



Warming = travel freeze?

Svalbard data: Storms ruining travelers' holiday plans in Europe may be the new normal

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

A predictable sneer from many of the millions of stranded European travelers is some variation of "I suppose this massive snowstorm is another sign of global warming."

Actually, yes.

That's if you believe – and some definitely don't – a new study of climate patterns in Sval-

bard and other Arctic areas. It finds receding surface ice, which at current rates of decline could disappear entirely during summer by century's end, triggers a mechanism that triples the odds future winters in Europe and north Asia will be similarly inclement.

The findings gained worldwide notice when George Monbiot, a columnist for the *Guardian* of London, wrote about them Monday.

"High pressure in the icy north last winter, according to the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, blocked the usual pattern and 'allowed cold air from the Arctic to

penetrate all the way into Europe, eastern China, and Washington, D.C.," Monbiot wrote. "NASA reports that the same thing is happening this winter."

That ignited a rather heated debate.

"The Moonbat has finally flipped," responded James Delingpole, a columnist for *The Telegraph* of London. He said maps supposedly showing the abnormal pattern are full of guesswork because there are no weather stations to produce data in places like the middle of the Arctic Ocean.

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Popcorn, premiers and 'Polar'

3D movies, cafe debut at new culture center, along with live music/film tribute to Svalbard

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

What does it say about Longyearbyen when the oldest form of cinema is overwhelmingly preferred to the newest?

A week of movie debuts at the new Kulturhuset saw the ancient practice of a live music soundtrack for a film play to a beyond-capacity audience, while the town's first-ever 3D movie filled less than one-third

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MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

A sparse audience watches the first 3D movie in Longyearbyen, "Tron: Legacy," at Kulturhuset on Sunday. Movies are showing up to three nights a week instead of one at the old Huset theater.

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Troll invades Christmas Eve Mass

Service at Svalbard Church to be seen live by teleconference at Norway's station in Antarctica

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

Unlike some awkward family gatherings, this is one group of polar opposites that's happy to be getting together for Christmas.

A 4 p.m. Christmas Eve Mass at Svalbard Church will be "attended" by inhabitants of Norway's Troll research station in Antarctica. Leif Magne Helgesen, the church's priest, said videoconferencing equipment will offer almost

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NORWEGIAN POLAR INSTITUTE

Norway's Troll research station is now basking in the constant light of Antarctic summer.

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

Editor

Mark Sabbatini

Staff writer/photographer

Karla Paz

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

marksabbatini@yahoo.com

Web site

www.icepeople.net

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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.

Lighting up to measure the Lights



KOLBJØRN BLIX DAHLE / ANDØYA ROCKET RANGE

A rocket measuring neutral upwelling caused by auroral activity is launched Dec. 12 from the Andøya Rocket Range for its 10-minute flight over Svalbard before landing near Greenland's Station North. The Rocket Experiment for Neutral Upwelling project is measuring previously unstudied temperature increases in the neutral atmosphere resulting from the auroral activity. The mission's blog is at www.rocketrange.no/?page_id=751&campaign_id=1&post=35.

Briefly

City orders replacement of all faulty food grinders

Longyearbyen officials are ordering the replacement of all food grinders installed in homes this year due to defects ranging from clogged drains to overheating that presents a

fire hazard.

A letter sent today to the vendor, Activum Consulting, demands payment be refunded to the city, with officials stating a plan to replace the units will be determined after the New Year. A mandate originally required all homes have the grinders by this summer.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Everybody remember Sebastian Plur Nilssen, the kayaker dragged from his tent and across a Spitsbergen beach by a polar bear, which was shot by Nilssen's fellow paddler? In addition to being part of various "most dramatic and/or strangest news of 2010" lists, he's in the running for some kind of Norwegian "hero of the year" award. But nearly being eaten isn't all glory: he was attacked by a moose this month while searching for a Christmas tree with his dog team on the mainland. The imagination runs wild thinking what may happen when he goes to China for New Year's ... More proof man is not at the top of the food chain: Researchers have determined blue whales can scarf 457,000 calories in a single mouthful. For man to exact revenge in kind he'll have to swallow 366 kilograms of whale meat (not including blubber), barely a nibble out of the 4,500-kilo average weight of the creatures that can be harvested in Svalbard (minke instead of blues but, hey, the former got their name from a Norwegian whaler who mistook them for the latter) ... On the other hand, maybe that could become an extreme eating competition for the Svalbard episode of "En Bit av Norge" ("A Bit of Norway") when the cooking

