



New travel rules start Feb. 1



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

A sign at Svalbard Airport's security check alerts travelers to new ID rules as of Feb. 1.

Norwegians need passports or similar IDs to and from Svalbard; airport checks to be on mainland

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

A trip to Svalbard is like going to the moon, foreigners say. For Norwegians, it'll just seem like traveling to another country.

New security rules starting Feb. 1 require the identity of all travelers between Svalbard and the mainland to be checked during arrival

and departure. The existing rule only verifies the identity of foreigners entering the mainland from Svalbard.

"This will apply to both Norwegian citizens and foreign nationals," the Svalbard governor's office states in a notice at its website.

The change won't affect security procedures or boarding of flights at Svalbard Airport, said Erik Nygaard, chief of police operations for the governor's office.

"This is the police in Tromsø," he said.

See **SECURITY** page 4

EU station may boost rescues

Addition at KSAT's facility in Svalbard will provide faster and more precise transmissions

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

Search and rescue operations in Svalbard may get a significant boost, especially at sea, from a European Union decision to build a transmitting station for such purposes in the archipelago, officials said.

The EU has started negotiations with Norway for the station, which likely would be located at the Kongsberg Satellite Services (KSAT) facility in Svalbard, according to a statement issued this week by the Norwegian

See **SATELLITE**, page 4

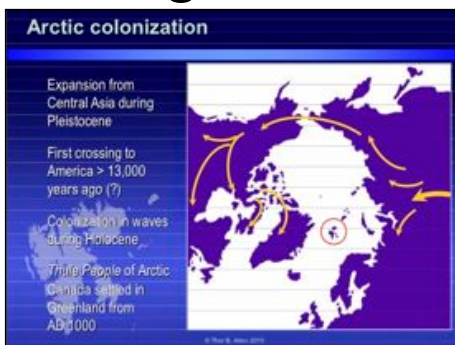
There goes one cool dude



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Aki Vähä, 27, heads for a heated tent after a polar dip Friday during the Spitsbergen Hot and Cold party at the Svalbard Sailing Club. The bonfire and barbecue were a prelude to Saturday's Spitsbergen Up and Down anything-goes race. **Race results and pictures on page 3.**

Getting wired on Svalbard's history



THOR ARLOV / UNIS

This slide from a class lecture about Svalbard's history is part of a collection at www.unis.no.

Lectures, tests, other content for two-week class at UNIS allow those at home to play along

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

The final exam and answers are already online, but students thinking about cutting class should know history in this instance doesn't necessarily repeat itself.

On the other hand, the years of coursework from "The History of Svalbard" class starting Monday at The University Centre In Svalbard are a detailed reference for serious and casual

See **UNIS**, page 3

Inside

'Kebab Man' jailed again in Tromsø
Page 2

Headlines from Svalbardposten

- Local fresh food prices take huge leap in 2010
- Officials want better animal care in Svalbard
- Dogs bitten by rabid fox at Hopen appear OK

Page 3

Weather forecast
Page 3

Events calendar
Page 4

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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When we screw up you'll know about it – on the front page. One of the big complaints about newspapers is they tend to bury corrections and clarifications deep inside where few people who read the original article see them. If we need to fix something, an alert box on the front page will state what story is in error and where the full correction is printed.

Submitting material

Letters, columns, photos and other material are welcome, but we can't offer pay for published items since nobody here is getting paid at the moment. Submissions in electronic form (text, Word documents, JPEGs, etc.) are highly preferred, although typing and/or scanning of items will be considered on a per-case basis. We reserve the right to edit submissions for length, clarity, accuracy, libel and other reasons, but we will also make every reasonable effort to contact the author about any changes prior to publication.

Happy about alarming results



PHILIPS ELECTRONICS

Philips Electronics is claiming a glowing success for its research and publicity Wake-Up Light project, where about 250 Longyearbyen residents were given the device free at the start of the polar night. The 186 respondents had a mean rating of 7.2 in the morning on a scale of one to ten, with five meaning no difference. The project site, seen above, is at www.philips.com/wakeup.

