



Ketil Rønning, lead singer for the Longyearbyen band Schmeerenburgh, performs Saturday at Endalen during the first Spitsbergen Rock festival. Seven Norwegian bands performed at various locations during the four-day event.

High and hardcore

First Spitsbergen Rock festival gives black metal a new latitude

For Heidi Merethe Lian, it was an evening of pleasant music and an opportunity to dig out the vintage wardrobe. Y'know, the spiked necklace, skull-and-crossbones accessories and ankle-length black denim coat with a black metal band moniker on back.

"Before, one or two years ago, I liked to dress like this every day," the 16-year-old

Longyearbyen student said, her hair done up in a nice vertical frizz.

Lian and a few hundred fellow BMers gave their eardrums some long-awaited exercise during the first Spitsbergen Rock festival Thursday through Sunday. Seven Norwegian bands spent the extended weekend pummeling

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42.2 km? Snow sweat

Challenges in Spitsbergen Marathon go beyond distance

Running a marathon ought to be achievement enough. Especially when challenges like a lengthy trip to the end of the Earth, snow in June and rifle-clad race officials on ATVs watching for polar bears are added.

So it seems unfair mentioning some completing this year's Spitsbergen Marathon didn't achieve their goal after all.

"I wanted to run the northernmost," said Gieseler Norbert, a Berlin resident in his 40s running his 32nd marathon.

Actually, that'd be the North Pole Marathon, whose participants passed through here in April on their way to a race ending at 90 degrees north and a tempera-

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Twenty-eight runners begin their 42.2-km journey through the mostly gravel streets of Longyearbyen during the 15th annual Spitsbergen Marathon on June 6. A total of 120 runners participated in full, half and 10K races.

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Rescuers prepare a Danish man with an inflamed appendix for an 1,100-km helicopter journey from his camp on the northern tip of Greenland to Svalbard on June 6. Photo by Airlift/Longyearbyen Sykehus.

15-hour rescue saves man at tip of Greenland

2,200-km helicopter operation from Svalbard to ill researcher one of the longest in history

One of the longest helicopter rescues in history ended successfully June 6 when Svalbard officials flew more than 2,200 kilometers to evacuate a 34-year-old man with a severely inflamed appendix from an expedition on the northern tip of Greenland.

The Danish researcher was in stable condition following the 15-hour rescue, according to a statement by the Svalbard governor's office. He was treated at Longyearbyen Hospital before being flown to Tromsø for further care.

The man and a fellow researcher sent out an emergency signal June 5 from about 400 km northwest of Stasjon Nord, the country's northernmost military station. Greenland authorities attempted a rescue, but asked Svalbard officials for help after

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Editor

Mark Sabbatini

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

editor@icepeople.net

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.

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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.



Race workers prepare for polar guard duty during the Spitsbergen Marathon on June 6. The course covered most of the major streets in Longyearbyen, including the road to the airport where bears have been near earlier this year.

Some goals met, some not during race

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ture of -37C. They also paid an entry fee of 120,000 NOK, which didn't include travel arrangements to Longyearbyen.

The 28 people completing the 15th annual Spitsbergen Marathon on June 6 paid a mere 400 NOK to run most of the major roads in town – twice – and the misunderstanding was excusable given everything else northernmost Svalbard lays claim to. Most of the runners were foreigners looking above all for an exotic and unusual experience, which they certainly felt they got.

"It's summer and it's snowing," Norbert said. "That's a big difference."

The cold and lack of a crowd were a plus for Norbert, who said his main goal was simply finishing the race. Doing so in less than five hours would be nice, even if that didn't approach his personal best of 3:43.

Final time: 5:19:27. But that was without any training runs during his four days here and he was hardly the only one with an optimistic time goal on mostly gravel roads.

Aleksey Shestov, who came from Russia's Saratov region to get his PhD in ice mechanics

at The University Centre In Svalbard, said he hoped to complete the 42.2-km course in 3:15. His longest training run was 30 km and he expected the biggest challenge to be "the first 30 minutes and the last hour." He finished in 3:38:19, sixth in the 18-39 age category.

The overall winner was Per Hviid, a member of the Fokus Bank Road Runners, with a time of 3:09:29. The women's winner was Lori Osmundsen of Portland, Ore., in 4:30:08. She said just running the race was an unexpected development – to say nothing of winning it.

"I ran a marathon in my family's town of Norway (Mandal) and I met a journalist who said 'You like to run exotic marathons? Have I got one for you,'" she said. "I said 'Really? That's my next project' – and he printed it."

The winner of the 60 runners in the half marathon were Simon Lovås at 1:25:25 and Anja Kristiansen Meyer 1:52:58. The winner among the 32 runners in the 10K race were Johannes Abildsnes at 43:09 and Anne-Mette Berg at 49:58.

Full results from the race can be seen at www.svalbardturn.no.

Greenland rescue may set future tone

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the plane got stuck in the snow at the site.

Weather conditions were favorable over the Greenland Sea and the Svalbard governor's office determined the mission was safe.

