To believe that the governor can rescue people out, regardless of circumstances, is wrong. There is no guarantee for that.

- Per Andreassen, police lieutenant
  Svalbard governor's office

Bearly aware:
Polar bear destroys two tents at poorly chosen campsite; group also had trouble with weapon

Geese grub:
Record flock a threat to tundra

Perfect dark
Svalbard gets world's brightest view of total solar eclipse; viewers say phenomena among best ever

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

"I've never seen so many phenomena during an eclipse," said Kathy Biersdorff, a Calgary resident watching her 11th total solar eclipse since 1979. "You picked a fabulous one."

- Light switch: Clear skies flip narrative. 4
- Dim bulbs: Cheap and clueless rues. 5

After a week featuring a near-hurricane blizzard, widespread and bizarre media inquiries about things such as whether Svalbard would run out of food due to all the visitors, and a polar bear attack at a campsite that resulted in non-fatal injuries to one man, the biggest remaining question was whether the week's cloudy skies would clear by Friday morning.

See RADIANT, page 6

Woman accused of setting fires in multiple buildings sent down to mainland during investigation

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

A woman suspected of trying to set multiple fires in several occupied residential buildings along Vei 222 late Friday night is in custody on the mainland as police and fire officials investigate the case, according to The Governor of Svalbard.

The fires were set at about 11:15 p.m. and, while open flames resulted, firefighters responded quickly and extinguished the fires before they could inflict major damage. Lt. Gov. Jens Olav Sæther told Svalbardposten the woman has acknowledged setting the fires, which police are treating as a case of premeditated arson.

"There is no reason to believe anything other than that it was done on purpose," he said.

Firefighters and police respond to one of several fires started in residential buildings March 20.

See EXILE, page 12
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.

Needed: 49,000+ beds in the next 46 years

The sun sets over what might be Longyearbyen in the year 2061 (since climate change might result in temperatures closer to Spain's than the North Pole's), when an estimated 50,000 people are already pledging to visit to see Svalbard's next total solar eclipse. The masses made their commitments within a few days of the debut of a "Solar Eclipse 2061" Facebook page (at tinyurl.com/pn4k3xb) set up by Adrian Paixao Nilsen of Lillestrøm. "It all started as an internal joke amongst me and my classmates," he told NRK. "I had no idea that there was so much interest in this." But he noted "my buddies and I are actually planning to have a reunion then and if others will be with us we will be ready with open arms."

Random bits of the week's weirdness:
This week's "be afraid, be very afraid" warning about Russia's Arctic ambitions comes from Diplomatic Courier magazine (tinyurl.com/ng9jtmw), which has the former Soviet empire enlistning panserbjørn to aid their military push northward. For those unfamiliar with the creatures from Philip Pullman's "Dark Materials" series, they're "a race of largely solitary armored bears who have a society based on the real-life island of Svalbard." Furthermore, they "consider honorable fighting as sacrosanct...have opposable thumbs, giving them the ability to manipulate complex objects as do humans, and they consider their armor, what can be considered their clothing, to be their souls." The magazine, referring to a massive Russian military exercise in the Arctic this month, declares "Russia is training their own 'armored bears' to have specialist training in Arctic warfare and to guard a string of frozen outposts." Obviously this is an expose of one of the country's closest-held secrets, since the photos of the exercise we're seeing are decidedly lacking in experimental DNA splicing ... But it's hardly necessary to reveal Russia's nuclear secrets to expose its ambitions for Svalbard; just ask your guide a few questions during the standard tourist visit to one of the country's settlements here. Colin Dickey did that for a lengthy online feature about Pyramiden published by Longreads (tinyurl.com/ovy69bq). Some of his characterizations of Svalbard seem a bit off — "the archipelago is a museum of folly and failure. Humans have tried to extract resources and riches out of the barren frozen land up here, to very little success" (yeah, mining's only sustained us for a bit more than a century). But his Cold War and be-yond musings are rich fodder for thought ("the two nations kept up pretenses, hosting winter sports events and other niceties" while engaging in far more military activities than would seem practical given Svalbard's limited population and activities). He asked his guide, Sasha ("materializing as if out of an Eisenstein film") why the Russians insist on keeping their fledgling mining and tourism operations going. The response: "If we leave Barentsburg, we could never come back." Although other experts have previously stated Russia is trying to extend the life of the coal mine in Barentsburg as long as possible for that purpose, it seems the Norwegians aren't exactly being benign if Sasha is to be believed. "Already, he said, he gets letters every week from Norwegians seeking to buy Pyramiden—or just the hotel, or even just a floor of the hotel," Dickey's article states. "The Norwegians, he claimed, are desperate to claim some wedge of the deserted city, because they know that if they did they could erase any trace of Russian habitation within a few years."
**Bear attacks eclipse campers**

