

1. Introduction

Hi,

congratulations, you were selected as the participant of this year Polar Ecology Course. The practical part of the course will take place at High North, in Svalbard. It is necessary to be well prepared for the course not only with the knowledge but with the equipment as well. Also, a basic awareness of the environment in which you will be moving during the course is crucial. This guide should help you with it.

2. What to take and how to pack it

We recommend carrying a larger backpack as checked baggage and a smaller backpack (hand luggage) that you will use for day trips. We do not recommend travelling with suitcase or travel bag for practical reasons.

NECESSARY clothing and equipment:

- Sleeping bag with thermal comfort around 0°C
- Waterproof jacket
- Solid boots (ideally leather), properly treated (impregnated/waterproofed)
- Backup shoes
- Base layer (preferably from merino wool - not cold when wet)
- Hiking pants
- Insulating layers (down/synthetic jackets, fleece)
- 2x hat and gloves (warmer for boat and static work, lighter for more demanding activities)
- Slippers for Nostoc station, river wading (sandals or 'cros')
- Enough (good/warm) socks!
- Toiletries (toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, sunscreen, hand cream)
- Medicines, you are taking (e.g. for allergies, asthma...)
- Passport, travel insurance card and other documents
- Payment card (there is an ATM in Longyearbyen, you can withdraw Norwegian Krone on the spot)
- sunglasses

Apart from your student projects and fieldwork, there will certainly be time to relax. So bring books, movies, your favourite board game (we will be happy to play with you) or knitting, for example 😊. It is also useful to have a notepad and a pencil to record measured data.



Fig. 1: Clothes into the field

Author: M. Šabacká

3. Travelling to Svalbard

According to the ideal scenario, there is only one transfer on the way to Svalbard (Prague-Oslo-Longyearbyen). Unfortunately, we cannot guarantee that your air tickets are the ideal ones so that it may be, e.g. Prague-Stockholm-Oslo-Longyearbyen. There is always enough time for all transfers. Each group usually has the same time itinerary (sometimes even group ticket). Keep in touch to each other and help those who have no experience with flying and please check the baggage allowance for your airline!

It usually takes a full day to get to Svalbard, and the arrival time is at night (still polar day 😊). After arriving in Longyearbyen, we will pick you up at the airport and go to Payer's House in LYR.

4. Julius Payer House in Longyearbyen

[Payer House](#) is our base station in Svalbard. It has a fully equipped kitchen, laboratories, bathroom and high-speed internet (WiFi - eduroam). The station manager will acquaint you with the operating rules and daily routine. Please follow his instructions.

Around the station, you will move either on foot or by car. The zoo-group will spend relatively a lot of time on a boat.

Station phone number: +420 734 690 283

Address: Vei 401-42, 9170 Longyearbyen



Fig. 2: Station „Julius Payer House“ in Longyearbyen.

Author: M.Brož

5. Field station Nostoc

[Field station Nostoc](#) in Petuniabukta is about 60 km northeast of Longyearbyen, and the only way how to get there is by sea. You will probably go on the Polarcirkel - open plastic boats. Safety

equipment and short training will be provided by the operator of these boats. It is important to wrap your luggage so that it does not get too wet. A large and robust plastic rubbish bags and tape is the best solution. Remember that you will probably go back from Nostoc on the Polarcirkel too, so you will need more bags. The journey takes about 2 hours, and you can easily get cold on the sea, dress well!

After arrival, the station manager will acquaint you with the operating rules of the station. Safety is a crucial thing at Nostoc, so please follow all regulations.

There is no phone signal at the station. The nearest one is in Pyramiden, settlement 5 km away, therefore be aware of the limited connection. We have satellite phones for emergency calls at the station. Around the station, you will move either on foot or by boat.

There is no hot water at the station. We use cold water from a stream for everything. You will sleep in sleeper units on beds. All you need is a sleeping bag.



Fig. 3: Station „Nostoc“.

Author: M. Lulák

6. Weather and terrain in Svalbard

The weather in Svalbard is relatively pleasant for long-stay fieldwork in summer. However, the strong wind and drizzle for five days in a row are not uncommon. The temperature is between 5-10 °C in summer, with the fact that wind decreases the apparent temperature.

Mostly it is cloudy, but days with a cloudless blue sky may happen. Changes can be very fast. Due to the nature of the weather, it is necessary **not to underestimate your clothing**. It is recommended to carry more layers with you and be able to react to the current weather situation.

Most of the time, you will move in tundra terrain that may be waterlogged. Another common terrain is blockfield/scree. It is crucial to wear **suitable boots**. Also, shin covers can be useful. Your shoes will have a tough time. If you do not trust them entirely, take spare ones. It may be necessary to wade the river - for this, it is advisable to wear ideally sandals because the stones in the rivers are very sharp. When working/moving on the glacier, follow the group leader's instructions carefully. All necessary equipment for glaciers is available at the station.

7. Daily routine and food at the station

You will get acquainted with the daily routine on the spot, but it is good to know at least what it is about. We have breakfast (8 AM) and dinner (around 8 PM) together. Lunch is in the form of a snack. Breakfast and dinner are prepared by pre-arranged duty that cooks and washes dishes after a meal. The duty changes every day so that all inhabitants of the station will participate in the end. There is a short briefing after dinner where the plans for the next day are discussed.

As for food, we try to have a menu as varied as possible, so nobody would miss anything. If you prefer some of your own food, you can bring it, of course.

It is necessary to report to us about any diets, allergies or health problems that we should know about!

8. Safety

Upon arrival, you will receive safety weapon training, training about behaviour in the presence of a polar bear and boat behaviour. Both stations have fully equipped safety kits, first-aid kits. If you take any medicines, it is necessary to take them and familiarize the others with them in case of need. Follow the instructions you receive in the field and at the station - believe that people in charge are very experienced.

Try to avoid injuries, behave responsibly and follow the rules and instructions of station manager/ group leader in the field.