



# 36 degrees of separation

*Floods, avalanches halt flights and block roads as temps soar to 4.5°C vs. -31.5° a year ago*

**By MARK SABBATINI**  
Editor

If this a preview of Svalbard's climate in 2100, the picture isn't pretty.

Longyearbyen was an image of flooded streets, stranded travelers and dangerous avalanche-prone areas Monday as a high temperature of 4.5 degrees Celsius made it the warmest city in Norway.

Combined with steady rain and a month of temperatures already far above normal, the result is multiple and shifting road closures, can-

celed flights, and warnings from officials with the city and governor's office to stay in town.

"There is no reason to embark on snowmobiles, on skis or on foot into the terrain," Erik Nygaard, police chief for the governor's office.

The damage started in earnest just after midnight Sunday when a slush avalanche washed through Vannledningsdalen, blocking the main road from downtown to Nybyen and washing out the Perleporten pedestrian bridge at Vei 500. The road is expected to be open again by Wednesday, but Bydrift still needs to analyze and repair the bridge.

"The bridge will remain closed for some time," said Marianne Aasen, general manager

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ARLID LYSSAND / SYSSELMANNEN

The pedestrian bridge at Vei 500 is expected to be closed for some time after being washed out by a slush avalanche Sunday.

## 'Menacing' China in Svalbard?

*Claim country is 'eyeing greedily' the Arctic comes in wake of SvalSat hacking accusations*

**By MARK SABBATINI**  
Editor

A deeper chill is gripping the Cold War for the Arctic, as China is facing and angrily denying accusations of "casting menacing eyes on" the region's natural resources and commercial

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MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

The Longyearbyen bluegrass band Blåmyra performs at the vorspiel preview concert at Kulturhuset during this week's Polarjazz festival. Band members are, from left, Atle Husby, Sveinung Lystrup Thesen, Mari Tefre, Elise Strømseng and Arnfinn Elvertro.

## Still 'jazz' - yet it ain't

*Polarjazz adjusts groove for the crowd, puts emphasis on variety*

**By MARK SABBATINI**  
Editor

Jazz [jaz|[n.]: "A type of music characterized by improvisation, syncopation, and usually a regular or forceful rhythm..."

Um, OK, it probably still qualifies.

Even if not, the 14th annual Polarjazz fes-

tival beginning Wednesday retains its title despite a near-total absence of its namesake.

"I wouldn't call it a jazz festival," said Lasse Hansen, the festival's director. When previous lineups were heavy on jazz "it almost went under because almost nobody came."

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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.

## 'Carmina Burana' – The itty-bitty review



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

When the biggest flub is by esteemed visiting conductor Jan Helge Trøen, center, the local amateurs comprising most of the performers can feel good about the staging of "Carmina Burana" at Huset on Saturday. A false start and audible "sorry" by Trøen at the midpoint was the only obvious error, although the low volume and lack of full orchestration muted a canata that should hit with the impact of a polar bear atop a calving glacier. But aficionados more than got their money's worth just from the ornate and pounding piano duet of Olivera Marinkovic and Bjarne Sakshaug from Den Norske Opera & Ballett (as were Trøen and three spot-on vocal soloists). The 60-person, mostly local choir handled their rare operatic challenge capably after four months of rehearsals, and an ensemble of local kids near the end was a surefire crowd and camera pleaser. A full-house of patrons offered a standing ovation and ebullient praise after, and The Paper Of Record contributed its "good time was had by all" mantra (unlike us, who never depart a show – not even a first-graders' Christmas play – without finding something to critique).