'Kebab Man' in jail again for visa trouble

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Kazem Ariaiwand, an Iranian native who gained worldwide fame with his red kebab catering truck in Longyearbyen, is serving a 30-day jail sentence after being arrested Jan. 6 for an immigration violation in Tromsø.

The arrest follows a similar incident last, after which he was deported to Switzerland,

where he also has citizenship, spending about six months there before being able to arrange his return to Svalbard.

His famous truck is also gone, with Ariaiwand sending it to Tromsø for repairs shortly after his return last year. It is unclear when, or if, either will return.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

"Buy our competitor's newspaper" is pretty stupid advice for a business, which might explain why we still haven't made a dime at this. But for purely selfish reasons we are imploring people reading *Svalbardposten's* electronic editions without paying for them to fork over the dough for a subscription. The paper announced Friday it's abandoning plans to switch from a downloadable PDF format to a copy-protected e-paper available only online and only accessible for a month after publication. Losing the ability to download and read at your leisure without needing an internet connection is unpleasant, but losing the ability to look up stuff from months or years ago is crippling for us. Here's hoping people "lending" their PDFs take the reprieve before the *Svalbardposten* gurus revive thoughts of protectionism or doing away with e-editions altogether ... Longyearbyen isn't center of the world any longer, as we reported last week, but here's an argument that the town – not Disney World – is the happiest place on Earth. Norway is the world's happiest country, according to this year's rankings by London's Legatum Institute. And since Longyearbyen residents earn and play significantly more than their mainland peers ... a

new gizmo getting headlines is an 11,500-kroner "wildlife taser" that officials in Alaska and other northern areas have used to sedate troublesome bears rather than shooting them. But before paying multiple times the cost of a good rifle in the name of compassion, consider that we didn't find the word "polar" preceding any of the bears mentioned. But if anyone here wants to try getting close enough to a polar bear to touch it with the taser and lives to tell the tale, we guarantee they'll get prized space on the front page ... Our eyebrows were raised a few days ago by the arrival of an unusual person with no job, place to stay, significant knowledge about Svalbard and of questionable financial means. No indications any trouble resulted, but it got us thinking how one might survive undetected for a week or so in Longyearbyen. Some whispered suggestions of places with all-hours access and nooks a person might be able to hide in overnight include Svalbard Church, some top-floor storage rooms in the 230 block of town and some large closet space near some little-used entrances in Nybyen, but we're not about to offer specifics. Food is trickier, although Svalbardbutikken has been putting out their leftover Christmas cookies for several weeks now.

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM
SVALBARDPOSTEN
VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Big rise in produce prices, in spite of pledge to lower costs

A promise fresh foods at Svalbardbutikken would become cheaper didn't happen in 2010 as fruit prices increased 25 percent, vegetables 12.7 percent and daily products seven percent compared to 2009. The pledge by previous management in 2007 declares "unhealthy products subsidize healthy products," said Morten Helliksen, the store's administrative director. He expressed skepticism upon first hearing about last year's increase, but said some factors such as supplier and shipping costs are out of the store's control. Papayas, for instance, cost 79.90 kroner per kilogram in 2010, up from 33.81 in 2009, with other tropical fruits also accounting for much of the increase, he said. But apples and oranges also saw retail price increases of about one-third. Overall food and alcohol prices increased 6.1 percent in Svalbard in 2010. For all of Norway, fruit prices decreased by 5.7 percent and vegetable prices increased two percent.

