



Nearly N. Pole season

Barneo to host bachelors and bureaucrats seeking the N. Pole, and try to avoid last year's errors

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

When setting up a tent on a desolate ice surface at minus 40 degrees Celsius, it's rational to assume stag parties and bureaucrats converging for a policy meeting won't be among your camping companions.

Unless, of course, you're at the most remote ice camp of all, which every year draws clusters of people striving for some way to be unique beyond just being there.

The extreme duties of the hosts began full-speed Tuesday as the first cargo plane destined for this year's Barneo Ice Camp site departed an airport near Murmansk. In addition to trying to set up the camp by the scheduled start of expedition season April 1, the Russian-run site will try to overcome mishaps that resulted in a lot of bad blood with guests last year.

The plane – carrying 50 tons of equipment including two tractors, fuel, generators and 20 camp staff – will drop the cargo over the base

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ARLID LYSSAND / SYSSELMANNEN

A male polar bear lies outside a cabin at Hyttevika after being fatally shot Sunday by an occupant while the animal was trying to enter through a window. No charges are expected in the incident.

Bear killed at cabin

Animal was halfway through window when occupants shot it after attempts to scare it failed

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

A polar bear trying to break into a cabin was fatally shot Sunday by the occupants, who said they felt they had no alternative when attempts to scare the animal off failed.

The scientifically-tagged male bear, about 2.1 meters long and weighing 305

kilograms, broke through a window and was halfway inside when it was shot, said Arild Lyssand, a chief police inspector for the Svalbard's governor's office, in an interview with NRK. He said a man and a woman inside the cabin, both Longyearbyen residents, apparently acted in legitimate self defense.

"They tried throwing lighted candles at the bear and fired four warning shots but it didn't help," Lyssand said.

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An Arctic melt that's oh so sweet

Chocolatier at Fruene bringing new meaning to savoring polar bears and icebergs in Svalbard

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

Elin Blindheim experienced a meltdown almost immediately after arriving in Longyearbyen, but in her case that's a good thing.

The former Brattvåg resident is creating a new kind of buzz at Fruene with handmade chocolates now being sold at the espresso cafe. She said it offers her a chance to chill a bit

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MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Elin Blindheim makes a batch of candies layering white and dark chocolate around centers of Bailey's Irish Cream on Tuesday at Fruene.

Avoid oversleeping and going to Hell for missing church: Set clocks ahead one hour at 2 a.m. Easter Sunday.

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.

Confirmed sightings of new life



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Kristin Foss Telstø, 14, center, lights a candle Sunday at Svalbard Church after receiving her Confirmation from Priest Leif Magne Helgesen, far left, and Catechist Tore Ørjasæter. Fifteen Longyearbyen youths received Confirmation during the Mass. Services scheduled at the church during Easter week include a 7 p.m. Holy Thursday Mass and an 11 a.m. Easter Sunday Mass. There will also be the annual outdoor Good Friday Mass at 1 p.m. at the cross at Vindodden.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Call it Svalbard's version of the "stand your ground" debate as we've got a second straight week of cyberspace ranting about humans and polar bears due to Sunday's fatal shooting of a bear trying enter a cabin. Last week saw people musing about whether film crews truly bother polar bears by illegally violating their space (and if we ought to root for the animals if confrontations occur). This week, in addition to legit questions about issues such as whether pepper spray might have been an effective non-lethal deterrent, we've got desktop experts pondering things like whether polar bear hunting ought to be made legal. Multiple commenters at *Svalbard-posten's* website also suggest the window the bear was halfway through was too small for it to enter. Anne Lise Klungseth Sandvik, who's probably the site's most prolific commenter, is showing little patience with such observations (and others), responding "you should probably take a little course in polar bear anatomy and movement." There's also debate about dining on polar bears, largely focusing on the danger of *Trichinella* contamination ... Using exotic cooking as a transition, does anyone else find it annoying hearing people talk about liking/making Asian food? Asia's, like, a big friggin' place with a lot of countries featuring things not even vaguely similar in many regions. **We found ourselves similarly miffed reading all kinds of press releases, articles and reviews for the IMAX documentary "To the Arctic,"** DVDs of which goes on sale Tuesday. The mostly laudatory copy makes endless references to the Arctic, but there's not a hint about even what country the filmmakers follow a polar bear family in. In case it's unclear: the Arctic is also big friggin' place that covers one-third of the Earth, geographically speaking. We



WARNER BROS. HOME ENTERTAINMENT

All white looks alike? Not really, which is why it'd be helpful to tell rescuers something more specific than "the Arctic" should you happen to get lost there.

finally, by venturing deep into a PDF of production notes from the filmmakers, discovered the bears being followed do indeed reside in Svalbard. Of course, every single writeup made sure to mention it's narrated by Meryl Streep ... And using famous personalities for our next transition, it seems **"Top Gear" narrator Jeremy Clarkson is in Longyearbyen and bitching about not having a hat.** He's putting together a project about World War II convoys from the United Kingdom that sailed through perilous conditions in Svalbard en route to the former Soviet Union. But for now, in addition to moaning about not finding a hat in Oslo or Tromsø, he's Tweeting breaking vital news to followers such as "goodnight everyone from the most northerly town on Earth. Fags: £1.40 a pack" ... **Still, he might be faring better than a group of about 15 Jehovah's Witnesses who visited last week,** knocking on doors hoping to save a few errant souls. They get points for persistence after finding the population basically doomed to damnation during a visit in 2011. But they might want to rethink visiting during the most holy Christian time of the year, when locals tend to make pilgrimages to cabins.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Elin Blindheim puts a box of white chocolate polar bears in a display case at Fruene on Tuesday. The bears are one of Blindheim's unique Svalbard-themed creations, which the cafe hopes will be popular as souvenirs. The cafe also hopes to expand the selection and possibly sell the confections online.

