

## EUROPE

### NORWAY

*Spitsbergen, Various Activity.* Spitsbergen is a group of islands north of Norway (78°N); Longyearbien is the capital. They were originally discovered in the 17th century and used as a base on a number of attempts on the North Pole by Nansen and others. Although not technically Norwegian territory, the islands are “looked after” by Norway. They are a major polar bear breeding ground, so you have to travel everywhere with a rifle. The highest hills (ca. 1700m) are in the north of the main island, Svalbard, which is where most people visit. Despite their northerly latitude, the islands lose all snow apart from their glaciers and ice caps during the summer months due to the warming influence of the Gulf Stream; in summer, travel is more difficult as the land becomes unfrozen tundra. There is a lot of very loose sedimentary rock, making climbing very unpleasant in summer.

Last March and April, I traveled to Spitsbergen to do some glaciology, which involved blowing up bits of glacier, driving around on the skidoos and seeing the polar bears. We had some cold temperatures (-33°C) and got a couple of sessions to go climbing. We did Mount Aspelin via a snow plod up the east ridge and down the northeast ridge, which was straightforward, though it was good to get out at midnight on April 11 after a days’ work. It was a bit of a problem mountaineering with a rifle over one shoulder. Mount Aspelin is the highest point in the south of the island, so it gave some good views. Everything is still snow-covered this time of the year, which offered good skidooing and travel on the sea ice.

On April 19, we had finished all the science, so Andy Smith and I did a brilliant ten-kilometer ridge on the north side of the Ragna Mariebreen Glacier. The traverse included four peaks: Framnuten (817m), Tverregga (925m), Gimlingen (975m), and Thoretinden (1081m). Climbing (up to IV) was necessary to get up or off all of the peaks, and Gimlingen was particularly difficult and dangerous with a narrow ridge as the summit (which I stood astride). I think it was the first ascent of most of the peaks; it certainly was for Gimlingen. I’ve since heard that Thoretinden was ascended up snow slopes from the north about 12 years ago around Easter time. We then descended to a col at the end of the ridge and skied 15 kilometers back to the camp. The rock was appallingly loose and some of the ridge was thin, but it was one of the best days I had had in the mountains for years and the ski back really ended it well.

BRIAN DAVISON, *United Kingdom*

*Troll Wall, Rock Fall.* It was reported that the 1300-meter Troll Wall on the north face of Trollryggen (1742m) experienced a series of rockfalls beginning in September. The first came from high on the face in an area known as the Gray Wall; the fall strafed the lower sections of the Swedish, Spanish and Rimmon routes. All routes in the vicinity of the wall were seriously affected. A month later a far greater rockfall occurred down low on the wall between the Rimmon Route and the 1986 route *Death to All*. The fall registered 2.0 on the Richter Scale at recording stations in Norway and Sweden. (*High Mountain Sports* 197)

*Lofoten Islands, Vagakallen, Freya.* It was reported that in July, the German couple Daniela and Robert Jasper established a 30-pitch, 800-meter route, *Freya* (F7c A3+), on Vagakallen (942m).