



Cruise traffic up 75%

Bigger boats bring biggest bump in passengers to Longyearbyen; hotel stays, flights also trending up

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

So much for that warning from the Brits that the Arctic is too dangerous for cruising.

Longyearbyen had the largest increase percentage-wise in passengers of all ports affiliated with Cruise Northern Norway and Svalbard. Their estimate of 38,500 travelers aboard 42 ships is 75 percent more than 2011.

"This increase comes as a result of the fact that Norway is a very attractive destination, and the passengers who choose cruises to the northernmost parts of Europe want beautiful nature and safe ports," said Erik Joachimsen, managing director of the agency, in a prepared statement Friday.

That's the opposite of the experience portrayed by the British government, which this spring issued an unprecedented travel alert stating cruises in the remote Arctic should be avoided because of the natural dangers and insufficient facilities for quick rescues.

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MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Aggie Peterson, left, and Per Martinsen perform Pyramiden's first concert in 14 years Saturday in the theater of the abandoned Russian mining town. Peterson said her grandparents' work in the settlement decades ago, plus a "ghost radio" broadcast sent to her, motivated her visit.

Ghosts alive

Pyramiden's first concert in 14 years electrifies abandoned town

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

Aggie Peterson kept the crowd on its feet throughout the historic concert. By necessity, that is, to keep from stirring up the "spirits" of the world's northernmost ghost town.

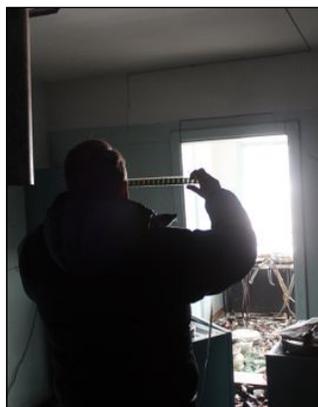
"We request you please don't sit in the seats," a tour guide told about 130 people entering the rustic theater in Pyramiden, where the last gig was 14 years ago. The primitive wooden seats, still comparatively sturdy in an

Sounding clueless; Good luck figuring out what sounds from Pyramiden are 'instruments' in band's new album.

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abandoned mining town where much is in ruins, were covered with plastic to keep away what might be called a life-choking presence: years of accumulated dust.

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MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

A tourist, at left, captures the abandoned Russian mining town of Pyramiden as seen from outside the theater. At right, a visitor examines a discarded movie filmstrip in the theater's projection room.

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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.

Watching in a winter waterland



ALFRED-WEGENER INSTITUTE FOR POLAR AND MARINE RESEARCH

A camera 12 meters under the old pier at the research center in Ny-Ålesund captures images of the marine life every 10 minutes as part of a new underwater observatory that also provides data such as temperature and salinity. Researchers at the station told NRK the observatory will provide their first year-round look at such data, since most are only there for a short time during the summer. Winter ice also means scientists know much less about marine life in the area than other types. Data from the observatory is available at www.hzg.de/institute/coastal_research/cosyna/033397/index_0033397.html.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Major hat tip to The Local Paper of Jesters this week for exposing a wealth of wackiness. First, **be sure to check out the brief on the opposite page by Anders Fjellestad about the secretly buried statue that's supposed to protect us from global warming.** We especially like the "why the hell does a Chinese Buddhist go up to Longyearbyen to bury a religious statue?" query (snipped from our brief for space reasons), a most anti-MSM approach to paragraph transitions ... The haven for pure folly, however, belongs to glamorous gossip-monger Line Ylvisåker, who follows **the misadventures of two Spanish men who slept on the second floor of the post office building, found themselves locked off from their belongings after a daytime excursion and then got busted by police for trying to break in.** Call it the classic vagabond tourists' dilemma, as real hotel rooms cost at least 900 kroner and "they thought it was expensive and chose to spend the money on other things, such as going to a bar" ... While we're on enormously intoxicating subjects, **the stem on the gigantic "champagne glass" on Operafjellet finally broke Aug. 31, more than a month later than recent years.** More than 300 people submitted guesses for the melt-through date (including some guessing "none"), but the only correct prediction was made by Kjell-Hugo Kåven of Alta, who wins a free engraved shot-glass from the newspaper ... Mother Nature's extended sobriety is just another contribution to The Year of Freaky Weather since, while temperatures have been above normal, the sun that so ably melts that mountain snow has been almost totally absent. In fact, **there was just one full day of sun (the 18th) in August,** ac-

