

= Svalbard =

Svalbard ( Norwegian pronunciation : [ ʂsʰvɑlbɑrd ] ; formerly known by its Dutch name Spitsbergen ) is a Norwegian archipelago in the Arctic Ocean . Situated north of mainland Europe , it is about midway between continental Norway and the North Pole . The islands of the group range from 74 ° to 81 ° north latitude , and from 10 ° to 35 ° east longitude . The largest island is Spitsbergen , followed by Nordaustlandet and Edgeøya .

Administratively , the archipelago is not part of any Norwegian county , but forms an unincorporated area administered by a governor appointed by the Norwegian government . Since 2002 , Svalbard 's main settlement , Longyearbyen , has had an elected local government , somewhat similar to mainland municipalities . Other settlements include the Russian mining community of Barentsburg , the research station of Ny - Ålesund , and the mining outpost of Sveagruva . Svalbard is the northernmost settlement in the world with a permanent civilian population . Other settlements are farther north , but are populated only by rotating groups of researchers ; e.g. Alert , Nunavut the northernmost year - round community .

The islands were first taken into use as a whaling base in the 17th and 18th centuries , after which they were abandoned . Coal mining started at the beginning of the 20th century , and several permanent communities were established . The Svalbard Treaty of 1920 recognizes Norwegian sovereignty , and the 1925 Svalbard Act made Svalbard a full part of the Kingdom of Norway . They also established Svalbard as a free economic zone and a demilitarized zone . The Norwegian Store Norske and the Russian Arktikugol remain the only mining companies in place . Research and tourism have become important supplementary industries , with the University Centre in Svalbard ( UNIS ) and the Svalbard Global Seed Vault playing critical roles . No roads connect the settlements ; instead snowmobiles , aircraft and boats serve inter - community transport . Svalbard Airport , Longyear serves as the main gateway .

The archipelago features an Arctic climate , although with significantly higher temperatures than other areas at the same latitude . The flora take advantage of the long period of midnight sun to compensate for the polar night . Svalbard is a breeding ground for many seabirds , and also features polar bears , reindeer , the Arctic fox , and certain marine mammals . Seven national parks and twenty - three nature reserves cover two - thirds of the archipelago , protecting the largely untouched , yet fragile , natural environment . Approximately 60 % of the archipelago is covered with glaciers , and the islands feature many mountains and fjords .

Svalbard and Jan Mayen are collectively assigned the ISO 3166 - 1 alpha - 2 country code " SJ " . Both areas are administered by Norway , though they are separated by a distance of over 500 nautical miles ( approximately 600 miles or 950 kilometres ) and have very different administrative structures .

= = Geography = =

The Svalbard Treaty of 1920 defines Svalbard as all islands , islets and skerries from 74 ° to 81 ° north latitude , and from 10 ° to 35 ° east longitude . The land area is 61 022 km<sup>2</sup> ( 23 661 sq mi ) , and dominated by the island of Spitsbergen , which constitutes more than half the archipelago , followed by Nordaustlandet and Edgeøya . All settlements are located on Spitsbergen , except the meteorological outposts on Bjørnøya and Hopen . The Norwegian state took possession of all unclaimed land , or 95 % of the archipelago , at the time the Svalbard Treaty entered into force ; Store Norske owns 4 % , Arktikugol owns 0 . 4 % , while other private owners hold 0 . 4 % .

Since Svalbard is located north of the Arctic Circle it experiences midnight sun in summer and polar night in winter . At 74 ° north , the midnight sun lasts 99 days and polar night 84 days , while the respective figures at 81 ° are 141 and 128 days . In Longyearbyen , midnight sun lasts from 20 April until 23 August , and polar night lasts from 26 October to 15 February . In winter , the combination of full moon and reflective snow can give additional light .

Glacial ice covers 36 502 km<sup>2</sup> ( 14 094 sq mi ) or 60 % of Svalbard ; 30 % is barren

rock while 10 % is vegetated . The largest glacier is Austfonna ( 8 @, @ 412 km<sup>2</sup> or 3 @, @ 248 sq mi ) on Nordaustlandet , followed by Olav V Land and Vestfonna . During summer , it is possible to ski from Sørkapp in the south to the north of Spitsbergen , with only a short distance not being covered by snow or glacier . Kvitøya is 99 @. @ 3 % covered by glacier .

