



# Sun comes prematurely

*Longyearbyen in deepest freeze of winter for Solfestuka – and sun will shine first light on wrong day*

By **MARK SABBATINI**  
Editor

Since responsible journalism requires impartiality, let's just stick to the fact the sun is acting like a jerk during the week Longyearbyen celebrates its first appearance of the year.

The surface of the sun is 5,505 degrees Celsius, but it's being stingy sending protons to Longyearbyen residents eager to gather outside to show their appreciation. Temperatures between minus 20 and minus 25 degrees have lingered for days and are expected to continue all week.

That's the kind of cold where cars don't start even when plugged into engine block heaters,

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MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

A trio of heavily bundled pedestrians brave minus 25 degrees Celsius cold and 42 km/h wind gusts today in the center of Longyearbyen. Clear skies, but lingering cold, are expected later this week.

# Wild fares for flights to wild



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

A Svalbard Airport employee takes pictures of the first passenger off a Norwegian Air flight Friday.

*Travelers happy as Norwegian Air back after five years with prices all over the map, but for how long?*

By **MARK SABBATINI**  
Editor

On the first day competitive airline service resumed in Longyearbyen, travelers could go to Oslo for 2,799 kroner or a mind-boggling 299 kroner.

The fares were for the same airline.

Norwegian Air Shuttle landed at Svalbard Airport for the first time in five years Friday, with arriving passenger generally expressing satisfaction with the fares and service offered by the discount

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# Giving 'glacial pace' new meaning

*Study showing greater Ice Age melt in Svalbard than thought may prepare for future drama*

By **MARK SABBATINI**  
Editor

If sea level suddenly rose five meters even the most stubborn climate change skeptics would probably be silenced – perhaps literally.

The possibility may seem absurd, but instability in an Antarctic ice sheet had scientists uneasy and there's not a lot of data about precedents. But a multiyear study of Svalbard's

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ANNE HORMES / UNIS

Endre Før Gjermundsen extracts ice from a northwestern Spitsbergen glacier in 2008 as part of a multiyear study of the area's climate history.

## Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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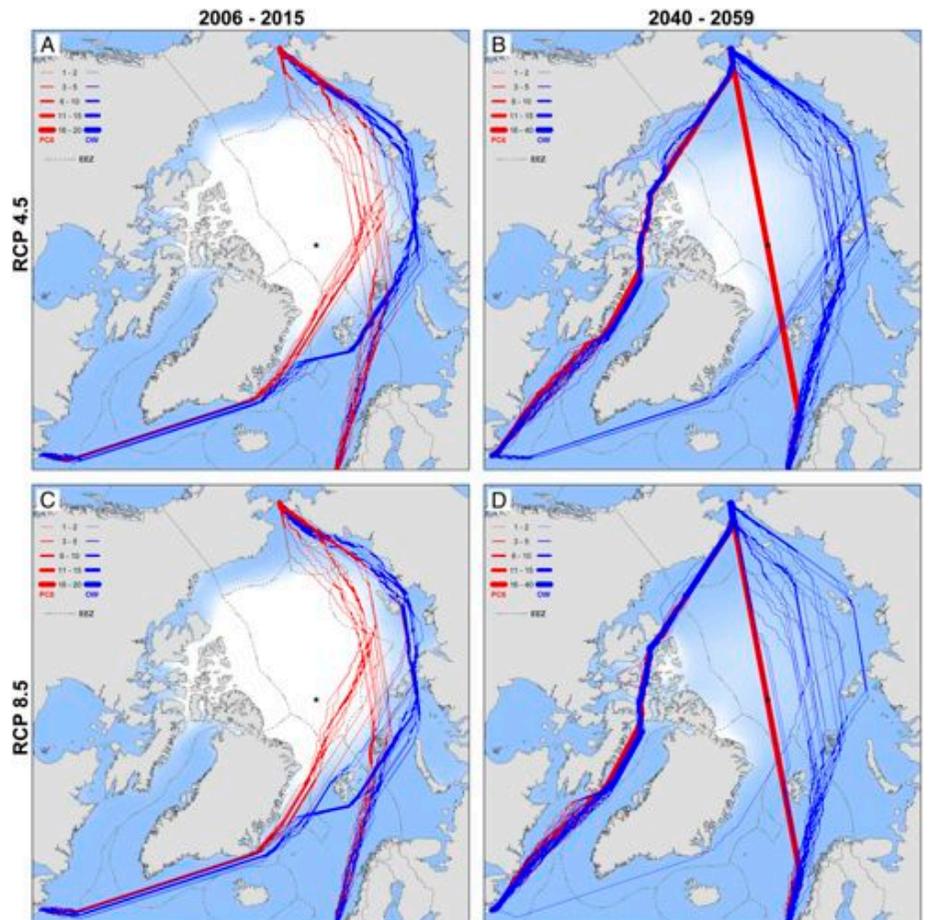
## Corrections policy

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.