## Icesheet

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

For those who've forgotten what winter is like thanks to weather we're just as likely to see in August, the *Guardian's* Poem of the Week is "Six Winters" by Tomas Tranströmer, an 80-year-old Swedish poet who won the Nobel prize for literature last year, which gives Svalbard some prominence. The poem basically contains six short musings, the second of which is "An élite of the dead became stone/in Katarina Churchyard/where the wind shakes in its armour from Svalbard." Since our knowledge of poetry is as disastrously shallow as that of quality journalism, here's the *Guardian's* interpretation: "We're deep in the Kingdom of Winter. The concept of an 'elite of the dead' is ironical and appalling. It prefigures the subsequent reference to wartime. That this is an elite of conquerors is reinforced by the entrance of the armoured wind. The dead may be reduced to emblems of grim and silent stone, but the wind from icy Svalbard 'shakes' in its armour, suggesting not fear or even cold, but vigorous movement, the brandishing of noisy weapons, fresh savagery." The whole thing, along with the hoity-toity analysis, is at [www.guardian.co.uk/books/2012/jan/23/poem-of-the-week-tomas-transtromer?newsfeed=true](http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2012/jan/23/poem-of-the-week-tomas-transtromer?newsfeed=true) ... Staying with the art of words, with Google all but digitalizing everyone's DNA to "benefit" them with a barrage of ads reflecting their online habits (porn sites of the world rejoice!), we decided to see what the syndicate (new motto: We're

Now Evil) has on us. Searching for "Spitsbergen" brings up auto-complete phrases like "Norway UFO crash info" and...actually, that's probably already revealing too much information. If only people living in the Arctic weren't into wearing 10 layers of heavy clothes ... Speaking of fun with Google, The Paper With Real News We Steal Shamelessly long ago made us stop using links to their website filtered through Google Translate because of inaccuracies ranging from embarrassing to potentially catastrophic. But use the embryonic virtual Babel Fish on Polarjazz's website and the schedule suddenly becomes massively impressive (no disrespect to the real artists). Among those appearing this week, according to the English translation, are Frank Sinatra (instead of deLillos) and Eric Clapton (instead of Bjelleklang). Unfortunately, they also come with price tags matching their A-list fame, as festival passes are listed at \$1,400 (more than five times the price for those who grok Norwegian), and other prices are similar inflated into dollars and British pounds ... Climate change skeptics might want to keep an eye on the thermometer for the next six weeks as Punxsutawney Phil saw his shadow during that (in)famous U.S. occasion known as Groundhog Day. Actual climate scientists did a study on the accuracy of his predictions (summary: you might as well flip a coin), so if temps do warm up it's a great chance to turn the "junk science" rhetoric up a notch.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

The main road between downtown Longyearbyen and Nybyen is closed after being covered by a slash avalanche just after midnight Sunday, which also washed out a nearby pedestrian bridge.

## High temps mean high chaos

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of the city's utility and infrastructure agency, in a prepared statement.

Also closed were the roads to Svalbard Airport, Adventdalen and Mine 3. Escorted convoys are being used for access to the airport and Adventdalen, with shuttle busses being offered at 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. for students at The University Centre in Svalbard trying to get between classes and housing in Nybyen. All roads are expected to be reopened by midweek.

Travelers are being further thwarted as flights from Tromsø were cancelled Sunday and today, halting mail and grocery deliveries as well as stranding hundreds of travelers. An extra flight scheduled Wednesday in an effort to accommodate the high number of people ar-

iving for the Polarjazz festival also had to be cancelled, although officials are more optimistic about conditions later in the week.

The meltdown follows a month where temperatures at Svalbard Airport were 10.1 degrees Celsius above normal, averaging minus 4.7 degrees in January. A lack sea ice cover north and west of Svalbard, plus warm air from the south, are cited for the high temperatures.

The warm Arctic air is also seen by officials as causing a cold spell across Europe that has killed 60 people as of early this week and stranded tens of thousands due to heavy snow. Monday's temperatures in Istanbul were 15 degrees Celsius colder than in Longyearbyen.

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

## China denies accusations of greed

### BATTLE, from page 1

shipping opportunities.

The Japanese daily *Sankei Shimbun*, in an article Saturday, states China is "eyeing greedily" the Arctic's untapped oil and gas, and is considering building a strategic base there for "resources exploration" and "naval vessels."

