



Heavy cruise loss

Light-fuel mandate may reduce number of ships by half in 2015, but decline may be short-lived

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

When a heavy-oil ban was enacted in Antarctica in 2011, the number of cruise ship passengers arriving that season was reduced by two-thirds. But the drastic decline was short-lived, with twice as many passengers arriving the following year.

Similarly, a heavy-oil ban in Svalbard taking effect in 2015 may reduce the number of arriving cruise ships by half – although the decline in passengers may not be as steep since they are generally arriving on larger vessels.

But the numbers are likely to rebound at least partially as cruise companies upgrade their fleet with ships capable of using lighter fuels and Svalbard tourism officials develop alternative sightseeing destinations to replace those that will be off-limits.

About 22,000 passengers are expected in Svalbard next year, compared to 38,000 passengers on 41 ships this year, said Ronny

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The Store Norske Mandskor, above, performs during a ceremony marking the start of construction of a new flue-gas treatment facility at the coal-fired power plant in Longyearbyen. At left, LAB Managing Director Thomas Feilenreiter, left, and Mayor Christin Kristoffersen secure the facility's "foundation stone" (a case containing cognac and a dated newspaper) in place. Photos by Mark Sabbatini / Icepeople.

Boozy flue remedy

New power plant emissions facility gets foundation built on cognac

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

After the struggle they went through to get funding, maybe it would have been more appropriate to pass the bottle around, especially since some of the dignitaries were hardly

dressed for the bitterly cold winds.

But instead a "foundation stone" consisting of a case containing a bottle of cognac, an issue of *Svalbardposten* and two pieces of coal was set into place during a ceremony

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From Russia with nuke sub

'Heavily armed' and potentially flawed submarine likely to conduct sea tests near Bjørnøya

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

The good news: it probably won't be carrying nuclear warheads.

But the expected deep-sea test of a new Russian nuclear-powered submarine west of Bjørnøya is raising plenty of other worries. In addition to ordinary concerns about accidents and malfunctions, much of the sub's equipment

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SEVMASH.RU

Russia's first fourth-generation, multi-purpose submarine, the *Severodvinsk*, conducts a test voyage in the White Sea. Tests during 2011 and 2012 revealed numerous flaws due to delays resulting in a debut 16 years later than planned.

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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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.

Seems like a good place to work up a sweat



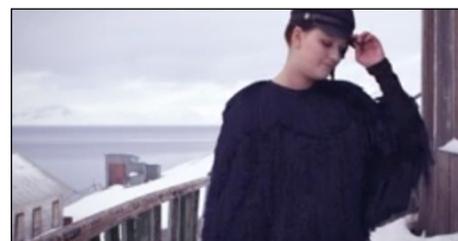
MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

The Store Norske Mandskor performs its first full-length concert Saturday inside the abandoned Taubanesentralen coal-processing facility. The capacity crowd, bundled in heavy coats to ward off the drafty chill, also got a narrative about the history of the prominent metal building on stilts and a chance to explore inside as sounds from the old mining days played through speakers.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

We're not dismissing her as a complete ditz, but **Norwegian pop star Frida Amundsen isn't coming off as someone hoping to be loved for her brain as much as her body in her latest video, shot recently in Svalbard.** "What If" splices various blurry snippets of scenes from Longyearbyen and Barentsburg with prototypical close-up lip-sync shots of the 21-year-old singer, also out of focus. Amundsen, whose idea of risk is clearly different than that of her famous namesake explorer, told *Harstad Tidende* the song is "all about everlasting love games of chance and how one can never be absolutely sure of anything, but still must dare to bet the whole heart." Um, sure, because that's a concept we've never heard in any pop song before. But here's an idea that might improve your odds: When you're going outside in the high Arctic and it's snowing, try putting on a coat. While plenty of guys are into Barbie levels of brain power, hypothermia generally isn't considered an alluring trait. Anyhow, the "melancholy and cool" video can be seen at tinyurl.com/on37g8y ... After thoroughly ridiculing a Huffington Post journalist last week for a feature story about the "world's northernmost university" being in Tromsø, we suppose kudos are in order for **Paul Watson, a Toronto Star columnist who gets it right –**



U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

What if...you wore a jacket and learned to focus? Maybe trying to snag a guy wouldn't be such a dramatic undertaking.

almost – in an article titled "Life at the Harvard of the Arctic" published last Saturday. His profile of The University Centre in Svalbard does a decent job of covering student activities ranging from field research to safety training ("orientation at the world's most northern university is a guaranteed blast, even without the cavorting of frosh week mixers or sorority rushes"), along with various aspects of Svalbard life such as "Little Thailand." The only glitch? He misspells the name of the university with a little "the" and "Center." OK, that's serious nitpicking, but we don't let just anybody escape this page unscathed ... And in other slightly errant portrayals of Svalbard, **Air Berlin is advertising "flights to the North Pole as part of a New Year's Eve 2014 promotional offer."** Wow, we had no idea flying to the Pole in the dead of winter was possible and, reading further, it seems maybe they're stretching their claims a bit. It's actually an unremarkable New Year's Eve flight to Longyearbyen which, the ad notes in non-headline text, is "located just 1,300 km from the North Pole." If that gives potential travelers a slight headache, it's likely to be nothing compared to what they'll experience on the return flight of their \$2,590 trip, which departs bright and early at 10 a.m. New Year's Day.