The landforms of Svalbard were created through repeated ice ages , when glaciers cut the former plateau into fjords , valleys and mountains . The tallest peak is Newtontoppen ( 1 @, @ 717 m or 5 @, @ 633 ft ) , followed by Perriertoppen ( 1 @, @ 712 m or 5 @, @ 617 ft ) , Ceresfjellet ( 1 @, @ 675 m or 5 @, @ 495 ft ) , Chadwickryggen ( 1 @, @ 640 m or 5 @, @ 380 ft ) and Galileotoppen ( 1 @, @ 637 m or 5 @, @ 371 ft ) . The longest fjord is Wijdefjorden ( 108 km or 67 mi ) , followed by Isfjorden ( 107 km or 66 mi ) , Van Mijenfjorden ( 83 km or 52 mi ) , Woodfjorden ( 64 km or 40 mi ) and Wahlenbergfjorden ( 46 km or 29 mi ) . Svalbard is part of the High Arctic Large Igneous Province , and experienced Norway 's strongest earthquake on 6 March 2009 , which hit 6 @. @ 5 on the Richter scale .

= = History = =

Scandinavians may have discovered Svalbard as early as the 12th century . There are traditional Norse accounts of a land known as Svalbarð ? literally " cold shores " ? although this may have referred to Jan Mayen , or a part of eastern Greenland . It was then thought both Svalbard and Greenland were connected to Continental Europe . The archipelago may in that period have been used for fishing and hunting . The Dutchman Willem Barentsz made the first indisputable discovery of the archipelago in 1596 , when he sighted its coast while searching for the Northern Sea Route .

The name Spitsbergen originated with Barentsz , who described the " pointed mountains " he saw on the west coast of the main island , although his 1599 map of the Arctic labels the island as Het Nieuwe Land ( " The New Land " ) . Barentsz did not recognize that he had discovered an archipelago , and consequently the name Spitsbergen long remained in use both for the main island and for the archipelago as a whole .

The first known landing on the island dates to 1604 , when an English ship landed at Bjørnøya and started hunting walrus ; annual expeditions soon followed , and Spitsbergen became a base for hunting the bowhead whale from 1611 . Because of the lawless nature of the area , English , Danish , Dutch , and French companies and authorities tried to use force to keep out other countries ' fleets .

Smeerenburg was one of the first settlements , established by the Dutch in 1619 . Smaller bases were also built by the English , Danish and French . At first the outposts were merely summer camps , but from the early 1630s , a few individuals started to overwinter . Whaling at Spitsbergen lasted until the 1820s , when the Dutch , British and Danish whalers moved elsewhere in the Arctic . By the late 17th century , Russian hunters arrived ; they overwintered to a greater extent and hunted land mammals such as the polar bear and fox . After British raids into the Barents Sea in 1809 , Russian activity on Svalbard diminished , and ceased by the 1820s . Norwegian hunting ? mostly for walrus ? started in the 1790s . The first Norwegian citizens to reach Spitsbergen proper were a number of Coast Sámi people from the Hammerfest region , who were hired as part of a Russian crew for an expedition in 1795 . Norwegian whaling was abandoned about the same time as the Russians left , but whaling continued around Spitsbergen until the 1830s , and around Bjørnøya until the 1860s .

= = 20th century = =

By the 1890s , Svalbard had become a destination for Arctic tourism , coal deposits had been found and the islands were being used as a base for Arctic exploration . The first mining was along Isfjorden by Norwegians in 1899 ; by 1904 , British interests had established themselves in Adventfjorden and started the first all @-@ year operations . Production in Longyearbyen , by American interests , started in 1908 ; and Store Norske established itself in 1916 , as did other Norwegian interests during the war , in part by buying American interests .