show visits next year. Which has us (and others much smarter) wondering: what exactly is the "dish" of Svalbard? ... Speaking of odd eating challenges, our favorite item at the new Kulturhuset cafe is a huge block of Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese for 300 kroner. It's supposed to be to-go, but we're seriously thinking of offering a prize to whoever can eat the entire thing during a regular-length movie ... If eating that much petrified milk isn't disrupting locals' sleep, maybe those Wake-Up Lights that Philips gave away for their big PR promo are. *Smart Money*, in a gift guide of premium-priced household items, advised "don't buy this," calling the alarm device inferior to the competition because "its basic display doesn't show the date, and the timing of the light can't be customized." ... More Proud Moments in Tourism, Chapter 2,897: a writer in Sunday's *San Jose Mercury News*, describing a trip to the "polar willow forest at Sundneset," notes "I looked down. I was standing on top of the trees, no higher than the sole of my Wellingtons. Yet another wondrous adaptation of life in the high Arctic." There's no byline, which we hope is from the subsequent shame of realizing the struggle those unfortunate greens go through to reach those tiny heights.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Liv Mari Schei performs live music during the Dec. 15 premier screening of "Polar Eufori," a 30-minute tribute to the natural and human aspects of Svalbard, at Kulturhuset.

Loving the new, missing the old

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of the theater's 245 seats.

Of course, the fan favorite was a hometown homage with music by its most famous musician, while the spurned show was "Tron: Legacy," recipient of a splat-worthy 49 percent approval rating from RottenTomatoes.com.

Screenings, beginning more a week later than scheduled due to a delay in projector equipment arriving, also coincided with the launch of Kulturhuset's cafe, open seven days a week until 7 p.m. (with limited service later on movie nights). It's possible to take *foie gras* and cappuccino into the theater, but residents

seem content with soda and oil-not-butter-topped popcorn (another local movie first).

"It's much better than the old one, of course," said Tarjai Vätirk, 23, a lifelong Longyearbyen resident comparing the new theater with the 59-year-old Huset. "I miss the old one, too, because it's what I grew up with."

The new theater with its digital projector means movies can show when they debut worldwide, since they're delivered on tiny cartridges instead of big reels. Also, they're showing up to three nights a week instead of one.

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



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Håvard Øverli, above left, loads a digital film cartridge into the projector at Kulturhuset during its first night of movies Dec. 10. Above right, moviegoers buy concessions at Kulturhuset's new cafe, which is open daily and serves a variety of food and pastries in addition to traditional snacks.

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Icebreaker to clear path for Noorderlicht on Dec. 24

The small Russian icebreaker *A. Belikov* will break a path into Tempelfjorden for the *Noorderlicht* on Christmas Eve, presenting a potential risk for people occupying cabins in the area. The *Noorderlicht* arrived Monday in Longyearbyen and for the 10th consecutive year will freeze into the ice at Tempelfjorden, serving as an accommodation for tourists. Cold temperatures froze the ice earlier than recent years, forcing Basecamp Spitsbergen to charter the icebreaker. Lt. Gov. Lars Fause said the timing conflicts with cabin dwellers and snowmobilers in the area, but the ice-breaking is within regulations and more people are likely to be there at a later date.

