



THE LAST DEGREE, PART 1: BARNEO PREPARES FOR A PRINCE



COURTESY OF CAMP BARNEO

Prince Harry, right, contemplates the impact to his crown jewels after jumping into Longyearbyen's sub-freezing polar waters this week in preparation for a week-long ski expedition to the North Pole with four wounded British soldiers. They are scheduled to depart this weekend for Camp Barneo, above, where a sign from a past season offers tour groups and scientists an icy welcome.



GETTY IMAGES

In royal cold, all are equals

Prince Harry, wounded soldiers among first 'guests' for Pole trek

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

His skin will freeze just as fast and the uneven ice will be just as exhausting with every stride. In this group, in fact, His Royal Highness might find his lack of a handicap an impairment.

Britain's Prince Harry arrived in Longyearbyen this week as the highest-profile member of Walking With The Wounded, a North Pole expedition by four wounded British soldiers hoping to raise 18 million kroner for other injured service personnel.

A week of skiing in one of Earth's coldest

and harshest regions is tough enough without a missing arm or leg, but there are pluses.

"I think it's an advantage," said Guy Disney, 28, a captain who lost his right leg below the knee in Afghanistan in 2009. "I don't get frostbite on that foot."

The prince's attention – and thus the global media's – fixated on a more intimate part of the anatomy after testing an immersion suit in the polar sea the day after his arrival.

"It's quite tight on the balls," he said after a running jump into the minus 3C water.

See **WOUNDED**, page 3

Weather delays ice camp setup

Locating and building site a new challenge for workers each year

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

It's not that different from picking a regular campsite, aside from arriving by parachute and making sure the flat space is big enough for a landing strip.

See **ARRIVAL**, page 4

Arctic Ocean getting less salty



ALFRED WAGNER INSTITUTE

A researcher towing a sledge of sea ice samples returns to the *Polarstern* after an open water lead forms in the pack-ice.

Freshwater content of upper sea layer increases 20 percent since 1990s as melt, currents change

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

It's still a bad idea to drink it if stranded at sea, but the waters around Svalbard are considerably less salty than 20 years ago.

The freshwater content of the Arctic Ocean's upper layer has increased about 20 percent since the 1990s, according to a study made public last week by the Alfred Wegener

See **DILUTE**, page 2

Inside

Trash People scrap their stay early
Page 2

Headlines from Svalbardposten
- Store Norske hires new coal transport firm
- Insurers must pay for rescues, governor says
- Polar bear on road near Mine 7 avoids town
Page 3

Weather forecast
Page 3

Events calendar
Page 4

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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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.

Trashed people scrap Svalbard early



GIANLUCA BATTISTA / DEMOTIX

H.A. Schult's "Trash People" lay half-covered with snow in Adventdalen after being blown over by strong winds following their setup March 14. A planned week-long showing of the art exhibit was trimmed to five days, with less than half of the 600 "people" displayed, but continued bad weather led to most being removed only two days later. About 25 were set out briefly for a March 18 press conference before being removed for good.

Salinity loss affects temps, currents

DILUTE, from page 1

Institute. The study notes the upper layer controls whether heat from the ocean is emitted into the atmosphere or to ice, and impacts global ocean circulation.

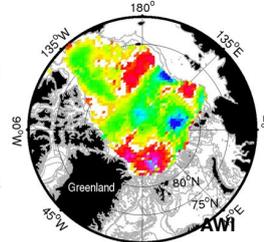
Researchers analyzed more than 5,000 sea samples collected between 1992 to 1999 and 2006 to 2008, according to the study published in the journal *Deep-Sea Research*. Increasing glacier and sea ice melt are cited as factors for the rise in freshwater content, along with less circulation of that water from the Arctic. Near-coastal areas between Siberia and the central Arctic Ocean are cited as areas most experiencing such changes.

"We can expect that the additional amount of freshwater in the near-surface layer of the Arctic Ocean will flow out into the

North Atlantic in the coming years," the study notes.

About ten percent of the global mainland runoff flows into the Arctic via Siberian and North American rivers in addition to relatively low-salt water from the Pacific. This freshwater lies as a light layer on top of the deeper salty and warm ocean layers, cutting off heat flow to the ice and atmosphere.

Simulations of the circumstances resulting in the salinity loss "show that the changes in the Arctic freshwater content encompass far larger areas than assumed to date," the study adds. Further research is scheduled this summer.



Yellow, green and blue areas show increasingly large declines in the mean salinity of the Arctic Ocean's top layer.