Another cold shoulder came Monday when *Aftenposten*, citing an unnamed diplo-

matic source, reported Norway will block China's bid to obtain permanent observer status at the eight-member Arctic Council as long as Beijing continues to snub Oslo diplomatically. The decline in relations came after the Nobel Peace Prize for 2010 was awarded to Chinese activist Liu Xiaobo.

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

## HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

### Power plant w/ CO2 capture proposed for Longyearbyen

Norway's Conservative Party is proposing a new coal power plant with full CO2 capture be built in Longyearbyen by 2015. The Labor Party-led government has proposed the country's first such plant be built in Mongstad by 2020, but a Longyearbyen facility costing three billion kroner would be one-eighth the price of the Mongstad facility, said Nikolai Astrup, an environmental spokesman for the Conservative Party. The proposal was welcomed by officials with the CO2 lab at The University Centre in Svalbard, which has been drilling test wells in Adventdalen for potential storage of the gas in liquified form. Erik Solheim, Norway's environmental minister, did not immediately oppose the proposed Longyearbyen plant, stating "this is an idea that must be studied further."

### Barentsburg hotel closed for major upgrade until March

Upgrades to the heat, water and sewage systems, plus new rooms and other interior improvements, will keep the hotel in Barentsburg closed until March, said Aleksander P. Veselov, director general of Trust Arktikugol. Several buildings in Barentsburg have received facelifts recently due to funding from the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources, with renovations to the hotel starting in earnest last summer. The renovation will also address fire department and planning authority concerns about fire safety.

### LNS buys Greenland mining company, will offer jobs there

LNS is buying nearly 60 percent of the shares in Greenland Mining Services, with plans for full acquisition by 2017, as it looks to other polar areas after losing its support services contract at Svea. "We think this is very exciting and in some ways a continuation of the activities we have on Svalbard," said LNS Administrative Director Frode Nilsen "That we were chased out from Svea is sad, but at the same time it provides new opportunities." Those opportunities will include the possibility of some Svalbard employees working in Greenland if they want.

## Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Snow. SW to 46 km/h. High 0C (-7C wind chill), low -4C (-12C wind chill).	Snow. Variable winds to 39 km/h. High 0C (-7C wind chill), low -9C (-16C wind chill).	Snow. SW winds to 25 km/h. High -4C (-10C wind chill), low -11C (-19C wind chill).	Snow. SW winds to 25 km/h. High -2C (-8C wind chill), low -9C (-16C wind chill).
Sunrise 0:00; sunset 0:00	Sunrise 0:00; sunset 0:00	Sunrise 0:00; sunset 0:00	Sunrise 0:00; sunset 0:00
<b>Extended forecast:</b> Sunday, snow, -2C (-7C), -2C (-8C), light 0:00h; Monday, snow, -3C (-9C), -4C (-10C), light 0:00h; Tuesday, snow, -4C (-10C), -4C (-10C), light 0:00h; Wednesday, snow, -4C (-9C), -4C (-10C), light 0:00h			
<b>Data provided by yr.no</b>			



COURTESY OF BJELLEKLING

The 25-year-old band Bjelleklang, whose claim to fame is "humorous Norwegian-language versions of known and unknown hits," performs twice Saturday at this year's Polarjazz festival.

## Little jazz, but lots of variety

### IMPROVISE, from page 1

So this year's scheduled is highlighted by the Kaizers Orchestra (promo: "oil drums, gas mask, pump organ and a live band...a complete experience, a six-head monster, a coarse and fine machinery") on the kickoff of their 2012 tour. Other featured artists include Maria Mena ("Kanye West, John Legend and Joan Thempa are among the musical greats who have fallen in love with the Mena's music"), deLillos ("one of the best, most original and important names in Norwegian popular music history"), Bjelleklang ("side of the body sounds...a complete guitar or two, frying pan and night pot (!) And a variety of rhythm instruments") and the Christianssand String Swing Ensemble ("a helakustisk band, but the organizers and the audience turns to rock metaphors when describing the experience").

The single jazz band is The Real Thing ("everything from funky soul jazz to seductive ballads"), a modestly high-profile Norwegian group for the past 20 years.

