



NORTH POLE MARATHON



COURTESY OF ECRGS



COURTESY OF ECRGS

A caretaker, left, accompanies a team of sled dogs to the Barneo ice camp Tuesday, where they will be used as part of a Russian search and rescue exercise involving an expedition in distress. At top right, runners struggle through sugar snow, high winds and minus 30 degrees Celsius temperatures during the North Pole Marathon. At bottom right, a group of Russian dignitaries and other visitors perform the traditional circular dance around their country's flag after flying to the North Pole on Sunday. The group included Russian Bishop Iakov, who performed a consecration service at the Pole.

## Pole positioning

*For runners and rulers, competition is fierce at the top of the world*

By MARK SABBATINI

Editor

So a soldier, a marathoner and a bishop walk into a bar...

OK, it's not a bar so much as a mess tent with a lot of beer. But when that tent is at more than 89 degrees latitude North that kind of mixed company is probably going to make for better party chatter than "I was talking to the

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

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duck" punchlines.

The opening week at the Barneo ice camp  
See **BARNEO**, page 4

## Tourists grow well in the dark

By MARK SABBATINI  
Editor

If you don't mind tourists, it's hard finding much of anything negative in their statistics from past year.

There was a decline in cruise ship passengers (after a freakish increase the year before) and fewer business travelers (who account for

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## Two hours in an ice prison

*Student at UNIS falls 25 meters into crevasse; dramatic rescue without injury called a 'miracle'*

By MARK SABBATINI  
Editor

A man who fell 25 meters into a crevasse while ascending Nordenskiöldtoppen on Sunday emerged physically unscathed after a dramatic two-hour rescue, but said mentally he's definitely not back yet to "business as usual."

Stefan Schöttl, 25, was part of a nine-person group – six on foot and the rest, including himself, on skis – near the top of the mountain when the surface beneath him collapsed.

See **TRAPPED**, page 3



SYSELMANNEN

Inge Skjevik, wearing a helmet video camera, descends Sunday into a glacier crevasse below Nordenskiöldtoppen to rescue Stefan Schöttl, 25, who fell into the opening when the surface collapsed under his feet. A three-minute video of the rescue can be seen at [tinyurl.com/qjmgvmk](http://tinyurl.com/qjmgvmk).

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

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## Copyright stuff

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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.

## Cat people need not apply



Sofia Berger, 12, top, departs the starting line of the Trappers Trail dogsled race Saturday at The University Centre in Svalbard. The 75-kilometer race, now in its sixth year, attracted a record 24 entries. At bottom left, Einar Eliassen Berntsen arrives at the Kapp Laila checkpoint where racers, volunteers and observers camped overnight. At bottom right, Gunn Beate Paasche attends to her dogs at the checkpoint. Linda Marie Vassdal won the Ski & Pulk category (one to three dogs) with a time of 6:28:59, Janne Søreide the small-team category (three to five dogs) in 4:32:36, and Fredrik Lindgren and Lena Danielsen the large-team category (six to eight dogs) in 3:48:34. Full race details are at [www.longyearbyenhundeklubb.no/trapperstrail.html](http://www.longyearbyenhundeklubb.no/trapperstrail.html). Photos by Veronica Andersen.

## Icesheet

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

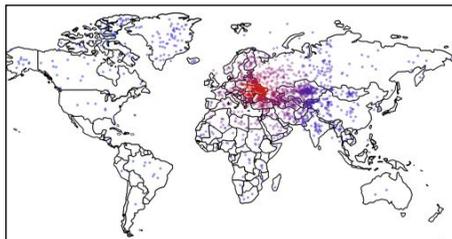
Time to play word association: Look at the picture to the right and what's the first phrase that comes to mind? The correct answer, according to our esteemed local leaders, is African dancers. **You'll be able to watch them perform when the Museumsveien bridge finally reopens during a ceremony at 12:30 p.m. March 29.** There will also be the usual speeches, along with kindergartners doing something related to "The Three Billy Goats Gruff," which we suppose readers might have has a fractionally better chance of guessing. The bridge, closed last summer due to water



