



# Change at the top?

*Election likely means new leadership, but Svalbard impact uncertain*

By **MARK SABBATINI**  
Editor

How much will Norway's new conservative leadership affect Svalbard? To quote Longyearbyen's two main opposing leaders: not much and not sure.

It's a near certainty – 95 percent, according to perhaps the world's best forecaster – Norwegians will oust Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg's Labor-led government in the Sept. 9 parliamentary election. Norway consistently ranks among the world's happiest and most prosperous countries, but Labor's eight-year reign has allowed voters to find plenty of faults and they see Conservative Erna Solberg as the solution.

**Decision time:** Last day for early voting in Svalbard is Monday, Sept. 2. Local polls will be open Saturday from noon to 2 p.m.

The four center-right parties led by Solberg are highlighting typical conservative issues such as lower taxes, less business regulation and greater personal freedom/responsibility. But it's hardly the right-wing agenda of some countries, as they also call climate change "the greatest single challenge facing the global community" and see immigration as a positive influence on the workforce.

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MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Liberal Party members Oddmund Rønning, left, and Ingrid Vinje, right, discuss their campaign flier with Non-Partisan Party member Lene Villumsen outside Lompensenteret on Saturday.



WIKICOMMONS

A cruise ship docks in Ny-Ålesund, where new regulations are causing a big drop in visitors this summer.

## Sinking prospects

*Ny-Ålesund sees big drop in cruise ship visitors due to new rules; may get worse next year*

By **MARK SABBATINI**  
Editor

Ny-Ålesund received nearly 40 percent fewer cruise ship visitors this summer than in 2012, apparently due to new regulations mandating an on-board pilot with Arctic experience and imposing a future ban on heavy oil.

"Last year nearly 40,000 tourists visited,

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## Behold: 'Animal tragedy porn'

*Media lapdogs obediently report Svalbard polar bear starved due to climate change, skeptics say*

By **MARK SABBATINI**  
Editor

Yup, us lamestream media types are absolutely giddy about the opportunity to put pictures like this on the front page.

It's not topless girls on page three, but the gruesome image of this starved polar bear is yet another chance to trumpet elitist propaganda about the tragic impacts of climate change.

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ASHLEY COOPER / GLOBAL WARMING IMAGES

A male polar bear that apparently starved to death due to a lack of traditional food sources is discovered by researchers in July.

## Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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## Copyright stuff

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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.

## Say, your workout routine is just fabulous



PAUL GOLDSTEIN / EXODUS

A female polar bear goes through what appears to be an aerobics workout on an ice floe in Svalbard in late July. Photographer Paul Goldstein captured the bear on film during a cruise, explaining in a blog post that "this female was trying to pinch a seal kill from a larger male bear who, understandably was not giving up his spoils ... She spent a few minutes stretching and grooming which appeared very much like an early morning exercise class."

## Icesheet

### Random bits of the week's weirdness:

We're back after a three-week hiatus to bury all traces of our past, an apparently successful venture since there appear to be no arrest warrants for us in any Western countries. But, wow, are we feeling guilty about all the happenings we missed and don't have enough space to catch up with. So we're going for short and plentiful in this week's rants, beginning with **another record prize for the governor's annual trash lottery. A total of 155 cubic meters of debris was cleared from the north Spitsbergen coast** by 22 volunteers in late July and early August, one cubic meter more than in 2009. Nearly all of the volunteers were selected in a drawing that has been enormously popular since Svalbard's governor started it more than a decade ago, although a couple of slots were sold at an auction for up to 7,000 kroner ... Since we're obeying our Oppressive Overlords by splashing "polar bear starves due to global warming" propaganda across our front page, we figured we might as well show another "death porn" shot from Svalbard making the rounds. **Polar bears have**



SYSSELMANNEN

**Who let her have the camera?** This is the kind of "scenic" Svalbard trip photo you get when the head of Longyearbyen's trash facility tags along.

**apparently been feeding for a year off a submerged whale carcass spotted during a voyage from Iceland to Svalbard.** The photo by "buen viaje" got more than 9,500 "upvotes" from Redit users when it was posted Aug. 15 ... Failure is another popular theme this week as *National Geographic's* feature on "famous famous expeditions and their silver linings" is getting plenty of linkage. **It leads with Salomon August Andrée and two colleagues crashing and dying while trying to reach the North Pole from Svalbard in 1897.** Apparently the silver lining was discovering their bodies and diaries 33 years later, revealing they'd died after a futile three-month trek south ... Still, Arctic expeditions have improved to the point you can engage in Skype sex and see art galleries made of ice on the way to the Pole. So we're not surprised to see **Svalbard listed among Lonely Planet's greatest travel experiences in its 40 years of worldwide wandering.** Photographer Philip Lee Harvey wrote that while he suffered greatly in a winter blizzard while snowmobiling to the *Noorderlicht*, "I almost didn't want to get close to it because it was so perfect in its environment. It was exactly how I imagined it to be. Travel experiences are rarely like that."



ANONYMOUS / FLICKR

**Desperate enough to eat year-old sashimi:** Without many places left to dine, polar bears devoured every last morsel of this whale buffet.

