



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

The future home of an expedition log and piece salvaged from an airship attempting to reach the North Pole are pointed out by Stefano Poli, co-owner of the Spitsbergen Airship Museum, which reopened Monday in a new building across the street from Svalbard Museum.

One if by air...

Airship museum reopens in new building after two-year shutdown

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

When historic Arctic explorers are your heroes, facing years of diligence and hardships to create a lasting tribute to them doesn't seem like quite a daunting task.

Stefano Poli is finally completing his modern conquest, as the Spitsbergen Airship Museum reopened Monday in a new and improved location after closing two years ago. The two-story

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Two if by sea...

Pair completes 72-day reverse polar trek with skis and kayaks

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

Usually, completing that grueling trek to the North Pole is literally the pinnacle of an epic journey. For Audun Tholfsen and Timo Palo, it was just the beginning.

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COURTESY OF ARCTIC RETURN ADVENTURE TOUR

Audun Tholfsen and Timo Palo stand on the shore near Longyearbyen after completing a 72-day reverse polar traverse from the North Pole as a tribute to Fridtjof Nansen's failed 1893-96 expedition.

...and lots of icky stuff by land



TV2

Geir Wing Gabrielsen removes a tick from a seabird at Kongsfjorden. The insects are a new presence due to warmer temperatures.

Ticks, more pollutants seen in Svalbard due to climate change

By MARK SABBATINI
Editor

If we're going to be invaded by species, why can't it be something pleasant like strawberries?

Instead, seabirds nesting at Kongsfjorden are being infested with ticks, according to a researcher studying the impact changes as such global warming are having in the area.

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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.

Thai one on this weekend



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Workers put the finishing touches and polish in the dining room at the new restaurant A Taste of Thai, which is scheduled to open at 10 a.m. Saturday. The 170-square-meter restaurant is a drastic remodeling of the space in Lompensentret long occupied by Kafé Busen before it closed in 2009. The new owners, Rung-Arun Sianglam and her husband Wiggo Lund, signed a contract for the location last September and hoped to open in May, but were forced to wait due to delays in construction work. It is the first of two eateries scheduled to open during the new few months, with a sushi restaurant featuring chefs from Japan scheduled to debut in October.

Icesheet

Random bits of the week's weirdness:

This seems to be a "thanks for kudos, but..." kind of week in the news. Longyearbyen has been named one of the world's "12 Most-Colorful Towns" by *Budget Travel*, along with cherished destinations such as San Francisco, Berlin and Ittoqqortoormiit, Greenland. The accompanying photos are mostly beautiful without a doubt, but the image of Longyearbyen seems a bit sparse in the pallet. And the description isn't exactly the most vibrant thing we've ever read: "At the altitude of Longyearbyen, Norway, above the Arctic Circle, about the only warm things around are the rusty reds of many of the town's homes." Can we agree we're secure enough in our love of this town based on its legit strengths to acknowledge there's dozens of small Norwegian towns whose color range doesn't include quite so much brown (or white, depending upon the time of year)? ... It's also wonderful to see the



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

No, you can't bring your MSR stove into the Svalbard Global Seed Vault and feast on veggies after a nuclear war.

Svalbard Global Seed Vault still getting favorable write-ups a few months after visitors were banned, but the stage managing and oft-misplaced narratives seem inevitably bound to the coverage. A *National Geographic* photo essay titled "Give Peas a Chance" (no, it's not even close to the first wordplay on the phrase) leads with a shot of vault press guru Cary Fowler cradling two glass vials of peas outside the underground facility. Nifty, but if you come up here looking for actual edibles after a global disaster you might end up more than a little peckish. Similarly, Fowler's one of four experts selected by *The New York Times* to debate "Does Captive Breeding Distract From Conservation?" But with the question and other experts focusing mostly on animals, the inclusion of his seed essay feels a bit misplaced.



SCIENCE FACTION / SUPERSTOCK

Um, are prospective travelers really going to see this as one of Earth's most-colorful destinations?



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

The new two-story building housing the Spitsbergen Airship Museum, located across the street from Svalbard Museum, is easier for arriving cruise ship tourists to reach on foot than the old location near Svalbard Church that closed in 2010.

Airship museum takes flight again

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building recaptures three flight expeditions from Spitsbergen to the North Pole during the early 1900s that ended in a mixture of failure, triumph, heroism, tragedy, comedy and idiocy.

The airship museum initially opened in late 2008 in the old Svalbard Museum across from Svalbard Church, with a large ceremony featuring presentations by city and business leaders. Monday's reopening across the street from the current Svalbard Museum, close to the seaside at Sjøskrenten, was far more subdued with a mere four visitors during the day.

