



East Greenland

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Stay overnight at **Kulusuk** (p204) and appreciate traditional culture without the crowds
- Visit the immense **Northeast Greenland National Park** (p213)
- Kayak the ice-choked fjords around **Tasiilaq** (p208)
- Make a **first ascent** of an isolated peak (p211)
- Take part in the gruelling **Arctic Team Challenge** (p209)



A land apart, known to Greenlanders as Tunu or Tunua (the Back Side), the isolated east coast of Greenland has developed differently from the rest of the country in cultural and linguistic terms. Today it remains one of the most traditional areas of Greenland. The communities here are less developed, and in many ways the lifestyle reflects a past long lost in other parts of the country. Villagers are still dependent on subsistence hunting and fishing, and development is still very low key. Although tourism is big business around Tasiilaq, the area seems doggedly unchanged by it.

East Greenland is also home to some of the most spectacular scenery in the country, with stunning peaks and dramatic fjords providing ample opportunities for first ascents, fantastic hiking and spectacular kayaking. Tasiilaq is the most popular base for any of these activities and is easily accessible from Iceland. A handful of respected outfitters supply everything from route advice to essential equipment. Recreational hikers can take in a variety of day hikes or opt for more strenuous multiday walks through the incredible scenery. Serious hikers and mountaineers have the option of scaling one of the local peaks or heading up to the icecap for a polar odyssey.

Further north is the vast wilderness of the Northeast Greenland National Park, the world's largest national park, which protects almost half of East Greenland. It's one of the most remote areas of Greenland, permits are required and access is cruelly expensive. However, the pristine wilderness, unscaled peaks and abundant wildlife make it a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

History

The east coast of Greenland has always been isolated. Although there is evidence that both the Independence I (p77) and Saqqaq cultures had settlements near the present site of Itoqqortoormiit, they lasted only briefly. In the 15th and 16th centuries a second wave of migration from the Thule area occurred, but by 1800 Ammassalik was the only settlement that hadn't been abandoned.

Europeans, too, seemed to have little luck in the area. The first European settler to East Greenland was Gunnbjörn, a lost sailor who washed up in 930, named the offshore islets he'd found Gunnbjörn's Skerries, and moved on posthaste. Europeans most likely sailed up the east coast on hunting or exploratory expeditions over many years, but it was 1884 before any contact was made with local Inuit. At this point the Danish Umiaq expedition came across 416 Inuit near the site of present-day Tasiilaq, and 10 years later the first Royal Greenland Trade Department post was established on Ammassalik Island.

KULUSUK (KAP DAN)

pop 310

Spectacularly situated on the craggy slopes of an ice-filled bay, Kulusuk is a stunning place surrounded by dramatic peaks and rocky outcrops. The village maintains a very traditional way of life; most people survive on subsistence hunting of seals and polar bears, few houses have running water, and dog teams far outnumber snowmobiles.

Kulusuk is, however, one of the most popular destinations in Greenland and is just a two-hour flight from Reykjavik, making it possible for day-trippers to drop in out of the sky and overwhelm the village for a few hours. To experience real life here, stay overnight and explore when the day-trippers have left.

Sights & Activities

There are few specific sites of interest in town, but the spectacular setting and brightly coloured traditional houses more than make up for this. The poignant and photogenic

old cemetery has rows of simple white crosses overlooking the ice-filled bay and backdrop of craggy peaks.

Informal *qajaq* demonstrations and drum dance performances are put on for day-trippers on the bluff behind the church, and all visitors are welcome to attend. It's a bit of a tourist trap, but if you're on a short visit it's a good chance to catch a bit of culture.

You can hike up any of the rocky outcrops that surround the town for a stunning view over the village and bay. Alternatively, head straight up the hill south of the airport to an eerie mountain lake. It's easy to ascend the first peak on the ridge, and you may see ptarmigan and Arctic fox.

Qalorjuorneq (676m) is the highest peak on the island, but its steep, wet snowy slopes aren't easy to climb.

Tours

From June to September Hotel Kulusuk (see Sleeping & Eating, following) offers a two-hour cruise to the tidewater glacier on the island of Apusiaajik (Dkr295); a three-hour boat tour to Tasiilaq (Dkr595); a walking tour of Kulusuk village (Dkr75); and a two-hour mountain-jeep tour to Isikajia Mountain (335m; Dkr210). In winter it also offers 2½-hour/half-day/full-day dogsledding trips (Dkr395/595/995) and a superjeep snow tour (Dkr295, two hours).

Local outfitter **Fred Kilime** (☎ 986801; kilimeoutfitter@greenet.gl) can also arrange tailor-made hiking, dogsledding and skiing trips, while **Johann Brandsson** (☎ 986888; kulusuk@greenet.gl) organises sailing and dogsledding tours.

