



RUSSIAN POLARITY: A WEEK OF DAWNINGS AND DARKNESS



Workers at the Barneo Ice Camp, left, set up one of the large tents used as housing, dining and research facilities during the North Pole expedition season. At right, one of the first expeditions – including Katya Popova, 12, one of this year's youngest participants – gets a briefing at the camp.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BARNEO ICE CAMP

Smooth openings

Barneo camp, Pyramiden hotel debut after overcoming troubles

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

Mother Nature decided to play another April Fool's Joke on those trying to help expeditions reach the North Pole, but this year the workers weren't playing along.

The Barneo Ice Camp opened as scheduled Monday at 89 degrees latitude north despite deceptive weather that complicated an inaugural flight. About 200 visitors participating in expeditions, research and a meeting of Arctic Council ambassadors before the April 25 scheduled closing the Russian-operated camp.

In addition, the Russians ended a lengthy tease for travelers seeking the far north, re-opening the refurbished Tulip Hotel in Pyramiden after several years of claiming the debut was just a year away. The restoration is part of an aggressive, but struggling effort to revive tourism and science research in Sval-



TRUST ARKTIKUGOL

Pyramiden's Tulip Hotel, which opened during the Easter holiday after a multi-year restoration, is accepting guests for the first time since mining halted in the settlement in 1998.

bard's Russian settlements.

Bad weather delayed last year's opening at Barneo for days which, combined with a

See **DEBUTS**, page 4

Tragedy: Barentsburg miner killed

Mine closed after man hit by boulder; cause still unknown

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

Barentsburg's coal mine is closed until at least next week after a Ukrainian man in his 30s was killed in an accident, according to the Svalbard governor's office.

The accident occurred at about 1 p.m. Thursday (April 4, reflecting a delayed press time). Investigators said the cause of the accident is unknown.

"It is clear that the victim was hit by a boulder," a statement by the governor's office

See **BARENTSBURG**, page 4

Inside

Top Gear? Try Top Griper

Page 2

Headlines from Svalbardposten

- Postal service asks city for 'real' street names
- Two fights at pub; one man fined 12K kroner
- Hiker suffers head injuries in 200-meter fall

Page 3

Weather forecast

Page 3

Events calendar

Page 4

Missing expedition for the dogs

German-led team seeks traces of ill-fated trip that vanished 100 years ago in northeast Svalbard

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

Herbert Schröder-Stranz was an explorer a century ahead of his time, coming to Svalbard during the early 1900s to research the potential for commercial shipping routes. Now some fellow Germans are trying to go back a century in time to find him and determine why the quest came to a fatal end.

See **MISSING**, page 3



SPITZBERGEN-EXPEDITION.DE

One of 37 dogs being used to trace a famous German expedition in Svalbard 100 years ago is loaded in a carrier Monday in Longyearbyen.

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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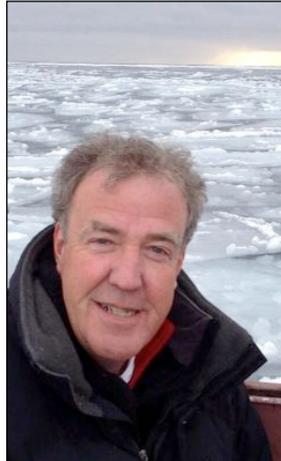
Corrections policy

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.

In top gear for griping



JEREMY CLARKSON / TWITTER

Jeremy Clarkson, left, poses without a much-desired hat in what he claims were temperatures as cold as -58C during a five-day fanciful bitchfest aboard a research voyage in Svalbard in late March. The host of the TV show "Top Gear," who is making a documentary about British convoys in the area during World War II, proved ill-suited for the journey after being unable to find a hat in Oslo or Tromsø. In a column in *The Sunday Times* of London, he mangled everything from Svalbard's history ("nothing happened" until 1920 except a Dutchman who arrived in 1596, got bored and left) to calling Longyearbyen's large Thai population the result of "Australian rabbit syndrome." He advises tourists to visit "diet-Arctic" Iceland because "after you leave the (Svalbard) airport you will get about a quarter of a mile before you are eaten by a bear. And you will be grateful because inside its stomach you will at least be out of the wind." His griping about the harsh conditions continued during the boat voyage which, in addition to impairing his ability to correctly read a thermometer, put a heavy coat of ice on the vessel's railings during a March 25 storm (pictured at right). He also notes "it turns out that you can get bored with crashing into icebergs."