*Czech man suffers face, arm injuries during early morning encounter; bear shot and killed*

By MARK SABBATINI

A polar bear attacked a tour group of six people early Thursday morning about 30 kilometers northeast of Longyearbyen, with a Czech man rescued by helicopter after sustaining injuries to his face and arm not considered to be life threatening, according to The Governor of Svalbard.

The attack occurred at about 6:20 a.m. at Fredheim, according to a statement released by the governor. The group was on a combination snowmobile/skiing tour and sleeping in tents when the attack occurred.

A tripwire alarm around the campsite failed to operate and there was no polar bear guard on duty when the attack occurred.

"It was a very big surprise," said Jakub Moravec, the 37-year-old victim, told ITV News. "I'm very lucky."

He said he tried to protect his head during the encounter and the bear was shot three time almost immediately by another camper. The bear wandered off, but was subsequently located and killed by officials responding by helicopter due to severe neck injuries that were impairing the animal's movements.

Moravec was flown to Longyearbyen Hospital and then to Tromsø for treatment.

The bear attack resulted in a firestorm of often-sensational media headlines since it occurred a day before the March 20 total solar eclipse, which attracted a record number of overnight visitors to Svalbard. Local leaders had advised visitors during the week before the eclipse to avoid attempting last-minute trips due to the bear danger and lack of available places to stay.

Two photographs added a sense of tragic coincidence to the incident. Moravec's lone picture of Longyearbyen on his Facebook page, taken before the attack, shows the hospital he was treated at. Another photo on Facebook taken by Joshua Holko notes "the magnificent polar bear that I photographed less than a week ago is now DEAD." He accused the campers of ignorance because they "set up a tent camp in an area where the bear was known to be hunting for food."

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

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**Weather forecast for Longyearbyen**

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**Extended forecast:** Sunday, cloudy, -7C (-14C), -9C (-17C), light 14:53h; Monday, cloudy, -7C (-12C), -9C (-17C), light 15:09h; Tuesday, p. cloudy, -7C (-11C), -13C (-19C), light 15:26h; Wednesday, cloudy, -12C (-20C), -15C (-21C), light 15:42h.
The March 20 total solar eclipse is observed from a charter plane at 35,000 feet above the north Atlantic Ocean. The high-altitude view was the only way for people not in Svalbard to see the full blockage of the sun in person, since clouds blocked the view in the Faroe Islands, the only other inhabited area where the eclipse was total. But numerous news, science and other organizations provided live coverage on TV and online, with coverage of the 147 seconds of totality as well as the two-hour eclipse available from a number of sites, including a portal at UNIS at tinyurl.com/hpm6jr.

Hurray for a dark day

Gloomy moods and news coverage vanish with the clouds as clear skies block out hardships, costs

By MARK SABBATINI

Those 147 seconds of clear sky during the total solar eclipse were like night and day in more than the literal sense.

During a week when perhaps an unprecedented number of media types had their eyes on Svalbard, coverage early in the week presented the archipelago as unwelcoming due to nature (blizzards and a polar bear attack) and the local folks (“don’t come here, officials warn last-minute travelers”).