But for Poli, who has worked since 2005 to establish the museum he co-owns with Ingunn Løyning, it was a triumph he was confident of achieving despite numerous setbacks with the initial facility.

"I was sure it would happen because I believed in this project," he said.

The visitor total improved to 62 today with a large cruise ship docking in Longyearbyen, even though promotional efforts are still limited. The website (www.spitsbergenairshipmuseum.com) hasn't been updated since the closure of the first facility, for instance, although Poli said he plans to do so soon now that most of the work necessary to open the new location is complete.

The airship museum is scheduled to be open the same hours as Svalbard Museum, currently 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. every day.

"Of course when there is a boat with people in town we are open at night," Poli said.

Touring the museum along the designated path (arrows lighting the way still need to be installed) tells the tales of three expeditions with photos, works, salvaged items and videos up to the length of feature films:

- Walter Wellman's unsuccessful attempt to fly over the North Pole in the airship "America" in 1907 and 1909.

- The first successful flyover of the Pole by Roald Amundsen, Lincoln Ellsworth and Umberto Nobile in the airship "Norge" in 1926. But the quest ended in infamy as bad weather forced the trio to land in tiny northern Alaska village instead of Paris. The indifferent Inuit residents first greeted the explorers with indifference and then stripped the aircraft for parts. The explorers then fought a bitter war in the press about whose home country deserved credit for the flyover.

- Nobile's attempted flyover in the airship "Italia" in 1928 as a result of the feud. The airship crashed, and he was arrested and publicly disgraced when the rescue resulted in the death of Amundsen and numerous others.

The expeditions are poorly documented and frequently misunderstood by historians and casual observers, Poli said.

The new museum retains the former's modern decor that's heavy on textured glass and metal, plus older touches such as curtains made from old sails of *Noorderlicht* and three wood stoves as the only heat source.

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

HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN

VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

Reducing vehicle use with prizes, restrictions proposed

A series of proposals for reducing motor vehicle traffic in Longyearbyen has been submitted to the municipal council by Kari Haugstulen, a freelance guide who said she is surprised how much residents use vehicles to travel short distances. "I did not think there was a need for cars here," she said. "Two or three kilometers, the longest street goes, but people still use the car." Haugstulen, who moved to Longyearbyen 15 months ago, is proposing rewards for people who walk to work, converting Hilmar Rekstens street to pedestrian and bike paths, and establishing snowmobile-free zones in areas such as Longyearbreen. She said there should also be snowmobile-use zones to compensate for the restrictions. Bøye Bøland, a city survey engineer, said a traffic safety project is already underway which will be discussed by the council this fall. "Our main focus has been school safety, and that young people should feel safe in traffic," she said. "We have thought most about safety for pedestrians and cyclists."

Longyearbyen School gets more space starting this fall

Longyearbyen School will have more space beginning this fall as the city has acquired a new pavilion outside the main building. The auxiliary building will house the recreation program and first-grade students. The expansion, including converting vacated space in the main building, is expected to cost about 17 million kroner. The city's desire to complete the project quickly resulted in Bydrift bypassing the bidding process and awarding the contract to local builder Sandmo & Svenkerud.

Polar Girl runs aground with 23 passengers, but no harm

The *Polar Girl* ran aground today for unknown reasons at Grumant in Isfjorden, resulting in the Svalbard governor's office bringing the 23 passengers back to Longyearbyen by helicopter and rescue boat. There were no injuries or reports of major damage and a second cruise vessel towed the *Polar Girl* off the ground during the evening.

Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Partly cloudy. NW winds to 11 km/h. High 6C (6C wind chill), low 4C (2C wind chill).	Partly cloudy. W winds to 11 km/h. High 5C (5C wind chill), low 4C (1C wind chill).	Light rain. SW winds to 7 km/h. High 3C (1C wind chill), low 1C (-1C wind chill).	Cloudy. N winds at 3 km/h. High 2C (2C wind chill), low 1C (1C wind chill).
24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight	24-hour daylight
Extended forecast: Sunday, p. cloudy, 3C (0C), 1C (-1C), light 24:00h; Monday, p. cloudy, 3C (1C), 1C (-1C), light 24:00h; Tuesday, cloudy, 3C (3C), 2C (0C), light 24:00h; Wednesday, cloudy, 2C (2C), 1C (0C), light 24:00h			
Data provided by yr.no			



COURTESY OF ARCTIC RETURN ADVENTURE TOUR

A dashed line in red shows the route followed by Audun Tholfsen and Timo Palo during their reverse polar traverse, encountering hazards such as poor sea ice conditions and a polar bear attack.

