

Text sample: chapter 6 (regional descriptions)

na which was the very first centre of English whaling in Spitsbergen, according to Conway. The Pomors also used the area for hunting and built a hut, and one of the very first winterings by Norwegian trappers in Spitsbergen in the early 1820s, may have been based in this bay. Ebelftothamna continued to be used by trappers in the early 20th century. Some of them took advantage of the NEC's claim on the territory by receiving a small salary for "guarding services." The last trapper liked the place so much that he spent no less than five winters there, all on his own. Most of these activities took place at Ebelftothadden on the south side of the bay, which is off limits to visitors since 2010.

The north side of Ebelftothamna was the site of one of the earliest scientific stations in Spitsbergen, when "Das Deutsche Observatorium" ("the German observatory") was collecting meteorological data from 1912 to 1914 for Count Zeppelin. The aim was to investigate the suitability of the area for airship expeditions. In the end, the First World War made it impossible to follow up such plans. The German observatory building was moved to Ny-Ålesund. There were rumours that it was destroyed by a British warship, but that was German propaganda. Today, there is not much more than the foundations remaining to be seen.

6.6 The northern west coast

The whole of the western coast is mountainous and picturesque ; and though it is shone upon by a four months' sun every year, its snowy covering is never wholly dissolved nor are its icy monuments of the dominion of frost ever removed.

William Scoresby, *An Account Of The Arctic Regions* (1820)

6.6.1 Dei Sju Isfjella

General: "Dei Sju Isfjella" is the coastal stretch between Krossfjord and Hamburgbukta; strictly speaking, this old name is used to address the seven glaciers that calve into the sea. Passenger ships pass this coast regularly, although this happens usually at some distance and during the night, on the passage from Kongsfjord/Krossfjord to destinations further north. In good weather, the coastal panorama with its glaciers and mountains is quite impressive, but there are no suitable landing sites due to the lack of natural harbours along this coast which is totally exposed to the open ocean. The area is part of the Northwest Spitsbergen National Park. For map, see section 6.5 Krossfjord.

Place names: The glaciers are named according to their order from south to north: **Førstebreen:** "First glacier," **Andrebrean** "Second glacier" and so on. **Dei Sju Isfjella:** "The seven icebergs," referring to the seven glaciers. The name, originally "Sieben Eisberge," was probably given by Friedrich Martens who published the first accurate account on Spitsbergen in 1675. **Kvedfjordbukta:** S/S Kvedfjord, used in



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1906 and 1907 during Gunnar Isachsen's expeditions.

Geology: Basement phyllites and schists in the southern part. Further north, these metamorphic rocks are replaced by harder granites and gneisses (see also section 6.6.3 *Magdalenefjord*). There, the mountains reach higher altitudes of about 900 metres.

Landscape: It is hard to imagine a more inhospitable coast. The mountains drop steeply down to the sea, and flat coastal areas, if any, are restricted to narrow strips of land, mostly rocky moraines. The calving glacier fronts, once famous among whalers for their sheer size, are now diminishing and steadily being replaced by growing areas of moraine.

Flora and fauna: There are a couple of seabird colonies, mostly with Little auks in suitable steep scree slopes and Brünich's guillemots, Kittiwakes and Puffins on rocky cliffs, for example at Knoffberget and Nissenfjella.

History: The adjacent open sea has been an important whaling area for centuries. In early 1922, the two Norwegians **Torgeir Møkleby** and **Harald Simonsen** had to endure an Odyssey of several weeks drifting up and down this coast in a small boat that was caught in the ice (see *history* in section 6.7.2 *Danskøya*).

There was a small hut in Kvedfjordbukta that was used by trappers as a link between the districts in Krossfjord and Smeerenburgfjord. It was probably built in 1928, but already used in 1923-24 according to other sources. Another hut was standing near Ræderfjellet (built 1929). Today, there are only some ruins left.

6.6.2 Hamburgbukta

General: Hamburgbukta is a very small bay about three kilometres south of Magdalenefjord and hardly visible from the open sea. The entrance is narrow and only two metres deep, but the bay offers a reasonably protected natural harbour for small ships. It is the only one between Krossfjord and Magdalenefjord and so was often used by early whalers. Hamburgbukta is part of the Northwest Spitsbergen National Park.

Geology: Granite-gneiss-complex, with an age of around one billion years (pointing to a possible "Grenville event").

Landscape: Barren and rocky, with small level areas at the coast. The inland is very mountainous and heavily glaciated. Two smaller glaciers flow down to Hamburgbukta, but no longer reach the water.

