

The Svalbard Environmental Protection Act  
came into effect on 1 July 2002.  
It is a framework act that is  
supplemented by several regulations:

- Regulation pertaining to harvesting in Svalbard
  - Camping regulations
  - Regulation about motorized traffic
- Regulation about land use plans and impact assessment
  - Pollution regulations
- Regulation about keeping dogs on a leash

Read more on [www.sysselmannen.no](http://www.sysselmannen.no)



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MILJØVERNDEPARTEMENTET



# WHEN VISITING SVALBARD

## INFORMATION FOR NON-RESIDENTS

## The environmental legislation in Svalbard

The Svalbard Environmental Protection Act with its regulations constitute the most important environmental legislation in Svalbard. This folder explains important aspects of the legislation and provides other useful information for visitors to Svalbard. The main purpose of the legislation is to safeguard the almost untouched wilderness that still exists on the archipelago. One of the guiding principles is that everyone who visits the islands has a duty to behave in a way that will avoid unnecessary damage or disturbance to the natural environment and the cultural heritage.



*Svalbard's nature offers great outdoor experiences. Here the view from Rodahlfjellet in Sorgfjorden north on Spitsbergen is enjoyed.  
Photo: The Governor of Svalbard.*

## Hunting, trapping and fishing

Hunting, trapping and fishing rights in Svalbard are mainly reserved for permanent residents. However, visitors are allowed to hunt Svalbard ptarmigan (bag limit for the season of five birds per person), pink-footed goose, Brünnich's guillemot, black guillemot, fulmar, glaucous gull, ringed seal and bearded seal, and may fish for Arctic char using a rod or hand line at certain times of year. If you wish to hunt in Svalbard, you must first pass the Norwegian hunting proficiency test and be registered in the Norwegian Register of Hunters, or provide documentation that you have similar hunting qualifications from the country where you are normally resident. You must be at least 16 years old to hunt small game and 18 years old to hunt seals.

You must also obtain a hunting or fishing licence before starting these activities. Licences are issued by the Governor's office, and a fee is charged for each licence issued. The proceeds shall be paid into the Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund. Any fishing equipment that has been used elsewhere must be disinfected before it is used in Svalbard.

Dead animals or parts of animals are the property of the Svalbard Environmental Protection Fund and must not be removed from the place where they are found. Please notify the Governor's office if you find dead animals, especially polar bears, Arctic foxes or walrus.

Snowmobiles and other motor vehicles may not be used to find game or to distract an animal's attention from the hunter. Shooting from motor vehicles is not permitted.

You are allowed to bring a maximum of five kilograms of game meat when you leave Svalbard.



*The Svalbard ptarmigan is the only sedentary bird in Svalbard.*

*Photo: Arild Lyssand.*

## Fossils

In Svalbard you may come across fossils that are up to several hundred million years old. You are not allowed to collect fossils in some of the protected areas.



PHOTO: BJORN FRANTZEN

### Camping activities

The rules for camping in Svalbard apply to camping in tents and all other types of shelters (bivouacs, snow shelters, igloos, etc.), regardless of the size of the camp and how long it is in use.



*Make sure to clear the campsite after use. All equipment and waste shall be removed.*  
*Photo: The Governor of Svalbard*