## The farce that launched 1,000 ships



COURTESY OF LAURENCE C. SMITH

A series of charts shows projected Arctic shipping routes for current times (left side) and the middle of the 21st century (right side), under scenarios of modest and more severe global warming (top and bottom rows, respectively), according to a study published Monday in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences Plus*. Thicker lines in red and blue (the colors representing two different types of common shipping vessels) indicate heavier projected use. The projection shows most shipments between Europe and the Bering Strait will pass through Svalbard's waters. Such passage may reduce transportation time and fuel costs by 40 percent compared with shipments via the Suez Canal. But the study's authors also raise concerns about invasive species, such as mosquitoes and forest beetles surviving hidden in cargo. The full report is at [tinyurl.com/cwlku4g](http://tinyurl.com/cwlku4g).

## Icesheet

### Random bits of the week's weirdness:

We're fond of mentioning media coverage about the various ways Svalbard is weird, just to remind residents how abnormal they appear to Real People. We seldom hear local reaction, which is why we're thrilled The Local Paper of Regular noted **the hoity-toity magazine Travel+Leisure includes Longyearbyen in its list of the world's 13 strangest towns. We're first on the list**, with the magazine noting the usual eccentricities such as "there is no dying allowed" and "the local polar bear population rivals the human one." The real fun in this case is the *Svalbardposten* reader comments. "Surely for the dark we are rare," wrote Anne Lise Klungseth Sandvik. "But the list of brain-dead weirdos tops off everything else." Evy Knudsen counters with "Idiocy. Longyearbyen and the archipelago are beautiful and nothing else. :-)" Brenju Børn pretty much nails it with "Hahaha, making the city carrying more interesting!" The article is at [www.travelandleisure.com/articles/worlds-strangest-towns](http://www.travelandleisure.com/articles/worlds-strangest-towns) ... The



HØGSKULEN I VOLDA

**Way too cool for school:** We could have been merely freezing in Switzerland, but n-o-o-o-o...

bitter cold and winds are naturally showing no mercy to long-planned expeditions now underway in large numbers, but **we can't help wondering what unspoken thoughts the "thrilled" outdoor recreation students from Høgskulen in Volda are having** about being here instead of the alternative destination of Switzerland, where temperatures in the Alps are roughly about zero degrees Celsius.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Grette Bossart examines sun-themed art by Longyearbyen kindergartners Friday at Kulturhuset.

# Sun not bringing the heat

**SOLFESTUKA, from page 1**

water pipes freeze in numerous locations, and the city struggles to provide adequate heating and hot water. Winds gusting to 42 km/h made the pain even worse early in the week, to the point where it might have had a historic impact on the annual Solfestuka celebration.

"We've never had to cancel an event," said Roger Ødegård Zahl, the city's cultural advisor.

Clearer skies and gentler winds, if not warmer temperatures, are forecast for the festival's main outdoor events at the end of the week.

The official welcoming of the sun's return is at noon Friday at the Skjæringa memorial outside Svalbard Church. But even that is being screwed up by the guest of honor, who will actually shine its first rays on the city Thursday.

"It's always like that the year after leap year," Zahl said, adding organizers decided long ago to keep the ceremony on the traditional date.

A break with tradition is the Take A Chance sledding contest at 1 p.m. Saturday, which will be in Nybyen at Sarkofagen instead of Hiorthamn. The event was moved to Nybyen last year due to lack of snow and Zahl said the location proved suitable enough for an encore even though snowfall isn't a factor this year.

And, no, nobody's leaked anything about what local news from the past year will be spoofed at the "All That Glitters is Not Coal" variety show Friday and Saturday at Huset.

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**

## Solfestuka schedule

### March 5

10 a.m.: Solar activities for kids 1-3. Longyearbyen Library.

7 p.m.: Mass by Father Michalski and Bishop Grgic. Svalbard Church.

7:30 p.m.: Solcafe w/ group singing. Huset.

### March 6

10 a.m.: Sledding for kids 3-6. Behind Radisson.

7:30 p.m.: Presentation about 2012 winter expedition in Antarctica by Sigrí Sandberg Meloy. Svalbard Museum.

### March 7

7:30 p.m.: Presentation by Stein Aasheim about his 2011 South Pole expedition, plus discussion with Sigrí Sandberg Meloy. Kulturhuset.

11 p.m.: Concert by El Caco. Kroa.

### March 8

Noon: Welcoming of sun ceremony. Skjæringa.

12:30: SolFest. Svalbard Church.

6 p.m., 9 p.m.: SolFest for youths. Juniors at 6 p.m., seniors at 9 p.m. Longyearbyen Ungdomsklubb.

7:30 p.m.: "All That Glitters is Not Coal" variety show. Huset.