LONGYEARBYEN LOKALSTYRE

**We have extreme climates, so do they:** There's more than unites us to the Sub-Saharan region than divides us.

damage to the foundation, is reopening as a narrower one-lane bridge several weeks late due to design problems ... No matter how far your bridge guess missed the mark, it can't possibly be any worse than a **sizable percentage of United States residents who literally put the Ukraine all over the map, including a few locations in or near Svalbard.** We've run some half-serious, half-amused articles in recent weeks about whether Svalbard might be Russian's next annexation project because of worried remarks by a few Serious Policy People in Norway. Still, since most Barentsburg's population is from the Ukraine, we suppose even a non-U.S. politician could be confused.



THE MONKEY CAGE

**We hope Putin isn't this dumb:** Look closely at Svalbard – yup, there's actually people in the U.S. who think we're at or near the Ukraine.

## Rope a dope (left behind)



PHOTO BY ANNA EJSMDOND

A reindeer snagged in rope and a set of old antlers tries to forage for food in the snow at Breinosa on April 3. Anna Ejsmond, a student at The University Centre in Svalbard, noted in an e-mail "the reindeer was surprisingly in good condition at least as I could judge from a distance of 40 meters." She didn't approach it because it was feeding with a few other reindeer on a steep mountain slope and "it was unable to run with the stuff on his head, and it seemed to me that it can hurt himself while running. However he was feeding, surprisingly, without any bigger problems, by moving the attached antlers (toward the) back of his head and then picking food from the ground ... So I got an impression that it used to live with this stuff from some time." Other sightings of a reindeer similarly entangled – although it is not certain it is the same animal – have been reported on local Facebook pages and elsewhere during the past month.

## 'At least I gave them a sign of life'

TRAPPED, from page 1

"I went on the snow and suddenly a hole opened itself," Schöttl told *Svalbardposten*. "I remember it was a long fall. In the first part it was a free fall."

The area is known to have a lot of cracks in the ice. But "if you are not very well familiar with the danger, it is not possible to see this is an avalanche danger zone with the naked eye," said Arild Lyssand, a police lieutenant with the Svalbard governor's office, in an interview with NRK.

Schöttl's fall was halted when he slid to a side of the crevasse. But the surrounding walls were so close there was almost no room to move, resulting in a struggle when a member of the group called him on his cell phone.

"It was tight and I had no way to get my mobile telephone and answer," he told *Svalbardposten*. "Eventually I got the telephone up and called back. 'Stefan, is that you?' they asked. I said 'Yes, I'm OK,' but they could not hear me. At least I gave them a sign of life from me."

Two helicopters carrying rescuers from the governor's office and Longyearbyen Red Cross responded to the scene, with one helicopter bringing the other tour group members back to town. The remaining rescuers could only see about 15 meters into the crevasse and the wind drowned out their efforts to shout to Schöttl.

Inge Skjevik, belayed by other rescuers, repelled into the crevasse, telling *Svalbardposten* it was the first time he'd descended so deep and the going was tricky.

"It was tight and I could not see the bottom," he said. "As I lowered myself down it was just darker and darker, but it was never completely black. Eventually I managed to make the man out."

Skjevik said Schöttl's skis may have slowed his fall and kept him from dropping further down a crack a few meters away.

Schöttl, after being pulled out in a harness, was flown to Longyearbyen Hospital, where he was pronounced unharmed.

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

## HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

### Barentsburg's hospital gets temporary replacement doc

Barentsburg's hospital has a doctor again as Anastasia Rjaguzova arrived March 27 to replace Ibrahim Pliev, who fled the Russian settlement claiming he wasn't being paid and city administrators were making cost-cutting decisions that were endangering patients. Trust Arktikugol, the state-owned company that oversees the settlement, disputes Pliev's claims and is challenging him to produce evidence. Rjaguzova, who worked as a substitute at the hospital in 2012 when the doctor at the time was on vacation, is again working on a fill-in basis until a new doctor is scheduled to arrive this month.

