



Dale Shippam, left, a 55-year-old heart transplant patient, rests Monday during his attempt to reach the North Pole. Above, runners begin the 2010 North Pole Marathon on April 7 from a drifting ice base camp.

Pole pilgrimages

Disabilities, novel feats make trek to top even more challenging

A 55-year-old heart transplant recipient. A blind marathon runner. A 15-year-old seeking a record for youth on skis. A businessman just looking to get a haircut.

Getting to the North Pole is tough enough, but for many the expedition is also about overcoming personal limitations or achieving sometimes eccentric firsts. Something like becoming the first Arab woman at the top of the world may merely require the right ancestry, but other quests such as a planned boat row to the Pole require elements like abnormal warming to happen at the right time.

For guides helping the new wave of explorers attempt their dream it also adds challenges to the already demanding tasks of arranging travel, supplies, diversions, and ensuring often inexperienced trekkers are relatively safe and comfortable.

"This is far, far more stressful than minus 55 degrees and making 20 miles a day," said David Hempleman-Adams, a British adventurer who has participated in 14 successful expeditions to the north and south Poles. "Sometimes you forget you've got to be patient with people."



Parker Liautaud, 15, left, navigates ice in his attempt this month to be the youngest person to ski to the North Pole. At right, a successful expedition performs a traditional "around the axis" dance.

“ This is far, far more stressful than minus 55 degrees and making 20 miles a day.

- David Hempleman-Adams, expedition guide

” Hempleman-Adams, leading four Svalbard expeditions including two North Pole trips this week, found himself trying to book day excursions and scarce hotel rooms in Longyearbyen when one group's flight to a base camp was delayed. But he said the effort is rewarding because even for those making the easiest or most trivial of quests, perhaps involving only a flight to the Pole, "the fact is they got off their asses and got there."

Participants frequently seek to promote a charitable, political or other cause with their quest. Among those in Hempleman-Adams' See **POLE**, page 4



Volcano disrupts mainland flights

Travel between Svalbard and Tromsø may resume Friday, but ash still a problem farther south

Flights between Svalbard and mainland Norway are on hold due to a cloud of ash from an Icelandic volcano that has caused a historic disruption of air traffic worldwide, although officials said travel to and from Tromsø may be possible by Friday afternoon.

Svalbard is north of the ash cloud, so travel within the archipelago and to North Pole expeditions is still permitted, said Ole M. Rambech, director of Svalbard Airport. Hopes the ash would clear enough for a Tromsø flight Thursday night were thwarted, but he said conditions might improve sufficiently for the Friday's regularly scheduled flight. (Note: Article dates reflect a delayed press time of 11 p.m. April 15.)

"The forecast is indicating the winds will turn more to the south," Rambech said. "That would mean the north of the mainland might clear up."

A total of 270 people were stranded in Svalbard on Thursday, resulting in hotels filling to capacity as people returned from field work and Pole expeditions, and 88 in Tromsø, according to *Svalbardposten*. The Coast Guard

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Icepeople is published weekly (or thereabouts) on Tuesdays (or thereabouts), with printed copies available free on a limited basis in Longyearbyen. Additional printed copies are available locally and by mail upon request. Charges are on an "at cost" basis.

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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.



Jean-Louis Etienne, a French explorer, celebrates after landing Saturday in eastern Siberia, five days after taking off from Svalbard and making the first successful balloon crossing of the North Pole. Photo provided by Generali Arctic Observer.

Briefly

Balloonist completes first North Pole crossing

A French explorer successfully made the first crossing of the North Pole by balloon five days after taking off from Svalbard, but a snowstorm forced him to land in Siberia instead of Alaska.

Jean-Louis Etienne, 63, completed the 3,130-kilometer trip Saturday, landing on the tundra of eastern Siberia. In a radio call to his support team, noting "I am in Sakha in the middle of nowhere," he expressed relief.

"There were after all, some tricky moments during this flight," he said. "I was beginning to feel the effects of not sleeping enough. It was time to bring it to an end to savor this flight, which was long and difficult, but so thrilling."

