

# SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

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## Svalbard guidelines

<https://en.visitsvalbard.com/visitor-information/rules-of-svalbard-and-safety>

There are some Svalbard Guidelines we would like you to read before arriving in Svalbard. This way you will be better prepared to take care of our High Arctic paradise.

### Environmental Protection

Flora and fauna on Svalbard have adapted to the difficult Arctic conditions, but the nature is still very fragile, and even minor encroachments can cause lasting damage. This is why special environmental regulations have been developed for Svalbard. The purpose of the Environmental Act of Svalbard and its appurtenant regulations is among other things to ensure the protection of Svalbard’s vulnerable natural environment and its many valuable historical monuments.

### Tourism and travel

All visits to Svalbard are subject to strict regulations regarding the protection of nature and historical sites, as well as ensuring the safety of the visitors. Strict rules apply to tour operators, tour organisers and tourist vessels, for example, that tour organisers are fully responsible for their customers’ safety. The organisers are also responsible for ensuring that the travellers are informed about all relevant rules and regulations. The tour organiser must inform the Governor of Svalbard of all tour plans well ahead of the start of the season, as well as present proof of insurance to cover any search and rescue operations should the need arise.

If you are going out for a trip alone and plan to go beyond Management area 10 (the central parts of Spitsbergen), you must report your planned trip to the Governor of Svalbard. The obligation to report

applies to all trips both on land and on sea, and such reports shall be made on specific forms. Make sure you contact the Governor of Svalbard a long time in advance. You will also be required to take out a search and rescue insurance or provide a guarantee for the same in connection with such a trip. The environmental protection legislation contains certain restrictions for traffic within Svalbard.

Among other things, the use of motorized vehicles on bare ground is prohibited, and the use of snowmobiles is only permitted in certain areas. All traffic in the bird sanctuaries and in some other protected areas is regulated or prohibited. Special rules apply to camping. Please familiarize yourself with the environmental legislation of Svalbard, especially prior to setting out on a trip by yourself. Svalbard is an Arctic pearl. The nature, landscape and historical monuments set the premises for all activities, and this is the way we want it to remain. With this in mind, we encourage all visitors to "TAKE CARE OF SVALBARD".

## Guidelines

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. It is prohibited to lure, pursue, or otherwise seek out polar bears in such a way as to disturb them or expose either bears or humans to danger.
6. Do not leave the settlements without a suitable gun, and experience in using it.
7. Be considerate to 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.
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.

*It is impossible being an invisible tourist, - but we do appreciate you're trying.*

## Sustainable Tourism in Svalbard

<https://en.visitsvalbard.com/inspiration/various/increased-efforts-sustainable-tourism>

### A good place to visit – now and in the future

The residents of Longyearbyen are very fond of their town and, with the beautiful Svalbard nature as their backyard, they are perhaps more engaged than most in matters concerning environmental protection and sustainability. The same goes for the guests who visit us. More and more tourists are demanding and choosing destinations that demonstrate responsibility and offer genuine and authentic experiences of high quality.

Svalbard's nature is vulnerable and there is a delicate balance between protection and use. The effects of climate change are more visible in the Arctic than anywhere else, and sustainability is more relevant now than ever. This coincides with a major transformation for the local community in the years ahead, with mining on the way out, a new energy solution and a tourism industry recovering from the effects of Covid-19. Sustainable solutions will play a pivotal role in this transformation.

Visit Svalbard is proud to be labelled as a Sustainable Destination. The label scheme, which is owned by Innovation Norway, is an important tool for improving efforts related to sustainability every single

day. For the destination company Visit Svalbard, the local companies and the wider destination, the Sustainable Destination label means we have a commitment to focus on sustainability. Read more about the label scheme.

### Is it possible to be sustainable at 78 degrees North?

However, some may well ask: How can Svalbard be a sustainable destination when its energy comes from coal mining, most consumer goods are imported to the island, there are daily flights to and from the mainland and in the summertime large cruise ships arrive with thousands of guests on board? We often hear this as arguments for why we are not a sustainable destination. However, this is what we must deal with in the current situation. Despite the environmental paradox in Svalbard, we are working continuously to improve the conditions in this setting.

Having this label does not mean that our destination is sustainable. However, it's an important tool for improving the situation and committing us to a continuous process of seeing how we can reduce our environmental footprint. We implement local measures, make wise environmental choices and not least increase awareness of sustainability among the tourism industry, the local population and our guests.

### Environmental focus

Visit Svalbard as a company is environmentally certified. The local tourism companies are dedicated to taking care of the environment and reducing their environmental footprint. Back in 2010, Basecamp Explorer Spitsbergen became the first company in Svalbard to gain environmental certification.