9 p.m.: Tropical SolFest w/ DJ. Svalbar.

### March 9

1 p.m. Take A Chance sledding contest. Upper Nybyen at Sarkofagen.

3 p.m.: Children's singing concert. Kulturhuset cafe.

7:30 p.m.: "All That Glitters is Not Coal." Huset.

10 p.m.: Concert by Åge Aleksandersen and Sambandet. Kulturhuset.

Midnight: Dual-floor dance party. Huset.

## HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

### Entire Svalbardposten staff, including editor, departing

Svalbardposten Editor Birger Amundsen is departing after eight years and the newspaper's two reporters are also leaving this year. Amundsen, 64, whose original four-year contract was extended twice by two years by the newspaper's board of directors, said he plans to keep a home in Adventdalen and work on projects, including "a book about polar bears and humans." He originally came to Svalbard as an engineer in 1973 and was working for NRK in Marienlyst when he was hired by Svalbardposten. Also departing are Line Nagell Ylvisåker, 30, in May for maternity leave and Anders Fjellestad, 32, in August. Amundsen said 75 people have applied so far for the two reporter positions, which will be filled before he departs by the end of the year.

### Businesses protest extra fee for Svalbard parcel shipping

A nine-year-old postal service policy of charging extra for packages sent to and from Svalbard is being protested by the Svalbard Business Association. "No one should suffer in order to live in rural areas," said Berit Fosslund, head of the trade group. The original surcharge of 160 kroner, approved in 2004 despite objections from local politicians and residents, is now 196 kroner. A letter by the association to Parliament's Transportation and Communications Committee complains the policy violates an equal price requirement for postal services. Pål Jakobsen, a postal service spokesman, said the policy applies to letters under 50 grams, and packages to Svalbard must be sent by air instead of less expensive ground transport.

### Tour company won't face charges for death at glacier

No charges are being filed in the death of a woman in a guided raft who was hit by ice from a calving glacier last August. Svalbard Lt. Gov. Lars Erik Alfheim said investigators aren't certain how far the raft was from the glacier, but "We have concluded that they were more than 60 to 80 meters away, which is the zone that was recommended in the past." He said the incident will be a factor in recommending safe distances in the future.

## Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

### Wednesday

Partly cloudy. E winds to 22 km/h. High -18C (-24C wind chill), low -22C (-30C wind chill).

Sunrise 7:42a; sunset 4:38p

### Thursday

Cloudy. E winds to 25 km/h. High -19C (-24C wind chill), low -23C (-29C wind chill).

Sunrise 7:34a; sunset 4:46p

### Friday

Partly cloudy. Variable winds to 22 km/h. High -15C (-20C wind chill), low -23C (-28C wind chill).

Sunrise 7:25a; sunset 4:54p

### Saturday

Partly cloudy. E winds to 35 km/h. High -15C (-23C wind chill), low -19C (-25C wind chill).

Sunrise 7:17a; sunset 5:01p

**Extended forecast:** Sunday, p. cloudy, -18C (-24C), -20C (-27C), light 10:00h; Monday, p. cloudy, -16C (-23C), -20C (-27C), light 10:15h; Tuesday, clear, -16C (-23C), -20C (-28C), light 10:31h; Wednesday, clear, -16C (-23C), -21C (-29C), light 10:46h

Data provided by storm.no

The screenshot shows the Norwegian Air Shuttle website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'norwegian' logo and various menu items like 'Bedrift', 'Reisebyrå', 'Grupper', 'Reward', 'Charter', 'Mine reiser', and 'Logg inn'. Below that, there's a search bar with 'Norge (Norsk)' selected. The main heading is 'Fly til Longyearbyen-Svalbard fra Oslo-Alle flyplasser tur/retur'. The search criteria show 'Fly fra Oslo-Alle flyplasser (OSLAL)', 'Fly til Longyearbyen-Svalbard (LY)', 'Utreise 01 mar 2013', and 'Retur 01 mar 2013'. The 'UTREISE' section shows a flight from Oslo-Gardermoen at 09:15 to Longyearbyen-Svalbard at 12:10, with a low fare of 2,129 NOK and a flex fare of 2,649 NOK. The 'RETUR' section shows a flight from Longyearbyen-Svalbard at 12:55 to Oslo-Gardermoen at 16:00, with a low fare of 299 NOK and a flex fare of 2,799 NOK. There are also sections for 'VELG FLYNING' and 'BETINGELSER'.

#### NORWEGIAN AIR SHUTTLE

Norwegian Air Shuttle's website lists last-minute fares for its inaugural flights between Longyearbyen and Oslo on Friday. The lowest fare of 299 kroner is the airline's cheapest to any destination.

## Non-stop Norwegian a hit with flyers

### DISCOUNT, from page 1

airline. But questions remain about how long the carrier will remain, having twice abandoned Svalbard after one year, and travelers are facing a labyrinth of fares and fees in the meantime.

