



# Business drops 27% in 2009

*Coal market collapse takes big bite out of Svalbard's economy; many other industries also down*

Revenue for Svalbard businesses declined from 5.5 billion kroner in 2008 to less than 4 billion in 2009, in large part because of a drop of more than 40 percent in the coal market,

Statistics Norway reported this week.

The overall decline of 27 percent also includes reductions "in most other industries, most prominently in the construction business, industry and education," the report states.

A few industries including transportation, storage, and cultural and leisure activities saw revenues rise last year, the agency reports.

Tourism overall, however, experienced a slight decline "despite the increase in the number of firms in the industry."

The number of all businesses in Svalbard increased to 190, compared to 172 in 2008, according to the report.

Store Norske's coal production in 2009 was

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Anne Gellein, right, new principal at Longyearbyen School, discusses education plans Aug. 27 with Assistant Principal Kirsten Gullberg.

## New principal gets schooled

*Lots of differences, lots of opportunities, says longtime educator*

One of Anne Gellein's first lessons as the new principal of Longyearbyen School is the concept of guns and student safety is rather different from her 30 years elsewhere.

"Those of us who are new here have to learn how to handle guns and to shoot," she said. A collection of firearms is at the school

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## Change is in the air – and seas

*Svalbard's ecosystem facing major transformation; part of global 'extinction-level event?'*

Major changes are on Earth's horizon. The mystery is what will be around to see them.

An assessment with the ominous phrase "extinction-level event" – the same thing that wiped out the dinosaurs – is part of a just-published comprehensive study of the planet's fossils. Some participants argue climate change is causing the planet to enter a new "geologic epoch" marked by significant shifts in temperatures, ocean chemistry, erosion, and mass biological changes and die-offs in plant and animal species.

Meanwhile, Svalbard researchers issuing their own concerns about the area's ecosystem in a separate study say warming is happening faster here than almost anywhere.

What both groups are uncertain about is

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## Svalbard's Web gets less tangled

*New tourism site features more extensive visual tours, plus booking of lodging and accommodations*

It still can't let you practice dogsledding or fending off those 3,000 polar bears, but virtual tourism in Svalbard took a step closer to reality this week.

An overhaul of the Web site hosted by Svalbard Tourism (www.svalbard.net) features a greater emphasis on pictures, a splashier interactive layout and – more substantially – the ability to comparison shop and book lodging as well as tour activities. Unni Myklevoll, the agency's tourism manager, said the overhaul has been in the works for six months.

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The homepage of the new Svalbard Tourism Web site, which debuts this week.

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

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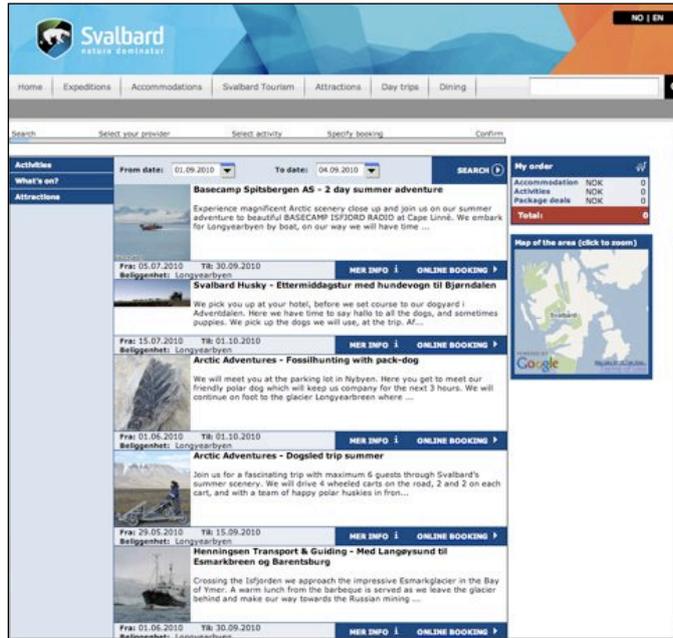
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## Corrections policy

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.



An option allowing travelers to book rooms as well as tours online, comparing prices and features of each, is among the changes appearing this week at the Svalbard.net Web site hosted by Svalbard Tourism. Visuals and user interactivity are emphasized on the page designed by Massive Rhino, a company in Trondheim. Officials with Svalbard Tourism will be able to update and add content locally, with more photos and additional business listings among the updates planned in the near future.

## Virtual tourism gets more lifelike

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"We are going to do cosmetic changes and development continuously," she said. "This is the first launch."