"This person has been sick for five days," Lars Fausa, assistant secretary for the governor's office, told the *Nordlys* newspaper. "If we don't get him out, the man will die."

The helicopter departed at 9 p.m. with two pilots, a systems operator, an airlift operator and two anesthesia nurses from Longyearbyen Hospital. It was also carrying more than 1,400 liters of extra fuel in six containers in addition to its 1,700-liter main tanks.

The helicopter made refueling stops in Ny Ålesund and again at a Danish military base on the northeast coast of Greenland before reaching the two researchers. They arrived in Longyearbyen at about 9:30 a.m. June 6.

Svalbard still had two helicopters available, including one aboard a Coast Guard ship in the area, if needed for other emergencies, Fausa said.

The "episode will be natural to include when evaluating what rescue preparedness should be on Svalbard," Svalbard Governor Per Sefland told *Svalbardposten*. Such operations are prominent in a long-term strategic plans for the area released earlier this year.



Lori Osmundsen approaches the 2-km mark during the Spitsbergen Marathon on June 6. She won the women's category with a time of 4:30:08.

Run at 78°N tough act to follow

By LORI OSMUNDSEN

There are some of us in America who have heard of Spitsbergen and can actually find it on a map.

I did not know, however, that Spitsbergen hosts the world's (nearly) northernmost marathon until last September, when a Norwegian journalist in Mandal suggested that I consider Svalbard for my next race. I thought he was joking. I said I would think about putting it on my list, along with the marathon on the moon.

Two days later the local newspaper, *Lindesnes*, printed an article stating that my next marathon project after running in Mandal would be the Spitsbergen Marathon. So it is real, I learned.

Eight months later I am running all over Longyearbyen with a handful of other marathoners attracted by the exotic.

The race preview from Svalbard Turn classified the marathon here as "tough." What does that mean? All marathons are tough. Otherwise everyone would do it.

But those who ran 42.2 km on Saturday, June 6, found the going plenty challenging: some snow, some hills and very brisk air for those of us not used to -1C in June.

My favorite part of the race was meeting reindeer at about 4 km – my first wildlife sighting in Svalbard.

The worst part of the race was meeting some headwind at around 24 km, when you suddenly felt cold and irritated that nature is slapping you in the face at the point you most needed a boost with 18 km yet to go.

One feature that the Spitsbergen Marathon shared with every other marathon I've run was outstanding volunteer support at the aid stations. I would like to hug every one of the volunteers who cheerfully gave out drinks, food and smiles every 5 km or so. Those ladies were my heroes during the race and they should be given free annual passes at Svalbardhallen for being tremendous goodwill ambassadors of Longyearbyen.

Spitsbergen has made it hard for me to think about what's the next marathon – how do you get more unique than that? Start one on the moon, I guess.

• *Lori Osmundsen is an attorney, freelance writer and marathon runner from Portland, Ore. She wishes to thank her home Sons Of Norway chapter, Grieg Lodge 2-14 in Portland, for their encouragement and support of her running adventure in Spitsbergen.*

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Ski tourists rescued from northern Spitsbergen after pickup ship trapped by ice

Four skiers were evacuated Sunday by helicopter from Eolusneset after the tour ship scheduled to pick them up was trapped by ice. The group was in good condition, but didn't have supplies for a prolonged stay at the north-east edge of Spitsbergen. Trond Aagesen, Svalbard's police division chief, said changing ice conditions make scheduling tours difficult, but there is nothing to suggest operators are acting irresponsibly. Spitsbergen Travel Managing Director Trygve Steen said the company is looking at changes, including more western routes next year, to avoid such situations.

Change would allow 16- and 17-year-olds to vote locally

A proposal allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in local board elections in 2011 will be considered today by the Longyearbyen local council. A number of municipalities have expressed interest in the experimental vote and teens whose permanent residence was in those cities before moving to Svalbard would be eligible to cast ballots here.

Display honoring mining executive a bit of a bust

A bust of Robert Hermansen, a Norwegian industrial leader credited with a profitable overhaul of Store Norske while managing director from 1999-2008, will be unveiled next weekend outside the post office and bank building in the center of Longyearbyen. Only the company didn't tell city officials about it beforehand. A recent letter from an executive states "only now we have been made aware that it must be applied for to get bust placed, which applied for by this letter." The bust, made by sculptor Per Ung, will be on temporary display until being permanently relocated at the new cultural center, now being built as an extension of the municipal building.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday

Low clouds, a few flurries.
SSW winds at 19 km/h.
High 3C (-2C wind chill), low
-2C (-2C wind chill).

Thursday

Cloudy, evening flurries/rain.
SSE winds at 9 km/h. High
3C (0C wind chill), low 2C
(-1C wind chill).

Friday

Cloudy, morning showers.
ESE winds 16 km/h. High
3C (1C wind chill), low 1C
(-3C wind chill).

Saturday

Cloudy. NNE winds at 4 km/
h. High 4C (4C wind chill),
low -2C (-2C wind chill).