### Siting and clearing up camps, camp fires, etc.

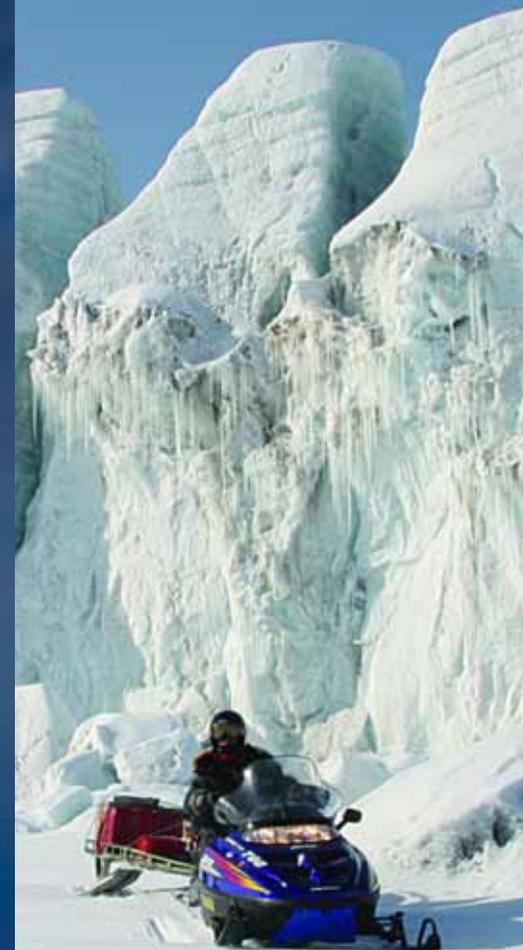
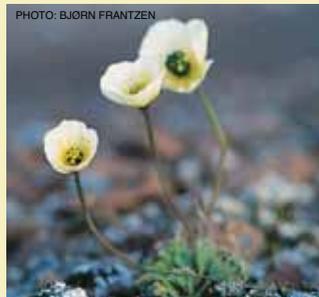
Whenever possible, please site your camp on ground where there is no vegetation. You must make sure that you camp at least 100 m away from cabins and buildings that are inhabited unless you have the permission of the owner or people using the buildings to camp closer. Each protected cultural heritage site in Svalbard is surrounded by a security zone extending for 100 metres in all directions from the perimeter of the site, and camping, camp fires, etc. are not allowed within this zone.

When you leave a camp site, please make sure that you clear away any stones, stakes or other objects that have been used to hold down tent canvas or fasten guy ropes, or to form shelters, seats or fireplaces, and any other structures that were built as part of the camp, and replace them where you found them. Make sure that you remove all your equipment and take any refuse and waste with you when you leave the camp site.

Please do not light fires on ground that is covered by vegetation or directly on ground covered by soil. When you leave, clear up the camp fire and remove any remains of fires as far as possible.

### Flora

Svalbard's plants are protected and cannot be picked. You are however allowed to collect mushrooms and seaweed for your own personal use except in some of the protected areas. There are about 170 plant species in Svalbard, and the Svalbard Poppy (photo) is rather common and widespread throughout the archipelago.



MAP  
USE OF SNOWMOBILES  
IN SVALBARD

PHOTO: SYNNOVE HAGA

Pull out and keep the map

### Motor traffic in Svalbard

As a general rule, off-road motor traffic is not permitted in Svalbard, and aircraft may not be landed away from approved landing strips.

Certain exceptions have been made for the use of tracked vehicles and snowmobiles on frozen and snow-covered ground. Visitors to Svalbard may use snowmobiles unaccompanied in an area in the central part of Spitsbergen. The area is marked in yellow on the map in this folder (which corresponds to map B referred to in the regulations on off-road motor traffic). In addition, visitors who are taking part in an organized tour or accompanying a permanent resident may use snowmobiles in an area on the eastern side of Spitsbergen and the adjacent ice-covered areas of sea. This area is marked in blue on the map. For further details of the rules for off-road motor traffic, see the regulations (Regulations of 24 June 2002 relating to off-road motor traffic and the use of aircraft for tourism purposes in Svalbard).

