



Ny-Ålesund René Bürgi

Ny-Ålesund

All around Kongsfjorden
in panoramic images

René Bürgi

Preface

Ny-Ålesund is located in the northwest of Spitsbergen, the largest island in the Svalbard archipelago. At almost 79° north, the small village is considered the northernmost civilian settlement in the world. Between 1917 and 1962, it was mainly used for coal mining. Today, it is a center for scientific research around the Kongsfjord. Institutes from 10 nations are represented here. Research and work is carried out in a wide range of fields, including geodesy, glaciology, oceanography, biology and climate.

The surrounding landscape is rough: rugged mountains rise above valleys and fjords. After the land has been covered by snow in spring, the wide, mostly permafrost areas are rocky and bare in summer. There are no tall trees or shrubs: the inconspicuous wil-

low bushes grow barely more than a few centimeters high. Only where birds nest and nutrients are carried out onto the land from the sea do mosses and grasses sprout during the short summer, and the shoreline glows a lush green. Nevertheless, it is hard to believe that the sturdy Svalbard reindeer can feed on these sparse green areas, as they have to brave the harsh conditions throughout the winter.

In the west of the island, the temperatures do not fall as low as elsewhere at this latitude thanks to the North Atlantic Current. The temperature here is around -20°C to +15°C. Snow can fall here all year round, but rain in December is not unusual either. However, the average values have changed at an alarming rate in

recent decades: Since 1994, the measured winter temperature has increased by around 6°C. If rain falls more and more often instead of snow in winter, this has visible effects on sea ice, permafrost soils and the surrounding glaciers, some of which still reach into the fjords. The animal world will also be severely affected by the changes.

For 15 months, Ny-Ålesund was not only my place of work at the Alfred Wegener Institute, but also the starting point for many excursions on foot, by snowmobile or by boat. Spitsbergen enchanted me with its wild beauty. Despite its simplicity, the landscape is constantly changing with the seasons, the position of the sun or the weather, and provides countless unforgettable

moments. During this time, I took many photos, most of them in the usual camera format. But what better way to do justice to such a vast and pristine landscape than with a panorama format? All the pictures in this book were taken as individual shots and later stitched together on the computer. The panoramas show fjords and mountains around Ny-Ålesund in their full extent, inviting you to go on a journey of discovery yourself.

René Bürgi



Locations





Spring



1. In February, the light returns around midday, bathing the land in shades of blue.



2. With snow, lots of light and often stable weather, March is one of the most beautiful months. Kongsvegen with Annekammen.



3. View from the summit of Dronningfjella over Tre Kroner and Gunhildkletten into the interior of the island. Pyramiden is 72 km away, Longyearbyen 88 km.



4. The end of the Kongsfjord with the mountain Colletthøgda and the rugged Kronebreen.



5. Svea, Colletthøgda, Pretender and Ragnhildtoppen (Dronningfjella). The Gåsebu hut on the right.



6. In the early morning mist rolls over the Kongsfjord.



7. The western part of Brøggerhalvøya from the shoulder of Berteltoppen.



8. Ny-Ålesund behind the foothills of Zeppelin Mountain.



9. View from Scheteligfjellet over Ny-Ålesund and the Kongsfjord in the late evening light.



10. Uversøyra. The meltwater from the Uversbreen glacier has formed an ice sheet on the outwash plain.



11. Late evening at Garwoodtoppen. At the end of April, the sun is already shining continuously.



12. Kongsvegen and Sidevegen. View from Garwoodhaugane towards Grinakertoppene (center of image).



13. Snow-covered Ny-Ålesund. The infrastructure still belongs to Kings Bay AS, which emerged from the former Kings Bay Kull Company.



