SPENDING NEW YEAR'S IN ANTARCTICA



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Scientists and crew spend a unique New Year's Eve in Antarctica, thanks to some improvisation form the station's cooks! New Year's can be fun in Antarctica!

No flights today

The weather was bad on New Year's Eve. Low clouds obscured the mountain tops of the Sør Rondane mountain range to the south of us. It was an impressive yet eerie sight to see those mountains shrouded in clouds. Usually you can see very far in all directions.

Brad and Weston, the pilots of the Alfred Wegener Institute's Polar 6 aircraft, decided to postpone their daily survey flight and wait to see if the weather would improve. However, two hours later visibility got even worse, and they had to cancel their flight for the day. While GPS could be used to help a pilot navigate in poor visibility, there are no landing radars or radio beacons in Antarctica like you have in Europe, so landing a plane safely would be an issue. Flying should be done only in good visibility conditions in this part of the world.

Fire up the barbecue!

That night, for New Year's Eve, our cooks, David Rigotti and Riet Van de Velde, suprised us with a unique and impromptu dinner idea: a barbecue! They had a small, controlled fire in two steel half-barrels going in the parking area behind the station, and the bulldozer's scoop was filled with snow to chill several bottles of cava and cans of beer. Despite the grey weather, we had a wonderful time!

Canadian co-pilot Weston Nicholson decided to attend the party wearing shorts. He insists on wearing shorts when he's not flying. I suppose growing up in Canada has made him quite resistant to the cold. The cava left for too long in the glasses on the table outside was frozen solid!

When midnight finally came to Utsteinen (although you'd never know if you didn't have a watch, given the 24-hour daylight this time of year), German scientists, Canadian airmen and PEA staff all wished one other a happy 2015.

In spite of the grey and frigid weather, we weren't in a hurry to head back inside. How often does one get to ring in the new year in Antarctica?