



Land sale nears

Deal for Austre Adventfjord may close 'at any time' – and Norway may not be the winning bidder

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

The finalists have been announced – and it's down to Norway and 41 other countries.

In other words, pretty much everybody is still a potential purchaser of a huge tract of land near Longyearbyen as the owner is declaring the sale is imminent, according to NRK. That's likely to fuel the fears of Norwegian officials and international observers that a potentially hostile nation such as China or Russia may be able to considerably strengthen its strategic presence in the Arctic.

"The sale of the property may be executed at any time," said Sveinung O. Flaaten, an attorney representing a family in Bergen that owns the land, in an interview with the news agency. "There has been tremendous interest in the property in the international market."

No details about the potential purchaser of the Austre Adventfjord property, or the price

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NICK COBBING / GREENPEACE

"Oscar-winning, martini-swilling" actress Emma Thompson steps off the Greenpeace ship *Esperanza* to explore the ice at the "North Pole," according to various media organizations, who didn't quite earn rave reviews for their coverage of her "Save the Arctic" voyage to Svalbard last week.

Scoring Emma

Did actress' Arctic trip halt oil drilling, end plastic bag use or change minds on an 'impossible' issue? Shockingly, not all answers are 'no'

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

Emma Thompson doesn't star in movies like "Guardians of the Galaxy," so it's not like she was going to save the planet in a few hours.

Still, the British actress willingly accepted the only-slightly-less-ambitious lead in the latest "Save the Arctic" sequel. The storyline: Hoping a 10-day voyage on a Greenpeace boat around Svalbard would inspire nations, oil companies and ordinary folks to go all out to combat climate change.

So, treating the world as Rotten Tomatoes

rather than a stage, how well did she score on the major plot points?

Get nations to halt Arctic oil drilling

It turns out invading another country or two while committing a few atrocities against humanity is the most effective way to get governments to enact major limits on Arctic drilling. Since Thompson can't match Vladimir Putin's villainous, her blunt and biting quips at Tony Abbot and other global leaders wasn't going to cut it.

Verdict: The nays have it.

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Russian festival gets bold in old ways

Five-day event brings music and spirit of 'forgotten' pomors to Barentsburg and Pyramiden

By **MARK SABBATINI**
Editor

The Russians are making a big effort – and a big gamble – to fill a big gap in Svalbard's cultural scene.

A five-day festival featuring the unfamiliar sounds of northern Russian is scheduled to begin Aug. 28, with nearly all of the concerts taking place in Barentsburg and Pyramiden. Not

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COURTESY OF TRUST ARCTICUGOL

Ascetics, a modern electronic/jazz band, will represent the newer element of music from northern Russia during the inaugural GRUMANT festival in Svalbard from Aug. 28 to Sept. 1.

Who's to blame and how to express your wrath

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Icepeople is published weekly (or thereabouts) on Tuesdays (or thereabouts), with printed copies available free on a limited basis in Longyearbyen. Additional printed copies are available locally and by mail upon request. Charges are on an "at cost" basis.

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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.

Shocker: Prehistoric monsters were Toons



VICTORIA ENGELSCHIØN NASH / NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC



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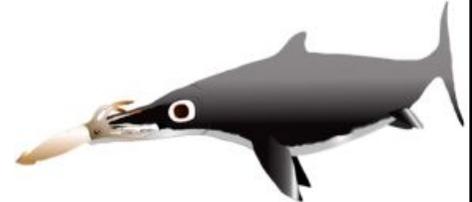


IMAGE COURTESY OF AUBREY ROBERTS

Patrick Druckenmiller, top, uses pink ribbons to mark fossil specimens discovered on Janusfjellet as part of this year's hunt for prehistoric reptiles by a team lead by Oslo paleontologist Jørn Hurum. Expedition members announced Saturday an ichthyosaur fossil found during a previous trip, the tail of which is seen at lower left, is a new species of the sea reptile. It has been named *janusaurus lundi*, after the mountain where it was found and after Bjørn Lund, an expedition volunteer from 2006 to 2012. At lower right, the 147-million-year-old reptile is depicted in an artist's reconstruction. The expedition can be followed at its blog at tinyurl.com/ohgykt5.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