Discussions to establish the sovereignty of the archipelago commenced in the 1910s , but were interrupted by World War I. On 9 February 1920 , following the Paris Peace Conference , the Svalbard Treaty was signed , granting full sovereignty to Norway . However , all signatory countries were granted non-discriminatory rights to fishing , hunting and mineral resources . The treaty took effect on 14 August 1925 , at the same time as the Svalbard Act regulated the archipelago and the first governor , Johannes Gerckens Bassøe , took office . The archipelago has traditionally been known as Spitsbergen , and the main island as West Spitsbergen . From the 1920s , Norway renamed the archipelago Svalbard , and the main island became Spitsbergen . Kvitøya , Kong Karls Land , Hopen and Bjørnøya were not regarded as part of the Spitsbergen archipelago . Russians have traditionally called the archipelago Grumant ( Грумант ) . The Soviet Union retained the name Spitsbergen ( Шпицберген ) to support undocumented claims that Russians were the first to discover the island . In 1928 , Italian explorer Umberto Nobile and the crew of the airship Italia crashed on the icepack off the coast of Foyen Island . The subsequent rescue attempts were covered extensively in the press and Svalbard received short-lived fame as a result .

== Second World War ==

In 1941 , Operation Gauntlet , all Norwegian and Soviet settlements on Svalbard were evacuated , and a German presence was established with a meteorological outpost , although a small Norwegian garrison was kept on Spitsbergen . The German Operation Zitronella took this garrison by force in 1943 , and at the same time destroying the settlements at Longyearbyen and Barentsburg . In September 1944 , together with the supply ship Carl J. Busch , the submarine U-307 transported the men of Operation Haudegen to Svalbard . Operation Haudegen ( i.e. , swashbuckler ) was the name of a German operation during the Second World War to establish meteorological stations on Svalbard . The station was active from 9 September 1944 to 4 September 1945 . It lost radio contact in May 1945 , and the soldiers were capable of asking for support only in August 1945 . On 4 September 1945 , the soldiers were picked up by a Norwegian seal hunting vessel and surrendered to its captain . This group of men were the last German troops to surrender after the Second World War . After the war , the Soviet Union proposed common Norwegian and Soviet administration and military defence of Svalbard . This was rejected in 1947 by Norway , which two years later joined NATO . The Soviet Union retained high civilian activity on Svalbard , in part to ensure that the archipelago was not used by NATO .

== Post-war ==

After the war , Norway re-established operations at Longyearbyen and Ny-Ålesund , while the Soviet Union established mining in Barentsburg , Pyramiden and Grumant . The mine at Ny-Ålesund had several fatal accidents , killing 71 people while it was in operation from 1945 to 1954 and from 1960 to 1963 . The Kings Bay Affair , caused by the 1962 accident killing 21 workers , forced Gerhardsen 's Third Cabinet to resign . From 1964 , Ny-Ålesund became a research outpost , and a facility for the European Space Research Organisation . Petroleum test drilling was started in 1963 and continued until 1984 , but no commercially viable fields were found . From 1960 , regular charter flights were made from the mainland to a field at Hotellneset ; in 1975 , Svalbard Airport , Longyear opened , allowing year-round services .

During the Cold War , the Soviet Union retained about two-thirds of the population on the islands ( with a third being Norwegians ) with the archipelago 's population slightly under 4,000 . Russian activity has diminished considerably since then , falling from 2,500 to 450 people from 1990 to 2010 . Grumant was closed after it was depleted in 1962 . Pyramiden was closed in 1998 . Coal exports from Barentsburg ceased in 2006 because of a fire , but resumed in 2010 . The Russian community has also experienced two air accidents , Vnukovo Airlines Flight 2801 , which killed 141 people , and the Heerodden helicopter accident .

Longyearbyen remained purely a company town until 1989 when utilities , culture and education was separated into Svalbard Samfunnsdrift . In 1993 it was sold to the national government and the

University Centre was established . Through the 1990s , tourism increased and the town developed an economy independent of Store Norske and the mining . Longyearbyen was incorporated on 1 January 2002 , receiving a community council .

= = Population = =

= = = Demographics = = =

In 2012 , Svalbard had an estimated population of 2 642 , of whom 439 were Russians and Ukrainian , 10 were Polish and 322 were other non Norwegian living in Norwegian settlements . The largest non Norwegian groups in Longyearbyen in 2005 were from Thailand , Sweden , Denmark , Russia , Iran and Germany .

