



Visitors, above left, play volleyball at the Barneo ice camp while waiting to be picked up after an expedition to the North Pole. Above right, Barneo staff load cargo into the rear of a plane as they prepare to end the season Monday. At right, workers take down one of the main tents used for purposes such as cooking and research. The camp hosted about 250 visitors from 18 countries.



CAMP BARNEO

Short season, tempers

Barneo ends abbreviated N. Pole camp as new leaders takes heat

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

It was still a very cool year for those reaching the top of the world, but also one where there was a distinct chill of a less pleasant kind.

The last flight from the Barneo ice camp departed Monday after a short season – perhaps the shortest in its 11-year history – as the base for North Pole expeditions. Mother Nature again impeded some plans with

weather delays and areas of open water. But this year some of the 250 visitors from 18 countries said humans at the camp also caused some heated moments.

New leadership with a regimented approach and strict adherence to rules was appointed to Barneo after Russian officials ended a sometimes rocky 2011 season by stating "stated at the end of a 2011 season" "we already have some changes in mind."

See WRAPUP, page 3

Britain warns cruisers

Alert advises avoiding Svalbard trips due to rescue risks; travel operators call claim 'ridiculous'

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Britain is warning travelers not to take cruises to Svalbard this year due to limited search and rescue capabilities, prompting an outraged response from tour companies.

It is the first time a European country has issued a travel warning for citizens not to sail on a cruise to Svalbard. It's also a further blow to a tourism industry already seeing problems due to a fatal polar bear attack last summer and increasingly strict environmental regulations affecting cruise lines' expenses and access.

"Search-and-rescue capabilities are limited due to the large distances between populated areas," the alert issued this week Britain's Foreign Office states. "The combined search-and-rescue ship capacity may well be less than would be needed to cope with even one of the small cruise ships that frequent parts of the Arctic."

The warning is "completely out of order," said Paul Goldstein, an executive with the adventure tour company Exodus, in an interview with *The Independent* of London.

"Exodus has never had clients involved in an incident involving either animals or ice in

See WARNING, page 4

Inside

City spin: Now confusing in English
Page 2

Headlines from Svalbardposten
- Secret deal to raise electricity rates even more
- City sells seven housing units to Tromsø firm
- UNIS gets record number of applicants for 2012
Page 3

Weather forecast
Page 3

Events calendar
Page 4

Lonely, getting old and liking it

Svalbard's population rising, aging and increasingly from other countries, officials report

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

A bunch of men aging alone in small homes in the desolate Arctic. Just the kind of place to attract those seeking Utopia.

But they are coming to Svalbard, and in greater numbers and increasingly from the more distant parts of the globe. There were

See POPULATION, page 2



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Girls from Thailand, the country with the most foreign residents in Longyearbyen, perform a folk dance at The University Centre in Svalbard during a national holiday in their home country.

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

Editor

Mark Sabbatini

Staff writer/photographer

Karla Paz

Copy editor

Kristan Hutchison

Psychiatrist

Irene Gallion

Mailing address

Icepeople

Vei 210 -2- 13

Longyearbyen, Svalbard

9170

Norway

Telephone

Norway: +47 41 51 46 38

U.S. +1 (970) 673-4472

E-mail

marksabbatini@yahoo.com

Web site

www.icepeople.net

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.

Copyright stuff

Original contents of this publication can be reproduced for non-commercial purposes free of charge if *Icepeople* is credited as the source. The original writers, photographers and other contributors retain their rights to all published works.

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.