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Sigh...last week it was the local version of "stand your ground" as people feuded about shooting polar bears invading homes. This week's channeling of Idiot Politics From Kookland is "build the fence" as the Local Paper of Recidivism is reporting a **five-meter-high fence costing 50 million kroner will be built around the perimeter of Longyearbyen to eliminate the risk of polar bears.** "People can go in and out as they like, around the clock," said Svalbard Gov. Odd Olsen Ingerø. "We know there's going to be debate on this, but we believe it is absolutely necessary to ensure the citizens against polar bears. It will better facilitate the business community we want to create." Firearms will also no longer be allowed inside the fence, with storage locations available for a fee at three checkpoints in the fence. There will be guards and cameras at the checkpoints, plus electronic sensors along the fence to detect polar bears. Ingerø, who made the announcement April 1, submitted a notice last week to Norway's Justice Ministry. A ministry spokesman said the idea is interesting, but must be investigated thoroughly ... Usually we read the online discussion about controversial topics like the fence at the newspaper's website, but for some reason we made a first-time detour to *Svalbardposten's Facebook page, which turns out to be generously decorated with porn ads.* They're of the "talk to hot Norwegian women" type, which we suppose qualifies as "targeted" advertising for a community consisting largely of coal miners. But what made the real impression on us is



SYSSELMANNEN

Probably not a rabbit-proof fence. But the governor thinks it'll be just dandy for keeping bears and firearms out of Longyearbyen.

those type of ads essentially make *Svalbardposten* the real alternative paper here in the only meaningful way – finding a way to make money ... After running a profile last week about a local chocolatier selling her creations at Fruene, we thought it might be a developing trend when we saw chocolate seashells in a box with a picture of polar bears and "greetings from Svalbard" message at Svalbardbutikken. Alas, **it's just some Denmark company slapping a local label on a product they no doubt sell in many tourist towns...** Finally, if you really were too clueless to figure it out, **yes, the fence thing is an April Fool's Joke.** Apparently not all of *Svalbardposten's* readers figured this out, as a prominent disclaimer in bold type was added to the article at 12:01 a.m. April 2. But even that seemingly wasn't enough, as a short time later it disappeared from the newspaper's homepage.



LEIBNIZ-INSTITUT FÜR LÄNDERKUNDE ARCHIV FÜR GEOGRAPHIE

Members of the 1913 German Arctic Expedition sail from Tromsø to Svalbard aboard the *Herzog Ernst* during the summer of 1912. Leader Herbert Schröder-Stranz is in the first row holding a dog.

Team trying to trace tragic trip

MISSING from page 1

Georg Sichelschmidt is leading an international team of 10 people – and 37 dogs – on the three-stage expedition that began Monday. Five people are conducting an initial 500-kilometer journey northwest from Longyearbyen for reconnaissance and establishing a supply deposit. An extension of the route and additional supply deposits will follow at the end of the month. Björn Klauer and his wife, Regina Elpers, will then spend four months searching for clues of the historic expedition that was never found.

"To our knowledge, never has there been a search before with a similar amount of time for

clues," Sichelschmidt writes at the expedition's website (spitzbergen-expedition.de). "The chances are great to find more tracks and ultimately solve the mystery of the disappearance."

Fifteen members of 1913 German Arctic Expedition departed from Tromsø in August of 1912, with Schröder-Stranz intending a scientific study of glaciers in northeast Svalbard and cross to the west side of the archipelago by dogsled. But the team had little Arctic experience, and he and seven men who attempted the journey perished.

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



SPITZBERGEN-EXPEDITION.DE

Maps show the three planned stages for a 10-person team attempting to find and investigate the fatal end of the 1913 German Arctic Expedition. The first two stages are for reconnaissance and supply deposits. The third stage will search the area where expedition is believed to have perished.

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Postal service: Give streets names to ease mail delivery

Delivering mail is a pain in Longyearbyen and the city should consider giving streets "real" names instead of its unique "numbers" system, according to Posten Norge. Virtually all addresses are "Vei" followed by a number such as 100 or 232. "Street names and house numbers can easily be confused," wrote Frode Wold, a senior postal service advisor, in a letter to Longyearbyen's municipal council. Also, numbering isn't consistent, such as Vei 232 having multiple branches and some numbers jumping suddenly from 50 to 500. Bøye Bøland, a city surveying engineer, said the system is generally logical with main roads getting designations such as 100 and 200, streets east of the city center in the 200s, those to the west in the 300s, sea areas in the 400s and 600s, and so on. "The road system has its origins from the old mining community, and has a historic value and identity of the community," he said. "We see no reason to go over the names, as long as it is not mandatory."

Pair of fights at Karlsberger costs one man 12,000 kroner

Two altercations resulted in police intervention at Karlsberger Pub, with one man fined 12,000 kroner for choking a bartender who refused to serve him because he was too drunk. He assaulted the female employee after she said she would escort him out of the pub. The governor's office, in addition to the fine for the March 20 incident, confiscated the man's firearm. The second altercation, which occurred early Wednesday morning, was a fight between five or six people, none of whom were seriously injured. The fight involving tourists and locals, all believed to be intoxicated, ended before police arrived.