ording to those responsible for All The News That's Pit To Frint ... Alas, those of you enjoying actual journalism from Svalbard (with a dose of unintentional hilarity if filtered through Google Translate) are about to join the sun's descent into perpetual darkness as **Svalbard-posten is going to a paywall and ePaper system as of Sept. 14.** The ePapers are available in computer, smart phone and tablet formats, but can't be downloaded or printed, and will only be accessible online for a limited time. We'll be providing the awful details in the near future (leaving out our opinions about why this sucks in so many ways, of course) ... We obviously had Pyramiden on the brain this week, so here's a couple of leftovers we had to demote to the gossip section. First, which we couldn't adequately confirm, is **a Frenchman is apparently collecting video and other material from the Russian ghost town for a video game.** Second, the settlement now has something in common with places like Kolmanskop (in Namibia), Kayaköy (Turkey), and St. Elmo (USA). We'll pause for a sentence to let the know-it-alls take a guess (a.k.a. Google it). They're among the "Top 10 Deserted Towns," according to www.top10listing.net. Pyramiden ranks number seven, with the site noting...hey, wait a minute. Is this sounding familiar (or did cheaters get a different answer online)? **Hmmm, it seems these are the same towns National Geographic put on its "Top 10 Ghost Towns" last year. Top10Listing doesn't provide any reference or credit to the magazine,** but surely this can't be another plagiarism scandal. After all, Top10 does use some completely different words in their short descriptions, even if the overall impressions are hauntingly similar.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Audience members capture the light and photo show accompanying Aggie Peterson's concert Saturday in the theater at Pyramiden. Most listeners wore coats to ward off the chill and remained standing for the 45-minute performance to avoid stirring up dust from the long-unused seats.

Concert brings Pyramiden alive

GHOST, from page 1

The 45-minute concert was anything but haunting, however, as the rock/electronica music by Peterson and Per Martinsen, who comprise the duo Frost, was lavishly illuminated with a light and video show backdrop. But the necessity of keeping the crowd on its feet became clear while spending two days in the ancient theater preparing for and rehearsing the show.

"It stirred up a lot of dust that made it hard to breathe when I was trying to sing," Peterson said.

There was also the chilly air that had most listeners wearing heavy coats while Peterson occupied the spotlight in high heels and an oc-

casional mask. But "you don't think about that while you're on stage," she said.

The concert was part of a daylong cultural tour of Pyramiden, which also featured an exhibition of images of life in the settlement from when Peterson's grandparents worked there beginning in the 1950s. Peterson said their work, plus a tape she received from a Russian man of a "ghost radio" broadcast apparently from the town, motivated her to organize the event.

Those influences are also a strong influence in Frost's new album, "Radiomagnetic," scheduled for release Sept. 17. Audio and video previews are available at frostnorway.com.

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

More cruisers, but only on big ships

BOATLOADS, from page 1

But profits from the increase aren't being evenly shared. It doesn't appear more ships are arriving in Longyearbyen and smaller vessels aren't seeing an increase in passengers, said Frigg Jørgensen, general secretary of the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators.

"The trend, however, is that the ships are constantly getting bigger and taking more passengers," he told NRK.

Also, while cruise travel was up an average of 41 percent at 12 ports in northern Norway, Bodø and Harstad saw decreases of 31 and 12 percent, respectively.

The report continues a trend of rising travel to Svalbard after several troubled years. Air traffic in July, for instance, was up 15.3 percent while hotel stays rose three percent.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM **SVALBARDPOSTEN** VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Buddhist statue buried near Longyearbyen as protection

A Buddhist symbol has been hidden in the mountains near Longyearbyen by Lu Wang, a China native now living in Tromsø, to provide protection against global warming. "The statue interacts with the universe and improves the planet," she said, adding "Global warming is strongest at the Poles. The ice melts and the scenery is affected. I thought if I put the statue in the Arctic it might prevent this situation. Longyearbyen was also the easiest location to get to." She said similar small statues of the sacred symbol of the Buddha Vairocana are at other vulnerable places like Mount Everest, Yellowstone National Park and Mount Fuji.

New Russian newspaper will focus on 'another viewpoint'

A newspaper for Svalbard's Russian community, focusing on issues from their perspective is scheduled to debut this month. *Svalbard's Russian Journal* will be published every other month by Trust Arktikugol, a state-owned company that oversees the settlements of Barentsburg and Pyramiden. It will be edited by Natalia Sjmatova, a Norwegian instructor at the University of Moscow, who last year edited four Russian issues of *Svalbardposten*. "Those who live in Barentsburg are obviously not as interested about what happens in Longyearbyen," said Aleksander P. Veselov, Trust Arktikugol's general director. "Our newspaper will show another viewpoint."

Questions raised as reindeer killed by 'protection' rope

A rope set up by the Svalbard governor's office to protect an ancient site at Colesbukta killed a reindeer that became snagged, prompting criticism from the man who discovered the skeleton last summer. "One can only speculate what would have been the reaction from the governor if there had been individuals that did the same," said Terkel Hansen, revealing his finding after reading about several other animals fatally trapped by ropes and cables recently. Guri Tveito, the governor's environmental chief, said the rope was removed last summer because it was not put up according to normal procedure.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cloudy. NE winds to 11 km/h. High 7C (4C wind chill), low 4C (2C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. NW winds to 11 km/h. High 5C (3C wind chill), low 2C (-1C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. N winds to 15 km/h. High 2C (-4C wind chill), low -1C (-6C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. NE winds to 11 km/h. High 2C (-2C wind chill), low -2C (-6C wind chill).
Sunrise 4:19a; sunset 9:27p	Sunrise 4:28a; sunset 9:17p	Sunrise 4:36a; sunset 9:08p	Sunrise 4:45a; sunset 8:59p
Extended forecast: Sunday, cloudy, 4C (1C), 2C (-1C), light 15:58h; Monday, cloudy, 4C (1C), 2C (0C), light 15:41h; Tuesday, p. cloudy, 2C (-2C), 1C (-4C), light 15:25h; Wednesday, cloudy, 3C (-3C), 1C (-4C), light 15:08h			
Data provided by storm.no			