Officials: Better animal care needed, but funding an issue

A rare visit by a veterinarian and an attack by a rabid fox on four dogs at Hopen this month are reminders better animal care is needed in Svalbard, according to officials. "Now it's random how often the veterinarian is at Svalbard ... sick animals should receive the help they need when they need it," said Guri Tveito, environmental chief of the Svalbard governor's office. A veterinarian currently visits three times a year to administer vaccinations and other services, with Longyearbyen Hospital offering some care when necessary. Sending dogs to the mainland can also be problematic because Scandinavian Airlines will only transport one dog per flight. Proposals for better care were discussed by officials and local dog owners in December, but funding improvements is a primary issue.

Hopen dogs don't have rabies

Four dogs attacked by a rabid fox this month at the Hopen weather station don't appear to have the disease, officials said, but they will be observed until 45 days have passed to ensure no symptoms appear.



**up & down
free-for-all**



Racers, above, take off from the starting line Saturday night during the second Spitsbergen Up and Down. A total of 82 racers, up from 49 last year, made the eight-kilometer trek from Nybyen to Trollsteinen (about an 800-meter climb) and back using skis, snowshoes, snowboards and other non-motorized equipment. The winner was Kristian Svarstad in a record time of 54 minutes and 10 seconds, with last year's winner, Sigmund Andersen, coming in second at 58:15. The woman's winner was Sidsel Svarstad with a time of 1:08:56, followed by Hanna Omholt at 1:15:33. At right, a racer warms up next to a pit fire in a large Sámi tent where registration and the post-race awards dinner took place. Photos by Mark Sabbatini / Icepeople.

Svalbard's history caught in a Web

UNIS, from page 1

learners, and offer a way for anyone locally and globally to absorb much of the knowledge without setting foot in the classroom.

You don't need to be a rocket scientist to attend the two-week course – from 5:15 to 7 p.m. Jan. 31 to Feb. 4 and Feb. 14 to 18 – although some students probably will be.

"The very intent is to teach biology and geology students something about the history of Svalbard because many aren't familiar with it," said Thor Arlov, a historian at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim who has taught the class since its inception in 2004.

Only enrolled UNIS students can take the course for credit, so members of the public

don't get to attempt that final exam. Arlov said about one-third of those attending the class part- or full-time are non-UNIS students.

Slides from lectures, documents about the area's history and exams for all years of the class (with sample answers for most) are at the class' website at http://www.unis.no/10_STUDIES/1020_Courses/General_Courses/sh_201.htm. Many UNIS course pages contain links to past research and blogs, but few, if any, offer the same extent of coursework.

But students skipping class will miss material and handouts not posted on the internet, Arlov said. Also, this year's exam won't replicate those from past.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Snow early. NW winds to 11 km/h. High -11C (-15C wind chill), low -23C (-29C wind chill). Sunrise: 0:00 Sunset 0:00	Snow. NE winds to 21 km/h. High -16C (-26C wind chill), low -24C (-29C wind chill). Sunrise: 0:00 Sunset 0:00	Partly cloudy. NE winds to 15 km/h. High -26C (-36C wind chill), low -29C (-38C wind chill). Sunrise: 0:00 Sunset 0:00	Partly cloudy. NE winds at 11 km/h. High -30C (-40C wind chill), low -30C (-40C wind chill). Sunrise: 0:00 Sunset 0:00

Extended forecast: Sunday, p. cloudy, -27C (-36C), -29C (-36C), light 0:00h; Monday, p. cloudy -28C (-35C), -30C (-40C), light 0:00h; Tuesday, p. cloudy, -27C (-34C), -29C (-38C), light 0:00h; Wednesday, p. cloudy, -28C (-37C), -28C (-39C), light 0:00h.

Data provided by yr.no



KSAT

Kongsberg Satellite Services' facility in Svalbard, seen here under the northern lights, will likely be the location for a new European Union search and rescue transmitting station.

New EU station to boost rescue signals

SATELLITE, from page 1

Space Centre (NSC). The station, likely to take several years to implement, will be part of the EU's Galileo system and operated by Kongsberg Satellite Services (KSAT), providing search and rescue information for northern Europe while stations in Spain and Cyprus cover the south.