Furthermore, the weather was overcast most of the week and the prospects for clear skies on Eclipse Day were seen as 50-50 until the last moment, which meant thousands of “eclipse tourists” might prove less than enthusiastic interview subjects.

“They were saying it’s an interesting place, but these people didn’t come here because of Svalbard,” said Ronny Brunvoll, director of Visit Svalbard. “They were here for the eclipse.”

But a nearly clear dawn Friday shined a new light on Svalbard. As a result, the global headlines evolved from British tabloid screamers such as “Polar bear mauls Svalbard tourist” the day before to glowing accolades where words like “espectáculo” needed no translation to savor.

The raves were amplified by the fact the archipelago was the only inhabited place on Earth where the total eclipse could be observed since clouds blocked the view in the Faroe Islands. But Brunvoll said he doesn’t know if that will result in any long-term benefits for Svalbard’s image and tourism trade.

“It's all about repeating the message,” he said. But “now they're all focusing on the next thing.”

“Of course, we've got great, great pictures we can use.”

There were some clueless correspondents (or editors) as well, including one article headlined “Polar bear attacks at lunar eclipse” (it wasn’t during the eclipse and even more obviously wasn’t a lunar blackout).

There were also articles about the eclipse causing unprecedented (but not catastrophic) disruptions of Europe’s power grid and tides – but for those in Svalbard the incidents were the textbook definition of “other people’s problems.”

There’s more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.
A private security guard from Oslo keeps an eye on shoppers at Svalbardbutikken during the afternoon following the March 20 total solar eclipse. The guard, who remained on duty at the store throughout the weekend, said he didn’t apprehend any shoplifters, but did advise some customers not to “shop in their pockets” by stashing merchandise in their clothes before paying for it. The store, which installed surveillance cameras and scanners to detect tags on high-priced items two years ago due to an increase in thefts during the summer tourism season, recently upgraded those measures with more cameras and an overhead monitor at the entrance that lets shoppers know they are being watched.

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

MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Sun not only dim bit

By MARK SABBATINI

Editor

Obviously local businesses and plenty of homeowners made out – like bandits in some cases – but the high cost of seeing Svalbard's dark side resulted in some dim moments from locals and the penny-pinched visiting hoards.

Residents emptied many supermarket shelves early in the week due to fears visitors would take everything otherwise, tourists arriving at the store later in the week encountered a first-ever uniformed security guard who tracked their movements, and a number of visitors arriving without a place to stay went knocking door-to-door hoping to find a kind stranger – or perhaps an absent one who left the door unlocked.

Such incidents didn't get much official notice, with The Governor of Svalbard reporting there were "no big problems" during the week of the eclipse. But the reaction from locals (and those renting local homes) ranged predictably from amusement and alarm, depending on the degree of inconvenience and intrusion.

"The craziest thing I saw was locals panic buying," said Alexander Flygel, a Svalbardbutikken employee, referring what became one of the week's more amusing snafus. Locals stocked up before large numbers of visitors arrived Wednesday, resulting in a short-term shortage of dairy and other items, which led repeatedly inquiries from visitors and the outside media about whether Svalbard had enough food to sustain the the record number of overnight visitors.

The store ordered twice as many groceries as normal, but because some of them didn't arrive until as late as Friday (when several planeloads of visitors made one-day visits to the archipelago) it appeared there was a shortage, said Karin Mella, the store's manager.

Coming up short on goods in another way was of more serious concern to the store, which hired a private security guard to keep a high-profile eye on shoppers during the eclipse and days immediately surrounding it. Mella said the store's board of directors decided to hire the guard as a deterrent and precaution, not because of any specific increase in thefts during what is already one of the busiest months of the year.

A few visitors who tried to cut perhaps a corner too many were those arriving – generally on late flights Thursday – with no place to stay. While some stayed up all night and then tried to catch a brief nap inside on whatever seating was available indoors, at least a handful of others sought shelter in home they didn’t have to pay for. (Full disclosure: the author owns one of the apartments visited; the two people renting the apartment turned a woman making the inquires away.)

