

# Information for foreign citizens in Longyearbyen

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Photo: Tommy Dahl Markussen



**LONGYEARBYEN**  
LOKALSTYRE



Skatteetaten



SVALBARD KIRKE



# INFORMATION FOR FOREIGN CITIZENS

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## What is Svalbard?



**Svalbard has the northernmost permanent settlements in the world. The temperature can drop below minus 30 degrees C in the winter.**

- Svalbard is part of the Kingdom of Norway. It is an archipelago between 74 and 81 degrees north and 10 and 35 degrees east. Svalbard has the northernmost permanent settlements in the world.
- Spitsbergen is the biggest island in Svalbard, and Longyearbyen is the biggest settlement.
- Svalbard is outside the Schengen Area. You need a visa to travel to and from Svalbard via mainland Norway if you are a citizen of a country to which a visa requirement applies.
- If you intend to live here, you must be able to support yourself with funds provided either by yourself or another provider. No social security benefits are available in Svalbard.
- Almost all the accommodation is owned by employers. In most cases, you must have a job in order to get accommodation.
- It is cold in Svalbard. The average temperature in summer is 5 degrees Celsius. During winter, the temperature can drop below minus 30 degrees Celsius. The polar night lasts from October to February.
- The reason Longyearbyen was established in 1906, was coal mining. Nowadays, the three most important industries in Svalbard are coal mining, tourism and research. About 2,100 people live in Longyearbyen.

## The Governor of Svalbard



**The Governor of Svalbard's Office is at Skjæringa in Longyearbyen.**

- The Governor of Svalbard (Sysselmannen) is the Norwegian Government's highest ranking representative in Svalbard.
- The Governor of Svalbard is appointed by the Norwegian Government. It is not an elected office.
- The Governor of Svalbard is Chief of Police, and has the same authority as a County Governor on the Norwegian mainland.
- The Governor of Svalbard's authority covers the entire archipelago. The Governor of Svalbard is in charge of the rescue services in Svalbard, and has resources including helicopters and a ship at disposal.
- Marriages, divorces and separations are part of the Governor of Svalbard's duties. The Governor of Svalbard is also responsible for prosecuting criminal offences.
- The Governor of Svalbard's office employs 37 people. The office has a Police Department, an Environmental Department, an Administrative Department and a Staff section.

### **You must contact the Governor of Svalbard's office if you need to:**

- Report an emergency situation
- Report a crime
- Apply for a visa. It is important that you submit your application well before you intend to travel, not less than two weeks in advance, and you will need to attend the Governor's Office in person.
- Apply for a firearm permit, in order to buy or hire a gun. Foreign citizens must provide a police certificate of good conduct from their home country, in English or a Scandinavian language.
- Register a car or snowmobile
- Apply for a licence for hunting, fishing and trapping
- Give notification of travel in Svalbard outside Management Area 10 (central parts of Spitsbergen)
- Have a form stamped for a VAT refund on goods purchased on the mainland.

For more information: [www.sysselmannen.no](http://www.sysselmannen.no)

## Laws and regulations



The Governor of Svalbard (Sysselmannen) has police authority in Svalbard.

- As Svalbard is part of Norway, Norwegian legislation applies in Svalbard.
- The Norwegian Social Welfare Act does not apply. People living in Svalbard are not entitled to social security benefits or housing benefit. Unemployment benefit is only payable in Svalbard in exceptional circumstances.
- Anyone intending to live in Svalbard must be able to support themselves with funds provided either by themselves or another provider.
- Svalbard is outside the Schengen Area. If you are from a country outside the Schengen Area and this country has a visa requirement for Norway, you need a visa for Norway every time you travel to or from Svalbard via mainland Norway. For **one** visit to your home country, you need **two** stamps in your passport: one for the outward journey via Norway, and one for the return journey via Norway. You will need to attend the Governor's Office in person in order to get a visa, not less than two weeks before you intend to travel.
- All foreign citizens travelling to Svalbard must show their passport or national identity card.
- The environmental legislation in Svalbard is strict. All wildlife is protected. Disturbing animals and birds and picking flowers is therefore prohibited.
- There are polar bears all over Svalbard. They can be dangerous to people. If you leave the settlements, you must bring a flare gun or similar, in order to scare off approaching polar bears. You should also carry a firearm. Carrying a loaded gun in the inhabited settlements is prohibited.
- The use of all violence is prohibited in Norway. You are not allowed to abuse children or use any other kind of corporeal punishment when bringing up children. Severe penalties may be applied to anyone who has physically abused a child.
- You are not allowed to drive a car, snowmobile or moped if you are intoxicated. The legal limit is 0.02% blood alcohol content.

For more information: [www.sysselmannen.no](http://www.sysselmannen.no)

## Residence permits



Periods of residence in Svalbard do not count as residence in mainland Norway. Photo: Tommy Dahl Markussen

- You do not need a residence permit to live in Svalbard, but you must be able to support yourself with funds provided either by yourself or another provider.
- Residence in Svalbard does not in itself count as residence in mainland Norway. You will not automatically be given a residence permit in Norway or Norwegian citizenship, even if you have lived in Svalbard for many years. This also applies to foreigners married to Norwegians.
- Children who have grown up in Longyearbyen and who are foreign citizens are not automatically entitled to residence permits in mainland Norway.