Chocolatier gives Fruene new buzz

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compared to a confectionary she started on the mainland a few years ago that became overwhelming due to its popularity.

"It's not hard to sell chocolate," she said. "Everybody likes chocolate."

The chocolates she started selling at Fruene this month are unique to her as well as customers, since some are new creations such as white chocolate polar bears and dark chocolates laced with coffee beans.

"I have one chocolate that's going to look like an iceberg," she said. "It's going to be white and blue."

Blindheim, 47, imports chocolate from Belgium that she melts down to make her confections. Like most gourmet chocolate makers, she uses lower amounts of sugar than people are used to in commercial candies.

"If I'm doing a chocolate like strawberry I want it to taste like a strawberry," she said.

Blindheim said she worked various jobs, including doing traditional Norwegian paintings on walls and doors, before being enticed by an article about Lofoten Chocolate owner Jeanette Johansen about five years ago. After contacting Johansen and getting an enthusiastic response to the question of "if there is a future in chocolate in Norway,"

Blindheim set out putting her own touch on her mentor's inspirations.

"All the recipes are made by myself," she said. "I don't have a book."

She began her Brattvåg business, Choco Plaisir, on a small scale similar to that now at Fruene. But it quickly expanded due to media coverage, attracting 6,000 Facebook followers worldwide and seven-day workweeks during the Christmas season where some days ended at 1 a.m., keeping her away from her husband and two children.

When she saw an ad seeking help at Fruene, Blindheim was immediately hooked, having worked on a ship that traveled here frequently when she was about 20. Tove Eide, the cafe's owner, said the attraction was mutual because she has long had a "romantic dream" of selling handmade chocolates, but didn't have time to learn how to make them.

"It goes well with what we have here," Eide said. The white chocolate polar bears were one of the first things she wanted because "in Svalbard nothing is being produced here."

"This is something very nice tourists can bring to the mainland that is produced here," she said.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Lunckefjell mine progressing, likely to open on schedule

Development of the new coal mine at Lunckefjell is progressing well and mining personnel are scheduled to start arriving as planned in September, officials said during a tour of the site. Progress from a towering blue building at the mountainside to tunnels extending nine kilometers into the mountain have been constructed during the past year with few unexpected difficulties, said Jostein Nordstrøm, project leader for Veidekke, the primary construction company hired by Store Norske for the mine. Still to be determined between now and next March when full-scale mining begins are operation questions such as the logistics of how coal is processed before transport. Store Norske has called the Lunckefjell mine an essential project that will provide about four years of production as supplies diminish at Svea at Mine 7, although a sharp drop in coal prices has caused the company to be more pessimistic in recent comments about the site's profitability.

Man expelled from Svalbard for being hobo in UNIS dorm

A Lithuanian man in his 20s has been expelled from Svalbard for five years after settling in as an uninvited guest at a UNIS student dorm, stealing food and making threats when confronted. The man arrived about a week ago, apparently hoping to find a job, but instead of renting a residence slept in the common room of the dorm. Residents confronted the man several times, but on Saturday night he made threats that resulted in calls to the governor's office. He was fined 5,000 kroner and expelled from Svalbard on Monday.

Six escape uninjured from burning cabin at Bjørndalen

Six people escaped without injury from a cabin that caught fire Friday in Bjørndalen, according to the Svalbard governor's office. The occupants were asleep in the cabin, owned by The University Centre in Svalbard, when the fire ignited for reasons still under investigation. The smoke awoke the residents, who extinguished the fire with dry chemicals, but the cabin sustained major damage.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Snow. E winds to 55 km/h. High -3C (-10C wind chill), low -16C (-23C wind chill).	Cloudy. E winds to 55 km/h. High -3C (-11C wind chill), low -10C (-17C wind chill).	Cloudy. E winds to 39 km/h. High -11C (-18C wind chill), low -15C (-22C wind chill).	Cloudy. E winds to 29 km/h. High -13C (-19C wind chill), low -16C (-22C wind chill).
Sunrise 4:55a; sunset 7:15p	Sunrise 4:47a; sunset 7:23p	Sunrise 4:39a; sunset 7:23p	Sunrise 4:30a; sunset 7:38p

Extended forecast: Sunday, cloudy, -9C (-13C), -14C (-18C), light 15:24h; Monday, p. cloudy, -9C (-13C), -11C (-16C), light 15:41h; Tuesday, cloudy, -11C (-15C), -13C (-18C), light 15:58h; Wednesday, cloudy, -10C (-15C), -13C (-18C), light 16:15h

Data provided by storm.no



EXPLORERSWEB.COM



CAMP BARNEO

The first cargo plane destined this year for the Barneo Ice Camp, left, departs Murmashi airport outside Murmansk early Monday morning. At right, a view of the Arctic ice sheet from a scouting helicopter shows a pattern of "large ice fields, separated by rivers," according to Russian officials who oversee the camp. The perilous surface, resulting after the maximum Arctic ice cover this winter was the sixth-lowest ever, makes the possibility of full-length land-to-Pole expeditions questionable.