Those willing to inquire at agencies such as Visit Svalbard were able to find last-minute beds for as little as 500 kroner a night.

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

MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

A couple that arrived in Longyearbyen without place to stay Thursday night, left, tries to get a bit of sleep on a bench in Lompensenteret following Friday’s solar eclipse. At right, dairy and other shelves at Svalbardbutikken were largely empty early in the week due to "panic buying" by locals.

A private security guard from Oslo keeps an eye on shoppers at Svalbardbutikken during the afternoon following the March 20 total solar eclipse. The guard, who remained on duty at the store throughout the weekend, said he didn’t apprehend any shoplifters, but did advise some customers not to “shop in their pockets” by stashing merchandise in their clothes before paying for it. The store, which installed surveillance cameras and scanners to detect tags on high-priced items two years ago due to in increase in thefts during the summer tourism season, recently upgraded those measures with more cameras and an overhead monitor at the entrance that lets shoppers know they are being watched.

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MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Sun not only dim bit

Food-hoarding locals, floor-hunting homeless visitors among less illuminating moments during eclipse

By MARK SABBATINI

Editor

Obviously local businesses and plenty of homeowners made out – like bandits in some cases – but the high cost of seeing Svalbard's dark side resulted in some dim moments from locals and the penny-pinched visiting hoards.

Residents emptied many supermarket shelves early in the week due to fears visitors would take everything otherwise, tourists arriving at the store later in the week encountered a first-ever uniformed security guard who tracked their movements, and a number of visitors arriving without a place to stay went knocking door-to-door hoping to find a kind stranger – or perhaps an absent one who left the door unlocked.

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A couple that arrived in Longyearbyen without place to stay Thursday night, left, tries to get a bit of sleep on a bench in Lompensenteret following Friday’s solar eclipse. At right, dairy and other shelves at Svalbardbutikken were largely empty early in the week due to "panic buying" by locals.
The odds of seeing the sun – or more precisely, seeing it completely blocked out by the moon – were described by forecasters as 50-50. But on Friday morning the sun – which only two weeks earlier wasn’t even visible in most of Longyearbyen as the surrounding mountains kept it hidden even after the official end of the four-month polar night – rose brilliantly over a mostly clear sky in a large valley just east of the city limits where the large crowd of eclipse watchers gathered in the minus 20 degrees Celsius cold.

Nearly 400 visitors gather at a warming tent in Adventdalen about 10 kilometers east of Longyearbyen to watch the March 20 total solar eclipse. At 10 a.m., 11 minutes before the eclipse officially started, skies forecast to be partly cloudy were almost entirely clear. Photo by Mark Sabbatini

“I was so lucky. I almost can’t believe the weather,” said Kari Stokke, hotel manager for Spitsbergen Travel, who suddenly found herself serving hot dogs and hot chocolate to nearly 400 elated guests in a giant warming tent in the valley about 10 miles east of Longyearbyen.

A budget poll of questionable scientific value conducted by Icepeople (a.k.a. our editor shouting out “excuse me – is there anybody here who is unhappy with the weather?” at everybody in the warming tent) indicated 100 percent of respondents felt "very good" or "excellent" about the skies that were virtually cloudless when the eclipse officially began at 10:11 a.m.

Most of the viewers were with an organized tour group and while they shared certain similarities – most were fairly affluent and in their 50s and 60s – their nationalities and experiences with eclipses varied widely.

Among those describing themselves as a “serious amateur” was Rob Hawley, 63, a retired engineer from San Jose, Calif., viewing his 12th total solar eclipse since 1970. He said eclipse tourism “a good excuse to go places” and his “bucket list” for Svalbard included the hope of seeing the northern lights at the same time as the eclipse for the first time.

William Mangold, 65, on the other hand, was an outlier in the group since seeing Svalbard was the primary motivation for the trip and the eclipse merely a nice bonus.

“I was in Antarctica two years ago so I had to come here,” he said. “I feel a little bit weird the eclipse isn’t why I’m here because for everyone else it is.”