Nine of our members are now environmentally certified, and this includes a full 14 companies. Visit Svalbard encourages local companies to undergo environmental certification, and several are in the process of being certified during 2022.

### Green and innovative development

Our member companies demonstrate an abundance of good sustainability measures that represent many aspects of the concept. Here are a few examples:

Svalbard Brewery, the world's northernmost brewery, burns the waste from its production and is self-sufficient in terms of energy. The surplus energy is used for heating and hot water in Longyearbyen. The brewery is a pioneer when it comes to circular economy.

Hurtigruten Svalbard was one of the first in the world to use electric snowmobiles. Moreover, they use hybrid boats and have invested in solar and wind power systems. With environmentally friendly transport solutions, they are treading a path for new technology and experience development that the tourism industry in Longyearbyen can gain benefits from in the future.

Svalbard Adventures is launching a major sustainability initiative in February. The prioritised focus areas are safety for employees and customers, employee welfare, impact on vulnerable nature and wildlife, development and wellbeing in the local community and energy efficiency and minimisation of emissions. As part of its employee welfare, Svalbard Adventures has established the Svalbard Adventures Academy to deal with social sustainability within the company. The academy will ensure that the company's employees thrive in Svalbard, develop professionally and learn to travel in nature in a safe way. Svalbard Adventures also facilitates inclusion of the local population by offering the locals courses and discounts.

When developing new experiences, tour operators are encouraged to focus on urban activities that may be operated all year round. This will ensure a workforce year-round and more activities which will in turn lead to guests staying longer.

### Welcome year-round

The tourism industry in Longyearbyen has a focus on communicating the Northern Lights Winter in Svalbard from October to January. We wish to utilise the existing capacity on flights and at hotels during this period. The Polar Night offers wonderful nature-based experiences in Svalbard, and we have made this period even more attractive by arranging cultural offerings and festivals.

By spreading the guest traffic throughout the entire year, the tourism industry contributes to a healthier economy and a more viable local community with safe year-round jobs.

### Well prepared guests

It's important for us that the guests feel welcome and well looked after while they are here and that they receive good information about the "dos and don'ts" in Svalbard's nature. Furthermore, employees in this industry should feel a sense of unity, ownership and local identity and be confident and proud of what they convey to the guests. To help achieve this, courses for service employees and a certification programme for guides are arranged.

Visit Svalbard's joint booking portal makes it easy for guests to find organised activities with qualified Svalbard guides. On the website [visitsvalbard.com](https://visitsvalbard.com), guests can also find the level of difficulty of the various activities, information about how to dress in the various seasons and an overview of environmentally certified companies. In addition, the Longyearbyen Community Guidelines explain how the locals would like you to behave when visiting.

As your safety in Svalbard is important to us, we recommend that you join activities arranged by one of our member companies. Visit Svalbard has developed general guidelines for organised tourism in Svalbard, which the member companies are obliged to follow. The guidelines contain requirements for tour operators and guide qualifications, among other things.

### Nature and wildlife

We have also developed guidelines and instructions for safe and environmentally friendly travel to preserve our rich wildlife and vulnerable nature. The guides are responsible for safeguarding environmental considerations and working during the tours to promote an environmentally conscious attitude. This includes ensuring that animals are not disturbed and that everyone is conscious of the traces they leave in the terrain and avoid leaving any traces to the extent that it is possible.

Marketing Svalbard in a responsible way is a key part of our strategy. Responsible marketing means marketing the destination in a respectful, realistic and authentic way. The photos published in our market channels must reflect what the guests can actually experience and must not be at the expense of the principles of sustainability. For instance, close-up photos of polar bears and digitally enhanced images of the Northern Lights are no longer included in our future marketing. This is something we are constantly working on, and we are in the process of updating [visitsvalbard.com](https://visitsvalbard.com). You can read more here about the Svalbard reindeer, polar bear, walrus and Arctic fox and how we relate to these animals.

## More than environment

Many people associate “sustainable tourism” with measures to reduce air emissions and the amount of plastic waste in the ocean. While taking care of nature and the environment is an important part of the concept of sustainability, a central part of the understanding is the interaction between the tourism industry, local authorities and the local community.

How we manage our cultural heritage is also part of creating a sustainable tourism industry. The mining history is an important part of our destination, and we are proud to have guided mine tours among our offers to the guests.

Furthermore, sustainability has an economic perspective. Tourism must contribute to the local community having something to live by. A good place to live is a good place to visit, and tourism must make a positive contribution.

Our strategy for the future is to have an even greater focus on finding the right volume of the right guests in the right place at the right time.

There is a range of measures that guests can take to be more sustainable, including staying longer in one place. [See more tips here.](#)