

Temperatures rise across Europe's far north

January 7 2020, by Helene Dauschy



The normally frigid fjords in Norway's Arctic Circle in winter are experiencing temperatures higher than normal this year

From the Norwegian fjords to Russian cities, record warm temperatures with less snow and rain have left the far north of Europe still waiting for the Arctic winter.

Sunndalsora, a small town in western Norway registered 19 degrees Celsius (66 degrees Fahrenheit) last Thursday, a temperature never seen before in the Nordic country at this time of year.

A local mayor marked the new year by filming himself swimming in water much colder than the air.

The [temperate climate](#) is due to warm winds which are expected to sweep through the region again this week, according to Norwegian forecasters. They added however these winds are not unusual and such warm spells are not necessarily linked to climate change.

Still temperatures have been higher than normal for the season.

In Sweden, temperatures over the past few days have climbed some 5C degrees higher than normal in the south of the Scandinavian country, and 10C degrees higher in the north.

"On 2 January three stations in central Sweden reported their highest January temperatures since 1971," Sverker Hellstrom, climatologist at the Swedish meteorological institute told AFP.

In Sweden's Lapland, the owner of a dog sled business claimed it has been one of the warmest winters in decades, with huge swings in temperature.

Donald Eriksson pointed out that on January 7 it was minus 36C degrees but on Tuesday it was above freezing at 1C degree.

"The trend is clear: in the last 15 years, and especially in the last 10, winter has been shortened by a month and a half on average," Eriksson told AFP by phone.

Shorter winters

In southern Finland where temperatures in December were 4.5C degrees higher than normal, winter has not even begun yet, according to the local weather service.

Meteorological estimates indicate that in January in the region, there will not be a real winter, defined as the number of days with below freezing temperatures.

Oslo, for example, has lost 21 days of winter over the last three decades, forecasters said, predicting that shorter winters will continue.

"By 2050, more than one million Norwegians will live in areas with less than a month of [winter](#)," said researcher Reidun Gangsto Skaland.

In the heart of the Arctic, the Norwegian archipelago Svalbard is experiencing its 109th straight month of temperatures above normal, according to the Norwegian meteorological institute.

It is the same situation in neighbouring Russia.

On Tuesday, it was 0C degrees in Murmansk, the world's biggest city above the Arctic Circle, which is about 6C higher than the seasonal norm, the national weather centre said.

The forecast for Wednesday is for even warmer temperatures reaching 2C degrees in Murmansk and 4C degrees in Saint Petersburg, Russia's second city, which would be 12C degrees higher than normal.

But the northeast of Russia is not alone. "All of the country has been registering positive anomalies" in [temperature](#), the director of the national meteorological service, Roman Vilfand, told the Ria Novosti

news agency.

He pointed to some parts of Siberia, one of the coldest places in the world where temperatures have reached 20C degrees higher than normal.

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