-  Area where unaccompanied visitors may use snowmobiles and tracked vehicles on snow-covered and frozen ground
-  Area where visitors may use snowmobiles and tracked vehicles on snow-covered and frozen ground if they are taking part in an organized tour or accompanying a permanent resident
-  Trail where visitors may use snowmobiles and tracked vehicles on snow-covered and frozen ground if they are taking part in an organized tour or accompanying a permanent resident

### Protected areas

About 65 percent of Svalbard's area is protected as national parks, nature reserves, bird reserves and one protected geotope. In most of these areas, visitors are allowed to travel by foot, on skis and by boat. Some restrictions on access apply:

- Kong Karls Land and the surrounding sea to a distance of 500 m from land – access prohibited all year round
- The seabird reserves and the surrounding sea to a distance of 300 m from land – access prohibited from 15 May to 15 August
- The island of Moffen and the surrounding sea to a distance of 300 m from land – access prohibited from 15 May to 15 September
- Virgohamna on Danskøya
- Bjørnøya south – access prohibited from 1 April to 31 August. Prohibition zone out to one nautical mile from land for vessels larger than 40 feet.
- Bjørnøya north – access prohibited from 15 June to 31 August.
- The rules applying to motorized traffic, the picking of fossils, hunting and fishing vary in the different protected areas. Regulations for the each area can be downloaded from [www.sysselmannen.no](http://www.sysselmannen.no).



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## COMMON SENSE RULES FOR SVALBARD

**We realize it is not possible to be an invisible tourist, but we appreciate your trying.**

1. Don't be an arctic litterbug! Leave no lasting signs of your visit.
2. Birds and other animals are not to be disturbed. Remember, you are the guest.
3. Help take care of the biodiversity. Do not pick flowers.
4. Leave old cultural remains alone. Law protects all traces of humans from before 1946.
5. Pursuing, attracting or enticing polar bears is strictly prohibited. They are dangerous animals, but also vulnerable.
6. Do not leave the settlements without a suitable gun, and experience in using it.
7. Be considerate of others.
8. Contact the Governor's office (Sysselmannen) if planning a longer field excursion. A mandatory registration applies for travel to large parts of Svalbard (outside Management Area 10).
9. Acquaint yourself with the rules and regulations pertaining to travel and other tourist activities on Svalbard.
10. For the sake of both the environment and yourself, we recommend organized tour arrangements.

**Svalbard Tourism  
in cooperation with  
the Governor of Svalbard**

## Polar bear precautions

If you are planning to camp in Svalbard, you must learn how to avoid the risk of polar bear attacks and how to ward off an attack without injuring or killing the animal. Appropriate means of frightening and chasing off polar bears must be available in all camps. Examples are flare guns and flare pens equipped with thunder flashes or signal cartridges, or sirens. If the camp is to last for a week or more, it must also be equipped with at least one recognized way of warning of the presence of polar bears, such as trip-wires with flares, guard dogs or a polar bear watch routine.

## Notification of camps lasting for more than one week

If you are planning to camp for a week or more in the same locality, you must notify the Governor's office of this at least three weeks before the planned starting date. The notification must include information on where the camp is to be, when and for how long it is to be used, the number of people who are to stay there, what kind of tents or shelters are to be used, and where the camp is to be sited in relation to streams, hilltops etc. The notification must also describe the polar bear precautions that are planned, how food is to be stored, waste management and sanitary arrangements.

## Cabins

There are many cabins scattered around Svalbard. Many of them are protected as part of the cultural heritage. Please note that visitors are not allowed to use cabins anywhere in Svalbard as overnight accommodation except in emergencies. This rule applies even to cabins that are not locked. If you need to use a cabin in an emergency, this should be reported to the Governor's office as soon as possible afterwards.

## The cultural heritage

All traces of human activity in Svalbard dating from before 1946 are protected. This applies to all types of buildings and other man-made structures, ruins, trapping equipment and its remains, and so on. Evidence of human graves of all kinds, including crosses, bones and bone fragments and skeletal remains of people found either in or outside the original graves are protected irrespective of their age. The same applies to skeletons and bones at slaughtering sites for walrus and whales and to sites where there have been spring-guns for polar bears.

## The fauna

All animals in Svalbard are protected, but the regulations permit some hunting, trapping and fishing of a limited number of species. The legislation does not prevent you from taking part in ordinary outdoor recreation activities, but you may not chase, catch or injure animals. Their eggs, nests and lairs are also protected. In the period 1 April to 31 August, it is forbidden to use ship sirens, fire shots or produce other loud noises less than one nautical mile (1852 m) from seabird colonies. Climbing on cliffs



PHOTO: ARILD LYSSAND

where there are seabird colonies is also forbidden between these dates.