The site, in Norwegian and English, replaces thumbnail photos on its front page with a full-screen slideshow of images. The previous site allowed tour bookings, but not accommodations.

Larger images and less text are also featured in listings for restaurants, galleries, festivals

and other diversions. Icons for the agency's Facebook, YouTube and Twitter links are displayed on all pages.

Businesses not featured at the revamped site, such as Mary-Ann's Polarrigg, will be added once missing items such as photos are provided, Myklevoll said. No bookings are offered now for tourist facilities in Svalbard's Russian settlements, but that may also change.

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

## Briefly

### Qadration race Saturday at Svalbard Sailing Club

This year's Qadration begins at 11 a.m. Saturday at the Svalbard Sailing Club, with registration starting at 10 a.m.

The race combines a 5.8-km run, 5-km kayak, 13.1-km bicycle and target shoot into a relay which can be completed by a team of up to three people (the same person bicycling to the shooting range). There is a 15-minute break between each exercise except shooting.

The cost is \$100, with kayaks, dry suits and other equipment available from the sailing club for those arriving in sufficient time. Registration and additional information is available at [Kjetilslettne@hotmail.com](mailto:Kjetilslettne@hotmail.com) and on the Web at [svalbardseilforening.com](http://svalbardseilforening.com).

### Norway welcomes China in new Arctic ventures

China can make a valuable contribution in the Arctic region, Norway's Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre said in a speech at the China Institute of International of International Studies Forum in Beijing this week.

"The Arctic's merits are receiving increasing attention from many states for ecological, economical and geopolitical reasons," Støre said.

The Chinese icebreaker *Zuelong* is sailing in the Arctic in what is so far China's longest scientific expedition in the north, *Beijing Review* reports. Also this week the first-ever shipment of iron-ore from Norway to China via the Northern Sea Route is occurring.

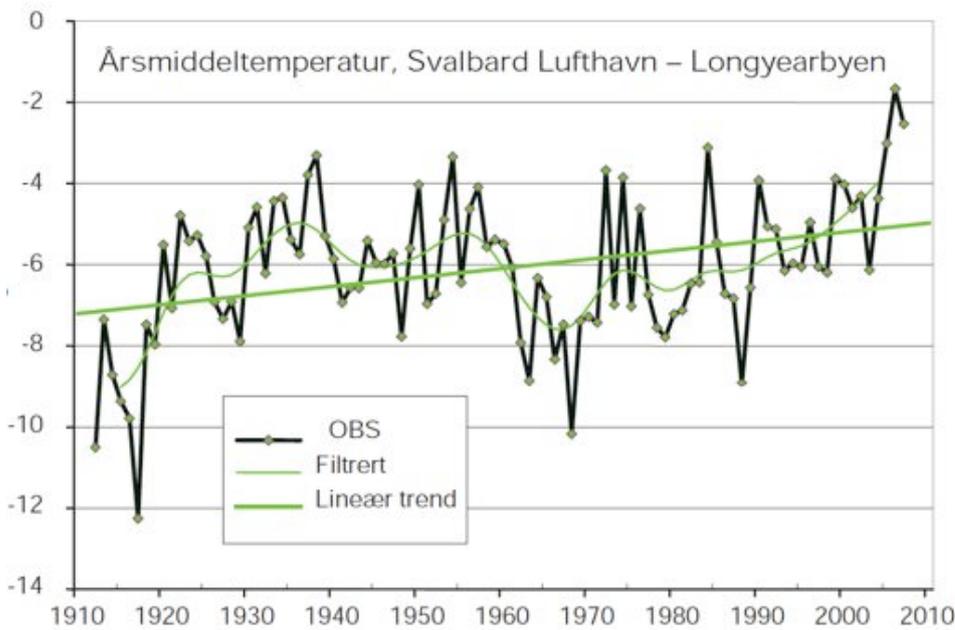
But some in China may still need to learn a bit more about the area, since the *Review* also states "Svalbard, a 3.5-hour drive south from Oslo, is the northernmost polar research station in Norway."

### Russian resumes grain exports to Svalbard

Russia's government has partially lifted a grain export ban resulting from its worst drought in 130 years, with locations now receiving grain including its ships and settlements in Svalbard.

The exports are permitted under international contracts signed by the Russian Federation and as humanitarian aid, the RIA Novosti news agency reported, citing a government regulation dated Aug. 30.

According to the report, the regulation permits grain and flour exports for purposes such as feeding feed Russian's military, diplomatic, consular and other missions abroad. Grain can also be exported for rescue operations and as humanitarian aid abroad.