Official spin, now befuddling in many languages

The screenshot shows the official website for Longyearbyen Lokalstyre. At the top, there's a header with the logo and navigation tabs: 'Kontakt oss', 'Organisasjon', 'Politikk', 'Tjenester A-A', 'Ledige stillinger', and a search bar. Below this are four main content areas: 'Administrasjon' (with sub-links like 'Arealplaner', 'Barnevern', 'Byggesak'), 'Bydrift' (with sub-links like 'Brenn og beredskap', 'Eiendoms'), 'Kultur og fritid' (with sub-links like 'Anngangenter', 'Bibliotek'), and 'Oppvekst' (with sub-links like 'Barnehage', 'Kulturskole'). The main content area features several news items with images and titles: 'Kundeweb strøm', 'Liten økning i innbyggertallet', and 'Skiløyper'. There's also an 'Aktivitetskalender' for April 2012 and a 'Nyhetsfeed'. At the bottom, there are sections for 'Om Longyearbyen', 'Linker', 'Selvbetjening', and 'Aktuelt nå'. The footer contains contact information and the slogan 'LUNIKT, TRYGT OG SKAPENDE'.

A redesigned official website for the city of Longyearbyen (www.lokalstyre.no) debuts Friday with more options immediately visible, along with automatic translations via Google into English, Russian, Thai and French. Initial tests indicate the site's code still needs some adjusting, as some portions and links fail to function properly when translated. The translations also need to be taken with a grain of salt since Google Translate, while constantly improving, still mangles many words into inaccurate (albeit frequently humorous) nonsense.

Svalbard getting more foreigners

POPULATION, from page 1

2,504 people living in Svalbard as Jan. 1 of this year, an increase of 90 from a year ago, according to Statistics Norway. Norwegian accounted for about 30 more residents, with foreigners accounting for the majority.

"The proportion of men is still greater than on the mainland," the agency notes in a prepared statement. "It is 58 percent of the total population men, while the mainland is 50 percent."

There are more men than women in all age groups in Svalbard except those under 20. Among residents 50 years of age and older nearly two-thirds are men.

An exception to the rule is foreign residents, more than half of whom are women. Among those women, more than one-third are

from Thailand.

In another deviation from the mainland, half of the 1,024 households in Svalbard consist of one person.

"This means that 25 percent of the population live alone," the statement notes. "The same share of the mainland is 18 percent."

An even bigger difference is households with four or more people, which account for 20 percent in Svalbard compared to 40 percent on the mainland.

Another group low in relation to the mainland is residents more than 60 years old. But Svalbard's total has increased from 56 in 2004 to 113 as of this year. Of those, 14 are 70 years of age or older.

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

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

The end of the season at Barneo naturally means we had to visit Wikipedia to refresh ourselves on a few details about the North Pole, such as the little-known fact that it is "also known as the 'GIANT PURPLE WAFFLE.'" That was just one of the "facts" recently inserted – usually by anonymous editors and always always hastily removed – at the gang-bang encyclopedia's website. We also learned "Santa is

real!" and "Clinton Zhang was the first person on the North Pole," the latter being attributed to an editor known as "clinton012." There was also a reference to the point at the opposite end of the world as the "Big Pole" rather than the South Pole (cue Beavis and Butt-head cackling). Barneo's entry managed to escape the edit wars despite a warning at the top of the page that "this article may require cleanup to meet Wikipedia's quality standards."



CAMP BARNEO

A scientist studies data in one of the main tents at the Barneo ice camp. Research is playing an increasing role at the camp, a camp official noting 11 data transmission buoys were deployed on the ice by four countries this season compared to the usual three or four buoys in previous years.

Rough Barneo season still thrills

WRAPUP from page 1

But expedition organizers and other participants said the change disrupted much of the community-oriented spirit of past years and the ability to make the impromptu decisions that are a practical necessity in such an environment. One tour company leader – speaking on background, as did other sources, since many will likely be dealing with camp administrators in those extreme and tight quarters in future years – said he had to postpone half of his expeditions until next year.

Messages to Polar Expeditions, a London company listed as the contact for Barneo operations, were not returned at press time. But press releases from Russian agencies affiliated with the camp were notably more positive than the summary for 2011, although some weather and terrain difficulties were noted.

