



Runners, left, take off from the start line of the North Pole Marathon on Saturday near Camp Barneo. Below left, a group does the traditional dance around the world after successfully reaching the Pole. Below right, a man goes for a polar dip in an ice hole at Barneo.

POLAR RUNNING ADVENTURES



CAMP BARNEO



CAMP BARNEO

## Brave and brain-frozen at Barneo

*Runners, swimmers and weddings – but no Libyans – seek N. Pole*

By MARK SABBATINI  
Editor

People are swimming and jogging for fun less than 30 kilometers from the North Pole, so perhaps it's not surprising a great way to make a quick friend is to ask something really stupid.

A busy, if somewhat short, season is in full swing at Camp Barneo as this year's crowd of expeditions try to fulfill their dreams of reaching the top of the world – frequently while doing something beyond the

"usual" trip. No haircuts, art exhibitions or British royalty from previous seasons have been spotted this year – and no Libyans despite their vow to bring a large delegation regardless of whether they had permission. But camp staff are plenty busy trying to keep up with a backlog of flights and guests after weather-related delays to start the season.

Among the major events of the past week was the 10th North Pole Marathon, with 41 runners completing the 42-kilometer race (on

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## A cold shoulder for vault

*No easy fix for ban on visitors, who are seen as important for seed bank's support and funding*

By MARK SABBATINI  
Editor

It's at the end of a narrow 150-meter rock tunnel inside a mountain, so it's not exactly feasible to just install another exit door or rig some stairs outside the window in case there's a fire.

So, rules being rules, the Svalbard Global Seed Vault is now closed to everyone except a handful of people working there occasionally.

For Longyearbyen's fire chief it's a matter of safety precautions that may save lives. But for vault officials it's cutting off oxygen that help keeps the vault itself breathing.

"Obviously the danger of fire is extremely remote, and the danger posed by fire very small," wrote Cary Fowler, executive director of the Global Crop Diversity Trust, in an e-mail interview. "The world's safest repository for seeds is, by definition, very safe for humans. But the value of the seed vault in promoting the cause of crop diversity conservation is anything but trivial. As humanity itself depends on this effort – literally millions or billions of people's lives – I have to believe that a balance can be struck that will permit the larger public good to be served."

The vault contains a technical plant and a  
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## Getting active on passive homes

*'Paper lamp' homes can save Longyearbyen money, but idea not practical for warehouses*

By MARK SABBATINI  
Editor

Living in a home made of lamp paper isn't such a hot idea in the Arctic, but the city may warm to places with the characteristics of one.

"Passive" homes with specialized materials and designs, while more expensive to build, can save money in the long run while reducing energy consumption, a study conducted for

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KVADRAT ARKITEKTER

This rendering of an energy-efficient passive building may eventually be the design for homes in Longyearbyen.

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

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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.



PARADOX INTERACTIVE

Ships exchange fire on the icy seas in the real-time strategy game "Naval War: Arctic Circle."

## The war at home arrives, for \$20

*Review: 'Naval War: Arctic Circle' a typical PC war game – except Svalbard's in the middle of battle*

By MARK SABBATINI

### Editor

For those impatient for global warming to hurry up and allow the spoils of the Arctic to be claimed, your moment has arrived.

The Russians have invaded and the other nations of the north have responded. The troops need a general to lead them, but you'll need to pay US\$20 for the honor. However, that fee includes a trip to the year 2030.

Couch commanders take charge of the troops of their choice in "Naval War: Arctic Circle," a real-time strategy game released today for computers running Windows Vista. If battling for home turf isn't enough "homer" incentive for Svalbard residents, the game was programmed by the Norwegian company Turbo Tape Games in cooperation with a bunch of Norway's military and cultural entities.

That said, there's nothing groundbreaking to make NWAC stand out in the crowded RTS

field and a few things likely to deter gamers who don't care about the Arctic content. A free demo is available to conduct reconnaissance.

Gameplay is solid, with a massive 35-million-kilometer map of open sea and coastline. The selection of military aircraft, subs and ships is impressive, if not as abundant as some competitors. The interface is relatively simple, without scads of menus to scroll through, and command is possible in abstract or precision detail.

Tutorials are engaging and instructive, and the single-player missions reward strategic thinking over sheer firepower. One-on-one online battles are also included, but not tested for this review.

Among the negatives, the graphics are a step below top-notch, yet the game struggles on computers not well above the minimum specs. Worse, you can only save games after each mission is completed. Hopefully the latter problem is the sort that triggers a lot of complaints and a quick patch.