Probably the most fun thing about the new trash shack on the beach (if you're not up-in-arms about it) are the "tiles" next to the front door with the names of the evildoers and/or the contents of the containers that somehow found their way from ships to the north shores of Spitsbergen. But you might not be able to heckle all the culprits who made the Wall of Shame possible since some of the containers are at least a few decades old. A "tile" above the front door reading "food use only" is also intriguing since, while the interior is colorful and there's a study log bench that can seat at least two comfortably, suggesting a picnic inside a huge pile of trash isn't the most romantic of propositions ... For those who are wanting to get medieval about all that activist effort and money going toward the cabin of crud instead of a more practical project, a new video filmed in Svalbard with heavy "Game of Thrones"



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Jabbing the hut: Solveig Egeland, overlord of the seaside shack of trash, is sparing no effort to shame the suppliers of the building materials scavenged from supposedly supreme shores.

overtones may set the right mood. The British electronic quartet Clean Bandit drapes cellist/vocalist Grace Chatto in a lush fur, puts her at the helm of a dogsled on wheels and the edge of a mountaintop lake, and then does the cut-every-two-seconds thing with scenes in the Morocco and Sahara deserts. Other folks appear and disappear at erratic intervals, perhaps in tribute to the anyone-can-die-anytime-without-dignity mentality of its cable cousin. Or maybe not, as violinist Neil Amin-Smith swears to officialcharts.com "it definitely wasn't intentional," although he admits "in all her furs with the barren landscape is quite Khaleesi!" The video is at tinyurl.com/ogy2bz2.



COURTESY OF CLEAN BANDIT

'You know nothing, on snow': Otherwise you wouldn't be using sled dogs during the middle of summer to try to look like a femme fatale badass.



COURTESY OF GREENPEACE

So how much fuel and how many plastic bags were involved in getting y'all here? Since that's a question a lot of climate change skeptics are asking, it's possible images like this from Emma Thompson's Excellent Arctic Adventure weren't captivating enough to win them over.

'Emma's trip' sees shocking plot twist

THOMPSON, from page 1

At least get oil company CEOs to rethink their Arctic drilling plans

Considering the execs at companies like ExxonMobil are willing to defy sanctions and "cooperate" with Putin so they can drill in the Russian Arctic, appeals to their morality don't seem like a high percentage bet. Then there's the aspect of being on a set provided by Greenpeace, which keeps pissing off oil companies with blockades and other protests, not to mention headlines like "Statoil disappointed, Greenpeace glad" when an Arctic project strikes a dry hole.

Verdict: Also no, but the execs might give her effort high marks for comedy.

Sway people with seemingly hardcore views on a vital global issue

Probably depends on how one interprets this online comment by "SmirkingLiberal": "Oh. My. God. I didn't realize an actor had endorsed this. I'm converted. How could I have been so blind?! I mean...she was in a MOVIE." But people suspecting that response to an article in *The Guardian* is not entirely sincere shouldn't abandon all hope an Arctic Road to Damascus conversion is possible. Consider that Thompson, in comments widely-publicized in May, declared Twitter will "kill a generation" and she would "rather have root canal treatment for the rest of her life" than stoop so low as to Tweet herself. And yet she became a

#SaveTheArctic fanatic while aboard Greenpeace's *Esperanza* and near the end of her feed for the voyage provided the project's big plot twist by confessing "strangely addicted to the 140 characters now. @stephenfry was right, damn him."

Verdict: Yes, but only in aid of further destroying the planet.

