



Visitors walk along one of the main streets in Barentsburg during a short visit Friday. Cruise ship traffic was slower than last year, with only one ship a week instead of two, as Svalbard as a whole continues to feel effects of the global recession and other setbacks. Russia has announced large-scale plans for boosting tourism, science research and other activities in the settlement.



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

## BIG WEEK IN BARENTSBURG

*Birth, death, tragedy and triumph – plus a huge swap of residents*

By **MARK SABBATINI**  
Editor

A celebration, followed by frenetic work due to an economic revival, then another celebration where a huge portion of the residents were different. Finally, mourning one of its greatest tragedies ever.

Tourists on day trips to Barentsburg often find the streets of the Russian settlement almost completely deserted. But anyone staying just a bit longer experienced a jam-packed week both historical and lucrative, although

it's safe to say everyone earned the merriment that came with it.

The settlement is run by the state-owned company Trust Arktikugol, which celebrated its 80th birthday Aug. 22. The theater at the culture center was packed as dances, songs and speeches came from youths and adults, including Svalbard's Russian and Norwegian leaders.

"I hope there are many creative years remaining ahead of us, said Aleksander P.

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### Flurry of events reflect clashes, cooperation

By **MARK SABBATINI**  
Editor

That dizziness isn't a hangover from Barentsburg's birthday and mining parties. It's the head-spinning number of Russia/Norway developments coinciding with the festivities.

Lucrative oil pursuits, cooperating on research to protect the environment and leaving

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## Changing the rules about polar bears

*Mandatory protection for people traveling outside settlements is sought by environment minister*

By **MARK SABBATINI**  
Editor

Changing the law to require increased protection measures against polar bear attacks by people traveling outside of Svalbard's settlements is being sought by Norway's Ministry of the Environment.

A fatal attack on a teenager Aug. 5 at Tempelfjorden that injured four other campers is raising numerous questions about awareness,

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ARLID LYSSAD / SYSSELMANNEN

Rescuers approach a camp at Tempelfjorden where a 13-member group from the United Kingdom was attacked by a polar bear Aug. 5, killing one youth and wounding four others.

## 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.

## Paddle without a creek



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

Pia Bronken Eidesen, 7, tries a kayak during Svalbard Turn's activity fair Thursday at Svalbardhallen. Her father, Ruben, said she has been involved in swimming, gymnastics, football and "this summer she was doing some climbing." The organization also offers numerous other activities ranging from target shooting to chess. Information is available at [www.svalbardturn.no](http://www.svalbardturn.no).

## Briefly

### Longyearbyen to test LED street lights this fall

How many light bulbs does it take to change a bureaucrat?

Some of Longyearbyen's street lights will be fitted with LED bulbs in September and October as a test to determine if the new bulbs are worth using citywide.

"The project objective is to explain the potential/conditions with regard to energy conservation, light pollution and possible reduction of ongoing operating and maintenance costs by replacing current lighting with LED lighting," notes a statement by Bydrift, the agency responsible for the city's utilities.

Lights will be installed along half of Hilmar Rekstens street, from the power plant to Bykaia along Nyveien and in the port area.

A report making a recommendation is expected next June.

### Veterinarian offers shots for rabies Sept. 26-30

A visiting veterinarian will be in Longyearbyen Sept. 26 to 30 to give dogs vaccination shots for rabies.

The disease is rarely analyzed in Svalbard's wildlife, but a rabid fox attacked four dogs at Hopen in January. It was the first such attack since 1999, but more than 20 animals have been diagnosed with rabies in since 1980, according to the National Veterinary Institute.

Appointments can be scheduled by calling Harald Os at 9017 6618. The shots will be given at the governor's Sjøgarasjen facility.

## Icesheet

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

Here's another of those "mother of all mixed blessings moments:" The Northern Lights, lovely as their are, can also knock out cell phone service and we're approaching the peak period of an 11-year cycle of activity, according to the Norwegian Mapping Authority. The agency is using its two stations in Svalbard in particular to monitor activity so it can issues timely warnings, *Fædrelandsvennen* reported this week. The solar flareups can also affect GPS and other systems sending transmissions through the ionosphere. So while you might see a great light show, you won't be able to call your friends to invite them over and you

won't know where you are if you could. On the other hand, who wants some yuppie babbling on a cell phone at such moments ... since we're focusing on Barentsburg and other things Russian this week, we might as well update them in the Wikipedia Wars. Somebody altered the entry for Trust Arktikugol to read that five people were "eaten by a male mexican prostatute" instead of killed in an explosion during the 2006 underground mine. Thankfully it was changed back in short order. The user making the alteration seems to be a twit in general, getting reprimanded for distasteful edits about things such as Nazi Germany's occupation of Norway.