"It means that we get a very good coverage in the northern seas," said Kjell Arne Aarmo, senior advisor at the space center, in a prepared statement.

Current search and rescue data for the region comes from less precise satellite stations in Svalbard, Tromsø and Fauske. They provide data to a rescue coordination center, which relays data to a central international search and rescue system.

"Norway is traditionally known to be good at search and rescue," Aarmo said. "The new station at Svalbard will be a natural continuation of this tradition. It will also provide income to KSAT and further build up under the Norwegian industry expertise related to the operation of the polar ground stations."

Erik Nygaard, chief of police operations

for the Svalbard governor's office, said they are not familiar with the details of the new station, but "I can see this guidance system has some better facilities because the rescue beacons give a better response."

"It will be easier for the rescue helicopters to fly directly to the right spot," he said.

Norway was one of several nations competing for the station, according to the NSC. The EU previously decided to build a station in France.

"Norway is responsible for large ocean areas and is a major shipping nation," the NSC's statement notes. "Therefore, we have great need for good performance and secure access to navigation and search and rescue signals in these areas."

In addition to faster and more precise navigation, the satellites are equipped with search and rescue transponders. This ensures signals from personal locator beacons are forwarded to a rescue coordination center. Existing personal locator beacons are compatible with the new system.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

Travelers require ID checks starting Feb. 1

SECURITY, from page 1

"Of course we have put up some signs at the airport so people are prepared and have their identities."

Those arriving in Tromsø without proper identification will be required to return to Svalbard, Nygaard said.

The change is in compliance with Schengen Regulations stating the identities of all travelers crossing any Schengen external border must be checked. Svalbard is not a part of the Schengen area, which consists of territories in 25 European countries including mainland Norway.

Officials acknowledge the change may be inconvenient for some Norwegians, but efforts

to lessen the aggravation are underway.

"Passports or national identity cards satisfy Schengen regulation requirements for identity verification," the governor's statement notes. "As national identity cards are not available in Norway as of yet, and introducing a passport identification requirement for Norwegian citizens for travels within the realm is undesirable, an interim solution will be introduced whereby Norwegian citizens can prove their identities by presenting driver's licenses issued after 1998, bank-issued identity cards, or the Norwegian Armed Forces' identity card."

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.

What's up

Jan. 26

6 p.m.: Movie: "Trolljegeren," Norwegian mockumentary, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives," award-winning film at Cannes shown in recognition of Longyearbyen's large Thai population. Kulturhuset.

Jan 27

8 p.m.: Svalbard Seminar. Topics are historical explorers and Russian politics. UNIS.

Jan 28-31

Tango course. For more details contact elise.stromseng@unis.no.

Jan. 29

2 p.m.: Discussion by author Ellinor Rafaelsen about his novel series "Polarnette," where much of the setting is Svalbard during the 1920s. Longyearbyen Library.

Jan. 30

8 p.m.: Movie: "Avatar" (3D), U.S. sci-fi, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

Jan. 31

10: 15 a.m.: Environmental and Economic Committee meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

Feb. 1

10 a.m.: Administrative Committee meeting. Næringsbygget 1, Tundra room.

8 p.m.: Svalbard Seminar. UNIS.

Feb. 2-6

Polarjazz festival. Full schedule at www.polarjazz.no and in the Feb. 1 issue of Icepeople.

Feb. 13

11 a.m.: Hilmar Nøis Trail sled dog race from the Northern Light Station to Passhytta. No entrance fee and dog teams can be of any size. Deadline to register at trappers.trail@gmail.com is midnight Feb. 12.

What's online

icepeople.net provides daily updates of news about Svalbard and the world's polar regions, plus extras for articles from the print edition. Among the latest news:

- *Norway: North top foreign policy issue*
- *Tromsø hosts Arctic Frontiers summit*
- *Cold War sub base converts to Arctic study*
- *Early Barrow 'sunrise' merely an illusion*