Clusters of observers talked mostly about
photography techniques and previous experiences during the hour leading up to the moments of totality.

"Stand out there facing the crowd and take a picture of them using a flash right at the moment of totality – they’ll love you for it," was Bob Justis' "advice" to one bystander.

The Germantown, Maryland, resident who was viewing his sixth total solar eclipse since 1970, hastily informed a total novice within earshot (our official pollster) the advice was an obvious joke to someone possessing a clue since, in addition to reflective strips on most people's clothes making any flash picture useless, the flash would destroy people's "eclipse vision."

Many observers didn't spend the hour leading up to the moments of totality exposed to the elements, ducking inside the warming tents or the still-running busses that brought them out to the valley. Inside the tent a trio of fabric tubes blowing warm air were used to heat everything from feet to camera batteries to food that had frozen during the wait outdoors.

"It's like Thanksgiving," said one woman nibbling a now-warm sandwich. "I roasted a turkey."

The perceptible difference in daylight was small as the sun shrank to a tiny sliver of a crescent just minutes before the moments of totality, prompting some first-time viewer to speculate it might be because of the reflection from the vast white snow plain.

But Biersdorff said the extreme Arctic setting had little effect on lighting during the vast majority of the eclipse.

"That's why people who see 99 percent of an eclipse say 'I don't see what the big deal is,'" she said. "My hope is we have the northern lights. That would be perfection."

Joined by husband, Richard Patching, and a couple of friends, they began noticing a change in their surroundings about two minutes before the moments of totality.

"The lights have come on at the mine," Patching said about a minute before the eclipse became total.

The quartet speculated as to whether the scores of sled dogs in nearby kennels would begin howling and all around them a general buzzing intensified to a roar.

"Twenty seconds" a woman a dozen meters away shouted out. Those daring to glance in the opposite direction could see the lights of Longyearbyen come on and a brilliant "sunset" illuminate the far horizon in the fjords. "Here

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we go."

"Oh man…this is so amazing," Biersdorff said breathlessly, as she and her companions began shouting out a list of observed phenomena.

"Crescent shadows!" "Shadow bands!" "Diamond ring!" "Chromosphere!" "Prominence!" "Venus!" "The moon’s shadow!" "Both diamonds!"

The 147 seconds of totality from 11:10:02-11:13:09 a.m. – in which the valley was dusk rather totally dark – passed in a flash almost matching the near-instant return of light to the valley as the sun emerged from view behind the dark side of the moon. A huge roar resounded from the crowd, many of whom immediately begin scrambling inside the warming tent and into the heated busses nearby.

Although the northern lights weren’t among the observances tallied by Biersdorff’s group, she was utterly and uniquely elated by the unprecedented number of things she experienced.

"OK, there’s only one thing missing: champagne," she said. Fortunately that was covered too, as a cork popped almost immediately nearby and her husband returned moments later with two bottles ("no need to put them on ice up here" passed over) a paper towel quipped and 50 paper cups, and the couple began handing them out to the revelers heading toward warmer places to celebrate.

The eclipse was plenty thrilling as well for Longyearbyen residents, although many said they were unlikely to join those willing to go to the ends of the Earth to see one – especially since Svalbard’s was considered the pinnacle achievement for many longtime seekers.

Anne Lise Sandvik, 66, a Longyearbyen resident for the past 42 years, watched the eclipse from another set of warming tents a few kilometers away in the valley. She said she’s seen a partial eclipse from Svalbard before, but nothing like Friday’s event.

"It was amazing," she said. "I would not have gone across the Earth to see it, but I’m glad I saw it."

Sandvik, known as one of the town’s most active organizers of community activities, is something of a local legend when it comes to unique stories to tell. But she said the eclipse will be among those that are most memorable.

"It’s among the most special things I’ve experienced," she said. "Of course, it’s amazing to just lay out on my snowmobile at my cabin under the northern lights."