For more information: [www.udi.no](http://www.udi.no)

## Longyearbyen lokalstyre (community council)



Longyearbyen lokalstyre (community council) has its offices in the Næringsbygget building.

- Longyearbyen lokalstyre is the community council in Longyearbyen, comparable to a municipality on the mainland. Its authority covers Longyearbyen planning area.
- The council operates the school, kindergartens, cultural school, cultural centre, cinema, sports hall, gallery, library, youth club and youth activities, fire and preparedness services, and the energy company.
- The community council is also responsible for roads, water, waste management, sewerage and town planning.
- Politicians are elected to Longyearbyen community council every four years. The community council makes decisions on budgetary matters and general objectives.
- Foreign citizens over the age of 18<sup>1</sup> are entitled to vote if they have lived in Longyearbyen or a Norwegian municipality three years before the day of the election.
- Nordic citizens have the same right to vote as Norwegian citizens. You must be over the age of 18 and have lived in Longyearbyen for at least four weeks.

You must contact the community council if you:

- need a place at the kindergarten
- need a place at the school
- want to start your own business
- want to construct a new building or an extension

For more information: [www.lokalstyre.no](http://www.lokalstyre.no)

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<sup>1</sup> Your 18th birthday must fall before the end of the election year.

## Kindergartens and schools



**Longyearbyen School provides primary education, also for the children of foreign citizens.**

- There are kindergartens in Longyearbyen for children aged between 1 and 5. Please contact the community council to apply. The kindergartens operate from 07:30 to 16:30 from Monday to Friday.
- The school in Longyearbyen is a primary school, grade 1-10, with an upper secondary department and after-school activities. Norwegian children start school in the autumn of the year of their 6<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- Children of foreign citizens are entitled to primary and upper secondary education, subject to more detailed rules. Please contact Longyearbyen School for more information.
- Foreign applicants under the age of 21 who live in Svalbard with their parents or guardians and who are registered in the Population Register may be admitted to Longyearbyen School for upper secondary education.

For more information: [www.lokalstyre.no](http://www.lokalstyre.no)



## Children and families



The educational and psychological counselling service (PPT) advises schools and kindergartens if children need extra follow-up. This is the Polarflokken kindergarten in Longyearbyen.

- The community council's child and family welfare service is there to ensure that children and young people grow up in a safe environment. Every child in Longyearbyen is entitled to the necessary assistance and care whenever needed.
- The child and family welfare service will provide support and assistance to children, young people and families who are having a difficult time at home. The service provides guidance, counselling and other assistive measures.
- If you need help or know of a child who needs help, please contact the community council. For emergency assistance, telephone the police at the Governor of Svalbard on 112.
- You are not allowed to abuse children or use any other kind of corporeal punishment when bringing up children. Severe penalties may be applied to anyone who has physically abused a child.
- If a child has been subject to violence or gross neglect in the family, the child and family welfare service must seek assistance from the court in order to assess whether the child can live at home.
- The educational and psychological counselling service (PPT) provides advice to schools and kindergartens when a child may need special education assistance or special education. Parent cooperation is most important.

For more information: [www.lokalstyre.no](http://www.lokalstyre.no)

## Work and tax



Foreign citizens need a Norwegian identity number in order to work in Svalbard.

- Svalbard has a separate population register where everyone living in Svalbard must be registered. As soon as you move to Svalbard, you must notify the Svalbard Tax Office. You must also notify the tax office if you move within Svalbard and when you leave Svalbard.
- You need a Norwegian identity number in order to work in Svalbard. You can apply for this at the tax office. You will have to show your passport or national identity card.
- Anyone who lives in Svalbard for a minimum of 12 months must pay tax in Svalbard. You must submit a tax return to the tax office every year.
- If you live in Svalbard for less than 12 months, you may be liable for tax in Svalbard for any salary or business income you have earned here, if each period of residence lasts for a minimum of 30 consecutive days.
- Anyone coming directly to Svalbard from a foreign country will have a limited tax liability for the first five years. In these cases, you do not need to submit a tax return, **with two exceptions**: If you run your own business or own real estate in Svalbard, you will still have to submit a tax return.
- As a general rule, you pay 8 per cent tax on income in Svalbard. Members of the Norwegian National Insurance scheme pay an additional 8.2 per cent in National Insurance contributions, i.e. a total of 16.2 per cent.

For more information: [www.skatteetaten.no](http://www.skatteetaten.no)

## National Insurance



Membership of the National Insurance scheme entitles you to, among other things, hospital stays according to defined regulations.