Observed mean annual temperatures at Svalbard Airport during the past 100 years are shown in this chart as part of a report by the Norwegian Polar Institute assessing threats to the area's ecosystem due to climate change. Also shown are smoothing variations in 10-year increments (thin green line) and the linear trend (bold green line).

## Extinction warning part of climate study

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specific changes that might occur and which species will be most affected.

"The main implication is that we're really rolling the dice," said John Alroy, a paleobiologist at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia. "We don't know which groups will suffer the most, which groups will rebound the most quickly, or which ones will end up with higher or lower long-term equilibrium diversity levels."

What seems certain is the fate of each animal group will differ greatly, Alroy said, according to the interview by *Live Science*.

Alroy's analysis, detailed in the Sept. 3 issue of the journal *Science*, is based on almost 100,000 fossil collections in the Paleobiology Database (PaleoDB). It finds species today are going extinct at a rate that may range from 10 to 100 times the so-called background extinction rate – potentially changing the face of the planet and its species beyond what humans can predict.

Similarly, Svalbard is experiencing changes differing significantly from the historical norm, as well as other regions on Earth, according to the Norwegian Polar Institute. Among the most noteworthy is temperatures in the archipelago

rose 0.22 degrees Celsius per decade from 1912 to 2007.

"The increase is nearly three times as large as the long-term trend for global mean temperature," the NPI report states. "The change is also large in comparison to the Norwegian mainland regions where long-term trends in increase in annual mean temperature is measured at between 0.05 and 0.12°C per decade."

Major changes in Svalbard's ecosystem are expected, but it's too soon to offer specifics, according to the NPI researchers who studied multiple climate indicators.

"We can see a distinct increase in sea water temperatures, both in ocean currents west of Spitsbergen as well as in the Fram Strait," said John Richard Hansen, the study's editor, in an interview provided by the Svalbard Science Forum. "Sea ice extent and thickness have been reduced. Trends in air temperature and precipitation show clear changes. Air temperatures have been rising gradually and most pronounced during the last years.

Average temperatures beyond latitude 60 degrees north were warmest in 2003, 2005 and 2007, according to the study.

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

## HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

### Fuel tank dispute threatens to halt Ny-Ålesund activities

A dispute between Kings Bay and Esso Norge this summer is resulting in threats to remove the fuel tanks in Ny-Ålesund, which officials say will halt all activity at the settlement. The dispute is about an order from Norway's air and pollution agency ordering Esso to properly secure its tanks against leaks. The deadline for the order, given as early as last fall, is Oct. 30. Esso, estimating the cost at 1.5 million kroner, proposed Kings Bay take over the system for a payment that ultimately reached 500,000 kroner. Kings Bay, which owns the Ny-Ålesund station, is asking 3.5 million kroner, with a company official noting the two main tanks are in poor condition. Esso has stated it will remove the tank facility if an agreement is not reached by Oct. 30. The companies in recent days have stated an agreement may be pending, but nothing had been signed at press time.

### Group fined 10,000 kroner for fire that destroyed cabin

This year's British School expedition has been fined 10,000 kroner for causing a fire that destroyed a 90-year-old cabin in Brucebyen earlier this month, according to the Svalbard governor's office. The fire was caused by hot ashes left in a storage box on the porch when the group departed after spending the night. Wind stirred up the ashes, igniting the blaze about two hours later. The cabin was destroyed when reached by rescuers, who focused on protecting three other structures at the site.

### Lingering polar bear chased by officials from Hiorthhamn

A polar bear lingering at Hiorthhamn was chased away today by environmental officials with the Svalbard governor's office. Officials observed the bear Monday as it was about to eat a walrus carcass, keeping it under surveillance throughout the day. Several boaters traveled to the area, which Chief Officer Sidsel Svarstad said was unfortunate since "it is not allowed to actively seek out the bear and disturb it."

## Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cloudy, light snow midday. W winds at 4 km/h. High 1C (1C wind chill), low -3C (-3C wind chill).	Variable cloudiness. WSW winds at 3 km/h. High 1C (1C wind chill), low -3C (-3C wind chill).	Mixed rain and sleet. NW winds at 3 km/h. High 2C (2C wind chill), low 0C (0C wind chill).	Cloudy. NE winds at 2 km/h. High 0C (0C wind chill), low -1C (-1C wind chill).
<b>Extended forecast:</b> Sunday, cloudy with snow possible, -1C (-1C), -3C (-3C); Monday, variable cloudiness, -2C (-2C), -4C (-4C); Tuesday, cloudy, -2C (-2C), -4C (-4C); Wednesday, cloudy, -2C (-2C), -4C (-4C).			