= = = Settlements = = =

Longyearbyen is the largest settlement on the archipelago , the seat of the governor and the only town to be incorporated . The town features a hospital , primary and secondary school , university , sports center with a swimming pool , library , culture center , cinema , bus transport , hotels , a bank , and several museums . The newspaper Svalbardposten is published weekly . Only a small fraction of the mining activity remains at Longyearbyen ; instead , workers commute to Sveagruva ( or Svea ) where Store Norske operates a mine . Sveagruva is a dormitory town , with workers commuting from Longyearbyen weekly .

Ny Ålesund is a permanent settlement based entirely around research . Formerly a mining town , it is still a company town operated by the Norwegian state owned Kings Bay . While there is some tourism there , Norwegian authorities limit access to the outpost to minimize impact on the scientific work . Ny Ålesund has a winter population of 35 and a summer population of 180 . The Norwegian Meteorological Institute has outposts at Bjørnøya and Hopen , with respectively ten and four people stationed . Both outposts can also house temporary research staff . Poland operates the Polish Polar Station at Hornsund , with ten permanent residents .

Barentsburg is the only permanently inhabited Russian settlement after Pyramiden was abandoned in 1998 . It is a company town : all facilities are owned by Arktikugol , which operates a coal mine . In addition to the mining facilities , Arktikugol has opened a hotel and souvenir shop , catering for tourists taking day trips or hikes from Longyearbyen . The village features facilities such as a school , library , sports center , community center , swimming pool , farm and greenhouse . Pyramiden features similar facilities ; both are built in typical post World War II Soviet architectural and planning style and contain the world 's two most northerly Lenin statues and other socialist realism artwork . As of 2013 , a handful of workers are stationed in the largely abandoned Pyramiden to maintain the infrastructure and run the hotel , which has been re opened for tourists .

= = = Religion = = =

Most of the population is affiliated with the Church of Norway . Catholics on the archipelago are pastorally served by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Oslo .

= = Politics = =

The Svalbard Treaty of 1920 established full Norwegian sovereignty over the archipelago . The islands are , unlike the Norwegian Antarctic Territory , a part of the Kingdom of Norway and not a dependency . The treaty came into effect in 1925 , following the Svalbard Act . All forty signatory countries of the treaty have the right to conduct commercial activities on the archipelago without discrimination , although all activity is subject to Norwegian legislation . The treaty limits Norway 's right to collect taxes to that of financing services on Svalbard . Therefore , Svalbard has a lower

income tax than mainland Norway , and there is no value added tax . There is a separate budget for Svalbard to ensure compliance . Svalbard is a demilitarized zone , as the treaty prohibits the establishment of military installations . Norwegian military activity is limited to fishery surveillance by the Norwegian Coast Guard as the treaty requires Norway to protect the natural environment .

The Svalbard Act established the institution of the Governor of Svalbard ( Norwegian : Sysselmannen ) , who holds the responsibility as both county governor and chief of police , as well as holding other authority granted from the executive branch . Duties include environmental policy , family law , law enforcement , search and rescue , tourism management , information services , contact with foreign settlements , and judge in some areas of maritime inquiries and judicial examinations ? albeit never in the same cases as acting as police . Since 2015 , Kjerstin Askholt has been governor ; she is assisted by a staff of 26 professionals . The institution is subordinate to the Ministry of Justice and the Police , but reports to other ministries in matters within their portfolio .

Since 2002 , Longyearbyen Community Council has had many of the same responsibilities of a municipality , including utilities , education , cultural facilities , fire department , roads and ports . No care or nursing services are available , nor is welfare payment available . Norwegian residents retain pension and medical rights through their mainland municipalities . The hospital is part of University Hospital of North Norway , while the airport is operated by state @-@ owned Avinor . Ny @-@ Ålesund and Barentsburg remain company towns with all infrastructure owned by Kings Bay and Arktikugol , respectively . Other public offices with presence on Svalbard are the Norwegian Directorate of Mining , the Norwegian Polar Institute , the Norwegian Tax Administration and the Church of Norway . Svalbard is subordinate to Nord @-@ Troms District Court and Hålogaland Court of Appeal , both located in Tromsø .

