper and deeper into the fjord system, coordinating beautifully as they worked to corral fish into tight bait balls. And they weren't alone. At least twenty humpbacks spread across the fjord, patiently cruising, waiting for the orca to do all the hard work so they could swoop in and gulp down the whole ball in one massive lunge feed. Classic teamwork... or opportunistic behaviour, depending on which species you ask.

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The light was unreal, soft Arctic pinks washing over still water, snowy mountains towering all around. Scene after scene unfolded faster than we could process: whales everywhere, blows echoing, tails rising, orca slicing through the water with that unmistakable dorsal fin. With so much happening at once, you genuinely risk missing the shot if you don't commit to one whale and follow it. Sensory overload in the best possible way.

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Back aboard Stockholm, we delayed lunch for a while because even as the feeding calmed down, a few humpbacks kept lunge feeding, big, dramatic, heart-stopping bursts of action right at the surface. An unforgettable finale to an already unbelievable day of photography.

Later in the afternoon, we cruised back toward the charming little harbour at Store Kvalfjord... and the Arctic wasn't done with us yet.

As darkness settled in, the sky exploded.

We were treated to *the* most epic aurora display, curtains of green and pink dancing, swirling, shimmering overhead. One of those nights where you just stand there, freezing but beaming, knowing you're witnessing something truly magical, one of nature's best phenomena.



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Another extraordinary day in the Arctic. And tomorrow, who knows what the ocean has planned?

Monday 24 November 2025

Day 6:

Feeding frenzies and a final goodbye

Another morning aboard *Stockholm*, another round of sleepy eyes blinking into the dim Arctic daylight. After yet another late night with the Aurora Borealis stealing the show, we were definitely running low on sleep, but honestly, when the sky puts on a performance like last night's, who *wouldn't* stay up? Totally worth every yawn.

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After breakfast (and several essential presses of coffee), we layered up and headed back on deck, ready for another day of cetacean spotting. Our course took us once again toward Store Kvalfjord, because after yesterday's madness, who wouldn't want seconds?

The light was once again that perfect Arctic palette: soft pinks and pale blues brushing the mountains, making the cold feel... well, even colder, but also impossibly beautiful. We found whales fairly quickly, both orca and humpbacks, though not in the explosive numbers of yesterday. Still, we lingered, watching their movements, trying to piece together their behaviour and whether they were gearing up for a feed or just cruising.



After a while, it looked like they weren't doing much besides meandering, so we pushed deeper into the fjord. The walls narrowed steeply around us, icy cliffs rising on both sides, and along the way we spotted white-tailed sea eagles perched on high rocky outcrops, keeping a regal eye on the world below. A peaceful detour, scenic and serene.

Eventually, we looped back into the wider section of the fjord, and that's when things escalated quickly.

In the distance, a flurry of gulls swarmed above a patch of roiling water. Always a good sign. We approached slowly, and soon enough, we were witnessing a full-blown feeding spectacle. Multiple pods of orca and a whole crew of humpbacks had gathered around a huge bait ball, chaos in the best way possible. Orca porpoising across the surface, humpbacks lunge feeding with those massive, gaping mouths. It was the real deal.

Annoyingly, we caught only the very final seconds of that frenzy... but even the tail end of such action was unforgettable.

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We stayed nearby, watching some of the orca socialise, roll, dive, and slowly drift away.



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Just as we thought things might be winding down, lightning struck twice.

Another bait ball. Another frenzy.

Whales everywhere, again!

Orca slicing through the water. Humpbacks exploding upward in dramatic lunges. Birds diving in a feathered free-for-all. It was so overwhelming that at one point, pretty much all of us just lowered our cameras and watched. Moments like this aren't meant to be experienced only through a viewfinder.



Two massive feeding events in under an hour, a rare gift, and one we won't forget anytime soon.

Eventually, it was time to leave this magical northern world behind and begin our journey back to Alta. But the Arctic wasn't done with us yet.

As we cruised out of the fjord, a big male orca appeared beside the boat, then crossed to the other side, then back again. Almost like he was escorting us out, giving one final farewell before disappearing into the icy blue.

On our journey back into Alta, it was clear the Arctic wasn't finished with us just yet. As if refusing to let us leave quietly, the sky erupted once more, waves of colour rippling and swirling overhead in a final, breathtaking aurora performance. It felt like Mother Nature was giving us a personal goodbye show, a last little "don't forget me."

We were still underway aboard the boat, so phones were all we had to capture it, but honestly, the moment itself was far more powerful than any photo could ever be. A perfect, shimmering finale to an unforgettable tour.

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A perfect ending to an extraordinary time in northern Norway.



Tuesday 25 November 2025

Day 7:

Leaving Alta and Back to Heathrow

It was our final morning aboard the *MS Stockholm*, and we enjoyed one last hearty breakfast together before disembarking at 9 am. After a week of adventure, the familiar clatter of cutlery and the smell of fresh coffee and bread felt almost sentimental. With bags packed and goodbyes to the crew and our expedition leaders, Cristian and Beau, we stepped off the ship for one of the last times.

A taxi whisked us into Alta town centre, giving us a couple of relaxed hours to enjoy a few sights before heading to the airport. We popped into a local shopping centre to warm up at a cafe while waiting for the famous Northern Lights Cathedral to open its doors. When it did, the guests headed off to explore its stunning architecture and even had time to take in one of the cinematic aurora experiences, beautiful footage and time-lapses of the Northern Lights that felt especially meaningful after the displays we had witnessed ourselves.

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I held down the fort with the luggage, happy to let everyone enjoy their final taste of Arctic culture. Before long, it was time to make our way back to Alta Airport for our flight to Oslo. Everything ran on schedule, and the journey south was smooth and easy. With a short transfer in Oslo, we still managed to squeeze in some dinner before boarding our final flight home to London Heathrow.

This Arctic adventure delivered everything we could have hoped for and more: towering fjords, pastel winter light, and wildlife encounters that will stay with us forever. From peaceful mornings watching orca rest on glassy water to explosive feeding frenzies of humpbacks and bait-ball chaos, each day brought something magical. We witnessed sperm whales raising perfect tail flukes, white-tailed eagles circling above icy peaks, and auroras painting the sky night after night in colours that defy description.

Through snow showers, zodiac rides, steaming coffee breaks, and hours spent scanning the horizon, our group shared laughter, excitement, and a genuine sense of awe at the beauty of northern Norway. It was a week of unforgettable moments of nature at its wildest.

A huge thank you to everyone who joined this journey. It was a pleasure exploring this incredible region together and sharing so many memorable moments along the way. Until the next adventure!

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