Weather caused challenges throughout the trip, beginning with winds that forced him to take off ahead of schedule last Monday. A snowstorm last Wednesday near the North Pole preventing the solar panel of his craft from recharging its batteries, forcing the alternate landing site.

Etienne, who in 1986 became the first person to reach the North Pole alone, made the voyage in part to raise awareness of the impact of climate change on the Arctic. His capsule was equipped with atmospheric and magnetic measuring devices, which scientists will study. Trip logs are at www.jeanlouisetienne.com/generali_arctic_observer.

Trappers' Trail sled dog race begins Saturday

The second annual Trappers' Trail sled dog race will begin at noon Saturday at The University Centre In Svalbard, with racers expected to return to the finish line at Huset at about 2:30 p.m. Sunday.

Fifteen teams in four categories will race either 70 kilometers along Henry Rudi's Trail or 120 kilometers along Wanny Woldstad's Trail, with a mandatory overnight stop at Bikkjebu, Colesbukta.

Teams are scheduled to start individually at five-minute intervals. Mandatory checkpoints are at Frithamn and Bikkjebu.

Rune Hesthammer, the rookie of the year for the 1986 Iditarod in Alaska, is this year's honorary guest. He will present race awards during a ceremonial dinner at 8 p.m. Sunday at Svalbard.

Spectators are welcome at the start and finish lines, along the trail and checkpoints, and at the awards ceremony.

Svalbard geese with GPS to help UK find its way

Five barnacle geese due to migrate from Britain to Svalbard later this month are wearing solar-powered GPS trackers, but not because scientists are worried the birds will lose their way.

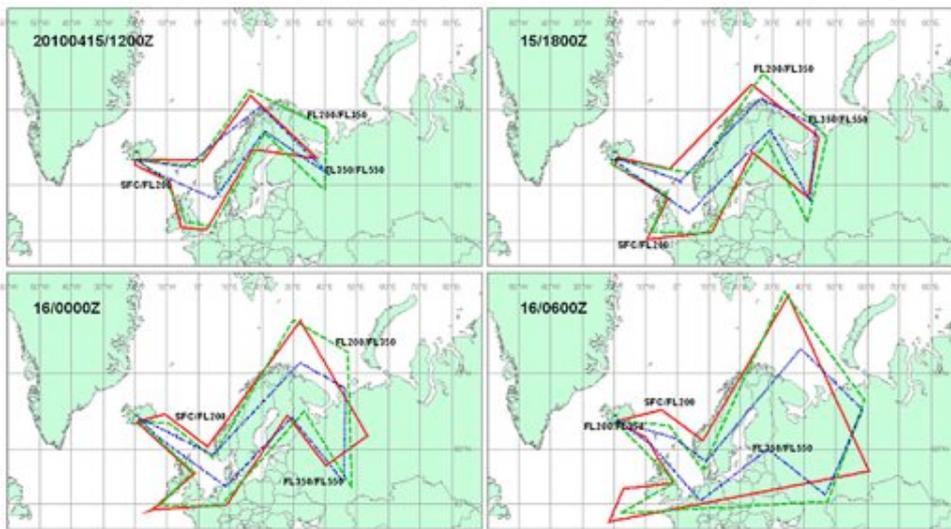
Instead, the researchers are hoping the information can be used to guide planners of a massive offshore wind expansion in the United Kingdom, ensuring the turbines don't disrupt the birds' migration path.

Larry Griffin, principal researcher for the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust monitoring project, told the BBC he also wants to see how the geese cope with existing wind farms on the Norwegian coast.

"If they are flying through there in the darkness or in sea fog conditions, my concern is there is potential of a collision," he said.

Griffin said 25 geese tagged during the past four years took them into sites where the wind farm expansion is proposed.

The geese population, which dropped to 300 in the 1940s, is now about 30,000.



The movement of the ash cloud from a volcano eruption in Iceland throughout Northern Europe from noon Thursday until 6 a.m. Friday as predicted by meteorologists is shown in this series of graphs. The red frame is where air traffic will be affected. Chart provided by Metoffice.com.