More tourists in Svalbard for the holidays, hotels report

More tourists are celebrating Christmas and New Year's in Longyearbyen, according to hotels experimenting with staying open for the holidays. "Christmas weekend we have around 30 guests," said Sven-Erik Svendsen, manager of the Radisson Blu Polar Hotel, which is open for its third consecutive Christmas. "From Dec. 28 we have 70, while there are 100 people for the New Year. It is going wonderfully well." The hotel is offering porridge and Christmas movies for guests, and will host children's activities outside on New Year's Eve. Basecamp Spitsbergen is about half full, an increase over last year when the lodge was open for the first time during the holidays. A Christmas Eve dinner at the Radisson, which attracts a large percentage of locals, is sold out with a waiting list.

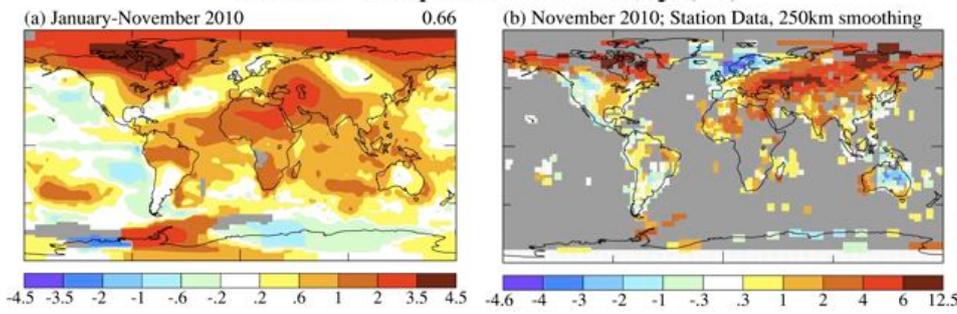
Svalbard Tourism hopes new bags will replace plastic

Svalbard Tourism is selling reusable shopping bags as its first step in an effort to eliminate plastic shopping bags from Svalbard. Planning began two years ago, with 2,000 shopping bags in two sizes arriving this month. They will be sold for 40 and 50 kroner at the tourist information office and Svalbard-butikken, with part of the proceeds going to support women and children in the slums of Bangladesh, where the bags are made.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Partly cloudy. NW winds at 7 km/h. High -20C (-24C wind chill), low -24C (-31C wind chill). Sunrise: 0:00 Sunset 0:00	Partly cloudy. NNW winds at 10 km/h. High -14C (-20C wind chill), low -20C (-28C wind chill). Sunrise: 0:00 Sunset 0:00	Cloudy. N winds at 10 km/h. High -12C (-16C wind chill), low -14C (-19C wind chill). Sunrise: 0:00 Sunset 0:00	Cloudy. N winds at 7 km/h. High -17C (-22C wind chill), low -20C (-25C wind chill). Sunrise: 0:00 Sunset 0:00
Extended forecast: Sunday, cloudy, -22C (-28C), -26C (-35C), light 0:00h; Monday, cloudy, -27C (-36C), -30C (-41C), light 0:00h; Tuesday, snow, -18C (-28C), -25C (-37C), light 0:00h; Wednesday, snow, -12C (-20C), -21C (-28C), light 0:00h.			
Data provided by yr.no			

Surface Temperature Anomaly (°C)



GODDARD INSTITUTE FOR SPACE STUDIES / NASA

A map showing unusually warm Arctic weather during the first 11 months of 2010, above left, is triggering atmospheric movement resulting in cold and stormy weather in Europe, a new study finds.

It's cold because it's hot? Some scoff

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"The clue is in that phrase 'published by NASA,'" Delingpole wrote. "See, going to NASA GISS for reliable, unbiased temperature data is a bit like asking Charles Manson for tips on how best to set up a commune where everyone's happy and no one gets ritually murdered or anything."

The study finds the clearing of Arctic ice allowed more heat into the atmosphere. The resulting higher air pressures are causing Arctic air to swirl into lower latitudes.

Temperatures in London, where Heathrow Airport is bearing the brunt of the holiday travel chaos, dropped below those in Longyearbyen at one point during the current storm. British officials facing scathing accusations of incompetence from anguished travelers are beginning to wonder if their equipment and readiness needs to be more like its Arctic neighbors.

