



Flights resume; a new threat

Air traffic between Svalbard and mainland close to normal, but more volcano eruptions seen as likely

A huge backlog of stranded passengers is easing and fresh supplies are arriving as flights resume normal operations between Svalbard and mainland Norway. But the relief may temporary as an Icelandic volcano responsible for the disruption is threatening more eruptions.

Flights, halted following last Wednesday's eruption, resumed on a limited basis to northern parts of the country last Friday and all Norwegian airspace was cleared for normal operations as of Tuesday night.

Getting to destinations remains chaotic for many, however, as airlines try to cope with the millions of passengers affected by the cancellation more than 100,000 European flights, the largest air traffic disruption in history. The crisis has cost airlines an estimated 12 billion kro-

ner and sparked calls for a wholesale reform of Europe's air traffic system.

Seismologists warned Tuesday the volcano in the Eyjafjallajökull region of Iceland continues to show signs of activity, with an eruption larger than last week's possible, but at the moment is spewing more lava than ash. Flights were grounded because the ash cloud that covered much of Europe is made up of tiny silicate particles that can severely damage jet engines.

The Svalbard governor's office is reviewing the situation daily and has arranged for the Coast Guard to provide vessel transportation to the mainland for incidents such as medical emergencies if airspace is closed again, said Sgt. Erik Nygaard.

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Assessing the volcano's impact beyond delays

- Significant hit to Norway's economy possible
- Central information portal for future incidents sought by Norwegian officials
- Critics call closure of air space excessive
- Health risks from ash seen as low so far
- How will ash affect climate change – and how is climate change affecting eruptions?

Details on these and other volcano developments at icepeople.net.

Springing into racing season

Dogs and coal miners complete long courses, ski marathoners take their turn this weekend

Øyvind Johansen's co-travelers were stuck going nowhere, but with his cruiser already revved up it offered a quick opportunity to be off to the races.

Johansen, a sled dog driver for Basecamp Spitsbergen, was a last-minute entry into the second annual Trappers' Trail race, which began its two-day run Saturday. Race organizers showed little compassion, selecting him among 16 teams to be the first racer out of the starting gate, but he said he was unfazed.

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Øyvind Johansen, a sled dog driver for Basecamp Spitsbergen, guides his team out of the starting gate at noon Saturday at The University Centre In Svalbard to begin the second annual Trappers' Trail race. Johansen finished fifth out of eight large teams of dogs with a time of four hours, 53 minutes and 37 seconds during the two-stage competition.

Svalbard apps fit for a king – or jester

An iPad can govern Norway, but can it lead you to the North Pole?



Arctic Watch, left, and Arctic Shuffle 2 show the serious and silly sides of apps for the north.

It's not entirely reassuring that Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg's most memorable contribution to this month's nuclear summit is the plausibility of governing a country with an iPad.

Photos of Norway's leader using the device while stranded in New York due to Iceland's volcano eruption circulated worldwide last week. Media reports didn't indicate if Stoltenberg was ruling according to the principles of Twitter or Civilization Revolution, but presumably he now has no inclination to follow Israel's lead and ban Apple Computer's latest portable gizmo.

If he brings it to Svalbard, however, he
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Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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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.

Ideal flight conditions here



A youth goes airborne Tuesday afternoon on the ski slope across from Longyearbyen School. About 15 students took advantage of clear skies and mild temperatures to use the free volunteer-operated pole lift.

Arctic apps can help in the cold, if they run

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might not always find it a royal experience.

For starters, its minimum operating temperature is rated at zero degrees Celsius (with a "nonoperating" limit of minus 20). Also, hotspots are somewhat harder to find than in the Big Apple.

Still, there's plenty of apps out there able to give Stoltenberg and more ordinary mortals command of their surroundings, both in the real Arctic where things like climate data can be a life saver and the fictional one where cartoon penguins appear with alarming regularity. Most are cheap or free, although admittedly even some of the latter aren't worth the memory space they consume.

The following are some noteworthy apps for the iPad/iPhone/iPod particularly relevant for researchers, travelers and leisure users in Svalbard. They're graded on an "A" to "F" scale, with extra merit awarded to those useable offline at least some of the time.

- **Arctic Watch (B):** This freebie provides "near daily updates of polar ice coverage maps and numbers from real-time satellite data," with the ability to compare it to averages from the past 30 years. A simple one-trick pony that

requires being online to use, but a subject of predominant interest among students and sciences in the area.

- **The North Pole Study Guide (C+):** A decent \$1.99 collection of interlinking Wikipedia articles (a too-frequent and too-lazy category for apps) with generally solid overviews of explorers, places, scientific terminology. But non-Arctic entries like performance art, football and Wikitravel could have been scrapped for additional useful material. A similar app to avoid is the **Longyearbyen Travel Guide (D-)**, a superficial and outdated 99-cent collection containing less information than a single visit to the city's Wikipedia page.

- **High Definition Arctic Atlas (F):** A 99-cent icon of frustration with vague maps (especially if you're not online) and near-impossible navigation. The developer has similar maps worldwide and reviews for all of them are invariably awful.

