

Polar bear mauls tourist as eclipse junkies head to Arctic

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A polar bear has injured the face and arm of a Czech tourist in Norway

A Czech tourist was mauled by a polar bear in Svalbard in Norway's Arctic on Thursday, police said, illustrating the potential danger for those arriving to see this week's total eclipse of the sun.

"One person was slightly injured in a polar bear attack," police inspector Sidsel Svarstad told AFP.

The man, one of a group of six campers, suffered injuries to his face and arm and has been taken to hospital, a statement from the local governor's office said.

The bear has been put down, it added.

The attack comes on the eve of a [total solar eclipse](#) that is only going to be fully visible on Earth from Svalbard, an archipelago in the Arctic, and the Faroe Islands, a Danish autonomy territory in the North Atlantic.

The moon is expected to pass between Earth and the sun on Friday, with a [total eclipse](#) beginning at 1011 GMT in Svalbard and lasting for three minutes.

It is the only total eclipse this year, and some 1,500 to 2,000 tourists from around the world are expected to descend on Svalbard for the chance to observe it.

Local authorities have warned eclipse chasers of the dangers posed by [polar bears](#).

People leaving Svalbard's inhabited areas are required to be accompanied by an armed local guide or carry a rifle.

According to police, the six campers were taking part in a snowmobile and ski tour some 50 kilometres (30 miles) from Longyearbyen, the main town in Svalbard, when the attack occurred.



The solar eclipse will only be fully visible on Earth from Svalbard (pictured) and from the Faroe Islands

It was not immediately known whether the tourists were in town for the eclipse.

There have been five fatal polar bear attacks in Svalbard in the past four decades. The most recent one occurred in 2011, involving a 17-year-old British student on a school trip.

Some 3,000 polar bears live in the region, outnumbering the 2,500 inhabitants.

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