"I have a lot of phone calls, a lot of e-mails, a lot of people stopping by and they say this is the greatest jazz festival ever," Hansen said.

The first two nights of the festival, the vorskpiel preview concert by local artists Wednesday and two featured concerts Thursday, will be at the year-old Kulturhuset instead of the traditional stage at the Radisson Polar SAS Polar Hotel. Hansen said there's room for a larger audience at Kulturhuset – with both nights still likely to be packed to capacity – and the stage setting is more suitable for those particular concerts.

A few familiar events are also scheduled during the weekend, although sometimes in different locations than recent years. A jazz lunch with Bård Watn ("his playful use of harmonies and keys along with a hilarious and informal way to appear on stage, a combination

### Polarjazz 2012 schedule

#### Wednesday

- 9 p.m.: Vorskpiel (preview concert featuring local artists). Kulturhuset.

#### Thursday

- 8:30 p.m.: Bård Watn; Kaizers Orchestra. Kulturhuset.

#### Friday

- 8:30 p.m.: The Real Thing; Delillos. Radisson.

- 11:30 p.m.: Night jazz with Mr. C & the FAB 3. Barentz Pub.

#### Saturday

- 1 p.m.: Bård Watn. Kroa.

- 4 p.m.: Christianssand String Swing Ensemble and Bjelleklang. Spitsbergen Hotel.

- 6 p.m.: Jazz buffet. Radisson.

- 8:30 p.m.: Maria Mena; Bjelleklang with Tundradundrene & Store Norske Mandskor; Christianssand String Swing Ensemble. Radisson.

- 11:30 p.m.: Night jazz/jam session with Mr. C & the FAB 3. Barentz Pub.

#### Sunday

- 6 p.m.: Jonas Fjeld. Svalbard Church.

that really goes to the heart of the audience. He is difficult to place in a genre") is at 1 p.m. Saturday at Kroa. The Christianssand String Swing Ensemble and Bjelleklang make a joint appearance at Spitsbergen Hotel at 4 p.m. Saturday, with the traditional jazz buffet at 6 p.m. at the Radisson. The final concert features Jonas Fjeld ("operates at the interface between rock, country and folk songs") at 6 p.m. Sunday at Svalbard Church. He replaces Ole Paus, who had to cancel for health reasons.

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

## What's up

### Feb. 1-5

PolarJazz festival. Full details and schedule on pages 1 and 4.

### Feb. 5

6 p.m.: Movie: "Play," Swedish drama, no age limit determined. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Varg Veum," Danish/Norwegian crime/thriller, no age limit determined. Kulturhuset.

### Feb. 10

6 p.m.: Movie: "Puss In Boots" (3D), U.S. animation/fantasy, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

### Feb. 11

Spitsbergen Up and Down 2012. Race to the top of Trollsteinen and back, with various age and gender groups in timed and untimed categories. Starting times range from 1 to 4 p.m. Prizes in "surprise" categories announced after. Details at [spitsbergenupanddown.no](http://spitsbergenupanddown.no).

### Feb. 12

5 p.m.: UKM 2012.

9 p.m.: Movie: "Iron Woman," British drama, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

### Feb. 15

6 p.m.: Movie: "Chronicle," U.S. action/thriller, no age limit determined. Kulturhuset.

### Feb. 16-18

WinterBlues 2012, featuring artists from Dark Season Blues, which celebrates its 10th anniversary this fall.

### Feb. 18

2 p.m.: Book presentation by Frode Skarstein, author of the triple biography "'Etterlysning: Gul Opel Kadett' - Polare Pilotpionerer i Krig" about WWI and WWII pilots Trygve Gran, Hjalmar Riiser-Larsen and Bernt Balchen. Longyearbyen Library.

### Feb. 19

6 p.m.: Movie: "Thale," Norwegian fantasy/thriller, no age limit determined. 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:

- *Sweden desperate for Arctic workers*
- *Lapland becomes Northern Congo?*
- *India claims a stake in Arctic cold war*
- *Using sardines to ward off polar bears*