ARLID LYSSAD / SYSSELMANNEN



BSES



BSES

A polar bear, top left, that attacked a camp Aug. 5 at Tempelfjorden is examined by officials from the Svalbard governor's office. Some members of the expedition including Patrick Flinders, 16, bottom left, are questioning if the guides were trained adequately to handle such encounters. Horatio Chapple, 17, pictured at right two days before the attack, was killed before a guide shot the bear.

# Stricter polar bear rules sought

## READINESS, from page 1

training, availability of suitable protection gear and other issues. The group attacked is facing accusations the guides were insufficiently trained and a tripwire alarm designed fire flares to scare bears away malfunctioned, as did a rifle the group was carrying.

Investigations into the attack on the group from the British Schools Exploring Society are underway by Norwegian and UK officials. Also being scrutinized by Norwegian officials is the unavailability of a more reliable military-style tripwire alarm beyond official government use in Svalbard.

The changes to the laws about polar bear protection are being sought by the ministry are part of a broader set of changes proposed to the Svalbard Environmental Protection Act.

Current law only requires travelers to be familiar with polar bear dangers and protections. The recommendation by the ministry would impose "a duty to hedge against bear attacks."

It would not apply to guests on organized tours. Punishments for violations are still being considered.

"What the ministry proposes to legislate is the same as the recommendations the governor's office already provides to all that going on a trip in Svalbard," Lt. Gov. Lars Erik Alfheim told NRK.

Alfheim said there are no major changes or surprises in the proposal.

"If this proposal is adopted, it is important to us that we have given information to people about polar bears, and that one must have a gun out on tour," he said.

Criticism about the proposed changes is being voiced by Svalbard Tourism and the Longyearbyen Hunting and Fishing Association, according to NRK.

"(The association) is concerned that the bill deprives individuals the possibility to make assessments and that the responsibility for their own safety," the station reported.

Media attention about the Tempelfjorden attack continues to be intense in the UK as victims and some of their parents are increasingly voicing concerns about the experience level of the guides.

Patrick Flinders, 16, told the Sunday Mirror both of the trip's leaders admitted never seeing a polar bear before, and only one had been to the region a decade ago. His father said he is planning to sue BSES.

Among the other changes proposed in the environmental protection act is a ban on heavy oil in ships traveling in Svalbard by 2015. Exceptions would be made for transportation to Longyearbyen, Barentsburg and Svea.

The proposal has some businesses and tourism operators concerned the restriction could hurt cruise traffic. The majority of cruise ships traveling to Svalbard now use heavy oil.

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

## HEADLINES STOLEN FROM SVALBARDPOSTEN VERDENS NORDLIGSTE AVIS

### Jebsens agrees to 4M kr. fine, but only pays 400,000 for now

Kristian Jebsens Rederi has agreed to a four million kroner fine for allegations of gross corruption in its contract dealings with Store Norske, although only 400,000 kroner of that must be paid unless they violate a two-year probation. In exchange, criminal charges against the company are being dropped. Kristian Jebsens is one of the subcontractors that entered contracts considered far above market value with former Store Norske Administrative Director Robert Hermansen, who has confessed to corruption and faces a sentence of up to ten years in prison. The penalty terms against Kristian Jebsens are based on the financial situation of the company, which in a prepared statement noted it is not admitting to illegal activity. The company was transporting coal by ship from Spitsbergen, but Store Norske terminated the contract after audits revealed the improprieties.

### Lunckefjellet mine may halt UNESCO nomination for area

Opening a coal mine at Lunckefjellet may prevent it from being added to the United Nation's list of World Heritage Sites, according to the organization. Svalbard is one of several potential candidates for sites with a UNESCO designation, but Store Norske hopes to begin mining at Lunckefjellet in 2014. A delegation from an advisory body to the UN toured the area by helicopter recently and is expected to make a recommendation within days.

### Students object to long-term stays at UNIS Guest House

Students at The University Centre in Svalbard are objecting to plans to include long-term housing at the UNIS Guest House under construction, saying the 25-square-meter units are too small for such use. The facility was originally intended as short-term housing for guests professors and researchers, but budget cuts forced the university to seek an alteration its traditional housing offerings. The Longyearbyen municipal council is scheduled to consider UNIS' request to allow long-term housing at the guest house this fall, possibly at its Sept. 5 meeting.

## Weather forecast for Longyearbyen

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cloudy. S winds to 15 km/h. High 4C (1C wind chill), low 2C (0C wind chill).	Rain. SW winds to 25 km/h. High 5C (1C wind chill), low 4C (-1C wind chill).	Rain. S winds to 15 km/h. High 2C (-1C wind chill), low 2C (-2C wind chill).	Cloudy. Variable winds to 11 km/h. High -1C (-3C wind chill), low -1C (-4C wind chill).
Sunrise 3:20a; sunset 10:26p	Sunrise 3:31a; sunset 10:15p	Sunrise 3:42a; sunset 10:04p	Sunrise 3:52a; sunset 9:54p
<b>Extended forecast:</b> Sunday, cloudy, 1C (-1C), -2C (-4C), light 17:41h; Monday, rain, 3C (0C), 1C (-2C), light 17:22h; Tuesday, rain, 3C (0C), 2C (-1C), light 17:03h; Wednesday, occasional rain, 3C (0C), 1C (-1C), light 16:45h.			

