



Tourist killed by wave

Woman dies after sightseeing dinghy capsizes in Krossfjorden; second boat death in past year

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

A woman from the United States in her 60s died Monday after a large wave capsized a sightseeing zodiac in Krossfjorden, officials said.

The accident occurred at about 11 a.m. when passengers from the 114-passenger cruise ship *Sea Spirit* were sightseeing in the rubber boats near a glacier area on the north

side of Fjortende Julibukta, according to a statement from the Svalbard governor's office. One of the zodiacs capsized, hurling all 13 occupants into the water.

"Witnesses testified that the boat was taken by a large wave and thrown around," the statement notes. "All aboard fell into the sea and were washed ashore. A woman lost consciousness and died after the incident. The cause of death has not yet been clarified."

The governor's office also did not identify a cause – such as calving glacier ice – of the wave.

Three other occupants of the dinghy had
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ARLID LYSSAND / SYSSELMANNEN

A glacial area in Krossfjorden, pictured here, was the site of a fatal accident Monday when a large wave capsized a sightseeing zodiac.

Loss of innocence

Sharp increase in shoplifting forces Svalbardbutikken to use camera, security scanners

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

When a tourist was discovered with polar bear nuzzling both arms, Karin Mella had no sympathy.

The manager of Svalbardbutikken recently caught the visitor trying to walk out of the store with two of the stuffed creatures hidden in the arms of his jacket. It was just another of the increasingly frequent thefts of everything from perfume to electronics to food that resulted in the installation this week

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MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

A customer pays for groceries as they cluster under the scrutinizing rays of a new theft-prevention scanner Tuesday at Svalbardbutikken. A sharp increase in thefts of everything from meat to stuffed polar bears makes the new security necessary, according to store employees.

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Following in failed footsteps?

Researchers seeking clues from lost historic expedition may be thwarted by missing food cache

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

A four-month trip to northeast Svalbard to seek clues about why a historic expedition disappeared are getting a first-hand experience with one possibility: a sudden, unexpected lack of supplies and no ability to obtain more.

A couple is facing the end of their quest soon due to a missing food barrel cached at the
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BJÖRN KLAUER

Björn Klauer and Regina Elpers take a rest day during what's supposed to be a four-month trip to research a lost expedition in northeast Svalbard.

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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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.

First ski descent in Svalbard, um, 'via sailboat'



KIM HAVELL / ICE AXE EXPEDITIONS

Pete Gaston, shreds a slope on the west coast of Spitsbergen north of Longyearbyen during a recent 10-day ski expedition aboard the *Artica II*, a 19-meter steel-hulled sailboat designed for breaking through ice. The 10-member group made the "first descents via sailboat in Norway," according to ESPN. Kim Havell, the expedition's leader, told the network participants ranged from 24 to 55 years old and their talents were equally diverse. "Everyone learned a ton from each other," he said. "Someone would be impressed by a backflip and someone else would be impressed by someone's route finding." While Havell said it was a mostly thrilling trip of skiing, sleeping and drinking beer, they didn't see any polar bears and they hit some rough waters "About half the team went down due to seasickness," he said. "There was a group puke section off the back."

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Apparently we're going from hoping people will throw money at us for providing free news (we'd have a donate button at our website if it was actually functional) to giving businesses free plugs in the hope they'll pay for unsolicited ads. Or so we're feeling since we're running two items on this page for Ice Axe Expeditions, including the photo above (which was mostly to make fun of idiotic wording from "the worldwide leader in sports"). But a New Jersey newspaper just got around to noticing a former resident went on a North Pole ski trek with that company in April, who **described the top of the world as "anticlimactic."** **"It's all just white, vast and flat and very, very cold,"** said Karl Pettijohn, 48, who's climbed six of the world's seven tallest peaks and came within 200 meters of the summit of Mount Everest last year before pneumonia forced him to turn back. **Maybe Pettijohn, managing director of an investment company, would have gotten more from his \$50,000 North Pole trip if he hadn't "spent more than 200 minutes on his satel-**



JAN-MORTEN BJØRNBAKK

Scientists telling fish tails (Ha! We kill us): If seeing more whales doesn't mean there's more of them, does seeing fewer mean there's no reason to worry they'll become extinct?