You must not remove any historical objects that you find in Svalbard. This includes objects that are not obviously valuable – anything from broken pots and pans to ammunition cases – so if in doubt, it is better to leave things as you found them.

There is a security zone extending for 100 metres in all directions around protected cultural heritage sites, unless otherwise decided in a specific case. Within this zone, you may not camp, light fires or do anything else that will disturb the site. For example, you must not damage, dig up, move, take away or disfigure protected structures or sites or movable historical objects.

Access to Virgohamna on Danskøya is forbidden, although the Governor's office can grant exemptions from this.



*Remains of a boiling station for blubber from the whaling period in Smeerenburg on Amsterdamøya. Tread carefully near Svalbard's cultural monuments.*

*Photo: The Governor of Svalbard*

### **Refuse and pollution**

You may not leave refuse or litter behind you in Svalbard or pollute the environment. You are allowed to make camp fires using paper and wood that has not been painted or otherwise treated. You must collect any other refuse and take it back with you to one of the settlements, where it must be delivered to an approved waste collection facility.

### **Driftwood**

Many of Svalbard's beaches are covered with driftwood, which forms part of the landscape of the archipelago. You are allowed to use driftwood for camp fires, but please make sure that you do not use any wood that might be part of Svalbard's cultural heritage.

### **Polar bears**

You must not lure, pursue or otherwise seek out polar bears in such a way as to disturb them or expose either bears or people to danger.

### **Firearms**

- You may not carry a loaded firearm or one with ammunition in the magazine within the settlements Barentsburg and Longyearbyen.

### **Notification of travel plans and requirements for insurance**

Anyone who is planning independent travel outside the central parts of Spitsbergen (marked in yellow on the map in this folder) must contact the Governor's office and fill out a notification form. Anyone travelling outside this area is also required to have a special insurance policy or a bank guarantee to cover transport expenses in the event of illness or the costs of a search and rescue operation. The Governor's office determines the amount of the insurance or guarantee.

When the notification has been approved and documents have been produced showing that you have the necessary insurance or bank guarantee, the Governor's office will issue a registration card. You should take this with you on your trip so that it can be produced in the event of control. The registration card is to be returned to the Governor's office after the trip.

For more information, see the Regulations of 18 October 1991 relating to tourism and other travel in Svalbard, and refer to the sections of this folder on motor traffic and camping.

### **Emergency beacons**

All visitors and tour operators in Svalbard are required to carry emergency beacons with them when travelling outside the area marked in yellow on the map in this folder.

### **Safety**

Remember that the Svalbard archipelago lies in the Arctic region and therefore has a cold climate. The weather conditions and temperature can change very rapidly. Even when the temperature is not particularly low for Svalbard, the wind chill can lower the effective temperature so much that conditions become extremely dangerous.

Outside the settlements, visitors to the archipelago must be aware of many natural dangers, such as glacier crevasses, unsafe sea ice, large holes in the snow created by high winds, avalanches, standing water on the ice, the low sea temperature, and the speed at which extreme weather conditions can arise.

If you are planning to travel in Svalbard, you should have some experience of expeditions to similar areas. You must have equipment that is suitable for the climate, weather conditions and terrain you are likely to meet. For maximum safety, we recommend that you use local guides. You can read more about safety in the brochure "Safety in Svalbard". The brochure can be obtained at the Governor's office or be downloaded from [www.sysselmannen.no](http://www.sysselmannen.no).



- As protection against polar bears, you should carry a suitable large-bore firearm and equipment for frightening and chasing off bears, such as a flare gun or flare pen, whenever you travel outside the settlements.
- Anyone who is to carry a firearm as protection against polar bears must have experience in the use of firearms.