Data provided by yr.no



MARK SABBATINI / ICEPEOPLE

A worker in Barentsburg rebuilds a window frame in one of the town's aging buildings. Efforts to repair decaying facilities and clean up decades of debris are a primary goal of governing officials.

## Barentsburg making big plans

### REVIVAL, from page 1

Veselov, general director of Trust Arktikugol in his address to the crowd, according to *Svalbardposten*. In an interview with the newspaper, he said renovating buildings and operations in the mining town are the main focus.

"We have devoted a lot of work with the mine after a fire three years ago," he said. "Going forward we will focus more on tourism and service."

The town's primary economic activity of mining was the immediate thought of residents for the next couple of days as they loaded the third ship this year with coal for export. The underground fire in 2006 halted operations until it reopened last year, one of the major reasons Barentsburg has 60 percent fewer residents than a decade ago.

That total was even more decimated – albeit temporarily – on Thursday with the arrival of a charter plane from Moscow. Twice a year the plane brings a wholesale change of winter/summer workers, with about 70 arriving and

150 departing on the most recent flight.

Newcomers didn't have to wait long to meet the old-timers, however, as an annual miners' bash took place during the weekend.

The mood was much more somber Monday, as about 20 Russian and Norwegian officials flew by helicopter to Operafjellet, just outside Longyearbyen, to lay wreaths at the site where a Russian plane crashed 15 years ago, killing 141 Russian and Ukrainian passengers. The crash by one of the charter flights from Moscow is the worst ever in Norway.

"We remember the day, mourn the dead and forget not their relatives," said Consul General Alexander Antipov, according to *Svalbardposten*.

"They were part of the culture and the life that is in Svalbard, and we will never forget," said Lt. Governor Lars Erik Alfheim. "Let us hope and pray that this will never happen again."

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

## Contradiction rules Arctic events

### RUSSIANS, from page 1

a ship decaying in one of Svalbard's most pristine areas are among the headlines revealing the intense contradictions the two countries face in their dealings in the far north. Among the major items:

- Russia announced a surprising deal with Exxon that could see both investing a total of \$500 billion for projects. Norway announced it is considering a pipeline to Europe and opening a portion of the southeast Barents Sea to drilling for the first time.

- The wreck of the Russian transport vessel *Petrozavodsk* will not be removed from the

southern coast of Bjørnøya because the rocky cliff area is too dangerous for such an operation, according to Norwegian Coastal Administration officials. The ship ran aground in the protected bird sanctuary in 2009, spilling oil and other waste.

- The Norwegian research vessels *Helmer Hanssen* and Russian ship *Vilnius* are conducting a joint ecosystem cruise in the Barents Sea. Observations related to commercial fishing, ecosystem changes and other fields will be recorded.

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

## What's up

### Aug. 31

8 p.m.: Movie: "Captain America: The First Avenger," U.S. action/adventure, age limit not determined. Kulturhuset.

### Sept. 3

Longyearbyen Library closed.

### Sept. 4

8 p.m.: Movie: "Oslo, 31," Norwegian drama, ages 15 and up. Kulturhuset.

### Sept. 6-9

15th Russian-Norwegian Symposium, focusing on climate change in the Barents Sea and its effects on the region's future. UNIS. For registration information contact [vera.helene.lund@imr.no](mailto:vera.helene.lund@imr.no).

### Sept. 6

8 p.m.: Svalbard Cabin Association meeting. Kulturhuset cafe.

### Sept. 7

6 p.m.: Movie: "Få Meg På For Faen," Norwegian drama, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

7 p.m.: Meeting for groups interested in rehearsing at Kulturhuset. In the Kulturhuset cafe.

### Sept. 8

7:30 p.m.: Book launch: "Adresse Ny-Ålesund," by Åse Kristine Tveit. Longyearbyen Library.

### Sept. 11

6 p.m.: Movie: "Popper's Penguins," U.S. children's/comedy, all ages. Kulturhuset.

8 p.m.: Movie: "Cowboys and Aliens," U.S. action/sci-fi, ages 11 and up. Kulturhuset.

### Sept. 13

6 p.m.: Children's book launch: "Sjøfuglene i Arktis" by Kirsti Blom and Geir Wing Gabrielsen. Longyearbyen Library.

### Sept. 14

8 p.m.: Movie: "Oslo, 31," Norwegian drama, ages 15 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:

- *Was Irene caused by climate change?*
- *Exxon, Russia reach huge Arctic deal*
- *Arctic commerce shipping setting records*
- *Furtuistic 'airships' coming to far north*