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

But will they set off the alarms if they raid the meat section? And can you arrest a blind person for shoplifting if his seeing-eye dog unwittingly commits a crime the owner never saw coming?

lite phone speaking to his office" ... Those new anti-theft scanners at Svalbardbutikken (which we've already triggered a couple of times) aren't the only visible change this week. **The supermarket is now prominently declaring it's OK for seeing-eye dogs to enter with visually impaired customers.** We can grok more shoplifting (not the same as endorsing it, mind you), but a sudden explosion of blind shoppers? Actually, no, since Store Manager Karin Mella said she's seen one in her 12 years there, but its a newly mandated thing chainwide ... And in other news of lyin' eyes, **a record number of blue whales have been spotted in recent years in the waters of Svalbard and Jan Mayen Island, but that doesn't necessarily mean there's more of them,** according to the *Barents Observer*. "Incidental sightings provide very little towards absolute numbers," said Nils Øien, a researcher at Norway's Institute of Marine Research.



BJÖRN KLAUER

A dogsled team guided by Björn Klauer and Regina Elpers comes across a barrel of dog food cached last year on Nordaustlandet. A similar barrel of food for the couple is missing and may have washed out to sea during a storm after it was disturbed by one or more polar bears.

Little food, but still large hopes

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site last year. Three other barrels had polar bear paw scratches on them, indicating they had been disturbed and the missing barrel "may have been swept to sea during a storm last fall," they wrote in their expedition blog (<http://spitzbergen-expedition.de>).

Björn Klauer and Regina Elpers, who arrived at the Nordaustlandet site after months of preparation from a larger team since last year, estimated in late May they had enough remaining food to last another six weeks.

Friends of the couple asked the Svalbard governor's office in early June about flying more supplies in by helicopter, but were quickly turned down, according to *Svalbardposten*.

"There is no precedent for giving landing permits for tourist expeditions," the governor's office wrote in its response. "We suggest you find another way to either evacuate the group from Nordaustlandet or send food."

Klauer and Elpers wrote they still have hope of continuing their expedition until its scheduled ending date in August.

"Until now, we have still found no concrete solution for the transport of additional food, but we are in contact with several tour operators and cruise lines in Longyearbyen," they wrote in an entry Monday. "But currently no boat near (us) is on the way."

The couple is hoping to find clues into the



SPITZBERGEN-EXPEDITION.DE

A 1913 German expedition to study glaciers in Nordaustlandet is believed to have perished in the area circled in red, according to a team of modern-day German researchers conducting a multi-month investigation of the area.

disappearance of a 1913 expedition led by Herbert Schröder-Stranz, who was researching the potential for commercial shipping routes. It is believed they perished in a central part of the island.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Faulty food grinder leads to birds, odor behind Radisson

Lots of seagulls and a rancid smell recently noticed by numerous people on the hillside between the Radisson Blu Polar Hotel and The University Centre in Svalbard were the result of a malfunction at the hotel that trapped leftover food beneath soil too frozen to dig out. "There has been a leak from the food waste grinder," said Trygve Steen, administrative director of Spitsbergen Travel, which owns the hotel. "It had sealed a good while ago, but we had to wait until now before we could dig up food waste that had leaked out." Employees of Spitsbergen Maskin, wearing full oilskins, started digging out the soil and food particles last Wednesday. Now both the problem and the gulls are gone, according to Steen, but he joked that's not necessarily a good thing. "We were inside thinking about making a bird observatory area of the restaurant," he said. "We have had unique species of Greenland Gulls and Lesser Black-backed Gulls visiting here."

Locally obtained 'D-number' now needed for tax deduction

Foreign workers in Svalbard will need to have a so-called D-number to obtain a tax deduction under a new rule implemented by the Norwegian Tax Administration. Workers must apply at the tax office in Longyearbyen instead of being allowed to obtain one on the mainland as previously permitted. The agency also wants to establish a mobile office in Barentsburg to provide verification to workers in the Russian settlement during monthly visits made by members of the Svalbard governor's office. Implementing checks in both locations will be a quick process, the agency noted.

Bridge on Museumsveien collapses, closed for repairs

The foundation of the bridge on Museumsveien where it crosses Longyearelva has collapsed, forcing the closure of the road until further notice, according to city officials. "It looks absolutely terrible," said Kjersti Holte, an engineer for Bydrift, the city's municipal infrastructure agency. Melkeveien is being used as an alternative route until repairs are completed.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cloudy. S winds to 25 km/h. High 7C (3C wind chill), low 5C (1C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. SE winds to 25 km/h. High 8C (6C wind chill), low 6C (3C wind chill).	Cloudy. SE winds to 18 km/h. High 7C (5C wind chill), low 6C (3C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. SE winds to 15 km/h. High 8C (6C wind chill), low 6C (-4C wind chill).
24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight
Extended forecast: Sunday, rain, 6C (3C), 5C (2C), light 24:00h; Monday, p. cloudy, 5C (1C), 3C (-1C), light 24:00h; Tuesday, cloudy, 4C (-1C), 3C (-1C), light 24:00h; Wednesday, clear, 4C (2C), 3C (-1C), light 24:00h			