Eruption likely to disrupt travel for days

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has reached an agreement with the Svalbard governor's office to provide ship transportation to the mainland for medical patients and other emergencies if necessary. Among those affected before the agreement was Store Norske, which halted mining at Svea due to the lack of transport if an accident occurred, but has since resumed operations.

A volcano under a glacier in the Eyjafjallajökull region of Iceland erupted for the second time in a month Wednesday night, sending up a massive cloud that drifted south and east over much of northern Europe. The cloud is made up of tiny particles of silicate that can severely damage jet engines. It can also penetrate the cabin, affecting electronics and passengers' health.

The eruption resulted in one of the largest peacetime shutdowns of air traffic ever, with an estimated 6,000 of Europe's 28,000 daily flights cancelled. Airlines from Asia, Australia, North America and elsewhere also canceled or diverted thousands flights to and from Europe on Thursday.

Airspace in England and other European locations remained on hold until at least Friday night as of press time, but conditions in northern Norway may allow some mainland travel earlier, said Håvard Breivik, security director for Avinor.

"It is impossible to say, but it may provide



An ash cloud rises from an erupting volcano Wednesday in the Eyjafjallajökull region of Iceland. A significant amount of ash was still erupting as of Thursday afternoon.

an opening for flights between Værnes and Tromsø," he told *Avisa Nordland*, adding conditions farther south, including Oslo, still are likely to be poor.

There was still "significant ash erupting" from the volcano as of 1 p.m. Thursday, according to the Volcanic Ash Advisory Center in London. Even when the ash clears, aviation officials worldwide have said flights will take several days to resume a normal schedule since planes and crews are currently in the wrong locations.

Rambech said the ash cloud was taking six to 10 hours to travel between Iceland and Norway with strong winds Thursday.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Long-term parking no longer free at Svalbard Airport

Motorists must now pay to park at Svalbard Airport for more than 23 hours, due to capacity problems caused by vehicles being left there for months. Fees, which took effect Monday, are 50 kroner for one day, 250 kroner for one week and 150 kroner for each additional week. Payment is calculated by tickets obtained from a meter machine – with a "free ticket" available for those at the airport less than a day – and motorists without one risk fines or towing, said Airport Director Ole M. Rambech. He said some cars are being left for months until someone picks them up to drive for the summer, and hopes revenue from tickets can be used to expand the parking lot.

Owner must give up kennels due to neglect of animals

The owner of Svalbard Huskies must abandon the business by Aug. 1 due to numerous safety and care violations discovered earlier this year, according to a Norwegian Food Safety Authority ruling. Some of the 45 dogs at the kennels at Mine 6, operated by Niklas Gerhardsson, were mutilated and malnourished after four animals came loose from a chain and began fighting. A woman who saw and photographed the blood-covered animals on New Year's Eve contacted authorities, and investigators said previous efforts to offer guidance to Gerhardsson to improve the kennel's conditions were unsuccessful. Gerhardsson – who had another person care for the dogs while he was away during the holidays – said there are errors in the report, but does not know yet if he will appeal the ruling.

Tourists evacuated from camp stalked by polar bear

Ten French tourists being harassed by a polar bear at Inglefieldbukta on the east side of Spitsbergen were relocated Sunday by a helicopter sent by the Svalbard governor's office. The bear roamed the area for hours, ransacking supplies in the campers' sledges, and efforts to scare it away with rifle shots and signal flares were unsuccessful.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday

Cloudy and cold. Winds from the EES at 9 km/h. High -13C (-13C wind chill), low -15C (-18C wind chill).

Thursday

Cold and clearing. E winds at 9 km/h. High -13C (-15C wind chill), low -17C (-19C wind chill).

Friday

Partly sunny and cold. NNE winds at 6 km/h. High -12C (-12C wind chill), low -15C (-18C wind chill).

Saturday

Cloudy with some sun. NNE winds at 9 km/h. High -9C (-11C wind chill), low -12C (-13C wind chill).

Extended forecast: Sunday, partly cloudy, -8C (-8C), -11C (-11C); Monday, increasing clouds and snow, -9C (-9C), -14C (-18C); Tuesday, cold and snow -12C (-12C), -15C (-21C); Wednesday, light snow and strong winds, -12C (-21C), -15C (-27C).

