

## CRUISING

for dinner in a silence broken only by the rumble of ice calving from the glacier. Thursday morning gave us a short hop further East to Borebukta (P15) for a final trek in this wilderness.

Our last sail under main, yankee and staysail was in sparkling sunshine and even the wind lost its chill as we approached Longyearbyen.

Longyearbyen - with a population nearing 3000 - rises from the waterfront jetties up a valley past a thriving commercial district of shops and bars towards mining accommodation now converted to an excellent guest-house. Everywhere is hard rock with little greenery other than lichen, sparse rough grass and the occasional flower sprouting out of the rock. Most pipe-work runs above ground, notably the hot water supply system from the power station that serves the whole community. Road building material abounded but houses were made of wood, which has to be imported. Mining has always been central to this economy and the relics of old shaft heads and abandoned conveyor pylons are everywhere.

Once ashore, we had time to explore so visited the local modern museum where we found a polar

bear! Naturally it was dead and stuffed but the islanders are keen to preserve their bears so there had to be a tale. Evidently this bear had surprised a trekking party and attacked them. The guide shot it five times to no avail. Even after his sixth and last bullet at a range of 3ft the bear still charged round before finally falling to the ground. On reflection, I'm relieved we didn't encounter one.

Much more fun and highly recommended was our encounter with huskies on the slopes above the town. Our instructor (Robert) helped us choose and hitch up our dogs before cantering across the

**"I REMEMBER  
LITTLE OF THE  
COLD, GREY  
HORIZON-LESS  
SEAS"**



Heading ashore for another trek in the wilderness.



Endless sea-ice was stunning.

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