svalbard fact file

area
63,000 sq kms. 60% covered by glacier

population
- Longyearbyen (Norwegian administrative centre) 2,080 inhabitants
- Barentsburg (Russian mining community) 500 inhabitants
- Ny-Ålesund (Norway international research centre) 40 inhabitants
- Sveagruva (Norwegian mining community) 210 commuters
- Hornsund (Polish research station) 8 inhabitants

capital
Svalbard consists of a group of islands between 74°-81°N and 10°-35°E, including Spitsbergen, Nordaustlandet, Barentsøya, Edgeøya and Prins Karls Forland. The de-facto capital of Spitsbergen is Longyearbyen, the largest populated area on the territory of Svalbard, located in the high Norwegian Arctic. The settlement is popular as it is the most easily accessed frontier in the Arctic and is an ideal base for the greater exploration of Svalbard. The settlement is named after American entrepreneur John Munro Longyearbyen (1860-1922), who as head of the Arctic Coal Company founded the town and the neighbouring coal mine, the first large mine on Svalbard. Mining is still a big business here, with the roadsides and mountainsides littered with mines and their equipment, though tourism is catching up fast.

With 2,000 inhabitants, the town is the de-facto capital of the islands, featuring an airport, a school, a shopping centre, hotels, restaurants, and more.

language
Norwegian, while in Longyearbyen, but other languages, including English, are spoken.

tipping
Whilst not obligatory, it is usual practice to tip 10%

bank opening hours
Norwegian kroner may be used all over Svalbard. All major credit cards can be used for payment at most accommodation facilities, activity providers and shops. Many also have payment terminals. There is a cash machine (ATM) in Longyearbyen.

Sparebank1, P.O. Box 518 / NO-9171 Longyearbyen
Phone 915 02244 / Fax 79 02 29 11

post office hours
Located in the Post and Bank building, town centre. Offers a full range of bank services, including cash point, foreign currency, insurance, cash withdrawals, cheques and foreign exchange service to and from accounts abroad. Open 10.00 - 15.30 (cash desk 10.00-13.00).

shops opening hours
Opening hours may vary from shop to shop and from season to season. We therefore recommend that you obtain a guide to opening hours when you arrive in Longyearbyen.

time (+/- GMT)
Longyearbyen GMT + 2

electricity
European round pin adapter

public holidays
Norwegian public holidays apply in Longyearbyen, and there are a few local festivals of interest.

telephone
Country Code + 47. GSM/3G phones work in the main towns of Svalbard. The Internet connection in Svalbard is top class. The town has several public Internet terminals and all the hotels and guesthouses have free Wifi.

postal
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currency
Norwegian Kroner. For up to date currency exchange, go to: http://www.xe.com/

credit cards
The full spectrum of credit cards are welcome in Svalbard.

travellers cheque
Can be exchanged in the major hotels.

passport/visa
No Visa needed. Normal Passport regulations apply.
gifts and souvenirs
There are plenty of souvenir shops downtown in Spitsbergen. Most of the hotels sell traditional gifts.

vaccination & health
Tetanus is required.

hospitals/pharmacies
There are no pharmacies on Svalbard, although you can buy some non-prescription drugs in Longyearbyen which also has a hospital for treating emergencies.

water
Tap water is drinkable, but surface water may contain tapeworm eggs from fox faeces and should be boiled before consumption.

climate
The Arctic ocean is contained in a polar climate characterised by persistent cold and relatively narrow annual temperature ranges. Winters are characterised by continuous darkness (polar night), cold and stable weather conditions, and clear skies; summers are characterised by continuous daylight (midnight sun), damp and foggy weather and weak cyclones with rain or snow.

temperature
Winter temperatures in and around Spitsbergen range from -10°C to -20°C, Summer temperatures 2°C to 8°C. The coldest months are January and February.

The temperature of the surface of the Arctic Ocean is fairly constant, near the freezing point of seawater. Because the Arctic Ocean consists of saltwater the temperature must reach -1.8°C before freezing occurs.

geography
The world’s northernmost inhabited place, the Svalbard archipelago ranges between 74° and 81° north latitude and 10° and 35° east longitude. The archipelago consists of three primary islands – Spitsbergen (the largest and, in Longyearbyen, administrative capital of Svalbard), Nordaustlandet, and Edgeøya – in addition to a number of smaller islets. Located midway between Norway and the North Pole, Svalbard has long served as a starting point and base for those looking to journey to the top of the world.