Ice, bears offer scares on trek

PADDLE, from page 1

The men completed a 72-day reverse polar traverse from the Pole to Longyearbyen on July 3, traveling about 1,200 kilometers on skis and 400 kilometers in kayaks. The expedition was a homage to Fridtjof Nansen's failed attempt to reach the Pole and his dramatic return to Spitsbergen between 1893 and 1896.

"After all these hesitations, three years of postponing, exhaustive preparations and little hope with the rather bad sea ice season, I can tell you honestly we were both scared pretty often," Palo wrote in the newest entry of the expedition's blog (www.arcticreturntour.com/blog.html). "There were many moments before the trip and during the trip when we felt that this is not going to work out. The only thing you can do at these moments is to keep going and somehow keep hope alive."

Their numerous setbacks and sometimes life-threatening perils were a true reflection of Nansen's journey. He hoped to reach the North Pole by ship and then make the return trip via Spitsbergen. But abandoned the vessel for dog sleds after two years as the icepack thwarted his plans. He and ship stoker Hjalmar Johansen reached a record latitude of 86°14' north before turning back on April 7, 1895.

Nansen reunited with his ship, the *Fram*, in 1896, but was only able to reach 85°57' north before giving up his quest.

The trip by Tholfsen and Palo was meant

to retrace Nansen's intended path for his return journey from the Pole. They had a far easier start, flying by helicopter to about 11 kilometers south of the North Pole. But covering the remaining distance north offered a taste of what was to come, as rigid ice limited them to about three kilometers a day – and strong winds blew their ice floes back two kilometers at night.

The expedition's blog also details, in a third-person narrative, several encounters with polar bears, including an attack by an apparently "very hungry" polar bear who stalked them from the water.

"At first this bear moved around them, watching and sniffing," the June 11 entry notes. "He slowly approached, appeared and disappeared from different places again and again. Hid himself behind floating ice and swam in the water. Timo and Audun were on a block of ice and tried to keep an eye on him. On one moment they didn't saw the polar bear any more. And after waiting for some time they thought that the king of Arctic turned to his own way."

"But bear was back. Suddenly he attacked them, jumping out of the water on the iceblock where Timo and Audun were standing. The distance between them was only three meters. It was huge luck that they were able to react so quickly. A revolver shot scared the bear away."

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

Climate change brings more invaders

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Kongsfjorden, more than any other place in the Arctic, reveals the consequences climate change is having, said Geir Wing Gabrielsen, a professor at The University Center in Svalbard and head of the Norwegian Polar Institute's research on environmental toxins.

Those include elevated levels of pollutants such as PCBs and DDT in the soil. The ticks are also newly migrating from the mainland

and being discovered in the birds.

"We will find more parasites and diseases in these populations, and it is a result of it becoming warmer," he told TV2 in an interview.

Temperatures in Kongsfjorden have risen three to four degrees Celsius during the past five or six years, Gabrielsen said. Big changes in the food chain and marine life are resulting.

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

What's up

July 1 - Aug. 5

Movie theater at Kulturhuset closed for renovations.

Aug. 12

8 p.m.: Movie "The Amazing Spider-Man" (3D), U.S. action/thriller, no age limit determined. Kulturhuset.

Aug. 15

Deadline for master plan for water supply.

Aug. 19

8 p.m.: Movie: "The Dark Knight Rises," U.S./British action, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

Aug. 26

6 p.m.: Movie: "Madagascar 3," U.S. animated/family film dubbed in Norwegian, no age limit determined. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Kon-Tiki," Norwegian dram, no age limit specified. Kulturhuset.

Aug. 28

6-8 p.m.: Activity fair. Demonstrations and signups for Longyearbyen's recreational clubs. Svalbardhallen. More information at svalbardturn.no.

Aug. 29

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

Aug. 31

6 p.m.: Movie: "Til Ungdommen," Norwegian documentary about youth activism in the summer of 2011, premier screening, no age limit determined. Kulturhuset.

Sept. 2

6 p.m.: Movie: "Til Ungdommen," Norwegian documentary about youth activism in the summer of 2011, no age limit determined. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Albert Nobbs," U.S. drama/romance, 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:

- Norway's gov't steps in to stop oil strike
- Arctic coal in Canada strongly opposed
- First half of 2012 warmest ever in U.S.
- Cows freaked out about global warming