Although Norway is part of the European Economic Area ( EEA ) and the Schengen Agreement , Svalbard is not part of the Schengen Area or the EEA . Non @-@ Norwegian Svalbard residents do not need Schengen visas , but are prohibited from reaching Svalbard from mainland Norway without such . In theory it would be possible to do a visa @-@ free airport transit at Oslo Airport , but this is not allowed by Norway . People without a source of income can be rejected by the governor . No person is required visa or residence permit for Svalbard . Everybody can live and work in Svalbard indefinitely regardless of citizenship . Svalbard Treaty grants treaty nationals equal right of abode as Norwegian nationals . So far , non @-@ treaty nationals were admitted visa @-@ free as well . " Regulations concerning rejection and expulsion from Svalbard " in force . Russia retains a consulate in Barentsburg .

In September 2010 a treaty was made between Russia and Norway fixing the boundary between the Svalbard archipelago and the Novaya Zemlya archipelago . Increased interest in petroleum exploration in the Arctic raised interest in a resolution of the dispute . The agreement takes into account the relative positions of the archipelagos , rather than being based simply on northward extension of the continental border of Norway and Russia .

= = Economy = =

The three main industries on Svalbard are coal mining , tourism , and research . In 2007 , there were 484 people working in the mining sector , 211 people working in the tourism sector and 111 people working in the education sector . The same year , the mining gave a revenue of NOK 2 @. @ 008 billion ( 227 @, @ 791 @, @ 078 USD ) , tourism NOK 317 million ( 35 @, @ 967 @, @ 202 USD ) and research NOK 142 million ( 16 @, @ 098 @, @ 404 USD ) In 2006 , the average income for economically active people was NOK 494 @, @ 700 ? 23 % higher than on the mainland . Almost all housing is owned by the various employers and institutions and rented to their employees ; there are only a few privately owned houses , most of which are recreational cabins . Because of this , it is nearly impossible to live on Svalbard without working for an established institution .

Since the resettlement of Svalbard in the early 20th century , coal mining has been the dominant commercial activity . Store Norske Spitsbergen Kulkompani , a subsidiary of the Norwegian Ministry of Trade and Industry , operates Svea Nord in Sveagruva and Mine 7 in Longyearbyen . The former produced 3 @. @ 4 million tonnes in 2008 , while the latter uses 35 % of its output to Longyearbyen

Power Station . Since 2007 , there has not been any significant mining by the Russian state owned Arktikugol in Barentsburg . There have previously been performed test drilling for petroleum on land , but these did not give satisfactory results for permanent operation . The Norwegian authorities do not allow offshore petroleum activities for environmental reasons , and the land formerly test drilled on has been protected as natural reserves or national parks . In 2011 , a 20 year plan to develop offshore oil and gas resources around Svalbard was announced .

Svalbard has historically been a base for both whaling and fishing . Norway claimed a 200 nautical mile ( 370 km ; 230 mi ) exclusive economic zone ( EEZ ) around Svalbard in 1977 , with 31 ,688 square kilometres ( 12 ,235 sq mi ) of internal waters and 770 ,565 square kilometres ( 297 ,517 sq mi ) of EEZ . Norway retains a restrictive fisheries policy in the zone , and the claims are disputed by Russia . Tourism is focused on the environment and is centered on Longyearbyen . Activities include hiking , kayaking , walks through glacier caves and snowmobile and dog sled safari . Cruise ships generate a significant portion of the traffic , including both stops by offshore vessels and expeditionary cruises starting and ending in Svalbard . Traffic is strongly concentrated between March and August ; overnights have quintupled from 1991 to 2008 , when there were 93 ,000 guest nights .

Research on Svalbard centers on Longyearbyen and Ny Ålesund , the most accessible areas in the high Arctic . The treaty grants permission for any nation to conduct research on Svalbard , resulting in the Polish Polar Station and the Chinese Arctic Yellow River Station , plus Russian facilities in Barentsburg . The University Centre in Svalbard in Longyearbyen offers undergraduate , graduate and postgraduate courses to 350 students in various arctic sciences , particularly biology , geology and geophysics . Courses are provided to supplement studies at the mainland universities ; there are no tuition fees and courses are held in English , with Norwegian and international students equally represented .