"An incredible number of hummocks encountered on the route and the presence of open water has made this campaign one of the most difficult of all previous expeditions," notes a press release from Russia's Association of Polar Explorers, summarizing an expedition involving 14 youths.

Journals at Barneo's official website (www.barneo.ru) also note the start of the season was delayed due to weather impeding set-up efforts, resulting in a backlog of visitors from the beginning.

Still, when most news articles and trip



CAMP BARNEO

An unusually high number of jagged ice hummocks and other terrain hazards made expeditions from Barneo to the North Pole more difficult than many previous seasons.

blogs mention things like "emotions being over the edge" it's in the positive sense.

Among the more positive aspects of the season was Barneo's progress in supporting scientific research, said Mikhail Malakhov the camp's expedition leader, in an interview with the Russian publication *Ecolife*.

"Borneo was originally planned as a base for organizing trips to the North Pole," he said. "But looking at the current activities at Barneo you can definitely say now it's more a temporary research station, rather than a platform for the tourists."

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Secret negotiations result in even higher electricity rates

Electricity prices, which Longyearbyen officials already raised 25 percent last December, are going up again as the city has agreed after secret negotiations to pay Store Norske more for coal. The December increase hiked rates to 1.42 kroner per kilowatt-hour, up from 1.17 kroner. The agreement with Store Norske will raise the rate to 1.52 kroner during the next two years. "Store Norske has been ordered by its owner to operate profitably," said Marianne Aasen, operations manager for Bydrift, the city's utility entity. "That is probably one of the reasons the negotiations have been at times challenging." The increase must be approved by the city's management committee and the full municipal council.

City sells seven housing units to Tromsø company

Longyearbyen's local council has approved the sale of seven city properties to the Tromsø company Triko, with the goal of reducing control of local buildings and their backlog of maintenance. The 37-million-kroner sale includes 106 small flats and bedsits, mostly along Vei 232 with an assessed value of 57 million kroner. Morten Langerud, the council's property manager, said there was little interest from other bidders in the properties. The formal transfer of ownership is scheduled for Sept. 3. Triko, which owns multiple properties in Tromsø, is owned by Gunnar Wilhelmsen, who also leads several other companies and business interests.

UNIS gets record number of applicants, up 31% from 2008

A record 628 people are applying for admission to The University Centre in Svalbard, nearly 200 more than in 2008. "It shows that we are an attractive place for students wishing Arctic expertise," said Ole Arve Misund, the university's director. The increase is part of a national trend of higher enrollment in science education. Of the UNIS application, 161 are for the biology program, 192 for technical, 188 for geology and 187 for geophysics. There were 431 applicants in 2008, 485 in 2009, 368 in 2010 and 549 in 2011.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Mostly sunny. E winds to 25 km/h. High -4C (-11C wind chill), low -8C (-15C wind chill).	Snow late. NE to 29 km/h. High -5C (-12C wind chill), low -6C (-13C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. N winds to 11 km/h. High -7C (-12C wind chill), low -9C (-13C wind chill).	Snow late. Variable winds to 11 km/h. High -6C (-11C wind chill), low -9C (-13C wind chill).
24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight
Extended forecast: Sunday, snow, -6C (-12C), -8C (-13C), light 24:00h; Monday, snow, -6C (-12C), -7C (-13C), light 24:00h; Tuesday, p. cloudy, -5C (-10C), -8C (-13C), light 24:00h; Wednesday, p. cloudy, -5C (-10C), -8C (-13C), light 24:00h			
Data provided by yr.no			



HURTIGRUTEN

A Hurtigruten ferry, among the most popular options for British travelers during summer, passes through ice-strewn waters during a cruise. Britain's foreign office is advising people not to take cruise to Svalbard because of the risks and limited rescue options in remote areas.

Britain: Arctic cruises too risky

WARNING, from page 1

Spitsbergen," he said. "We are disappointed by the negative publicity this ridiculous warning will generate."