Nearly all local stores and other businesses closed so employees could watch the eclipse. But a few residents were obligated to remain indoors, including kindergarten teachers due to the risk of the kids not following safe viewing techniques properly, public safety officials, and a handful of hotel employees.

But Synne Sarajärvi, 20, a receptionist at the Radisson Blu Polar Hotel, said she was among those who managed to bend their work mandate just enough to experience the moments of totality (with an OK from her bosses so, no, this article won’t get her fired).

"I jumped out the window," she said. "There’s a fire escape there and I walked down to UNIS."

Unfortunately, the view of the sun itself from the site was blocked by a mountain.

"The thing I noticed is it got kind of dark," Sarajärvi said. "It was kind of boring."

Elin Anita Olsrud, 51, the head librarian at the public library since moving to Longyearbyen from Oslo 18 months ago, said she and a small group of friends watched the eclipse from the top of a mountain a short snowmobile ride southwest of Longyearbyen since she, like nearly all Svalbard employees, closed their shops and offices to see the peak moments of the eclipse.

"It was just the five of us and nobody else, so that was amazing," she said.

Like Sandvik, Olsrud said she’s seen a partial solar eclipse from Oslo, but Friday’s eclipse ranks with the best of her already numerous Svalbard experiences, including her first snowmobile trip.

"It was fantastic," she said. "There’s nothing like it. It was hard to come to work afterward."
By GREG GOUDEY
Guest contributor

I came to Svalbard/Longyearbyen for the first time in June of 2013 and, just like I expect most first time visitors think, I thought I was so cool because no one I knew had been to the Arctic.

Here I was taking selfies and showing off on Facebook with posts raving about how great I must be because I'm a guy from sunny Southern California who is braving this Arctic archipelago alone, putting myself in reach of polar bear encounters and bla bla bla. I was one of these yahoo first-time tourists to visit this very special and one-of-a-kind location. I was exactly one of these people I now see as a bit of a nuisance around here in Longyearbyen.

Moving ahead to January 2014, I booked a flight from San Diego to Stockholm and stayed there for a week with a friend and then went to Helsinki for a few days again to visit a friend, but the main purpose and destination was again Svalbard. I wanted to witness the polar night in Svalbard where I knew the darkness would be at its most extreme. I intended to stay just one week at Guesthouse 102 and fully experience this type of perpetual darkness and how it might affect me. One week turned to two and I just really wanted to stay even longer.

During my two weeks of mostly isolation and aloneness in this amazing landscape under the dark sky, day and night I started to really travel deep within my psyche, with the help of some of my favorite introspective music (Tool, Neurosis, Fever Ray, etc.). I dug into some memories and emotions I realized I had been hiding and avoiding sorting out. I often spent entire days just holed up in my room at the guesthouse, laying in bed and at times feeling very confident and excited, and in other moments sobbing uncontrollably as I faced feelings of guilt and regret from my past. I had come to Svalbard in January to be awestruck by the natural surroundings and I left feeling enlightened, released, relieved, humbled, and with a new love of this stark, cold and challenging land that lies far above the Arctic Circle and just at the doorstep of the North Pole. Svalbard now more than I ever imagined has made a deep and lasting impression in my psychic core. This land is sacred to me and now I feel a connection with it that makes me protective of her well being.

I returned again to Svalbard on Sept. 1, 2014, this time with two friends I've met in my travels: Elodie is a well-traveled soul from France and my Polish buddy Darius who is now living in Norway. We all arrived the same day and set up camp at the Longyearbyen campsite to stay out the last days its open season, with plans to finish off the week at Guesthouse 102.

During my previous visit to Longyearbyen I made new friends in town, two sweet gals who work at the Fruene cafe, and thanks to keeping in touch with them through Facebook I was able to arrange a guided hike up one of the mountains surrounding Longyearbyen. The folks trying to sell campers a more comfortable night's sleep did so a bit too loudly. The Swedes were adroit and a bit authoritarian. And the Japanese were wasteful, much to their hosts' delight.

"I'm not exactly a tourist anymore. I'm no Svalbard expert, but I've learned what this place means. I've learned to love and respect it."