### Builder seeks extra 60M kr. for Lunckefjell mine road

The celebratory mood of February's opening of the Lunckefjell coal mine is giving way to a dispute between Store Norske and Veidekke Arctic AS, as the latter is demanding an extra 60 million kroner – on top of 200 million already paid – for infrastructure work that proved more costly than expected. Veidekke Arctic claims it has to excavate 500,000 extra cubic meters of ice from a glacier while building an access road whose route was based on drawings and data from Store Norske. The construction company also claims it was forced to use crews and equipment around the clock to meet the Oct. 1, 2013 completion deadline. Store Norske attorney Johan Fredrik Remmen said Veidekke Arctic "cannot deny their design responsibility" even if it relied on the mining company's data and claims work was completed 10 days late. Both sides said negotiations have not been fruitful and case is scheduled to be heard in Nord-Troms District Court May 22.

### Polar bear destroys tents

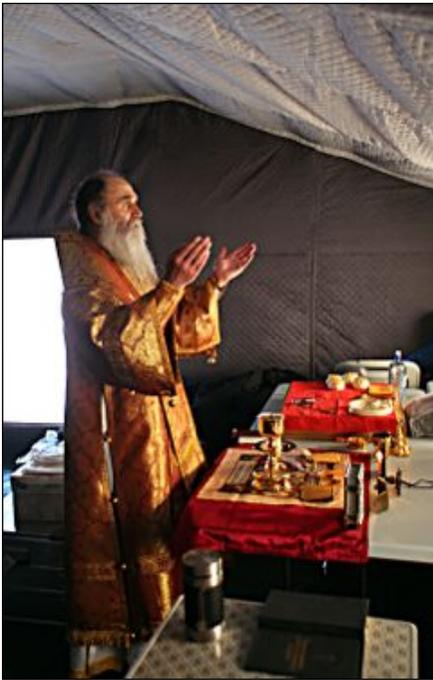
A polar bear destroyed two unoccupied tents Monday at a campsite at Agardhbukta, according to the Svalbard governor's office. An eight-person ski tour group reported the incident during the evening and they were "encouraged to move camp to a safer place and keep watch for polar bears around the clock." The guide leading the group said they also were having problems with a weapon, but it appears to be functioning normally again.

## Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cloudy. S winds to 32 km/h. High -1C (-6C wind chill), low -4C (-9C wind chill).	Snow. Variable winds to 39 km/h. High -3C (-9C wind chill), low -6C (-11C wind chill).	Cloudy. N winds to 32 km/h. High -6C (-10C wind chill), low -14C (-20C wind chill).	Cloudy. N winds to 39 km/h. High -14C (-21C wind chill), low -18C (-23C wind chill).
Sunrise 4:01a; sunset 10:05p	Sunrise 3:50a; sunset 10:15p	Sunrise 3:39a; sunset 10:27p	Sunrise 3:28a; sunset 10:38p

**Extended forecast:** Sunday, p. cloudy, -12C (-17C), -17C (-22C), light 19:36h; Monday, cloudy, -9C (-14C), -14C (-20C), light 20:04h; Tuesday, sunny, -9C (-13C), -14C (-20C), light 20:34h; Wednesday, p. cloudy, -9C (-13C), -15C (-21C), light 21:10h

Data provided by storm.no



COURTESY OF ECRGS



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COURTESY OF STEVE BENNETT

Russian Bishop Iakov, left, presides over a Mass at the Barneo ice camp on Monday. At top right, Barneo "residents" take a break Sunday with a game of football on the ice floe surface. At bottom right, Steve Bennett shows all of the food he is carrying by sled during a British ski expedition to the North Pole to raise funds for the National Osteoporosis Society. He estimates he will consume 9,000 calories a day during the seven- to ten-day trek.

## Racing to the Pole for fun and politics

### BARNEO, from page 1

got off to a rapid start this year as paratrooper teams, flying bishops and long-distance racers were just some of the adventurers converging on the Russian-operated site on their way to the North Pole.