- **Arctic Shuffle 2 (B):** Now *this* is the way to spend 99 cents, as this puzzle game featuring pinballing penguins is much loved by reviewers despite being habitat-challenged.

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

Briefly

Arctic fox hunt total sets record low for season

A total of 64 Arctic foxes were killed by hunters this season, the lowest since figures were compiled during the 2002/2003 season, according to the Svalbard governor's office.

The total for the season ending March 15 comes after a record high capture of 327 ani-

mals last year. In a prepared statement, the governor attributed the decline to several causes.

"First, the governor reduced the amount of hunting terrain ahead of the draw of the hunting grounds," the statement notes. "Second, the special climatic conditions led to a large downward projection, and in large parts of the hunting season it was very difficult to cross the terrain."



Halvard Pedersen crosses the finish line Saturday near Mine 7 to win Store Norske's sixth annual ski race from Svea to Longyearbyen, completing the 42-kilometer course in slightly more than three hours. The race has expanded from 18 participants the first year to 58 this year.

Iffy snow, but lots of sun for racers

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"It's just about getting the equipment," said Johansen, who made the decision to race when customers scheduled for a tour were stranded by the Icelandic volcano. "The dogs are already there."

He said he wasn't planning to speed up his team, but would probably mush then for an hour between rests instead of the 45-minute drives during his tours. He finished fifth among the eight large teams of dogs with a time of four hours, 53 minutes and 37 seconds.

The race from Longyearbyen to Kapp Laila and back was won by Team Bompeslekta, guided by Tommy Jordbrudal and Janne Søreide, in a time of four hours, 15 minutes and 36 seconds.

The weather was sunny, but windy, with a few rocky and icy spots along the trail, wrote Marzena Kaczmarek, a race official who won the small dog team category, in an e-mail.

"We had a team driving to Kapp Laila and putting the stakes along the good trail so that the mushers find it easily and all teams would follow the same trail," she wrote.

Shortly after the mushers started out at five-minute intervals, another race was concluding a few miles away at the foot of the mountain below Mine 7. A total of 58 skiers participated in Store Norske's sixth annual race from Svea

to Longyearbyen. The event started as a small-scale race for coal miners and other company employees, but has expanded to include outsiders to the point where there isn't space to transport everyone hoping to race to the mine.

This year's 42-kilometer competition was won by Halvard Pedersen, an environmental protection supervisor for the Svalbard governor's office. He said he's wanted to participate in the race for several years, but seeking the thrill of victory had little to do with it.

"It's nice, but the important thing is to attend," he said while devouring the "victory sausage" awarded to him at the finish line.

As with Trappers' Trail, conditions were good if not ideal.

"We had great weather as always and no injuries," said Svend Rendal, clerk general for Store Norske, in the company's newsletter. "The snow could have been better, but that is the course on Svalbard."

Pedersen is planning to compete again this weekend in the annual Svalbard Skimarathon which begins at 10 a.m. Saturday at Mine 6. Nearly 400 people are signed up so far in full- and half-marathon categories, with registration taking place from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Friday at Svalbardhallen.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Spitsbergen Rock to return with new dates and location

The Spitsbergen Rock festival will return for a second year, but with a new location and date, according to organizers. The inaugural festival was several kilometers from Longyearbyen at Endalen, where there was no mobile phone coverage and transporting people proved cumbersome. The tent for this year's event will be at the sailing club facility next to the shore, with additional concerts at Kroa and Svalbar. The event is also being moved from mid-June to the final weekend of May, allowing students from The University Centre In Svalbard to attend while the semester is still in session. Eight bands are scheduled so far to perform at the festival.

Store Norske starts gold drilling on St. Jonsfjorden

Store Norske has started drilling for gold in Svalbard after tests during the past two years indicate there is a high content of the precious metal on south side of St. Jonsfjorden. The rig is on the edge of Holmesletfjella, a few meters away from the steep mountainside. Drillers completed a fourth hole, about 500 meters deep, after three weeks and are now preparing to move the rig about 40 meters away from the precipice. Jørgen Stenvold, executive director of the company's gold operation, said they plan to drill a total of 4,000 meters by the end of June, with excavation planned "for many years" over a seven-kilometer area. "Exactly how much gold exists in the area so far is impossible to say," he said.

Mobile phones now work from Svea to Longyearbyen

Mobile phone repeaters allowing coverage between Longyearbyen and Svea went into operation Saturday, according to Telenor Norge. Repeaters were set up four years ago, but were not formally approved by the Svalbard governor's office and Store Norske was fined 500,000 kroner. Permission to reinstall repeaters was granted last fall, although one is in a different location than the original.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Freezing fog, snow. Winds from the WSW at 4 km/h. High -12C (-12C wind chill), low -16C (-18C wind chill).	Cold and partly cloudy. N winds at 9 km/h. High -12C (-13C wind chill), low -16C (-16C wind chill).	Partly sunny and cold. ENE winds at 8 km/h. High -13C (-13C wind chill), low -14C (-19C wind chill).	Cold, variable clouds. ENE winds at 12 km/h. High -11C (-14C wind chill), low -12C (-17C wind chill).