- Foreign citizens working for a Norwegian employer in Svalbard become members of the Norwegian National Insurance scheme. They must then pay National Insurance contributions. Membership lasts for up to **four weeks** after the last working day. **It is particularly important for you to be aware of this if you are a seasonal worker and/or out of work for more than four weeks at a time.**
- If you are a member of the Norwegian National Insurance scheme, you are entitled to Norwegian healthcare services, according to defined regulations. You may be entitled to sickness benefit, parental benefit in the event of pregnancy and childbirth, child benefit and care days to take care of a sick child.
- If you are a member of the National Insurance scheme and are providing for a spouse and/ or children, this entitles them to healthcare services while they are resident in Svalbard. **You should be aware that this entitlement does not apply to cohabitants.**
- If you are not a member of the National Insurance scheme, you will have to pay the cost of healthcare services, childbirth expenses and hospital admissions.
- Foreign citizens who are members of the Norwegian National Insurance scheme when they arrive in Svalbard retain their membership.
- Citizens of Nordic countries automatically become members of the Norwegian National Insurance scheme under a Nordic convention.
- The EEA Agreement does not apply in Svalbard. Therefore, National Insurance benefits for children who do not live in Svalbard, for example benefits such as child benefit and cash-for-care benefits, cannot be exported to other EEA countries. The entitlement to healthcare services depends on whether the citizen has an employment relationship in Svalbard.
- As a member of the Norwegian National Insurance scheme, you can accumulate rights to a retirement pension if you have an income and pay tax/National Insurance contributions. The retirement age in Norway is 67 years. Your pension can be paid from the age of 62, if you have earned sufficient pension entitlements.

For more information: [www.nav.no](http://www.nav.no)

## Healthcare



### Longyearbyen Hospital.

- There is a hospital in Longyearbyen with general practitioners, nurses, surgeon, dentist, physiotherapist, occupational health services, midwife and public health nurse.
- There is a health centre at the hospital where pregnant women and children between the ages of 0 and 5 receive midwife, public health nurse and doctor follow-up. The public health nurse also follows up children and young people between the ages of 6 and 20, and is available at Longyearbyen School at certain times of the week.
- Stays in hospital are free for residents of the Nordic countries, and for anyone who is covered by the Norwegian National Insurance scheme. Everyone else must have valid insurance or pay themselves.
- It is essential for anyone who has lived in countries outside Western Europe, the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Japan to be checked for tuberculosis. This applies to people who will be resident in Svalbard for more than three months. The examination is free. Please contact the public health nurse at the hospital to make an appointment.
- The regular General Practitioner scheme that applies on the Norwegian mainland does not apply in Svalbard.

For more information: [www.unn.no](http://www.unn.no)

## Church, culture and leisure time



Svalbard Church is always open. It is used as a venue for concerts and other cultural activities. Photo: Diana Snibsøer.

- The mission of Svalbard Church is to serve anyone living in Svalbard, regardless of their nationality and religious affiliation. It is always open. You can find more information on [www.svalbardkirke.no](http://www.svalbardkirke.no)
- Longyearbyen Community Council (Lokalstyret) runs a cultural house with a cinema, cultural hall and café, and a library with a collection of books and films in various languages.
- There are many organisations, clubs and associations in Longyearbyen. You can engage in singing and music, dance, sport and numerous other activities.
- The sports association in Svalbard (Svalbard Turn) offers a wide range of activities for children and adults. For more information please visit their website: [www.svalbardturn.no](http://www.svalbardturn.no)
- There is a swimming pool in Svalbardhallen, which is open every day.
- The youth club is a free offer for youngsters in the ages of 11-18. Opening hours: Please see the Community Council's website and Facebook page.
- 'Ung i Longyearbyen' (Young in Longyearbyen) organises many big and small events for young people, such as Camp Svalbard in summer and winter, the LybLan party and the Norwegian Youth Festivals of Art.
- No alcohol, drugs, moist snuff ('snus') or smoking is permitted at any 'Ung i Longyearbyen' activities. There are always adults present.
- Galleri Svalbard and Longyearbyen Arts and Crafts Centre are in Nybyen. Art exhibitions are held there, and artists may rent workshops on the premises.

For more information: [www.lokalstyre.no](http://www.lokalstyre.no)

## Telephone and email list

<b>NAME</b>	<b>TELEPHONE NUMBER</b>	<b>EMAIL</b>
Longyearbyen Community Council (Lokalstyret)	(+47) 79 02 21 50	<a href="mailto:postmottak@lokalstyre.no">postmottak@lokalstyre.no</a>
Longyearbyen Hospital	(+47) 79 02 42 00	<a href="mailto:post@unn.no">post@unn.no</a>
Norwegian Labour and Welfare Service (NAV) Longyearbyen	(+47) 55 55 33 33	<a href="mailto:arnt.vegar.jensen@nav.no">arnt.vegar.jensen@nav.no</a>
Svalbard Church	(+47) 79 02 55 60	<a href="mailto:prest@svabardkirke.no">prest@svabardkirke.no</a>
Svalbard Tax Office	(+47) 79 02 36 70	<a href="mailto:svabard@skatteetaten.no">svabard@skatteetaten.no</a>
Svalbard sports association (Svalbard Turn)	(+47) 79 02 13 33	<a href="mailto:post@svabardturn.no">post@svabardturn.no</a>
The Governor of Svalbard (Syssemmannen)	(+47) 79 02 43 00	<a href="mailto:firmapost@syssemmannen.no">firmapost@syssemmannen.no</a>