The Svalbard Global Seed Vault is a seedbank to store seeds from as many of the world 's crop varieties and their botanical wild relatives as possible . A cooperation between the government of Norway and the Global Crop Diversity Trust , the vault is cut into rock near Longyearbyen , keeping it at a natural  $-6^{\circ}\text{C}$  (  $-21^{\circ}\text{F}$  ) and refrigerating the seeds to  $-18^{\circ}\text{C}$  (  $-0^{\circ}\text{F}$  ) .

The Svalbard Undersea Cable System is a 1 ,440 km ( 890 mi ) fibre optic line from Svalbard to Harstad , needed for communicating with polar orbiting satellites through Svalbard Satellite Station and installations in Ny Ålesund .

One source of income for the area is visiting cruise ships . The Norwegian government has become concerned in recent years about large numbers of cruise ship passengers suddenly landing at small settlements such as Ny Ålesund , which is conveniently close to the barren yet picturesque Magdalena Fjord . With the increasing size of the larger ships , up to 2000 people can potentially appear in a community that normally numbers less than 40 . The government has recently passed legislation , effective from January 2014 , severely restricting the size of cruise ships that may visit .

== Transport ==

Within Longyearbyen , Barentsburg , and Ny Ålesund , there are road systems , but they do not connect with each other . Off road motorized transport is prohibited on bare ground , but snowmobiles are used extensively during winter both for commercial and recreational activities . Transport from Longyearbyen to Barentsburg ( 45 km or 28 mi ) and Pyramiden ( 100 km or 62 mi ) is possible by snowmobile by winter , or by ship all year round . All settlements have ports and Longyearbyen has a bus system .

Svalbard Airport , Longyear , located 3 kilometres ( 2 mi ) from Longyearbyen , is the only airport offering air transport off the archipelago . Scandinavian Airlines has daily scheduled services to Tromsø and Oslo . Low cost carrier Norwegian Air Shuttle also has a service between Oslo and Svalbard , operating three or four times a week ; there are also irregular charter services to Russia . Finnair has announced to commence service to Helsinki , operating three times a week starting June 1 , 2016 and lasting until 27 August 2016 , but Norwegian authorities did not allow this

route as it was not in bilateral agreement on air traffic between Finland and Norway . Lufttransport provides regular corporate charter services from Longyearbyen to Ny Ålesund Airport and Svea Airport for Kings Bay and Store Norske ; these flights are in general not available to the public . There are heliports in Barentsburg and Pyramiden , and helicopters are frequently used by the governor and to a lesser extent the mining company Arktikugol .

= = Climate = =

The climate of Svalbard is dominated by its high latitude , with the average summer temperature at 4 to 6 ° C ( 39 to 43 ° F ) and January averages at -16 to -12 ° C ( 3 to 10 ° F ) . The West Spitsbergen Current , the northernmost branch of the North Atlantic Current system , moderates Svalbard 's temperatures , particularly during winter . Winter temperatures in Svalbard are up to -20 ° C ( -36 ° F ) higher than similar latitudes in Russia and Canada . The warm Atlantic water keeps the surrounding waters open and navigable most of the year . The interior fjord areas and valleys , sheltered by the mountains , have larger temperature differences than the coast , giving about 2 ° C ( 4 ° F ) warmer summer temperatures and 3 ° C ( 5 ° F ) colder winter temperatures . On the south of Spitsbergen , the temperature is slightly higher than further north and west . During winter , the temperature difference between south and north is typically 5 ° C ( 9 ° F ) , and about 3 ° C ( 5 ° F ) in summer . Bear Island has average temperatures even higher than the rest of the archipelago .

Svalbard is where cold polar air from the north and mild , wet sea air from the south meet , creating low pressure , changeable weather and strong winds , particularly in winter ; in January , a strong breeze is registered 17 % of the time at Isfjord Radio , but only 1 % of the time in July . In summer , particularly away from land , fog is common , with visibility under 1 kilometre ( 0 @. @ 6 mi ) registered 20 % of the time in July and 1 % of the time in January , at Hopen and Bjørnøya . Precipitation is frequent , but falls in small quantities , typically less than 400 millimetres ( 16 in ) per year in western Spitsbergen . More rain falls on the uninhabited east side , where there can be more than 1 @, @ 000 millimetres ( 39 in ) .