COURTESY OF EFTERKLANG

A moving collage of photos from *Pyramiden* illustrate the music video for "Apples," one of 10 songs on the album "Piramida" by the Danish indie rock band Efterklang, scheduled for release Sept. 24.

What's making all that noise?

Indie rock album uses sounds from Pyramiden as instruments; good luck guessing what's what

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

Here's an album locals might find themselves playing repeatedly whether they like the music or not.

Certain sounds may be familiar to some, yet even the keenest ears will likely have a ghost of a chance of identifying them. Other than "must be the percussion and some of those synthesizer textures."

The Danish indie rock band Efterklang captured more than 1,000 sounds from the abandoned Russian mining town of Pyrami-

den for their fourth album, "Piramida," scheduled for release Sept. 24. A video and sound samples are now online at <http://efterklang.net>.

A preliminary listen (full review is scheduled Sept. 18) suggests it's engaging middle-of-the-road indie without harsh surprises likely to deter those unfamiliar with the band. Chris Buckle, a reviewer for the Scotland magazine *The Skinny*, calls it "possibly their least straightforwardly enjoyable album," but awards it four out of five stars.

"The result is a sombre and gelid piece at odds with the charm and warmth of past releases," he wrote. "But repeated close listens restart the record's heart, as it shivers off detachment to reveal an exquisite elegance."

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

Briefly

Tribute to longtime artist Anne Mæland in new film

A documentary about Anne Mæland, 80, an artist departing Svalbard after many years, is scheduled to debut with a free screening at 2 p.m. Saturday at Kulturhuset.

"As Long As You Want," a 38-minute film in Norwegian with English subtitles, will be followed by a discussion with Mæland and filmmaker Cecilie Denkinger.

Mæland, who sells traditional dolls and other crafts at Galleri Svalbard and elsewhere in Longyearbyen, talks in the film about her experiences during her long residency here. A preview of the movie is at www.youtube.com/watch?v=cAbKdQ74RGc.



ANNE MÆLAND

Meeting focuses on new plan for east Svalbard

A public meeting to comment on proposed revisions to the management plan for east Svalbard is scheduled at 5 p.m. Sept. 11 at the governor's administration building.

Representatives of the governor and the Norwegian Polar Institute will present the background of the plan and process of drafting the revisions, which are being reviewed until Oct. 10. English-language copies of the draft are available at www.sysselmannen.no/en.

Classical guitar class for adults starts Sept. 11

A classical guitar class for adults taught by acclaimed local performer Liv Mari Schei is scheduled to start at 6 p.m. Sept. 11 in the music room at Longyearbyen School.

The semester-long course is 1,500 kroner. To register or request more information contact stale.hortman@lybskole.no.

Two men in 70s rescued after boat sinks in north

Two British men in their 70s were rescued by helicopter after their sailboat sank today northwest of Raudfjorden, according to the Svalbard governor's office. The men triggered an emergency beacon at 11:05 p.m. and were found drifting on a rubber raft. They were kept overnight at Longyearbyen Hospital.

What's up

Sept. 7

9 a.m.: Board of Youth Enterprises meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

8 p.m.: Movie: "The Bourne Legacy," U.S. action, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

Sept. 8

2 p.m.: Documentary: "As Long As You Want," about Anne Mæland, 80, a longtime Svalbard resident. Discussion afterward. Free admission. Kulturhuset.

9:30 p.m.: Concert by Ila Auto, Grammy-winning rock, folk and country band, with opening by Longyearbyen bluegrass band Blåmyra. Huset.

Sept. 9

6 p.m.: Movie: "Brave" (3D), U.S. fantasy, no age limit determined. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "The Expendables 2," U.S. action/thriller, no age limit determined. Kulturhuset.

Sept. 10

11 a.m.: Environmental and Industrial Committee meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

6:30 p.m.: Pilates (breathing/posture for mountain activities) training course taught by Kathrin Teigum begins. Kulthruhuset. More information at www.fjellpust.no.

Sept. 11

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

5 p.m.: Meeting to discuss East Svalbard Management Plan revisions. Governor's administration building.

Sept. 13

2 p.m.: Board of Leisure and Cultural Enterprises meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

Sept. 15

7:30 p.m.: Performance by the Norwegian National Ballet Company. 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:

- *The scandalous Arctic diamond industry*
- *U.N.: Climate food crisis needs global aid*
- *Moscow police quell Greenpeace protest*
- *Polar bear, wolf vie in presidential race*