Introductory fares of 1,199 kroner for the March 1 flight from Longyearbyen to Oslo quickly sold out when Norwegian announced its return last October. But pricier seats remained available and the airline slashed the price to 299 kroner – the lowest for any flight it offers – for last-minute travelers. For those not wanting "no change" restrictions, the fare was 2,799 kroner.

Fares on Scandinavian Airlines also vary considerably, with rates of about 1,500 to 3,000 kroner listed this month, although unsold last-minute seats are available for about 800 kroner.

Norwegian's fares don't include taxes that add about 25 percent to the price and the airline generally has higher fees for extras such as

checked baggage and assigned seats.

But Norwegian's flights are non-stop, whereas many SAS flights stop in Tromsø, which was a big plus for Friday's travelers.

"We had a lot of trouble with SAS trying to fly my dog down," said Daniels Amby, 28, a student at The University Centre in Svalbard traveling to Austria. "They lost the dog in Tromsø."

Concerns have been raised in the past about Norwegian using older planes, but arriving passengers said the current ones are new and on par with SAS. The discount airline also boasts about free wi-fi, but travelers said it's too slow to be practical for most purposes.

"The closer to the rear you are the better," said Kristian Hansted Treit, 30, of Moscow. He was in the second row, which meant "going to the loo to text."

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**

## Ice age melt started earlier, lasted longer

### THESIS, from page 1

glaciers during the last ice age, about 12,000 to 30,000 years ago, may fill some of the gaps.

The melt of Svalbard's ice cover started far earlier and lasted longer than previously thought, according to a doctoral thesis being presented this week by Endre Før Gjermundsen, a student at the University of Oslo. The size and characteristics of the ice then were similar to the current-day West Antarctic Ice Sheet (WAIS), which rests largely on a bed below sea level and slopes inland.

"A small retreat could therefore destabilize the entire WAIS leading to rapid disintegration," Gjermundsen writes in his thesis, noting the ice sheet's stability has recently come into question. "If the entire WAIS were to melt, global sea level would rise about five meters."

His analysis, focusing on previously unstudied glaciers in northwest Spitsbergen, also relies on new methodologies.

"This is the first time samples have been analyzed from these areas, and the first time using so-called 'burial dating' (using two

isotopes to be able to tell weather the ice sheet was cold-based (non-erosive) or warm-based (erosive)," he wrote in an e-mail interview. "Additionally, some of our samples give a brand new idea on alpine landscape development."

In addition to revealing ice melt lasted several millennia after starting 20,000 to 25,000 years ago, Gjermundsen's thesis argues the peaks are surprisingly old and survived the last glacial cycles with little change. He said he plans to continue his study for two more years.

"We don't know whether glacier change today can respond quickly enough to matter to our grandchildren, and we are trying to answer this from a geological perspective by looking at Earth's history," Gjermundsen wrote.

His thesis is part of the Icebound project ([www.icebound.no](http://www.icebound.no)), which has conducted field studies of Spitsbergen's ice cover since 2008. An NRK documentary about his project is at [tv.nrk.no/serie/ut-i-naturen/dvna60001212/18-12-2012](http://tv.nrk.no/serie/ut-i-naturen/dvna60001212/18-12-2012).

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## What's up

### March 3-9

Solfestuka. See schedule on page 3.

### March 7

6 p.m.: Presentation about polar bear biology and behavior, and safety and conduct rules for people in the field. UNIS.

### March 10

11 a.m.: Family Mass w/ music by Polargospel. Svalbard Church.

12:30 p.m.: Annual meeting and election of new new presbytery. Svalbard Church.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Rive-Rolf," U.S. animated film dubbed in Norwegian, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Victoria," Norwegian drama, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

### March 11

7:30 p.m.: Trivia quiz. Kulturhuset cafe.

### March 12

1 p.m.: Environmental and Industrial Committee meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newntoppen room.

7 p.m.: Longyearbyen Council meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newntoppen room.

7 p.m.: Interview of Lasse Stener Hansen by Priest Leif Magne Helgesen. Sales of waffles and coffee to benefit Norwegian Church Aid. Svalbard Church.

### March 13

6 p.m.: Movie: "Django Unchained," U.S. drama/western, ages 18 and up. Kulturhuset.

### March 14

5 p.m.: Door-to-door fundraising for Norwegian Church Aid, arranged by Svalbard Church.

### March 15-16

100-year commemoration of women's right to vote. Historical and cultural presentations from 3:15-6:30 p.m. March 15 and 9:30 a.m.-6 p.m. March 16. Kulturhuset.

## 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:

- *Ban on trading polar bear parts rejected*
- *Global temps highest in 4,000 years*
- *Warming will cut worker productivity 20%*
- *Boy, 9, stops for penguins in marathon*