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

## Icesheet

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

We don't dare joke about polar bears attacking tents after last summer's fatal tragedy, but the folks at ESPN have no trouble promoting the "classic basecamp comedy" of a prank attack. The latest installment of the Svalbard online series "Further Unplugged," viewable at [espn.com](http://espn.com), features "cinematographer Dan Gibeau running for his life." His colleagues, irritated after Gibeau accidentally set off the tripwire alarm twice in a two-week period, decided to take revenge for having their down time stressfully interrupted. They triggered the alarm and shouted warnings as a cameraman on all fours pawed Gibeau's tent while snarling. Gibeau woke up, grabbed his knife, and cut his way out of his sleeping bag and tent so he could flee into the relative safety of the group tent, all while cameras were rolling to capture his panicked reaction. Colleagues say



ESPN

Dan Gibeau flees his tent after a hoax polar bear attack during the filming of the ESPN series "Further Unplugged" on Spitsbergen.

he was plenty pissed, but took it well in retrospect. On the other hand, Gibeau said, "One of my first thoughts was to stab towards the polar bear with my knife ... it definitely wouldn't have been such a funny webisode if Edmands (the cameraman) had been stabbed."



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Lauren Redniss, a freelance book author, takes a picture of seeds from North Korea during a Feb. 29 tour inside the Svalbard Global Seed Vault. The tour by media and film crews, in observation of the vault's fourth birthday and a deposit of seeds from Syria, may be one of the last as a ban on anyone entering other than a few people working there was announced in late March due to the lack of a fire escape at the mountainside facility.

## Ministry to seek vault solution

### CLOSED, from page 1

fuel tank where a fire is possible, said Jan Olav Sæter, Longyearbyen's fire chief, in an interview with *Svalbardposten*. He said the visitor ban applies to all non-essential personnel, including the prime minister, until vault officials create an emergency exit and demonstrate safety issues are resolved.

Discussions by with Norway's Ministry of Agricultural by officials responsible for the vault's management are likely, but any solution isn't likely to include another access point, Fowler wrote.

"I doubt it would be feasible to construct such an exit," he wrote.

The ministry – which issues favorable press releases about vault visits, including a three-day media blitz observing the vault's fourth birthday in February – appears amicable to an alternative solution. Geir Dalholt, the department's director, told *Svalbardposten* the ministry will contact Statsbygg, the construction and property affairs advisor, to determine what action is possible.

"We hope that it will still be possible to use the vault for the purposes of providing information and hoping to promote Norway

abroad," she said.

A ban on visitors was enacted when the vault opened in 2008, with a group of dignitaries attending the opening intended as the lone exception. The ministry relented after considerable effort by vault advocates, stating a few important guests could enter.

But many visits have become media-driven, such as the February tours that turned a simple deposit of seeds from war-torn Syria and other countries into a multi-day event. Vault officials and workers spent considerable time on makework duties for camera crews. More than half of the estimated 40 groups visiting the vault in 2011 were media representatives.

Fowler and other vault advocates say the increased media friendliness has resulted in wider and more positive exposure that has generated support and funding from policymakers and other entities. He said his organization will continue lectures, writings and other advocacy activities, but nothing can replace access.

"We have no 'Plan B,'" Fowler wrote. "The seed vault is iconic; there is no substitute in terms of public education."

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

## HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

### Avalanche blasts detonated at Lunckefjell without permit

A company doing initial work at the new Lunckefjell mine site detonated four blasts at Skollfjellet to trigger an avalanche without waiting for permission from the governor to do so, according to Store Norske. Moderate avalanche danger in the area has slowed work at the site that began last month and Store Norske submitted an application March 21 to the governor to conduct the blasts. But Veidekke, a company contracted by Store Norske, "carried out a blast that should not have been done before there was any reply from the governor," said Roy Are Hanssen, the Store Norske official responsible for the project. He said they will notify the governor about the blasts, which Veidekke considered necessarily due to the uncertainty of continuing work due to the risk, and the delay should not affect the overall timing of construction.

### CO2 storage funds nixed by ministry; UNIS to try Climit

A five-million-kroner request for the CO2 storage lab from Bydrift and The University Centre in Svalbard has been rejected by Norway's Ministry of Justice. The ministry, after considering the request for seven months, stated it does not have the funds and recommended the application be directed toward Climit, Norway's national program for development of CO2 capture. The joint project in Svalbard was to investigate the possibility of using CO2 from the Bydrift energy plant for storage in Adventdalen. Marianne Aasen, Bydrift's director of operations, said the city infrastructure agency will now concentrate on sulfur and soot purification efforts expected to be operational by 2014, stating Climit funds require a large deductible. Former UNIS Director Gunnar Sand, who remains a consultant to the university, said they are meeting soon with Climit officials to discuss the request.

### Store Norske buys majority of shares in Pole Position

Store Norske has signed an agreement to acquire 55 percent of Pole Position, a Longyearbyen logistics company founded in 2005.

## Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Partly cloudy. E winds to 15 km/h. High -11C (-15C wind chill), low -15C (-23C wind chill). Sunrise 3:34a; sunset 10:32p	Cloudy. SE winds to 18 km/h. High -11C (-14C wind chill), low -15C (-23C wind chill). Sunrise 3:22a; sunset 10:45p	Partly cloudy. NE winds at 7 km/h. High -14C (-19C wind chill), low -18C (-24C wind chill). Sunrise 3:09a; sunset 10:58p	Partly cloudy. NW at 7 km/h. High -13C (-17C wind chill), low -18C (-23C wind chill). Sunrise 2:55a; sunset 11:13p
<b>Extended forecast:</b> Sunday, p. cloudy, -13C (-16C), -17C (-22C), light 20:51h; Monday, p. cloudy, -12C (-16C), -17C (-21C), light 21:30h; Tuesday, p. cloudy, -11C (-16C), -16C (-21C), light 22:00h; Wednesday, cloudy, -12C (-16C), -16C (-22C), light 23:01h			
<b>Data provided by yr.no</b>			

## Setting on the Rising



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

The sun disappears behind Ramfjellet across the sea from Longyearbyen near midnight Easter Sunday as a permanent twilight marks Svalbard's quickly-shortening "night" hours. A large percentage of residents and visitors spent the holiday on snowscooter and other outdoor excursions as temperatures reached a high of minus seven degrees Celsius on a sunny day with light winds. The 24-hour daylight of polar summer begins April 19 in Longyearbyen.

## Easy for Pole folks to break the ice

### CONQUER, from page 1

a ten-lap circuit to ensure accuracy) at the top of the world Saturday. Andrew Murray of Scotland won the race with a time of 4:17:08, more than two minutes ahead of Luis Alonso Marcos of Spain. Rebecca Newmann of Great Britain was the winner among five women with a time of 6:06:36. The slowest racer was Rhoda Jones of the United States, wearing race bib number 13 (go figure), with a time of 11:41:26.

Others reaching the North Pole by means other than the traditional ski-and-sled trek included a number of parachute jumpers and a man the official Barneo blog (<http://barneo-polus.livejournal.com>) identified only as Golikov, stating he got in the Russian book of Records as he "crossed the North Pole on a snowboard under a kite."

Happenings at Camp Barneo are often just as eye-catching, such as a science team led by Sergey Pisarev conducting daily dives into holes in the polar ice with air temperatures of around minus 25 degrees Celsius. Those looking for evening diversions could always listen

## A bright future for passive homes

### ALTERNATIVE, from page 1

Longyearbyen planners concludes. The report also examined potential savings and other benefits for passive commercial buildings such as warehouses, but concluded traditional structures remain preferable.

There are also considerable uncertainties in the potential monetary and energy savings of passive homes due to factors such as the source for the city's long-term energy supply, the study by Kvadrat Arkitekter and Rambøll notes.

"We will now go ahead with a sketch on the basis of this," wrote Marianne Aasen, director of operations for Bydrift, the city's infrastructure agency, in an e-mail interview. "The calculations will prove whether it is prof-

to a presentation of Russian satellite camps by leaders from the Russian Geographical Society.

Even everyday routines tend to deviate from social norms. Seni Glaister, part of a Stroll to the Pole expedition raising money for a British children's hospice, notes in a blog entry he was being observed by "a film crew, led by Phil" who thrust a microphone in his face and asked majestically what he thought of an approaching helicopter.

"(I) realized with a moment of clarity that my lack of eloquence was not the fault of my whisky-fuddled brain but more to do with the fact that the inane question had completely stumped me," Glaister wrote. "'That' I said, mustering as much contempt as I could manage through a face mask, 'is the most ridiculous question I have ever been asked. It's a (expletive) helicopter.'"

But the shock of the response gave way to laughter and they "continued to giggle uncontrollably for much of the flight."

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

itable given the materials you choose, and the design you choose."

"The report says nothing about what materials should be selected for it to be profitable, which we assume when we start the project. We will also strive to build compact slits in the building to minimize the surface, making a profitable passive."

The report states "the intention of the exterior materials and facade geometry is to give the building character hopefully resembling a lantern or paper lamp." At night light comes from behind glass panes in the greenhouse wall, while during the day light can filter in through a "translucent facade."

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## What's up

### April 14-15

Noon: Trappers' Trail dogsled race, starting at Forskningsparken. Details at [www.longyearbyenhundeklubb.no](http://www.longyearbyenhundeklubb.no).

### April 15

6 p.m.: Movie: "Fuck Up," Norwegian action/comedy, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel," British drama/comedy, no age limit determined. Kulturhuset.

### April 19

2 p.m.: Board of Culture and Leisure Authority Meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

6 p.m.: Bydrift board meeting. Næringsbygget 3, Newtontoppen room.

### April 22

6 p.m.: Movie: "Titanic" (3D), U.S. drama/romance, no age limit determined. Kulturhuset.

### April 23

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

### April 24

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

### April 25

6 p.m.: Movie: "Ildfjell," Icelandic drama, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

### April 26

7:30 p.m.: Theater monologue "Jeanne d'Arc" featuring Juni Dahr. Kulturhuset.

### April 28

10 a.m.: Svalbard Skimarathon. Details at [svalbardturn.no](http://svalbardturn.no).

### April 29

6 p.m.: Movie: "A Cat in Paris," French animated/children's film dubbed in Norwegian, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Tyrannosaur," British drama, no age limit determined.

## 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:

- 60-nation report: *Huge polar setbacks*
- *Alaska's polar bears losing their fur*
- *India goes to Arctic for help at home*
- *Duck-billed dinos had tough Arctic life*