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

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

With British royalty in town we could probably fill this issue (and next) with gossip and call it a day, but since that's not really our thing we'll just mention a couple of things overheard. Prince Harry is, of course, getting "just a regular guy" comments from fellow expeditioners, but an ordinary local on the same flight from Tromsø says they kept a low profile and there wasn't anything unusual about security or the flight – at least until the TV cameras started trying to capture the moment ... Word is there weren't any paparazzi offering staff at the media's hotel extra "tips" for nuggets about the prince's off-camera doings. Seems "where can I get more wine?" was the most common

question from the press pack. Our observation is those actually heading out onto the ice drink beer, but since we're teetotalers we're not making any judgements ... It wasn't enough our seed vault is part of a conspiracy for a planet ruled by demons. Now we're helping send the world to Hell thanks to large methane leaks from our seabeds. A four-part series at www.huntingtonnews.net/2768, while actually quite substantial in scientific presentation, concludes with "Destination – Hell. Are we there yet?" It makes ominous connections between drilling, methane leaks, massive earthquakes and global warming. At least Bill Gates and the other Evil Geniuses assimilating power via seeds will probably have a bad day too.



COURTESY OF WALKING WITH THE WOUNDED

Members of Walking With The Wounded pitch a tent near Longyearbyen this week, spending the night in it as part of their acclimation to the Arctic cold before their skiing trek to the North Pole.

Prince 'a lovely bloke' on Pole team

WOUNDED, from page 1

Prince Harry's polar swim came at the beginning of what much of the press is referring to as three grueling days of Arctic training. But his fellow expeditioners, who spent a year training in Britain and Norway, said they're mostly making sure they're well-fed and rested, and making sure their gear is adequate for the Arctic conditions.

"It's much colder now," said Simon Daghish, 45, the expedition's leader and co-founder of the Walking With The Wounded charity. "What we are learning to do is little adjustments to our kit."

The soldiers said the coldest temperature they endured training was about minus 20C. Longyearbyen's are expected to approach minus 25C this week, with the mercury dropping to around minus 40C on the trail between Camp Barneo and the North Pole.

"For me the challenge is keeping the arm warm," said Martin Hewitt, 29, whose right arm was paralyzed when he was shot in Afghanistan in 2007. "Physically it's just preparation. I've got to spend a lot of time in the gym building up the (other) arm."

The expedition isn't just about the soldiers overcoming their disabilities. Disney is using a

specialty designed prosthetic leg, for instance, and the trip is an ideal stress test for determining its suitability for wider use. Disney and Hewitt also said they've started Prestige, an organization to lead wounded soldiers on future expeditions.

Prince Harry, training to be an Army Apache helicopter pilot, joined the team late but hasn't slowed them down, Daghish said. He said the prince's presence is invaluable for raising the profile of the expedition and therefore increasing donations, but he's also proving an asset on the trail.

"I knew him personally before he came out," he said. "He's a lovely bloke to have on the ice. He provides morale to the team and he's never once said 'no' to anything we've asked."

Expedition members are scheduled to fly to Barneo this weekend. Camp visitors willing to pay can get special treatment such as individual tents or specific food, but there are no such requests from Prince Harry or the group.

Field logs, a tracking map, videos, profiles of team members and other information is available at the expedition's website, <http://walkingwiththewounded.org.uk>.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Store Norske signs new transport deal after scandal

Store Norske has signed a five-year agreement to have its coal transported to the mainland by the Danish shipping company Norden. The agreement comes after Store Norske terminated its longtime contract with Kristian Jepsens Rederi in Bergen due to questionable payments that are part of a larger scandal involving the coal company's former administrative director. "The environmental factor was a decisive criterion for entering into the agreement" with Norden, said current Store Norske Administrative Director Bjørn Arnesstad. Store Norske also recently terminated its contract with LNS Spitsbergen for land transport and infrastructure services, with the coal company stating it intends to assume responsibility using LNS employees if they are willing to switch companies. LNS has indicated they plan to challenge the termination in court.

Insurers must pay costs for rescues, governor decides

Insurers must pay for travelers needing rescue, according to a new policy approved Friday by Svalbard's governor. A large number of rescues in recent years triggered discussion about the change, since in some cases insurance payments were not collected. Non-resident travelers in areas outside of Management Area 10 (central Spitsbergen) are required to notify the governor and carry insurance. Travelers without insurance will be charged according to previous policy, with the Ministry of Justice determining if a person or party acted with gross negligence. Among the incidents prompting the change was the Feb. 26 rescue of a Swedish family from Grøndalen. The governor recommended the family be billed for negligence, but the ministry reversed the finding.

Polar bear makes tracks near Mine 7, but not into town

A polar bear seen crossing the road near Mine 7 on Saturday was tracked by officials with the Svalbard governor's office to ensure it did not approach Longyearbyen. It may be the same bear seen Friday at Todalen.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Fair. N winds at 4 km/h. High -21C (-21C wind chill), low -27C (-27C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. Variable winds at 4 km/h. High -19C (-19C wind chill), low -24C (-24C wind chill).	Cloudy. E winds at 11 km/h. High -21C (-29C wind chill), low -23C (-31C wind chill).	Cloudy. ENE winds at 11 km/h. High -20C (-28C wind chill), low -22C (-30C wind chill).
Sunrise: 5:35a Sunset 8:34p	Sunrise: 5:26a Sunset 8:42p	Sunrise: 5:18a Sunset 8:50p	Sunrise: 5:09a Sunset 8:59p
Extended forecast: Sunday, cloudy, -19C (-27C), -22C (-30C), light 16:07h; Monday, snow, -11C (-18C), -21C (-29C), light 16:24h; Tuesday, light snow, -12C (-19C), -19C (-27C), light 16:42h; Wednesday, cloudy, -17C (-25C), -19C (-27C), light 17:00h.			
Data provided by yr.no			