NORTH POLE MARATHON

Good luck finding this during the dark season: Still, if you gotta go at the North Pole in December, it's best if you don't need to flush.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Visit Svalbard Director Ronny Brunvoll, left, helps cruise ship passengers crowding into Svalbard Museum this week. The cruise season, which began last week, will be the last when ships using heavy oil can visit destinations such as Kongsfjorden, Magdalenefjorden and northwest Spitsbergen.

Heavy oil ban means not all is shipshape

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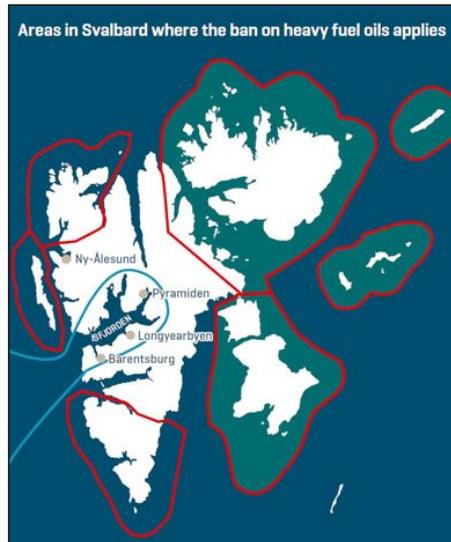
Brunvoll, director of Visit Svalbard. The total is based on booking reports from cruise lines, who set their sailing itineraries for the archipelago well in advance, so the estimated decline is not yet definitive.

"If it's going to be 30 percent, 40 percent, 50 percent, who knows?" Brunvoll said.

The ban on heavy fuel, which could cause major environmental damage in the event of a spill, poses two problems for cruise companies. Many of their vessels aren't designed for lighter fuels, and upgrades are costly and may take several years. A second problem more specific to Svalbard is the ban means ships carrying heavy oil cannot travel to popular destinations such as Ny-Ålesund, Kongsfjorden, Magdalenefjorden and northwest Spitsbergen.

But the industry faced similar problems – and offered similar predictions of drastic reductions in voyages – when the ban in Antarctica went into effect. Brunvoll said a similar rebound may occur in Svalbard since "it's the destination that fits the trend today."

One difference is Antarctica's heavy-oil ban applies to all areas below 60 degrees latitude south, while other northern cruise destinations such as Iceland, Greenland and Canada permit vessels with such fuels. But Brunvoll said Svalbard has the advantage of "a good location between Iceland and northern Norway," plus a well-developed infrastructure that can accommodate large groups of tourists far better than other "small and vulnerable cultures" in



CRUISE NORTHERN NORWAY & SVALBARD

the Arctic.

Brunvoll said tourism officials are now working on promoting alternative destinations where heavy-oil ships are still allowed, such as Isfjorden, Barentsburg and Pyramiden. While he acknowledged such work perhaps should have started a couple of years ago, he said it would have been difficult since cruise companies establish their itineraries one or two years in advance.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Climate change having wildly different effects on species

Pink-footed geese, barnacles, harbor seals, herring and capelin appear to be species that appear to be thriving in Svalbard due to climate change, while polar guillemots, ringed and hooded seals, and polar bears are suffering adverse effects, according to the Norwegian Polar Institute. The geese population has increased from 15,000 in 1965 to about 80,000 today due to wildlife management, and intensified agricultural activities and warmer climate in Europe that have driven the birds north. The guillemot population, classified as "near threatened," has been reduced by half during the past 20 years and a 90 percent decrease is predicted during the next 50 years.

Test shows Lunckefjell's coal may fetch premium price

An initial test of coal samples from the new Lunckefjell mine are in the "upper echelon" of the quality necessary for use by the metallurgical industry, which may boost Store Norske's struggling bottom line since such coal sells for higher prices than standard-quality coal used by power plants. Several further tests are needed to verify the coal's quality and only some of Lunckefjell's supply is likely to meet the higher standard, but "the results of the test are highly welcome news," said Aleksander Askeland, director of product and performance for Store Norske. A depressed market has lowered standard-energy coal prices to about 73 dollars per ton, but high-quality coal with a low content of sulfur and phosphorus frequently sells for five to ten dollars more.