Data provided by storm.no

Defending a slippery slope argument



MARKUS ECKERSTORFER / UNIS



M. WELKER / UNIS

At left, Wesley Farnsworth, a master's student at The University Centre in Svalbard, and field assistant T. Knecht conduct a horizontal transect across Larsbreen Rock Glacier in May of 2012 as part of Farnsworth's study of snow distribution around central Spitsbergen. Farnsworth, seen at right performing a snow stability test in May of this year, is attempting to better understand snow stability, potential snow avalanche trigger locations, and how snow distribution influences ground temperatures and periglacial landform dynamics around Longyearbyen. He will defend his thesis in a presentation at 9:15 a.m. Friday in the Lassegrotta auditorium.

'Every day we find empty boxes'

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of a video camera and security scanners.

"If you are giving something to your child, why would you steal and give it?" she said.

The store has "lost many things every year," but not to the extent it is happening this year, Mella said. She said the rise coincides with the return of tourist season and some visitors may be indulging in shoplifting due to the already high costs of the trip.

"Now we must do something," she said. "Every day we are losing more and more and more."

The high-cost scanners, installed at the entrance and checkout lanes, light up and ring a loud alarm when activated by a coded tag on merchandise. But that may not stop more brazen thieves who open boxes and conceal

their contents.

"Every day we find empty boxes. One day we found a hair color box in here," Mella said, gesturing toward a freezer filled with seafood.

An increase in thefts has also been reported at the Mix kiosk, but the situation isn't consistent at all Longyearbyen businesses. Employees at some stores said there's been no noticeable increase in thefts, while other said it's long been an ongoing problem – and not just during tourist season.

There were seven more property crimes in Svalbard in 2012 than 2011, although the generally low per-person crime rate has been generally stable since 2002, according to the Svalbard governor's office.

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

Boat death is second in past year

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the minor injuries. Two were transported by helicopter to Longyearbyen Hospital for treatment.

The governor's office received a call for help about an hour after the accident, and sent a helicopter with rescuers and a doctor aboard. However, the woman died before they arrived and her body has been sent to Tromsø for an autopsy.

The *Sea Spirit*, operated by Quark Expeditions, specializes in voyages in the Arctic and Antarctica. It was allowed to resume its 10-night voyage that departed Longyearbyen on Friday after an inspection and investigation in Ny-Ålesund by the governor's office.

"Quark Expeditions is doing everything possible to assist those involved and the local authorities during this difficult time," the company wrote in a prepared statement expressing regret for the accident.

The incident is the second death of a passenger in a sightseeing boat near a glacier during the past year.

A French woman in her 40s was killed last

August when ice from a calving glacier hit the zodiac she was in near Esmarkbreen about 40 kilometers west of Longyearbyen. The governor's office declined to press criminal charges against the tour company and its guides, stating it appears the boat was more than the advised minimum of 60 to 80 meters from the glacier. The parents of the woman are challenging the decision with Troms and Finnmark public prosecutors.

The most recent similar incident of significance before that fatality occurred in August of 2007 when 23 British tourists were injured, eight seriously, when the Russian captain of an Oceanwide Expeditions cruise ship navigated the vessel too close to an iceberg in Hornsund. A lengthy search for the captain was unsuccessful, but Oceanwide was fined 300,000 kroner. In addition, Discover The World, a British tour operator chartering the vessel, paid an undisclosed settlement to 16 passengers who filed a lawsuit against the company.

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

What's up

June 19

6 p.m.: Movie: "After Earth," U.S. action/sci-fi, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

June 22

6 p.m.: Summer solstice beach party, bonfire and barbecue. Svalbard Sailing Club.

June 23

11 a.m.: Mass. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Man of Steel," Canadian/U.S. action/adventure, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

June 25

7 p.m.: Evening Mass and social gathering. Svalbard Church.

June 30

11 a.m.: Mass by visiting priest Ragnar Aase. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "I De Beste Hjem," French drama/comedy, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

July 2

7 p.m.: Evening Mass and social gathering. Svalbard Church.

July 7

8 p.m.: Movie: "The Lone Ranger," U.S. action/adventure, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

July 9

7 p.m.: Evening Mass and social gathering. Svalbard Church.

July 14

11 a.m.: Mass. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "The Internship," U.S. comedy, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

July 16

7 p.m.: Evening Mass and social gathering. Svalbard Church.

July 21

11 a.m.: Mass. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "World War Z," U.S. action/drama, no age limit specified. 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:

- *Norway Parliament OKs Barents drilling*
- *World Bank notes climate-poverty link*
- *For Arctic birds, time has no meaning*
- *UFO, ancient pyramids found in Antarctic*