Extended forecast: Sunday, warmer with clouds, -7C (-8C), -12C (-13C); Monday, cloudy, -10C (-10C), -12C (-13C); Tuesday, partly cloudy -3C (-6C), -5C (-9C); Wednesday, sun and low clouds, -2C (-8C), -6C (-7C).

Data provided by AccuWeather.com



Alexander Flygel restocks the meat and deli sections of Svalbardbutikken on Tuesday after flight disruptions between Svalbard and mainland Norway left many shelves at the supermarket bare. The store warehouses enough non-perishable goods to feed Longyearbyen for months if necessary.

Trapped travelers become 'desperate'

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"The situation can change from hour to hour," he said.

Longyearbyen stores and restaurants, which found themselves out of produce and other perishables, started receiving fresh supplies by air and ship early this week. Alexander Flygel, 20, a Svalbardbutikken employee who was restocking the meat section Tuesday, said it's not the worst interruption of supplies he's seen in nearly 10 years of living here, but "it's the worst case in many, many years."

The ash cloud didn't reach Svalbard, so flights within the archipelago and to North Pole expeditions weren't interrupted. But all mainland airports were closed until a few in the north were allowed to resume service Friday and, with travelers still unable to reach Oslo and points beyond, officials at Svalbard Airport said the situation for some became desperate.

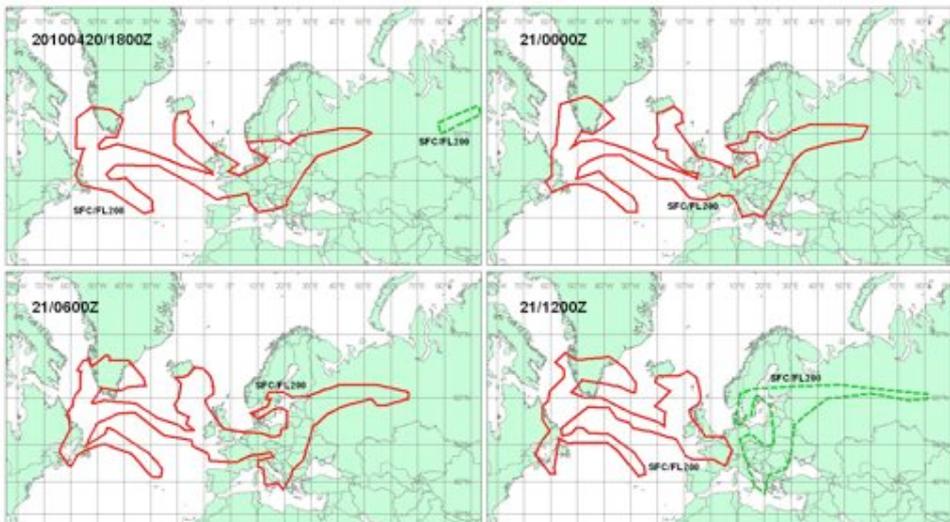
"There are people who need to be at a fu-

neral, others in foreign countries and we have heard about a father who cannot come down to a birth in progress on the mainland," said Tone Bendiktsen, a Scandinavian Airlines ground service worker, in an interview with *Svalbardposten*.

A high-profile tale among the masses enduring hardship featured David Attenborough, 83, a veteran broadcaster who reached the North Pole on Saturday as part of a nature series being filmed for the BBC. Widespread headlines followed when the ash cloud trapped him and colleagues in the field, as BBC officials expressed concern the team would run out of supplies.

"They had been making good progress with the new series of 'Frozen Planet' and could never have foreseen something as strange as a cloud of volcano ash stopping them from flying," an official told London's *Daily Mail*.

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



The path of the ash cloud from an Iceland volcano is expected to lessen over mainland Europe through midday Wednesday, according to this chart from the Icelandic Meteorological Office.

What's up

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, Næringsbygget 1, Tundra room.

April 28

7:30 p.m.: Concert by Jørn Bøgeberg Trio, featuring multiple styles. Tickets sold at the door. Galleri Svalbard.

May 2

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "En Helt Vanlig Dag på Jobben," Norwegian comedy/drama, all ages. Huset.

May 6

2 p.m.: Board of cultural and leisure meeting. Næringsbygget, Tundra room.

Board of City Operation Authority meeting. Time not specified. Næringsbygget, Smutthullet room.

May 7

9 p.m.: Board of growing enterprises meeting. Næringsbygget, Tundra room.

May 9

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

May 11

7 p.m.: Meeting of the local board. Lompensenteret, Mediateket.

May 12

7 p.m.: Presentation by filmmaker and author Jan Anders Diesen on Roald Amundsen's South Pole expedition. Radisson.

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:

- *At 40, Earth Day is now big business*
- *Global temperatures set March record*
- *High dioxin levels in halibut off Svalbard*
- *Ghost from Svalbard stars in kids' book*