Data provided by yr.no



Longyearbyen School students skin a reindeer during an Aug. 25 hunting trip near Vestpynten with teachers as part of the first week of classes. The meat from two reindeer killed by a guide during the excursion will be made into soup sold this fall as part of a charity fundraiser. Photo by Anne Gellein.

## New principal hunts fresh ideas

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and "the teachers bring the guns outside when we are with the children."

Protecting youths against polar bears is just one of the extra hazards instructors must pay attention to even during recess. Cold, constant dark and other unique conditions mean there's an unusually high ratio of one teacher for every eight students.

There's also the instructional differences such as a wider range of student ages, a narrower available curriculum of classes and a lack of principals at other local schools to share ideas with. But Gellein said it all fits her goal of seeking a new direction in her lifetime in education.

"These past two years I've been looking for new jobs, new challenges," she said. An appealing option was teaching Norwegian in another country, but "for many of those jobs you need to be fluent in another language and I don't think I'm good enough to apply for those positions."

Gellein grew up in Trondheim and worked in schools throughout Norway, with Norwegian and social science her main teaching subjects. She also has master's degree in arts and crafts.

Becoming an administrator rather than a teacher was motivated by a desire to help the

overall direction of schools, Gellein said.

"After two decades in schools you learn a lot about school management," she said. "You have chances to change and bring new things to the teachers and students."

Among the areas she said she emphasized were bringing schools together for cultural projects and performances, and placing greater emphasis on out-of-classroom activities.

Gellein got her own lesson in the latter during the first week of classes at Longyearbyen School as 90 students, "a lot of teachers and four hunters" took part in her first reindeer hunting trip.

"It's a tradition," she said. "They've been doing this for ages."

The group spotted seven reindeer near Vestpynten, with two of them shot by one of the hunters. Students were then divided into two groups, learning how to skin and butcher the animals before bringing the results of their labors back to the school.

The reindeers' heart, kidneys, lungs, livers will be used in biology class. The meat (minus some of the best parts reserved for a students' cookout) will be made into soup this fall as part of a charity fundraiser benefitting the Norwegian Refugee Council.

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

## Mining struggles lead decline in business

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2.6 million tons, down from 3.4 million in 2008. Furthermore, the global recession meant a sharp drop in prices and demand.

"Coal prices were below US\$60 per ton several times in 2009," Statistics Norway notes. "In 2008, the coal price was US\$175 per ton."

Mining continues to be Svalbard's leading

full-time employer, but the number of positions dropped about 10 percent in 2009, with the 1,495 "person-years" representing 26 percent of Svalbard's total. Tourism and construction represented nine percent and 11 percent, respectively. Public administration employment increased eight percent with 340 person-years.

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

## What's up

### Sept. 4

11 a.m.: Qadrathon race combining running, kayaking, bicycling and target shooting. Begins at Svalbard Sailing Club. Registration starts at 10 a.m.

### Sept. 5

6 p.m.: Movie: "Shrek – Happily Ever After," U.S. animated film with Norwegian subtitles, no age limit. Huset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Killers," U.S. action/comedy, ages 15 and up. Huset.

### Sept. 6

5 p.m.: Svalbard Turn's 80th anniversary celebration. Sports competitions, gymnastics exhibition and other events. Svalbardhallen.

### Sept. 7

10 a.m.: Administration Committee meeting. Næringsbygget 1, Tundra room.

5 p.m.: Exhibition: Photos by Knut Lindvig. Spitsbergen Hotel. Remains on display until Sept. 12.

### Sept. 13

10:15 a.m.: Environment and Industry Committee meeting. Næringsbygget 1, Tundra room.

### Sept. 15

8 p.m.: Meeting to discuss opening of cultural center. Næringsbygget 2, Smutthullet room.

### Sept. 16

2 p.m.: Board for Culture and Leisure Business Authority meeting. Næringsbygget 1, Tundra room.

6 p.m.: Board of City Operation Authority meeting. Næringsbygget 1, Tundra room.

### Sept. 17

9 a.m.: Control of Growing Enterprises Authority meeting. Næringsbygget 2, Smutthullet room.

### Sept. 21

7 p.m.: Local Board meeting. Lompensenteret, Mediateket.

## What's online

[Icepeople.net](http://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:

- *Polar satellite burns up over Barents Sea*
- *'A little like CSI in the (Svalbard) snow'*
- *Anti-warming leader reverses course*
- *Penguin sweaters make rescue stylish*