Provoke more Rolling Coal convoys

These are the folks who attempt to make us feel less threatened by emissions by modifying vehicles to emit seemingly impossible amount of black smoke, which they then often drive slowly in convoys that darken the landscape (but only temporarily - see?). But since folks who hang out in chat forums like ar15.com don't tend to see movies like "Remains of the Day" they likely had no idea they might need to counter Thompson's appeals.

Verdict: Mass fail.

Call media attention to her cause/career

Granted, she got write-ups in most of the UK media and other major publications like *Vanity Fair*, but various Kim Kardashian nonsense such as her new book of selfies and Justin Bieber getting beat up by Orlando Bloom overshadowed them by a ratio of about 100 to one.

Verdict: Also mass fail. But maybe more of all of us than Emma.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Tagging of polar bears under fire after one snagged in net

Scientists are defending themselves against numerous objections to fitting polar bears with ear tags to monitor their habits after a tag on a female bear got snagged in a fishing net in northern Spitsbergen last month. The bear was able to free itself without a struggle several hours after first being observed when it was apparently spooked by the approach of a helicopter that carried researchers who intended to drug the bear and remove the net. A majority of people responding to an online *Svalbardposten* survey stated they wanted an end to tagging or more stringent design requirements for the tags. Jon Aars, a polar bear researcher at the Norwegian Polar Institute, said bears have long been fitted with tags throughout the Arctic and he is only aware of one similar previous incident, which occurred a decade ago and ended similarly without incident. He said researchers may consider the possibility of adjusting a small disc-shaped geological measurement device on the tag, which was the part that got snagged.

Man hospitalized after fingers trapped in gear at Lunckefjell

A man whose fingers became trapped in equipment while working in the Lunckefjell mine Thursday was flown to a hospital in Tromsø for treatment, according to officials with Store Norske and the Governor of Svalbard. The severity and specific of his injuries were not disclosed. "There is ongoing research to find out what happened, but for now we are concentrating first and foremost on taking care of him," said Per Andersson, Store Norske's administrative director. The incident will be investigated by the Norwegian Labor Inspectorate and possibly Svalbard police officials.

Big DUI gets big punishment

A man in his 50s employed in Longyearbyen who was arrested in June for driving with a blood alcohol content of 0.24 percent has been sentenced to 24 days in jail, fined 60,000 kroner and will lose his driver's license for two-and-a-half years. The man, who admitted to court to consuming up to 11 drinks at a bar, was arrested after observers saw him drive away and notified police.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

| Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|---|---|--|
| Partly cloudy. SE winds to 29 km/h. High 7C (3C wind chill), low 5C (1C wind chill). | Clear. E winds to 22 km/h. High 7C (3C wind chill), low 5C (2C wind chill). | Cloudy. NE winds to 25 km/h. High 7C (4C wind chill), low 4C (1C wind chill). | Partly cloudy. NE winds to 25 km/h. High 6C (3C wind chill), low 4C (1C wind chill). |
| 24-hour daylight | 24-hour daylight | 24-hour daylight | 24-hour daylight |
| Extended forecast: Sunday, p. cloudy, 6C (3C), 4C (1C), light 24:00h; Monday, cloudy, 5C (2C), 4C (1C), light 24:00h; Tuesday, cloudy, 5C (2C), 4C (2C), light 24:00h; Wednesday, cloudy, 5C (2C), 4C (2C), light 24:00h | | | |

Data provided by storm.no

Joining Roger Rabbit in tune town



COURTESY OF SMALLTOWN TOMMY

Smalltown Tommy, a Båstad rock band seen here performing on a day cruise from Longyearbyen to Barentsburg last year, will return to Svalbard on Friday for the opening night of the Gruvebusens Høstfestival at Mary-Ann's Polarrigg. Three concerts by various bands plus a "karaoke show with Roger Rabbit" are scheduled both Friday and Saturday starting at 8 p.m.