The community at Longyearbyen's crowded campsite during Eclipse Week was a study in polar opposites, starting with those braving the Arctic outdoors setting up their tents only a few hundred meters from the jets at the airport. Longtime expedition experts competed for space with intrepid novices in common areas, and weather that was spectacular during the eclipse also inflicted hardships such as freezing and destroying the campsite's water pipes the day before. For the most part, those trying to experience the eclipse on a budget nature and a few fellow campers.

"Overall most people were definitely quite courteous," said Greg Goudey, who volunteered to help campsite attendant Juliane Opielka during the week. "I would say there was at least a good 70- to 75 percent of the people had never been here before," he said. "They were all

See DAWNING, page 10
See OUTDOORS, page 10
An employee with the Swedish mattress company Hästens tries out their sleeping gear inside a large tent. The company’s active nightlife didn’t endear them to all of the fellow campers they were hoping to sell their products to, although the overall atmosphere of the campsite was described as friendly.

**Share or keep secret?**

RIDGES OVERLOOKING TOWN. Seeing the town from that vantage point was well worth my lack of breath several times on the way up. Again I just found myself humbled by this unreal but so real place in the Arctic zone. During our week-long stay I needed to isolate myself one or two days and kind of pick up where I left off from my January visit. It’s as if unconsciously I come to Svalbard to collect and organize my thoughts and emotions.

On March 11, 2015, I arrived yet again to my beloved Arctic paradise known as Svalbard. This time I had a dedicated mission. On my previous visit to Longyearbyen Camping I talked with the owner about volunteering as extra help around the campsite during the total solar eclipse of March 20. Well here I was, in the cold again, watching the dramatic weather changes daily and waiting for an optimal time to set up my one-man tent at the campsite. My originally planned four days at Guesthouse 102 turned to six days, but I managed to set my tent on the ice at Longyearbyen Camping. Still staying in the warm comfort of the guesthouse I get a text from Julie at the campsite saying I should come right away and move my tent. The storm from the night before (which took out power in town) brought wet snow and left my tent in a shallow pond. I managed to get it up and hung to dry which meant another night at the guesthouse and more money to spend (things in the Arctic are not always easy nor are they cheap).

But during my stay at the guesthouse I overheard several comments and conversations amongst many first-time visitors to Svalbard. Mostly I thought to myself "man are you people funny. You have no idea where you are – are you prepared for this place?" Some people seemed to have a bit of a clue, while others I thought might find it too dramatic and uncomfortable here.

I did meet a Swedish adventure tour guide who was here with other Swedes to set up a camp for about 20 guests who were coming to watch the eclipse. At the campsite I ended up helping them set their camp, and in return I had some free meals and they left me with a bottle of nice 2007 Italian wine (of a varietal I do not know) and their leftover food items. As I'm finishing up this here chronologically ordered mini biography of my love and experiences to date at Svalbard, I sit in a local cafe reflecting upon all of my time spent at this magical place so far removed from the rest of the world. I've now been camping for four nights in my tent in temperatures in the the mid- to high-minus teens (Celsius), and after some changes and additions to my sleeping gear I finally can endure two more nights at camp.

I recognize that people who call Svalbard home are just different from people you meet in cities on the mainland; folks here are helpful and they look out for each other, and they even look out for non-residents such as myself. I feel now as a part-time resident, though as people here recognize me from previous visits and I think they can sense I'm not exactly a tourist anymore. I'm no Svalbard expert, but I've learned what this place means. I've learned to love and respect it, to appreciate and surrender to its raw natural events and realize I'm fortunate to be in this place and that I'm not in control of nature. She's always the one in charge.

I'm torn between sharing the idea of how easy it is to come to a place like Svalbard and starting to keep it my secret. I'm not sure I like the idea of just anyone taking a short flight up here and trampling about like they belong just anywhere they want. Svalbard is a special place for people who understand what it means to be here. I'm afraid too many people who are not prepared and or ready to be here may slowly destroy all that is magical for those who call Longyearbyen home.