While paratroopers are nothing new in Barneo's 13-year history – they're dropped along with heavy equipment to construct the camp and a runway on an ice floe – more than 50 parachuted in Tuesday to participate in four days of search-and-rescue exercises. As it turns out, such training came in handy as Barneo staff, on the same day the first ski expedition reached the North Pole, "also evacuated from the route tourists taken with a little frostbite," according to the camp's official blog (<http://barneo-polus.livejournal.com>).

Also among the first to arrive at the top of the world this year was a group of dignitaries with Russia's polar region programs and Russian Bishop Iakov, who flew to the North Pole on Sunday for a consecration service. The ser-

vices, first conducted by Iakov in 2012, carry heavy political as well as religious overtones, as he has said they symbolize Russia's efforts toward "the return of the country's former positions in the region."

A merrier competition at the top of the world this week was the annual North Pole Marathon, which attracted a record 47 runners from 20 countries for the 42-kilometer race on a course near the camp. Mike Wardian, an ultra-marathoner from the United States who was considered a heavy favorite, led from the start and won with a time of four hours, seven minutes and 40 seconds.

"It's the hardest race I have done in a while, definitely the hardest marathon," he said. "I am unbelievably happy to be done."

He finished far ahead of second-place racer Anne-Marie Flammersfeld of Germany, who set a new woman's record with a time of four hours, 52 minutes and 45 seconds.

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

## Dark season tourism sees strong growth

### VISITORS, from page 1

a scant 10 percent of hotel stays), but otherwise "tourism in Svalbard has generally enjoyed good growth in 2013," according to a report released this week by the governor's office.

The most notable increases were guest nights at hotels rising from 84,643 in 2012 to 107,086 in 2013 and flight passengers rising from 40,100 to 47,600. Both have been largely attributed to Norwegian Air returning as a second airline last March, but the report also notes efforts to promote traditionally slower periods are paying off.

"A significant proportion of this growth

has been in the first and fourth quarters – the polar night season – which has previously been referred to as the off-season," the report states.

Leisure travelers represented 61 percent of guests and conference participants, gaining market share, accounted for 29 percent.

There were 36,257 cruise passengers (excluding crew) in 2013, compared to 42,363 in 2012 and 24,187 in 2011. A generally steady increase in the number of larger cruise ships docking in Longyearbyen is responsible for the rise, with the number of actual ships and sailing showing no clear trend.

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

## What's up

### April 9

6 p.m.: Movie: "Noah" (3D), U.S. drama, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

### April 10

7 p.m.: Exhibit opening: Jewelry and other objects by Morten Haugmo. Galleri Svalbard.

### April 11

6 p.m.: Baptism Mass. Svalbard Church.

### April 13

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

1 p.m.: Confirmation Mass. Svalbard Church.

5 p.m.: Movie: "Rio 2" (3D), U.S. animated film dubbed in Norwegian, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

7 p.m.: Movie: "Divergent," U.S. action/drama, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

### April 16

6 p.m.: Movie: "Rio 2," U.S. animated film dubbed in Norwegian, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

### April 19

1-2 pm.: Open cafe w/live music for Confirmation ceremony by pianist Elisabeth Eines. Kulturhuset cafe.

2 p.m.: Confirmation ceremony. Kulturhuset.

### April 21

5 p.m.: Movie: "August: Osage County," U.S. animated/family film dubbed in Norwegian, all ages. Kulturhuset.

7 p.m.: Movie: "August: Osage County," U.S. animated/family film dubbed in Norwegian, all ages. Kulturhuset.

### April 23

6 p.m.: Kick-off for Svalbard Skimarathon. Kulturhuset.

### April 26

Open day at Longyearbyen Youth Club.

### April 27

5 p.m.: Movie: "The Amazing Spider-Man 2" (3D), U.S. action/adventure, ages 11 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:

- *Arctic SAR flaws studied after Flight 370*
- *Norway bans Putin PR guy's Arctic trip*
- *U.S. climate attitudes same as 1989*
- *Smithsonian finds aliens in Antarctica?*