Data provided by AccuWeather.com



David Hempleman-Adams, far right, discusses day excursion options in Svalbard at the Radisson Blu Polar Hotel after his group's flight to a base camp for a North Pole expedition was delayed this week. Sitting next to him is Tom Farmer, who is planning to get a haircut at the Pole from longtime friend Charlie Miller, blocked from view at left, to raise funds for a teenage cancer center.

Top of the world not enough for some

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group is Tom Farmer, an Edinburgh entrepreneur planning to get a haircut – complete with electric razor trim – at the North Pole from longtime friend and hairdresser Charlie Miller as a fundraiser to buy computers and other recreational equipment for the Teenage Cancer Trust in his hometown.

"People don't think of cancer as an illness that affects teenagers," Farmer said, noting facilities are generally equipped for young children or adults. But after widespread media coverage before his trip, "500,000 people in Edinburgh and 5 million in Scotland ... are all waiting to see what he did with my hair."

Another expedition with a medical cause is Dale Shippam, 55, a firefighter from Thunder Bay, Ontario, who received a heart transplant in 1999. He completed a "last degree" ski trip the North Pole this week as part of a campaign to raise money for heart disease research.

"It doesn't seem real to experience an adventure like this after a new heart," he told the *Toronto Star*. "Really, I thought that if I was

even lucky enough to survive and get a transplant that my life would be more sedentary."

Helping arrange the expedition was Rick Sweitzer, executive director of Polar Explorers and a participant in more than 20 North Pole expeditions. He said Shippam is "fit as a fiddle" and two cardiologists were part of trip, but it does put extra pressure on the leaders.

"Imagine him getting sick on the ice. His wellness is the only thing that counts," Sweitzer said. Also, even though the guides are not doctors, "our name is attached to it, for better or worse."

Another formidable effort ending in triumph was achieved by Jamie Cuthbertson, 49, who completed the North Pole Marathon on April 7 despite losing his sight in an explosion in 1986. He ran the course in near-blizzard conditions attached by a short rope to his guide, Alex Pavanello, saying "we are running side by side and we just have to get our running strokes co-ordinated."

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



Lonnie Dupre, above left, discusses one of his polar explorations Tuesday at the Radisson Blu Polar Hotel before departing on a North Pole excursion. To the right, heart transplant recipient Dale Shippam, Dr. Michel White of the Montreal Heart Institute and Toronto cardiologist Dr. Heather Ross reach the Pole on April 15 after 11 days skiing to raise money for heart disease research.



What's up

April 14

7 p.m.: Brainstorming session for new cultural center. Næringsbygget, Smutthullet room.

April 15

Deadline for 2010-11 kindergarten registration.

April 17-18

Trappers' Trail sled dog race. See details and schedule on page 2.

April 18

11 a.m. Visiting liturgy by Bishop Per Oskar Kjølås. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Shutter Island," U.S. drama/thriller, ages 15 and up. Huset.

April 20

7 p.m.: Aid to Botswana project meeting presented by Kari Schrøder Hansen. Svalbard Church.

April 24

10 a.m.: Spitsbergen Skimarathon. Race information available at svalbardturn.no.

10:15 a.m.: Environment and industry committee meeting. Næringsbygget 1, Tundra room.

April 25

6 p.m.: Movie: "The Fantastic Mikkel Rev," U.S. animation/comedy with Norwegian subtitles, ages 7 and up. Huset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Breakup," French drama, ages 15 and up. Huset.

April 27

10 a.m.: Administration Committee meeting, Næringsbygget 1, Tundra room.

April 28

7:30 p.m.: Concert by Jørn Bøgeberg Trio, featuring a blend of country, folks, rock, blues and other styles. Tickets sold at the door. Galleri Svalbard.

May 2

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

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:

- *Science detente for Russia, Norway?*
- *'Climategate' scientists cleared by panel*
- *Lack of ice ends Canada's seal hunts*
- *Renting a rustic Svalbard radio shack*