Extended forecast: Sunday, cloudy, 2C (0C), 1C (1C); Monday, cloudy, light winds, 3C (3C), 2C (2C); Tuesday, cloudy, 3C (3C), 1C (-3C); Wednesday, rainy and windy, 1C (-3C), -1C (-5C).

Data provided by AccuWeather.com



Figur Flint performs a brief set Thursday at Svalbar during a free jam session on the opening night of Spitsbergen Rock.

New festival brings rock to the rocks

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instruments and speakers into submission, which Lian said was a much-needed addition to Longyearbyen's regular roster of jazz and blues festivals.

"It's amazing they got one," Lian said while waiting for the bus to a marathon of concerts Saturday at Endalen by Mine 5. "It's perfect that I'm here now."

Looking much more conventional in a simple blue nylon jacket and jeans was Lina Harnes, 23, an Asker resident visiting her dad for the weekend. While pristine settings and all that have their place, an evening of cultural music was nothing to pass up.

"I didn't know it was happening," she said, adding the only band she was familiar with was the Oslo-based Superfamily that headlined the event.

She said standing for hours in and around the chilly semi-open hall at Endalen wasn't a concern since "it's going to be sunny all night," she said. Besides, "that's why you wear a coat."

No, the evening wasn't Norwegian Wood, but premium-seat views for fans of The Pretenders were online – and still can be streamed at www.nrk.no/norwegian_wood. Meanwhile, the world's newest and northernmost rock festival had whale burgers (not remarkably different than beef cooked well-done, but tasty with garlic sauce) and shorter porta-potty lines. Plus the bands had a better chance of creating the most bizarre memories (applicable in this case to both musicians and listeners).

"Who can say no to Svalbard?" said Bob Kåre, lead singer for Figur Flint, explaining why he opted for an invitation to go bear-watching and do "the whole nature thing" instead of soaking up the masses in Oslo.

He said he had no expectations about what the audience would be like, but they turned out to be as raucous as anywhere.

The festival might have been aimed at Svalbard's youth, but Arlid Hermansen, almost

60, was among those rocking among the rocks late into the night Saturday. He said he's no poseur – this really is the stuff he listens to at home.

"Not always, but sometimes," added Inger Marie Hegvik, who married Hermansen two weeks ago.

Hermansen, who's lived in Longyearbyen for ten years, said he's a regular at all of the local festivals and "I like this one just as much as any of them." The audience might not have packed every performance, but he predicts that will come in time.

"When they started the Svalbard blues festival it was low, but it got better all the time," he said. "I think that will happen here, too."

A year of planning went into the festival, including struggles to get permits to sell alcohol and put the porta-potties at a place where geological samples are being collected, and Festival Director Kristian Arnesen said organizers spent five days setting things up at Endalen.

"I'm still taking it down," he said a few days afterward.

Arnesen said he felt the festival went exceptional well, "especially at Endalen," and "we are 95 percent sure" there will be another Spitsbergen Rock next year.

"We already have two bands who said no this year who said they will come next year," he said, adding this year's bands also indicated they want to return.

About 350 to 400 tickets were sold for two days of paid events, making four concerts at two pubs on Friday well-attended but not quite sold out, Arnesen said. Free jam sessions on Thursday and Sunday were more lightly attended, but the opening-night crowd was boisterous and Arnesen said next year's festival would likely expand that to an all-day event while dropping the second jam session.

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

What's up

June 17

1 p.m.: Opening of the LOFF bird observation facility, located behind Svalbard Snøscooterutleie. Information available at www.loff.biz (in English at www.icepeople.net).

June 18

Last day of school.

June 18-19

Waste plant closed for annual service, cleaning and other work. Contact 7902 1501 in advance with inquiries.

Seminar: "Geopolitics in the High Arctic." Presentations from Norwegian and international experts about political and scientific issues related to climate change, territorial claims and other Arctic concerns. Political presentations are 4-7 p.m. June 18, scientific presentations 9 a.m.-noon June 19. Discussions are in English. At UNIS. Contact reception@UNIS.no or 7902 3300 for registration information.

June 19

First cruise ship of the season, the 1,896-passenger *Mein Schiff*, arrives. Ten port calls by ships, with a total passenger capacity of 16,881, are scheduled through Aug. 12.

June 20

5 p.m.: Midsummer Party at the Svalbard Sailing Club. Kids' games start at 5 p.m., grill at 6 p.m. Music, a bonfire and other activities are planned.

June 21

6 p.m.: Movie: "Inkheart," U.S./British/German adventure, ages 11 and up, Huset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "X-men Origins: Wolverine," U.S. action/fantasy, ages 15 and up, Huset.

June 22

10:15 a.m.: Meeting of the environment and industry committee. Næringsbygget 1.

June 28

8 p.m.: Movie: "Gran Torino," U.S. action/drama, ages 15 and up, Huset.

July 5

8 p.m.: Movie: "The Secret Life of Bees," U.S. drama, ages 11 and up, Huset.

July 16

7 p.m.: Exhibit opening, watercolors of Arctic fossils and plants by Hedvig Wright Østern, Galleri Svalbard. On display until Aug. 31.