Barneo seeking better luck in '13

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at approximately 89 degrees latitude north during three flights, said Yevgeniy Kirillov, a Northern Fleet spokesperson, in an interview with *RIA Novosti*.

"The cargo will be dropped in parachutes from low altitude," he said. "The pilot changes elevation angle (the nose of the airplane is lifted sharply up a few seconds before the drop) and the cargo falls out by gravity. Personnel from the Russian Air Force are the only ones that have experience in conducting such operations in ultra-high Arctic latitudes."

Scout helicopters began searching March 17 for this year's site, with an "assault team" parachuting onto the ice and beginning preliminary work on an ice runway, and tents for living and research. Aside from a few being delayed in Khatanga due to bureaucratic snafus, there appear to be few early problems.

"We're told that conditions on the ground are extremely cold at the moment with temperatures hovering around -39°C/-38°F," wrote Kraig Becker of The Adventure Blog, which tracks extreme expeditions worldwide.

"But other than that, the weather remains good with minimal winds and no snow. At least for now. That can change rapidly of course, but it seems that there is a window of opportunity for work to proceed at the moment."

It's the second season for a new management team at Barneo, which received harsh criticism from expeditioners for a regimented attitude that wrecked the traditional community spirit and prevented impromptu decisions necessary in such an environment. In addition, poor weather that delayed the start of the season caused a backlog and resulted in what's believed to be the shortest season in Barneo's 11-year history.

Among this year's scheduled high-profile expeditions are a "Last Night of Freedom" stag party featuring champagne and caviar at the North Pole, and a meeting of the ambassadors of the Arctic Council nations. There's also "regular" annual events such as the North Pole Marathon, scheduled April 9 for those able to afford the 100,000 kroner registration fee.

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

Shooting of polar bear first since 2011

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One of the occupants, who were not identified, shot the bear between the eyes with a revolver, Lyssand said. Neither person was injured, "but they were shook up by the incident."

The couple, who is remaining at the cabin for the Easter holiday, will be questioned when they return to Longyearbyen as part of a routine investigation into the incident, said Lt. Gov. Lars Erik Alfheim, in an interview with *Aftenposten*.

It's the first fatal shooting of a polar bear since one broke into a tent at a summer youth camp about 50 kilometers from Longyearbyen in 2011, killing a 17-year-old boy from the United Kingdom and severely injuring three other people.

The bear killed Sunday was flown by helicopter to Longyearbyen, where it was

identified as a healthy six-year-old male. It also had a microchip, ear tag and tattoo from Norwegian Polar Institute researchers who were following its movements.

The incident touched off familiar emotions in Svalbard and elsewhere, with people debating how much danger the cabin's occupants were in and if a non-lethal alternative such as pepper spray might have worked instead.

"In Siberia, Russia, Canada and the USA bear spray has been used to resolve this kind of conflict between bears and humans for about 30 years," wrote Per Ulrich Kristiansen, in a reader comment at *Svalbardposten's* website. "Not sure that pepper spray/bear spray will solve this specific situation, but bear spray should be part of the 'toolbox.'"

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

What's up

March 27

6 p.m.: Movie: "The Croods" (3D), U.S. animated/family film dubbed in Norwegian, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

March 28

7 p.m.: Holy Thursday Mass. Svalbard Church.

March 29

1 p.m.: Outdoor Mass for Good Friday. Vindodden.

March 31

11 a.m.: Easter Mass. Svalbard Church.

April 1

Q1 meter reading due.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Identity Thief," U.S. comedy/crime, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Stories We Tell," Canadian documentary, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

April 3

6 p.m.: Movie: "G.I. Joe: Retaliation," U.S. action/sci-fi, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Polarleik dance, featuring polka, salsa and other styles. Kulturhuset.

April 4

7:30 p.m.: Hålogaland Theater's Mister Boffo performs clown monologues to Italian theater legend Dario Fo. Kulturhuset.

April 6-7

Trappers Trail dogsledding race. Race details, registration and other details at www.longyearbyenhundeklubb.no/trapperstrail.html.

April 7

6 p.m.: Movie: "Identity Thief," U.S. comedy/crime, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Jag Etter Vind," Norwegian drama, all ages. Kulturhuset.

April 8

7:30 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:

- *Sea ice loss blamed for extreme winter*
- *Shell's Arctic chief quits after mishaps*
- *Idiot pol: Scientists kill 10% of polar bears*
- *Risk? Eh. Russian scientists still on 'bergs.*