



Europe :: Svalbard
(territory of Norway)

Introduction :: Svalbard

Background:

First discovered by the Norwegians in the 12th century, the islands served as an international whaling base during the 17th and 18th centuries. Norway's sovereignty was recognized in 1920; five years later it officially took over the territory.

Geography :: Svalbard

Location:

Northern Europe, islands between the Arctic Ocean, Barents Sea, Greenland Sea, and Norwegian Sea, north of Norway

Geographic coordinates:

78 00 N, 20 00 E

Map references:

Europe

Area:

total: 62,045 sq km

country comparison to the world: 125

land: 62,045 sq km

water: 0 sq km

note: includes Spitsbergen and Bjornoya (Bear Island)

Area - comparative:

slightly smaller than West Virginia

Land boundaries:

0 km

Coastline:

3,587 km

Maritime claims:

territorial sea: 4 nm

exclusive fishing zone: 200 nm unilaterally claimed by Norway but not recognized by Russia

Climate:

arctic, tempered by warm North Atlantic Current; cool summers, cold winters; North Atlantic Current flows along west and north coasts of Spitsbergen, keeping water open and navigable most of the year

Terrain:

wild, rugged mountains; much of high land ice covered; west coast clear of ice about one-half of the year; fjords along west and north coasts

Elevation extremes:

lowest point: Arctic Ocean 0 m

highest point: Newtontoppen 1,717 m

Natural resources:

coal, iron ore, copper, zinc, phosphate, wildlife, fish

Land use:

arable land: 0%

permanent crops: 0%

other: 100% (no trees; the only bushes are crowberry and cloudberry) (2011)

Irrigated land:

NA

Natural hazards:

ice floes often block the entrance to Bellsund (a transit point for coal export) on the west coast and occasionally make parts of the northeastern coast inaccessible to maritime traffic

Environment - current issues:

NA

Geography - note:

northernmost part of the Kingdom of Norway; consists of nine main islands; glaciers and snowfields cover 60% of the total area; Spitsbergen Island is the site of the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, a seed repository established by the Global Crop Diversity Trust and the Norwegian Government

People and Society :: Svalbard

Ethnic groups:

Norwegian 55.4%, Russian and Ukrainian 44.3%, other 0.3% (1998)

Languages:

Norwegian, Russian

Population:

1,872 (July 2014 est.)

country comparison to the world: 234

Population growth rate:

-0.03% (2014 est.)

country comparison to the world: 199

Sex ratio:

NA

Infant mortality rate:

total: NA

male: NA

female: NA

Life expectancy at birth:

total population: NA

male: NA

female: NA

Total fertility rate:

NA (2014 est.)

HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:

0% (2001 est.)

country comparison to the world: 170

HIV/AIDS - deaths:

0 (2001 est.)

country comparison to the world: 158

Literacy:

NA

Government :: Svalbard

Country name:

conventional long form: none

conventional short form: Svalbard (sometimes referred to as Spitsbergen)

Dependency status:

territory of Norway; administered by the Polar Department of the Ministry of Justice, through a governor (sysselmann) residing in Longyearbyen, Spitsbergen; by treaty (9 February 1920) sovereignty was awarded to Norway

Government type:

NA

Capital:

name: Longyearbyen

geographic coordinates: 78 13 N, 15 38 E

time difference: UTC+1 (6 hours ahead of Washington, DC during Standard Time)

daylight saving time: +1hr, begins last Sunday in March; ends last Sunday in October

Independence:

none (territory of Norway)

Legal system:

the laws of Norway where applicable apply

Executive branch:

chief of state: King HARALD V of Norway (since 17 January 1991)

head of government: Governor Odd Olsen INGERO (since September 2009); Assistant Governor Lars Erik ALHEIM

elections: none; the monarchy is hereditary; governor and assistant governor responsible to the Polar Department of the Ministry of Justice

Political pressure groups and leaders:

NA

International organization participation:

none

Flag description:

the flag of Norway is used

National anthem:

note: as a territory of Norway, "Ja, vi elsker dette landet" is official (see Norway)

Economy :: Svalbard

Economy - overview:

Coal mining, tourism, and international research are the major revenue sources on Svalbard. Coal mining is the dominant economic activity and a treaty of 9 February 1920 gave the 41 signatories equal rights to exploit mineral deposits, subject to Norwegian regulation. Although US, UK, Dutch, and Swedish coal companies have mined in the past, the only companies still engaging in this are Norwegian and Russian. The settlements on Svalbard are essentially company towns. The Norwegian state-owned coal company employs nearly 60% of the Norwegian population on the island, runs many of the local services, and provides most of the local infrastructure. There is also some hunting of seal, reindeer, and fox. Goods such as alcohol, tobacco, and vehicles, normally highly taxed on mainland Norway, are considerably cheaper in Svalbard in an effort by the Norwegian government to entice more people to live on the Arctic archipelago. By law, the Norwegians collect only enough taxes to pay for the needs of the local government; none of tax proceeds go to Norway.

GDP (purchasing power parity):

\$6.313 billion

GDP - real growth rate:

NA%

Labor force:

1,234 (2003)

country comparison to the world: 229

Budget:

revenues: \$NA

expenditures: \$NA

Taxes and other revenues:

NA% of GDP

Budget surplus (+) or deficit (-):

NA% of GDP

Exports:

\$NA

Imports:

\$NA

Exchange rates:

Norwegian kroner (NOK) per US dollar -

5.802 (2013)

5.8162 (2012)

6.0442 (2010)

6.288 (2009)

5.6361 (2008)

Communications :: Svalbard

Telephone system:

general assessment: adequate

domestic: local telephone service

international: country code - 47-790; satellite earth station - 1 of unknown type (for communication with Norwegian mainland only) (2005)

Broadcast media:

the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK) began direct TV transmission to Svalbard via satellite in 1984; Longyearbyen households have access to 3 NRK radio and 2 TV stations (2008)

Internet country code:

.sj

Transportation :: Svalbard

Airports:

4 (2013)

country comparison to the world: 188

Airports - with paved runways:

total: 1

2,438 to 3,047 m: 1 (2013)

Airports - with unpaved runways:

total: 3

under 914 m:

3 (2013)

Heliports:

1 (2013)

Ports and terminals:

major seaport(s): Barentsburg, Longyearbyen, Ny-Alesund, Pyramiden

Military :: Svalbard

Military branches:

no regular military forces

Military - note:

Svalbard is a territory of Norway, demilitarized by treaty on 9 February 1920; Norwegian military activity is limited to fisheries surveillance by the Norwegian Coast Guard

Transnational Issues:: Svalbard

Disputes - international:

despite recent discussions, Russia and Norway dispute their maritime limits in the Barents Sea and Russia's fishing rights beyond Svalbard's territorial limits within the Svalbard Treaty zone