The country will ask its chief scientific adviser if the blizzards that began last month, coupled with the worst cold snap in two decades last winter, provides evidence for a "step change" justifying increased spending on cold-weather gear, Transport Secretary Philip Hammond told lawmakers, according to the *Guardian*.

Heathrow, which handled 66 million travelers in 2009, has 69 ice-clearing vehicles, less than twice the number at Oslo, which handles a

Polar opposites to join for holiday Mass

TROLL, from page 1

simultaneous interaction between the two distant locations.

"The idea came from the people at the Troll station," he said. "They want to have a tradition of a service between Troll and Svalbard. It's a connection Antarctica to the Arctic, cold to cold."

Several Longyearbyen residents have worked at Troll, said Ken Pedersen, the station's operations manager, in an interview with NRK.

"It's not so easy to get the Christmas spirit down here when the midnight sun is shining and we know that many people have a tradition of going to church on Christmas Eve," he said.

The teleconference connection will be one-way during Mass, but "after the service it will be possible for family and friends, closer friends to say hello to the people on Troll," Helgesen said. "Also, the sysselmann will give his

“
They make this stuff up as they go along.

- Myron Ebell,
CEI Center for Energy
and Environment

quarter of that passenger total and suffers 60 days of snow a year on average.

"If we're going to face week after week of these kinds of conditions, which I haven't seen in my lifetime in this country, we'll have to have different equipment, different procedures in the future," said Colin Matthews, chief executive officer of the airport management company BAA, in an interview on Bloomberg Television's *The Pulse*.

Skeptics who see the storm as a freak occurrence say that's a waste of money.

"They make this stuff up as they go along," said Myron Ebell, director of the Center of Energy and Environment at the Competitive Enterprise Institute. "If this theory is true, a necessary consequence is that there will be less severe winter storms because arctic air masses will not be as cold."

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

Christmas regards."

The Mass itself won't be significantly different, Helgesen said.

"We often have the Antarctic people in our prayers with the church," he said.

The teleconference equipment in Longyearbyen is the system from The University Centre in Svalbard, which was easily transported to the church.

"We have tried it and it's a good connection," Helgesen said. "It's like a one-second difference in time."

So while the Troll residents may sing along to the hymns, it explains why there won't be two-way communication during the service.

"Due to a slight delay on the line we have to turn off the microphone so that we do not ruin it for those who sit in church in Longyearbyen," Pedersen said.

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

What's up

Dec. 24

2 and 4 p.m.: Christmas Eve liturgies. Svalbard Church.

Dec. 25

Noon: Christmas Mass. Svalbard Church.

Dec. 26

5 p.m.: Movie: "The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader" (3D), U.S. fantasy/family. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Megamind" (3D), U.S. animated comedy. Kulturhuset.

Dec. 28

5 p.m.: Family Christmas party. Svalbard Church.

Dec. 29

6 p.m.: Movie: "Keeper'n til Liverpool," Norwegian comedy, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Trolljegeren," Norwegian mockumentary, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

Jan. 1

6 p.m.: Movie: "Knerter Gifter Seg," Norwegian children's film, all ages. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Cornelis," Norwegian drama/musical, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

Jan. 5

6 p.m.: Movie: "Despicable Me" (3D), U.S. animated/family, all ages. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Fair Game," U.S. action/drama, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

Jan. 15

2 p.m.: Presentation by Aino Grib about staging the "Mellom Linjene" literary exhibition during KunstPause Svalbard 2010. Longyearbyen Library.

Jan 18 and 20

6 p.m.: Svalbard Seminar, presented by the Norwegian Polar Institute. Møysalen, UNIS.

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:

- *Arctic countries reach rescue agreement*
- *Siberia bone may be new type of human*
- *Qatar feasts on halal reindeer from Arctic*
- *NORAD again tracking Santa's progress*