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# The Archer

Published by East Finchley Newspapers, P.O. Box 3699, London N2 2DE. [www.the-archer.co.uk](http://www.the-archer.co.uk)

True north: Edwin and Paulina in the Svalbard Islands

## A trip to the top of the world

**Paulina Spencer-Lugtenberg, born in East Finchley, and her husband Edwin, who is originally from the Netherlands and moved here 10 years ago, live in New Trinity Road and love travelling. Paulina tells us about their latest adventure:**

We are avid readers of *The Archer*. We thought we would amuse you with some pictures from our recent trip to Svalbard to celebrate my 40th birthday. The Svalbard Islands are located in the Arctic Ocean, halfway between Norway and the North Pole. It is from here that the North Pole expeditions depart.

The main city where the airport is located is called Longyearbyen. It is home to the Global Seed Vault which is critical as a fail-safe seed storage facility so that humankind

has the ability to grow from seed in the event of natural or man-made disasters.

### Polar bears and dinosaur bones

There are more polar bears than humans on Svalbard so you are required to carry a rifle and be on the look-out at all times. About 2,600 people live in the whole archipelago whereas there are an estimated 3,000 polar bears.

There are two Russian settlements: one is a ghost town mining village called Pyra-

miden, which was formerly a model Soviet town. It is slowly dilapidating but must have once been an impressive place with a school, cultural centre (with the world's northernmost piano), sports hall, hotel and restaurant. Currently, at peak season, just 12 Ukrainians live there.

The other town, Barentsburg, was bought from the Dutch in 1932 and still has an active mine but is also focused on tourism and crafts. To get to these places takes a snow scooter. The trip to Pyramiden and back takes an entire day.

Some people may recognise Svalbard from the TV series *Fortitude*. Like in the show, it is true that sick or injured people are immediately deported to the mainland and no-one can be buried here. The permafrost is slowly melting, throwing up various things from the earth, including dinosaur remains! It is a fascinating place.

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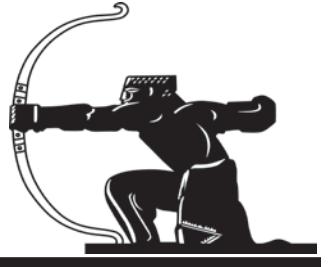
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Cold storage: Paulina outside the Global Seed Vault.

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