Maybe I just selfishly don't want to see more tourism here.

**DAWNING, from page 9**

OUTDOORS, from page 9

that same type – as soon as you say ‘polar bear' people have this fascination and this fear at the same time."

"It was entertaining to hear their enthusiasm. It wasn't annoying. It was cool."

The experienced group leaders overcame some harsh conditions, including a near-hurricane-force blizzard while setting up camp before most of their clients arrived. But that kind of assertiveness of the leader of a Swedish group also caused some tension.

"He kind of came in and more or less took over the place while he was there," Goudey said. "It wasn't in a way that was rude, but it was so in your face it was in a way everyone didn't know to react."

Another Swedish group – one decidedly lacking in Arctic experience – consisted of employees with the Hästens mattress factory, who tried to use the trip to pitch its product to campers uncomfortable on the frozen tundra. But while they were serious about selling slumber, others at the campsite said the company reps were a bit rowdy when it was actually time to go to sleep.

But one group who did deliver the gift of a good night's rest – both during Eclipse Week and for future campers – was a Japanese delegation who brought five new four-person expedition-quality tents and donated them to the campsite when they departed. Goudey, who spent three nights in one of the tents, said they will be rented out to future campers who are either lacking or don't want to carry their own.

"It was like luxury accommodations, although it was still cold," he said.

There's more! Visit www.icepeople.net for the complete story.
Because folks into Svalbard are so awesome at it, it's the

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get smart or get naked telethon

For six years we've been bringing you skewed news and views about the world's coolest place for free. But we can't pay for this out of our rapidly thinning pocketbooks forever, so we've bitten the bullet and added donation and advertising stuff to our newly redesigned website. Consider this our polite, not-resorting-to-porn-ads plea to consider "subscribing" or allowing thousands of readers worldwide to learn about your wares and talents.

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**Carrot:** Got something needing profession editing or translating, or a Mac needing first-aid? We're paid pros at it.

**Stick:** Do you really want to see this guy get desperate enough to expose more flesh? Save the therapy fees and donate instead.

Want more details or to hear this groveling in person? Contact our editor at marksabbatini@yahoo.com or 4151 4638.
March 24
7 p.m.: Evening Mass and fireplace social. Svalbard Church.

March 25

March 27
6 p.m.: Discussion about Confirmation Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

March 29
11 a.m.: Confirmation Liturgy. Svalbard Church.
7 p.m.: Movie: "Marie Heurtin," French drama/biography, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

April 1

April 6
5 p.m.: Movie: "Asterix: Le Domaine Des Dieux" (3D), French animated, all ages. Kulturhuset.

April 8

April 10
Camp Svalbard winter session for youths 13-16. Registration and more details at ingeborg.runde@lokalstyre.no.

April 12

April 13
8 p.m.: Trivia quiz. Barentz Pub.

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:

- Japan spurns Norway's toxic whale meat
- China's Antarctic fishing plan protested
- Climate altering Atlantic Ocean currents
- Fla. workers can't say 'climate change'

Arson details hazy

EXILE, from page 1

Residents in the buildings initially speculated on social media the resulting fire alarms might be the latest in a string of kitchen fires that have occurred since January of last year due to intoxicated people falling asleep while food is cooking. Commenters quickly realized it might be more than another smoke-and-noise incident when an ambulance arrived and firefighters began spraying fire hoses on at least one building.

There was also apparently confusion as investigators tried to piece together the scene, possibly because some of the occupants forced to evacuate the building were visitors renting the residences because of Friday’s total solar eclipse.

"There should be an interpreter there; hardly anyone spoke English," wrote Roger Ødegård, the city’s cultural advisor, who posted numerous photos and updates related to the incidents at a community Facebook page.

There were numerous angry responses from residents to Ødegård's updates and other social media posts regarding the woman’s actions, but Ødegård also stated he was glad the damage wasn’t worse due to factors such as an auto-notification alarm system the fire depart-