= = Nature = =

In addition to humans , three primarily terrestrial mammalian species inhabit the archipelago : the Arctic fox , the Svalbard reindeer , and accidentally introduced southern voles , which are found only in Grumant . Attempts to introduce the Arctic hare and the muskox have both failed . There are fifteen to twenty types of marine mammals , including whales , dolphins , seals , walruses , and polar bears .

Polar bears are the iconic symbol of Svalbard , and one of the main tourist attractions . While protected , anyone outside of settlements is recommended to carry a firearm to kill polar bears in self @-@ defence , as a last resort , should they attack , and is required to have appropriate means of frightening and chasing off polar bears ; a British schoolboy was killed by a polar bear in 2011 . Svalbard and Franz Joseph Land share a common population of 3 @, @ 000 polar bears , with Kong Karls Land being the most important breeding ground .

The Svalbard reindeer ( *R. tarandus platyrhynchus* ) is a distinct sub @-@ species ; although it was previously almost extinct , it can be legally hunted ( as can Arctic fox ) . There are limited numbers of domesticated animals in the Russian settlements .

About thirty species of bird are found on Svalbard , most of which are migratory . The Barents Sea is among the areas in the world with most seabirds , with about 20 million individuals during late summer . The most common are little auk , northern fulmar , thick @-@ billed murre and black @-@ legged kittiwake . Sixteen species are on the IUCN Red List . Particularly Bjørnøya , Storfjorden , Nordvest @-@ Spitsbergen and Hopen are important breeding ground for seabirds . The Arctic tern has the furthest migration , all the way to Antarctica . Only two songbirds migrate to Svalbard to breed : the snow bunting and the wheatear . Rock ptarmigan is the only bird to overwinter . Remains of Predator X from the Jurassic period have been found ; it is the largest dinosaur @-@ era marine reptile ever found ? a pliosaur estimated to have been almost 15 m ( 49 ft ) long .

Svalbard has permafrost and tundra , with both low , middle and high Arctic vegetation . 165 species of plants have been found on the archipelago . Only those areas which defrost in the summer have vegetations , which accounts for about 10 % of the archipelago . Vegetation is most abundant in Nordenskiöld Land , around Isfjorden and where affected by guano . While there is little precipitation , giving the archipelago a steppe climate , plants still have good access to water because the cold climate reduces evaporation . The growing season is very short , and may last only a few weeks .

There are seven national parks in Svalbard : Forlandet , Indre Wijdefjorden , Nordenskiöld Land , Nordre Isfjorden Land , Nordvest @-@ Spitsbergen , Sassen @-@ Bünsow Land and Sør @-@ Spitsbergen . The archipelago has fifteen bird sanctuaries , one geotopic protected area and six nature reserves ? with Nordaust @-@ Svalbard and Søraust @-@ Svalbard both being larger than any of the national parks . Most of the nature reserves and three of the national parks were protected in 1973 , with nearly all the remaining protected occurring in the 2000s . All human traces dating from before 1946 are automatically protected . The protected areas make up 65 % of the archipelago . Svalbard is on Norway 's tentative list for nomination as a UNESCO World Heritage Site .

The total Solar eclipse of March 20 , 2015 included only Svalbard and the Faroe Islands in the band of totality . Many scientists and tourists attended .

= = Media = =

News about Svalbard in English and Norwegian is published weekly at [svalbardposten.no](http://svalbardposten.no) , while " alternative " news in English is at [icepeople.net](http://icepeople.net).

Svalbard makes a prominent appearance in Northern Lights by Philip Pullman and the corresponding movie . In the novel it is used as a prison for important and powerful people . It is inhabited by Panserbjørne , mighty polar bears that wear armor forged from Sky @-@ Iron . One of the primary characters , Lord Asriel , was imprisoned and manages to flee from Svalbard during the novel .

The fictional town of Fortitude , as portrayed in the 2015 TV series Fortitude ( from UK 's Sky Atlantic ) , is situated in Svalbard .

In 2014 the Swedish singer Tove Styrke filmed a music video in Pyramiden for her single Borderline .