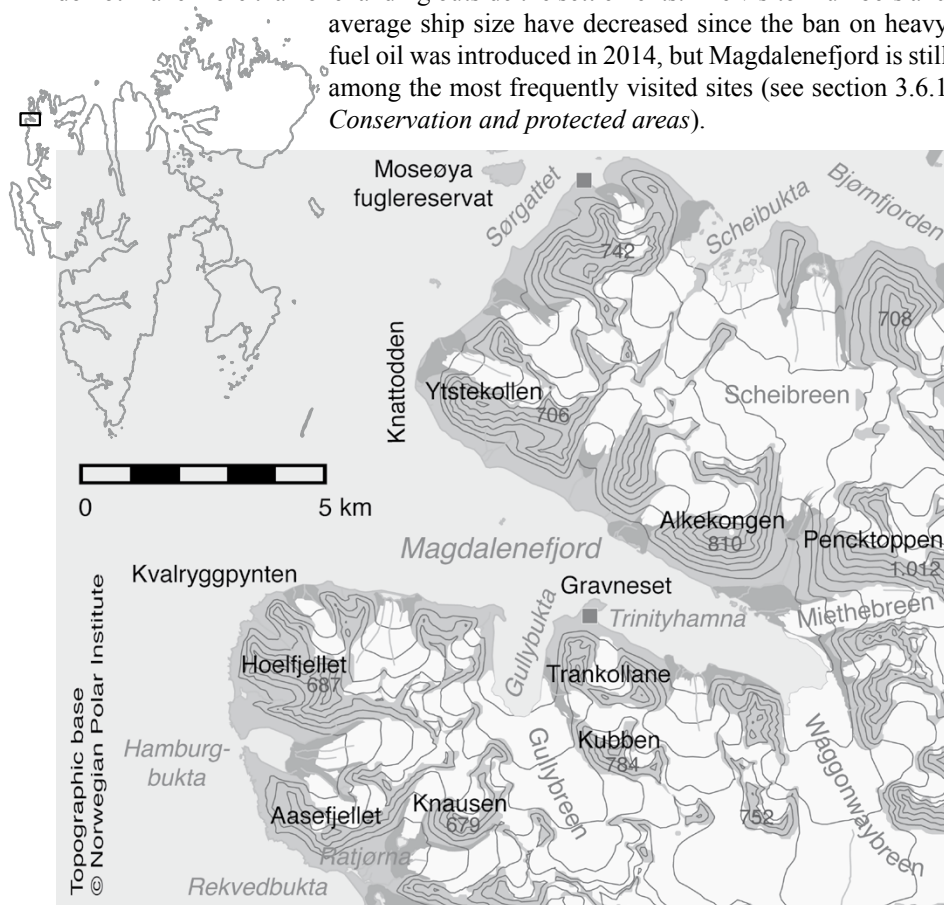
Flora and fauna: There are Little auk colonies in some steep scree slopes around Hamburgbukta.

History: Hamburgbukta was used by whalers from Hamburg for some years from 1642. Some graves are still visible south of the entrance. Norwegian trappers built a hut in 1912 on behalf of the *Northern Exploration Company* not far from those graves in the early 20th century, but it was only occasionally used during travelling. The hut collapsed between 2005 and 2007. The land area around Hamburgbukta was claimed by a German expedition in 1912 for the Norddeutscher Lloyd



6.6.3 Magdalenefjord

General: Magdalenefjord cuts about ten kilometres straight into the coast. It is two to three kilometres wide and is usually accessible year-round. It does not freeze regularly during the winter because of the influence of the West-Spitsbergen current ("Gulf Stream"). The small bay, Trinityhamna, sheltered by the peninsula Gravneset (officially Gravnesodden), provides a convenient natural harbour that was frequently used by whalers during the 17th century. Except for some rock shoals, the bathymetry of the fjord allows larger ships to enter and anchor in this scenic environment, which makes Magdalenefjord a popular destination even for large cruise ships. As a result, Gravneset was the place in Spitsbergen (apart from the settlements) that received the largest visitor numbers outside the settlements: 17,277 persons were registered ashore at Gravneset in official statistics in 2001. Most of those come on board ships with several hundred, or even more than one thousand, passengers and which usually do not make more than one landing outside the settlements. The visitor numbers and average ship size have decreased since the ban on heavy fuel oil was introduced in 2014, but Magdalenefjord is still among the most frequently visited sites (see section 3.6.1 *Conservation and protected areas*).



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6.4.3 (3): Blomstrandhalvøya with a view across Kongsfjord towards Ny-Ålesund. The houses of the old marble quarry Ny London are near the bay (Peirsonhamna). Mid June.



6.5 (1): Signehamna in Krossfjord, with Lilliehöökbrean in the background.