Clive Stacey, managing director of Discover the World, told the newspaper Arctic voyages do tend to attract older travelers at higher risk of ill health, but he has full confidence in the ability of the area's rescue entities.

"These voyages travel close to shore, and search-and-rescue arrangements are extremely good," he said. "The local authorities operate helicopters which can be on the spot within an hour."

But Britain's alert states even a timely response may not be adequate.

"Search and rescue ships offer basic transport and basic medical care, but are not capable of advanced life-support," the alert states. "Air or medical evacuation could also take time. There are uncharted waters in some fjords, and water temperatures can be very low even during summer months. Emergency medical facilities may be limited in number, and in types of services offered."

"If you are thinking of such a trip, please consider these factors and check the operational records and relevant experience of captains and crews operating vessels in Arctic waters."

The alert does not specifically name Svalbard, but virtually all discussing it took the destination as a given since most of the 100,000 Britons expected take Norwegian cruises this summer will travel on Hurtigruten

ferries and other cruise line ships destined for the area.

Svalbard Lt. Gov. Lars Erik Alfheim said the governor does not consider Britain's alert daunting, but there are obvious risks involved with Arctic cruises.

"There is no doubt that traveling in parts of the Arctic is more dangerous than other parts," he said in an interview with the *Barents Observer*. "It is also possible that different nations have different perceptions of what travel is dangerous. This warning applies to the entire Arctic and is issued for U.K. citizens."

"The governor may only account for our own rescue and rescue capacity. Even within the Svalbard's territorial waters – and with the emergency services we have today – there are clear limitations in the rescue and its capacities."

A British Foreign Office spokesperson, defending the alert, told *The Independent* it's part of a larger effort to increase safety awareness.

"The increasing importance that the FCO places on crisis preparedness has led us to work more closely with crisis-response authorities and agencies in country, and has made us aware of potential risks and our obligation therefore to highlight them," he said.

The cruise industry has been hampered by several high-profile accidents and rescues in recent months, causing many travelers to put trips on hold even to warm weather destinations.

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

What's up

April 24

1 p.m.: Administration Committee meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newntoppen room.

April 25

6 p.m.: Movie: "Ildfjell," Icelandic drama, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

April 26

7:30 p.m.: Theater monologue "Jeanne d'Arc – Visjon Gjennom Eld," featuring Juni Dahr. Kulturhuset.

April 28

10 a.m.: Svalbard Skimarathon. Details at svalbardturn.no.

April 29

1 p.m.: Children's ski festival on the moraine above Nybyen, with prizes for participants Also trails for sledding and other snow activities. Sign ups at Svalbardhallen from 5 to 8 p.m. Friday and noon to 3 p.m. Saturday at Svalbardbutikken.

6 p.m.: Movie: "A Cat in Paris," French animated/children's film dubbed in Norwegian, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Tyrannosaur," British drama, no age limit determined. Kulturhuset.

May 2

6 p.m.: Movie filmed in Svalbard: "En Fiende å Dø For," Swedish drama premiering this year, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset. Film details and reviews at www.filmweb.no/film/article418290.ece.

May 3

6 p.m.: Bydrift Board meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newntoppen room.

May 6

6 p.m.: Movie: "Laban - Lille Annas favoritter," Swedish children's film dubbed in Norwegian, no age limit determined. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "American Pie: Reunion," U.S. comedy/romance, 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:

- *StatOil: 5000,000 bpd in Arctic by 2020*
- *Arctic mammal, fish populations rising*
- *2,000 scientists: Stop fishing in Arctic*
- *Experts: We try to save cute species*



I am a hard-working Dutch woman looking for a job in Svalbard, Tromsø or the northern part of Norway. I speak English, Dutch, German, Spanish, Hungarian and Slovenian. I am a certified piano teacher, but I am open for other jobs to as long as I am paid. For further info e-mail rebekakonc@hotmail.com.