Autopsy can't solve death of anesthetized polar bear

The cause of death of a polar bear discovered three days after she was anesthetized by Norwegian Polar Institute researchers remains unknown, according to the Norwegian Veterinary Institute. An autopsy revealed the one-year bear weighed 91 kilograms and was anesthetized with a dose calculated for an animal weighing about 80 kilograms. The bear was bleeding under the skin in several places, and the liver and spleen were swollen, but there were no other signs of injuries.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cloudy. NE winds to 25 km/h. High 3C (0C wind chill), low 2C (-3C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. N winds to 29 km/h. High 3C (0C wind chill), low 2C (-2C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. NE winds to 15 km/h. High 2C (-1C wind chill), low 1C (-2C wind chill).	Mostly clear. NE winds to 11 km/h. High 4C (1C wind chill), low 1C (-2C wind chill).
24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight
Extended forecast: Sunday, p. cloudy, 5C (3C), 4C (1C), light 24:00h; Monday, cloudy, 4C (2C), 3C (0C), light 24:00h; Tuesday, cloudy, 5C (2C), 4C (1C), light 24:00h; Wednesday, p. cloudy, 5C (2C), 4C (1C), light 24:00h			

Data provided by storm.no

A new look at a very old place



A low sun shines on the trapper's station at Fredheim in this panoramic photo that's part of a new interactive tour of the area at spitzbergen.de. The tour company captured exterior and interior shots beginning in February, which can be navigated with arrow and map icons, with descriptions of each scene also available. The site also features nearly 40 other virtual tours of Svalbard.

SPITZBERGEN.DE

400 tons of steel and a bottle of booze

EMISSIONS, from page 1

marking the official start of construction on a new flue-gas desulfurization system at Longyearbyen's coal-fired power plant. For Longyearbyen Mayor Christin Kristoffersen, shoveling the first ceremonial gravel on the case was a fitting act.

"It's been a very rocky road," she said.

The treatment facility is necessary to meet emissions-reduction requirement imposed by the Norwegian government, but a contentious political battle ensued before the city obtained sufficient funds due to the initially budgeted cost of 73 million kroner rising to 115 million. While much of the funding came from the central government, the city is also relying on loans, grants and higher electricity rates.

Flue-gas desulfurization removes sulfur dioxide from coal through a set of processes, including "wet scrubbing" coal exhaust via intensive contact with droplets of limestone milk. The resulting byproduct is gypsum, a material used commercially for fertilizers and by the building industry.

The Longyearbyen facility is being built by LAB, a French/German company that has constructed similar facilities throughout Europe. Thomas Feilenreiter, the company's general manager, said the facility will require 2,000 cubic meters of excavation, 400 tons of steel and 70,000 man-hours of work, and is expected to be completed by the end of 2015.

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

Russian nuke sub test raises deep concerns

SEVERODVINSK, from page 1

"significantly deteriorated" during a construction period that took 16 years longer than expected, according to *Barents Observer*, which asserts the vessel will be "heavily armed" with test weapons and other gear.

"In case of an accident, I am much more worried about releases from the nuclear reactor than contamination from the weapons," said Steinar Høibråten a nuclear safety expert for the Norwegian Defense Research Establishment.

The *Severodvinsk*, a 119-meter-long sub capable of carrying 24 cruise missiles, was originally scheduled to be launched in 1995. But numerous economical and technical problems delayed completion until June of 2010 and it was not launched until the September of 2011, according to the *Barents Observer* article.

About 2,000 technical flaws were discovered during months of tests in the White Sea

during 2011 and 2012, with a top Russian naval official noting "some systems in the sub have significantly deteriorated due to the long construction period," the article noted.

The voyages near Bjørnøya are necessary because the White Sea isn't deep enough to test the capabilities of the *Severodvinsk*, which can dive to a depth of 600 meters, according to *Rossiskaya Gazeta*.

Norway has no jurisdiction over the tests since the designated area is in international waters, wrote Ivar Moen, head of Norwegian Joint Headquarters' Communications Department, in an e-mail interview. He stated that while military tests of new equipment are common, monitoring them is important "to safeguard Norwegian interests and values" although "the extent and scope that we do this is not appropriate for me to comment."

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

What's up

June 18

11 a.m.: Ceremonial laying of foundational stone for new flue gas treatment plant at Longyearbyen's power station by Mayor Christin Kristoffersen.

June 21

6 p.m.: Midsummer party, featuring bonfire, barbecue and music. Svalbard Sailing Club.

June 22

11 a.m.: Mass. Svalbard Church.

June 23

6 p.m.: Polar "Summer Boot Camp," offering "very tough and fun training activities." Contact polarpuls.lyb@gmail.com for details.

June 24

7 p.m.: Evening Mass and fireplace social. Svalbard Church.

June 29

11 a.m.: Mass. Svalbard Church.

July 20-22

Theater workshop for youths ages 14-18 featuring instructors from the Nordic Light, with youths from other Scandinavian countries also participating. Course is free. For details contact birgitte.dahl.knutsen@lokalstyre.no.

Aug. 10

7 p.m.: Movie: "Sex Tape," U.S. comedy, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

Aug. 17

7 p.m.: Move: "Guardians of the Galaxy" (3D), U.S. action/sci-fi, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

Aug. 20

6 p.m.: Movie: "How to Train Your Dragon 2" (3D), U.S. animated family film, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

Aug. 24

5 p.m.: Movie: "How to Train Your Dragon 2," U.S. animated family film, ages 7 and up. Kulturhuset.

7 p.m.: Movie: "Hercules" (3D), U.S. action/adventure, no age limit specified. 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:

- *World's ecosystems worth \$143 trillion/yr.*
- *May of 2014 the warmest May ever*
- *The winners of Antarctic climate change*
- *How climate change is ruining your beer*