14. A sailing ship enters the Kongsfjord. View from the Feiringfjellet over the fjord towards Brøggerhalvøya.



15. *Holtedahlfonna, Svea and Holmströmbreen. View from Nora, the middle summit of the Tre Kroner.*



16. View from Scheteligfjellet over the tip of Brøggerhalvøya towards the west.



17. Kronebreen with Colletthøgda and Steindolpen.



18. Ride over the last patches of snow at the end of the scooter season.



19. Meltwater has created an ice cave in the Austre Brøggerbreen glacier. It can be accessed via a 50-meter-deep shaft.



20. In the mid-1960s, the Blomstrandbreen glacier still reached as far as Blomstrandhalvøya.



21. Glacial ice washed up by the nearby Kronebreen glacier.



22. At the edge of the Kongsvegen glacier.



23. On the ascent to Feiringfjellet. Conwaybreen, Kongsbreen, Ossian Sars and Blomstrandhalvøya.



24. Kronebreen with breaking up sea ice. For two decades, the Kongsfjord has only frozen over in a few places during the winter.



Summer



25. Ny-Ålesund with Zeppelinfjellet and Brøggerfjellet.



26. Rain clouds over Solvatnet and the Kongsfjord.



27. Zeppelinhamna, Slåttofjellet and Sherdahlfjellet. The Zeppelin mast from 1926 still stands as a reminder of Amundsen and Nobile's polar expedition.



28. Front of Kronebreen and Kongsvegen. View from Colletthøgda.



29. Glacier ice in the Kongsfjord. In the back, the snowy mountain Feiringfjellet and the dark island of Ossian Sars.



30. Fuglehuken on Prins Karls Forland is the westernmost point of Spitsbergen. From here it is more than 500 kilometers to Greenland.



31. Aberdeenflya on Prins Karls Forland.



32. Kolhamna with Zeppelinfjellet. The road connects the new Geodetic Observatory with the village.



33. Glacier ice in the Kongsfjord. Grensefjellet, Botnfjellbreen and Botn-/Nielsenfjellet.



34. Nordvågjellet with a view of Blomstrandhalvøya.



35. Blomstrandhamna and Tønsneset.



36. Tønsneset and Kongsfjordhallet.



37. Coast between Fjerdebreen and Femtebreen.



38. King Haakons Halvøy and Möllerfjorden.



39. Tinayrebre and its bay.



40. Vestre Brøggerbreen with Kloten in the center of the image.



41. Scheteligfjellet and Kiærfjellet.



42. Western part of Lilliehöökreen from a distance of 7 km. The distances are deceptive: it is 20 km to the Wegenerfjellet (on the right in the picture).



43. Coast north of Fjortende Julibukta in the approach of fog.



Fall



44. Kongsbreen in the evening light. The island of Ossian Sars may only be entered outside the bird breeding season.



45. Lundryggen and Zeppelinfjellet. A cable car goes up to the clean air observatory on Zeppelinfjellet.



46. Monacofjellet on Prins Karls Forland.



47. Juttaholmen in the Kongsfjord.



48. *Glacial ice glowing blue in the slowly freezing Kongsfjord.*



49. The railroad ties of the old mine train can still be seen between the old mine train and the village.



50. Feiringfjellet, Merraskallen, Conwaybreen.



51. Brandallaguna with Brandalpynten. The new Geodetic Observatory of the Norwegian Mapping Authority is still under construction in 2016.



52. Ny-Ålesund behind Thiisbukta. The prominent concrete building served as a coal cleaning plant during the mining era.



53. Austre Brøggerbreen with Steenfjellet, Skaretpass, Skarsnuten and Brøggerfjellet. The entrance to the ice cave (19) is a little to the right of the image center.



54. Pass between Zeppelifjellet and Lundryggen.



55. Ny-Ålesund at dusk.



Winter



56. During the night, the Northern Lights dance over Zeppelin Fjellet, the local mountain of Ny-Ålesund.



57. Svalbard is shrouded in darkness 24 hours until mid-January. Ny-Ålesund with the aurora borealis and the laser beam from the aerosol LIDAR of the AWIPEV station.



58. Longyearbyen in mid-January. The main town on Spitsbergen is the starting point for the journey to Ny-Ålesund, 115 km away.



Acknowledgment

Thanks to all the lovely people of Ny-Ålesund for their openness, friendship and helpfulness. Especially to all those who took me on tours or accompanied me on my travels. Thanks also go to all the staff of the Alfred Wegener Institute in Germany and the logistics team of the Institute Polaire Paul-Emil-Victor. Thanks to Sarah for the wonderful days on site and the patience that the post-processing of the images required.

Bern, November 2019