Two Russian Mi-8 helicopters, above, approach an ice point known as "Blind-1" this week, which may become this year's site for Camp Barneo. Father Vladimir Archimandrite, top right, offers the traditional blessing for the Barneo season at a Moscow church earlier this month. At bottom right, Sergei Orlov discusses on Friday weather-related delays in the transporting of cargo from a storage hanger in Khatanga to the ice camp. All photos courtesy of Camp Barneo.



Barneo employees a rare breed

ARRIVAL, from page 1

Things get a little trickier once it's time to unpack the gear – including a tractor dropped from another parachute – especially since they may be doing it in poor weather with temperatures below minus 40C.

Eight workers are scheduled this week to begin transforming a barren sheet of ice about 100 to 150 kilometers from the North Pole into Camp Barneo, which will serve as the support base for Pole expeditions and scientific research until mid-May. Expeditions skiing north's "last degree" start at exactly 110 kilometers out, with a two-degree trip offering twice the challenge.

This is the Russian-operated camp's 10th anniversary, but the accumulated expertise and refinements isn't enough to thwart delays due to storms halting transport flights between the northern settlement of Khatanga and Barneo.

"There are many challenges and most of them are dependent on the weather," said Alexey Mironov, executive director of Polar Expeditions Ltd., the company responsible for camp operations.

Facilities will include a 1,200-meter-long airstrip, bio-toilets, 12-person tents heated to about 15C, larger mess tents for meals and meetings, and technical modules for storing and maintaining equipment.

The camp was scheduled to open Friday, but the arrival of the first workers is already two days behind schedule, Mironov said in an interview today. If the opening is delayed notifications will be sent to arriving parties, who sign agreements stating plenty of things may go awry due to circumstances beyond control.

About the series:
'The Last Degree' follows workers, researchers and expeditions at Camp Barneo during the 10th anniversary of the ice community.

Last year's setup was hampered when the parachute with the tractor didn't open completely, resulting in some broken parts.

"Something happens every year," Mironov said. "It's completely extreme operations. Very few people in the world know how to do it."

Fortunately, few employees seem inclined to look for work elsewhere. Mironov estimates 15 percent of the workers are new each year.

The longevity helps deal with unusual Pole expeditions, such as trekkers with disabilities and distinguished guests hoping to reach the top of the world. This year's first

scheduled trip features both, with Britain's Prince Harry joining four wounded soldiers, but Mironov said staff won't be in awe.

"They've seen it all," he said.

The number of scientists and ski expeditions has remained relatively stable over the years, but a consistently growing segment is tourists making short stops as part of a helicopter flight to the Pole.

"To ski for seven days, it's physically quite hard, but it's also mentally quite hard," Mironov said. For many "it's not about going to the Pole. It's challenging yourself or trying to prove something to yourself."

Even if they've trained elsewhere, many of the visitors aren't prepared for the extreme conditions, Mironov said. His company leads expeditions on shakedown trips in Svalbard, but even here "we say (the weather) is nice and warm, and there's always a hotel and warmth nearby."

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

What's up

March 30

6 p.m.: Movie: "Gulliver's Travels" (3D), U.S. comedy, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

April 1

6 p.m.: Movie: "Hop," U.S. comedy/family film, all ages. Kulturhuset.

April 3

11 a.m.: Liturgy. Svalbard Church.

6 p.m.: Movie: "Gnomeo and Juliet" (3D), British/ U.S. animated film, all ages. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Biutiful," Mexican drama, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

April 5

5 p.m.: Collection for Norwegian Church Aid's Lenten campaign. Svalbard Church.

7 p.m.: Local Board meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

April 6

8 p.m.: Movie: "Mennesker i Solen," Norwegian comedy, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

April 8

6 p.m.: Movie: "Rio" (3D), U.S. animated/comedy, all ages. Kulturhuset.

April 9-10

Trapper's Trail Sled Dog Race from Longyearbyen to Bikkjebu and back. Registration deadline April 6. More information at www.trapperstrail.blogspot.com.

April 10

11 a.m.: Baptism Mass. Svalbard Church.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Änglagård - Alle Gode Ting er Tre," Swedish drama/comedy, all ages. Kulturhuset.

April 12

7 p.m.: Waffle/fireplace gathering. Svalbard Church.

April 13

8 p.m.: Movie: "I Am Number Four," U.S. sci-fi/thriller, ages 11 and up. 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:

- *Seeds from home growers sent to vault*
- *Swedish Sami politicians: More power*
- *Russia ratifies maritime border treaty*
- *Estonia sees rocks as future of energy*