## Rock group on summer tour, Svalbard style



ANNE HORMES / UNIS

A student examines a sandstone boulder on southwest Bjørnøya as part of a project to determine summer temperatures on the island for the past 2,000 years. Details about the project led by Anne Hormes, an associate professor at The University Centre in Svalbard, are at [tinyurl.com/p2upcoz](http://tinyurl.com/p2upcoz).

## Mainland issues dominate election

### VOTE, from page 1

The Conservative Party's official manifesto pledges to "ensure a strong Norwegian presence and assertion of sovereignty in the High North and on Svalbard." Part of that presence includes continuing coal mining "until this can be replaced by other industries."

That differs little from Labor's approach and local leaders predict other issues, such as support for a new power plant, will maintain the status quo. They also agree Svalbard has not been the subject of much discussion among national candidates, but disagree on what that may potentially mean for the area.

"I don't believe that there will be a big difference between the governments," said Geir Hekne, group leader for Svalbard's Conservative Party. While mainland issues are the dominant focus of candidates – and many Svalbard residents who give first priority to their home municipalities – "I don't think we are forgotten in the north."

The lack of discussion make the impact of a change in leadership hard to predict, said Christin Kristoffersen, Longyearbyen's mayor and leader of the local Labor Party. But she expressed concern about a Conservative-led coalition giving too much priority to economic development over environmental protection.

"I want the commerce as well, but I want it to be a part of a viable whole," she said.

Kristoffersen also said she's concerned a

conservative coalition will take a more aggressive approach on Norwegian sovereignty in Svalbard that could threaten relationships with other countries. Cooperation is generally being voiced publicly by leaders of nations with Arctic interests, but underlying and sometimes bitter disputes persist on numerous issues, with Russia in particular asserting Norway is exercising excessive and discriminatory authority in the archipelago.

As with other issues, Hekne said he doesn't anticipate a change in approach to foreign nations in the Arctic with new leadership. He also said he doesn't expect the coalition's pledge of lower taxes will result in a lower allocation of funds to Svalbard.

Nate Silver, a statistician who gained fame last year by correctly predicting all 50 states in last year's U.S. presidential election, said Tuesday that Solberg's coalition has a more than 95 percent chance of winning the election.

There are seven political parties with seats in Parliament and 14 parties without who are participating in this year's election. Votes in Longyearbyen can be cast until Sept. 2 at the municipal building, which will be open an extra day on Saturday from noon to 2 p.m. Official details about the election, candidates and voter eligibility are available in English at [tinyurl.com/ol7whs7](http://tinyurl.com/ol7whs7).

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**

## HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

### Fruene to expand into space vacated by Classic Pizza

Fruene will expand this fall into the space grudgingly being vacated by Classic Pizza at the end of August, with cafe planning to expand its chocolatier and souvenir offerings. The lease for the pizza restaurant in Lompensenteret is being terminated as of Oct. 1, to the dismay of owner Sam Ziaei who says he's being pushed out for Fruene's expansion. Fruene owner Tove Eide said she was not actively seeing the expansion, instead accepting it when it was offered by the shopping center's management. "We have always understood that Classic Pizza even wanted to move, so we chose to accept the offer," she said. "I find it disgusting that people would think that we have tried to get Sam out. That we would certainly not do."

### Full-time veterinarian comes to Svalbard after long effort

A lengthy battle to get a full-time veterinarian in Svalbard finally succeeded this month as Astrid Vaag Vikaune, 36, arrived and is already busy treating patients. "I've given some vaccines and seen a dog that had a little fight," she said. "The rumor that there is now a vet here is swift." Local residents have attempted for years to convince government officials to fund a full-time veterinarian, citing the high number of sled dogs, but their efforts gained new urgency in May due to new EU disease regulations that made transporting dogs to the mainland difficult. Vikaune moved to Longyearbyen because her partner, Christopher Engås, accepted a job as a reporter at *Svalbardposten*. But concerns remain about finding a suitable treatment facility and if there is enough work to support a full-time vet.

### New Svalbardposten editor, Eirik Palm, to begin in Oct.

Eirik Palm, 47, executive editor of *Finnmark Dagblad*, has been named the new editor of *Svalbardposten*. The Hammerfest resident, who has also worked for NRK, is scheduled to arrive in October. His appointment is for two years, with the possibility of two extensions of one year. Palm will replace Birger Amundsen, who has been the newspaper's editor for the past eight years.

## Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Rain. SE winds to 25 km/h. High 11C (8C wind chill), low 9C (7C wind chill).	Rain. N winds to 29 km/h. High 9C (6C wind chill), low 5C (3C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. N winds to 22 km/h. High 6C (2C wind chill), low 4C (1C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. Variable winds to 15 km/h. High 4C (1C wind chill), low 2C (0C wind chill).
Sunrise: 2:46a, sunset: 10:58p	Sunrise: 3:01a, sunset: 10:45p	Sunrise: 3:14a, sunset: 10:32p	Sunrise: 3:26a, sunset: 10:20p
<b>Extended forecast:</b> Sunday, p. cloudy, 5C (2C), 3C (1C), light 18:32h; Monday, p. cloudy, 5C (3C), 3C (1C), light 18:11h; Tuesday, cloudy, 7C (3C), 3C (-1C), light 17:50h; Wednesday, cloudy, 7C (2C), 4C (-1C), light 17:31h			

Data provided by [storm.no](http://storm.no)

## Lose the trash lottery? Here's another chance



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A pile of debris awaits cleanup at Fuglefjella, where Svalbard's governor plans to take 15 to 20 volunteers on Sept. 14. Such material is presenting a danger to reindeer and other wildlife who are getting snagged or otherwise trapped. Locals interesting in participating are asked to contact the governor's office at [miljo@syssemmannen.no](mailto:miljo@syssemmannen.no). The cleanup is expected to last from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

## Skeptics: Bear's death a 'photo-op'

### STARVATION, from page 1

An "expert" scientist says the 16-year-old male found in Svalbard died due to a lack of sea ice on which to hunt seals.

"From his lying position in death the bear appears to simply have starved and died where he dropped," said Ian Stirling, a researcher with Polar Bears International who has studied the bears for nearly 40 years, in an interview with *The Guardian*. "He had no external suggestion of any remaining fat, having been reduced to little more than skin and bone."

The bear was examined and deemed healthy in April by Norwegian Polar Institute scientists. Seen in the southern part of Spitsbergen at the time, its carcass was discovered 250 kilometers away in the northern part of the island, suggesting an unusual trek from an area it had roamed for several years.

But widespread coverage with headlines such as "This is What Global Warming Looks Like" were quickly followed by a barrage of articles from outraged skeptics. They argued the researchers weren't just wrong, they were deliberately using the tragedy of the bear's death to promote false propaganda supporting the dubious evidence of climate change.

"I suggest this is what really happened: the polar bear biologists working in Svalbard earlier this year knew this bear was going to die back in April when they captured him — they simply waited, with a photographer on hand, until he died," wrote Susan Crockford, a zoologist with more than 35 years experience, at her blog [polarbearsience.com](http://polarbearsience.com). "It was an orchestrated photo-op."

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**

## New rules driving cruise ships away

### REGULATIONS, from page 1

all cruise ships," said Ole Øiseth, director of Kings Bay AS, the facilitator of the international research community, in an interview with *Nordlys*. "This year we barely had 25,000 visit. Revenues from port dues and souvenir sales fell by about two million kroner."

While there's mixed feelings among residents in Ny-Ålesund about cruise ship visitors, they undeniably provide revenue critical to support projects even if they can be disruptive. Without that revenue, researchers may be forced to pay higher costs if other funding can't be found.

The pilot mandate for ships 150 meters or longer, which some cruise officials said caught them by surprise, took effect this year. One cruise ship reported paying 200,000 kroner to

comply, according to *Nordlys*.

In addition, some cruise lines are redirecting their routes in anticipation of a ban on heavy oil in Svalbard that will go into effect in 2015, Øiseth said.

Longyearbyen saw a slight decrease in cruise ships this summer, but the 54,000 total passengers were a six percent increase compared to 2012, according to Harbormaster Kjetil Bråten.

But Terje Aunevik, administrative director of Pole Position, which provides logistical assistance for shipping companies, told *Nordlys* he's concerned the new regulations will drive larger cruise ships to other Arctic areas such as Iceland, Greenland and Canada.

**There's more! Visit [www.icepeople.net](http://www.icepeople.net) for the complete story.**

## What's up

### Aug. 28

6 p.m.: Movie: "Monsters University" (3D), U.S. animated dubbed in Norwegian, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

### Sept. 1

11 a.m.: Mass w/baptism and communion. Svalbard Church.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Monsters University" (3D), U.S. animated dubbed in Norwegian, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Kys Meg for Faen i Helvete," Norwegian drama/comedy/romance, all ages. Kulturhuset.

### Sept. 2

8 p.m.: Trivia quiz. Barentz Pub.

### Sept. 3

7 p.m.: Municipal Council meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

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

### Sept. 4

5 p.m.: Polargospel practice begins, led by Espen Rotevatn and Marlene Mellum. Svalbard Church.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Kick-Ass 2," U.S. action/comedy, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

### Sept. 5

6 p.m.: Incriptions of confirmations. Remember to bring birth certificates. Parents invited. Svalbard Church.

### Sept. 7

Noon: Quadrathlon, featuring 6K run, 5K kayak, 13K bicycling and target shooting. Teams of up to three persons permitted. Registration at [svalbardseilforening.com](http://svalbardseilforening.com). Races begins at Svalbard Sailing Club.

### Sept. 8

6 p.m.: Movie: "Grown Ups 2," U.S. comedy, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Oh Boy," German drama/comedy, all ages. Kulturhuset.

### Sept. 9

8 p.m.: Trivia quiz. Barentz Pub.

## 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:

- *Has global warming hit a plateau?*
- *Canada tests \$620K 'stealth' snowmobile*
- *Greenpeace defies Russia, gets boarded*
- *How Arctic frogs survive freezing alive*