Festival brings pomor pride to Svalbard

GRUMANT, from page 1

only are the Russian settlements rarely used for concerts, but the festival is taking place at a time of year when other attempts to launch festivals recently have failed because there are few tourists and many locals are still on holiday.

But Timofej Rogozhin, a lead organizer for the GRUMANT festival, stated in an e-mail interview the event will revive an "undeservingly forgotten" part of Svalbard's traditional culture. The festival's name is what Russian pomor hunters and fishers called the archipelago centuries before it was "discovered" by Willem Barentsz in 1596.

"(It is) not *kalinka-malinka* Soviet kind of music, but with traditional folklore, typical for

northern Russian regions," he wrote, adding people from that region have started working in Barentsburg during the past year or two.

As for the timing, "every new project is a risk," he wrote. "What's the point to live not trying?"

Most of the 15 concerts by eight different music "projects" will focus on older folk and ethnic music, with many of the performances scheduled outdoors, weather permitting.

The full interview with Rogozhin, plus a list of performers and schedules, is available at icepeople.net/grumant. For more information about the festival contact rvsh@arcticugol.ru.

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

Attorney: Austre Adventfjord sale imminent

LAND, from page 1

for the 217-square-kilometer tract across the fjord from Longyearbyen, were revealed by Flaaten. The land, one of only two private tracts in Svalbard and representing 0.35 percent of the archipelago's total land area, is being offered to all 42 countries that have signed the Svalbard Treaty.

"Our principle will be the highest bidder wins the bid for the property," Flaaten said.

China is seen as one of the most potentially interested – and worrisome – foreign purchasers due to its aggressive efforts to establish a strong foothold in the resource-rich Arctic. The Austre Adventfjord property contains an estimated 20 million tons of coal, worth nearly 10 billion kroner at current prices and enough to sustain mining in Svalbard for 20 years.

But the new owner, especially a foreigner, will likely face huge legal struggles to reap some – or any – of those riches. Among the potential battles are existing mining claims, ensuring new projects comply with the Svalbard Treaty and the area's strict environmental laws, and a 1938 "mischief" clause requiring the Norwegian government's approval if the property is sold to a foreign entity.

Chinese tycoon Huang Nubo announced in



WIKICOMMONS

The private Austre Adventfjord tract represents 0.35 percent of Svalbard's total land mass.

May he was offering a bid of "more than" 24 million kroner with plans to turn the land into a "holiday village for the Chinese." But some observers questioned if the bid was actually on behalf of the Chinese government and Nubo seemed to know little about the area, at one point declaring "I didn't know there was so much ice there."

The Norwegian government, which owns virtually all land in Svalbard, announced days later it would attempt to purchase the property, resulting in widespread media reports erroneously declaring foreign bidders had been "sunk" or "scuppered." But the owners insisted the land will still be sold to whoever is willing to pay the highest price.

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

What's up

Aug. 12

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

Aug. 15-16

Gruvebusens Høstfestival (miner's harvest festival), featuring live music, karaoke and other activities. Mary-Ann's Polarrigg. Starts at 8 p.m. both nights.

Aug. 16-17

Basic sea kayaking course. 9 a.m.-5 p.m. both days. Contact Svalbard Sailing Club at svalbardseil@gmail.com for details.

Aug. 17

11 a.m.: Mass. Svalbard Church.

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

Aug. 19

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

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

11 a.m.: Mass. Svalbard Church.

5 p.m.: Movie: "How to Train Your Dragon 2." Kulturhuset.

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

Aug. 26

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

Aug. 27

6 p.m.: Movie: "Hercules." Kulturhuset.

Aug. 29

7 p.m.: Premier of movie "Beatles," Norwegian action/comedy, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

Aug. 31

5 p.m.: Movie: "Børning," Norwegian action/comedy, 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:

- *Tromsø in midst of a real estate boom*
- *Canada's new map: We own the N. Pole*
- *Top PR firms abandon climate deniers*
- *Giant penguins once roamed Antarctica*