Man suffers head injuries in 200-meter fall during hike

A Longyearbyen man in his 30s suffered head injuries and was evacuated by helicopter after slipping on ice and falling about 200 meters from the top of Sukkertoppen on Thursday, according to the governor's office. The man, hiking with two other people, was conscious when he was flown to Longyearbyen Hospital.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Partly cloudy. E winds to 22 km/h. High -11C (-16C wind chill), low -13C (-19C wind chill). Sunrise 4:56a; sunset 9:11p	Cloudy. NE winds to 32 km/h. High -10C (-15C wind chill), low -12C (-19C wind chill). Sunrise 4:47a; sunset 9:20p	Mostly clear. E winds to 35 km/h. High -8C (-14C wind chill), low -14C (-20C wind chill). Sunrise 4:38a; sunset 9:29p	Cloudy. E winds to 29 km/h. High -14C (-19C wind chill), low -18C (-24C wind chill). Sunrise 4:28a; sunset 9:38p

Extended forecast: Sunday, cloudy, -14C (-20C), -18C (-24C), light 17:29h; Monday, cloudy, -12C (-17C), -14C (-21C), light 17:48h; Tuesday, cloudy, -12C (-16C), -14C (-18C), light 18:09h; Wednesday, cloudy, -12C (-19C), -13C (-20C), light 18:30h

Data provided by storm.no



COURTESY OF BARNEO ICE CAMP

Workers helping with the setup of the Barneo Ice Camp parachute out of a cargo flight March 28, landing at the designated site at 89 degrees latitude north after low clouds made a landing impossible.

Travelers get Russian welcome

DEBUTS, from page 1

new management staff, resulted in one of the shortest and most tumultuous seasons in site's 11-year history. This year's setup generally went smoothly after scouting flights for a suitable site began in mid-March, but a March 28 flight carrying crew and cargo was forced to bail out – in way that fulfilled their duty.

"In preparation for the flight to Barneo, weather was good," an entry at the camp's official blog notes. But low and dense clouds were over the camp and a "visual approach to landing was impossible. As a joke in our crew, who switched to the alternate version of 'shooting the coordinates.' The pilots maintain the assigned altitude and speed, and excellent navigators performed calculations."

Cargo and crew parachuted out of the plane based on the calculations and "all the paratroopers landed on the landing area."

Among the first scheduled expeditions are a Greenpeace ski trip to the Pole in the latest of several Arctic trips to raise awareness about climate change and increasing commercial activity in the High North, and the North Pole Marathon scheduled April 9.

The camp itself is also a destination for many guests, including scientific researchers from Russia's Hydrometeorology and Environmental Monitoring Agency, the State Oceanography Institute, and their peers from Norway and the United States spending much of the



COURTESY OF BARNEO ICE CAMP

Workers unload a cargo plane at the Barneo Ice Camp shortly before its April 1 opening.

season at the base, according to Russia's TV-Novosti. The camp's first-ever political conference, with Arctic Council ambassadors discussing cooperation in the region, is scheduled for the middle of the month.

Less extreme travelers were out in far larger numbers in Svalbard during the extended Easter weekend, with many locals and tourists staying at the just-refurbished Russian hotels in Barentsburg and Pyramiden, according to *Svalbardposten*. The Barentsburg hotel reopened in March after a brief closure, but more recent opening of Tulip Hotel in Pyramiden is the first time guests have stayed there since mining ceased in the community in 1998.

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

Death adds to string of mine accidents

BARENTSBURG, from page 1

notes. "When the helicopter with police, a doctor and interpreter arrived in Barentsburg, the miner was confirmed dead."

No other people were reported injured.

"The governor closed the mine in Barentsburg in anticipation of the Labour Inspectorate examining the scene," the statement notes. "The Labour Inspectorate will be in Barentsburg next week."

The death is the latest in a string of mining accidents in Svalbard that government and

mining officials have called troubling.

Concerns about compliance with safety regulations and truthful cooperation were raised by investigators following an accident at the Barentsburg mine a year ago. There have also been several accidents at Store Norske's mines during the past year, including a man who lost his arm in late December, prompting the company to halt operations at one point to give workers more safety training.

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

What's up

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. April 10

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

8 p.m.: Annual Polarleik meeting. Huset.

April 11

7 p.m.: Concert featuring works of Sami mythology by Frode Fjellheim, Anneli Drecker and other Troms region musicians. Svalbard Church.

April 13-14

Open day at Fredheim, hosted by governor, featuring presentations about the history of the fishing station.

April 14

11 a.m.: Mass. Svalbard Church.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Pitch Perfect," U.S. comedy/musical, all ages, Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Zero Dark Thirty," U.S. thriller, ages 15 and up. 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:

- *Less Antarctic ice means more in Arctic*
- *Oil minister backs off Lofoten drilling*
- *Secret nuclear cargo sent to Murmansk*
- *'Goldilocks' clouds melting Greenland's ice*