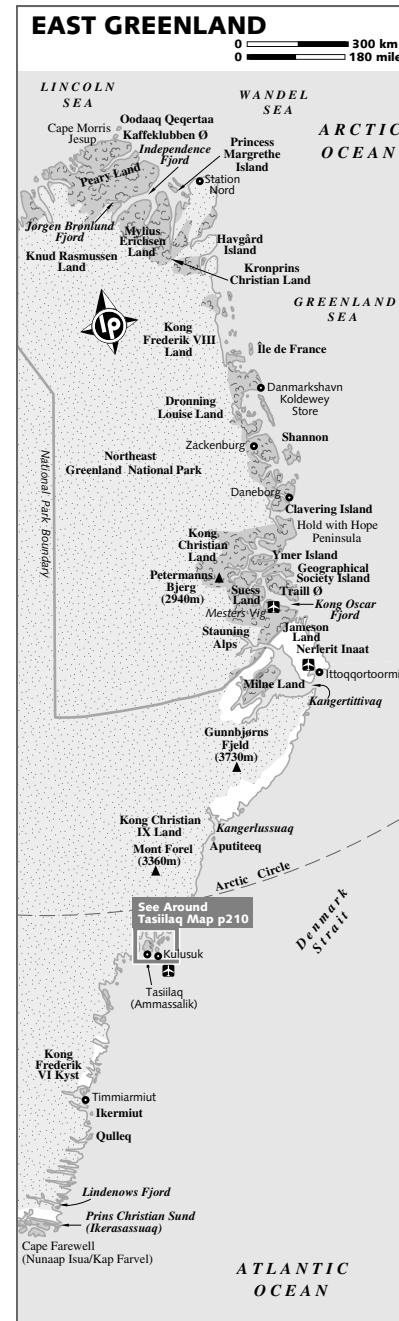
For kayaking tours in this area, try **Ultima Thule Expeditions** (www.ute.is), which offers trips (six/eight/12 days US\$1690/2390/2790) around the spectacular local glaciers and fjords.

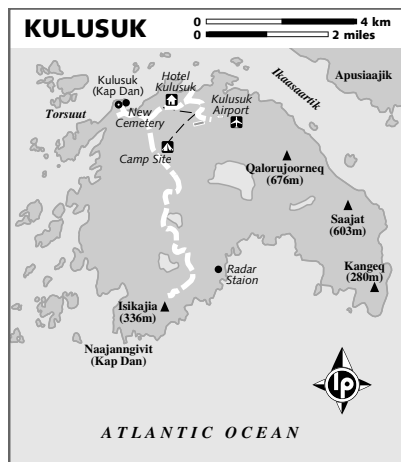
AirIceland (☎ 986978; www.airiceland.is) day tours from Reykjavik to Kulusuk cost Ikr40,300/29,900 in high/low season. The trips include a return flight, a guided tour of Kulusuk village, and the dance and *qajaq* demonstrations. Add on a half-hour of dogsledding on the Apusiaajik Glacier, and the cost rises to Ikr55,500/45,500.

Sleeping & Eating

Camping is possible about 1.5km southwest of the airport, but there are no facilities.

Kulusuk Youth Hostel (☎ 986888; kulusuk@greenet.gl; dm Dkr150) Established within a traditional





DAY-TRIPPING IN KULUSUK

Staunchly traditional Kulusuk can see up to 150 day-trippers six days a week in summer, and though the income this provides is welcome, their influence isn't always so benign. Although the village looks poor, this is because the local people choose to follow traditional ways in some respects; despite the lack of running water, many have satellite TV, mobile phones and home computers.

In the past, well-meaning visitors have given sweets, money or pens to Greenlandic children, but this patronising behaviour upsets parents and demeans the children by inspiring them to ask subsequent visitors for more of the same. Please resist the temptation to play Santa Claus, and let traditional life survive as the locals see fit.

Greenlandic house, this basic hostel has open-plan rooms and no running water. It has a good kitchen and satellite TV. Check in and get directions at the souvenir shop in the centre of town.

Hotel Kulusuk (☎ 986993; www.arcticwonder.com; s/d Dkr890/1085; ☒) This fine hotel has comfortable, modern rooms with en suite, TV, kettle and phone. Most also have good views over the bay. If you fancy just dropping in for a meal, breakfast will cost you Dkr75; lunch and dinner cost Dkr165.

The village shop has a range of groceries for self-caterers.

Shopping

East Greenlandic carvings, beadwork and other gifts are of consistently high quality and are generally much cheaper than on the west coast. In Kulusuk some curios are sold by relaxed street vendors when tour groups pass through, and you'll normally pick up something for less than you would in Tasiilaq.

Kulusuk Art & Souvenirs (☎ 986888) sells a good selection of *tupilaks*, sealskin bags, caribou horn, jewellery and postcards.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Kulusuk's airport is chaotic, as most flights arrive and depart within an hour of each other and the tiny terminal building can't handle the crowds: you'll have to fight your way to the check-in desks.

From mid-May until mid-September, **Air Iceland** (☎ 986978; www.airiceland.is) has flights between Reykjavik and Kulusuk (from 1kr30,000 return) every day except Sunday. There are two to four flights weekly the rest of the year. For more details, see p227.

Twice a week **Air Greenland** (☎ 986926; www.airgreenland.gl) flies from Kulusuk to Kangerlussuaq (Dkr3173, 1½ hours), where you can connect to other domestic flights.

Air Alpha (☎ 981313; www.airalpha.com) helicopters shuttle passengers between Kulusuk and Tasiilaq (one way Dkr545) from about 10am to 3pm or as the need arises. These flights can't be pre-booked, but they run until every passenger has been transferred.

BOAT

Ice conditions permitting, the Royal Arctic Line cargo boat connects Tasiilaq and Kulusuk (one way Dkr205, two hours) once weekly. If you're travelling with others it's worth enquiring about chartering a boat from a local hunter to take you to Tasiilaq, as the cost can be as little as half that of the helicopter. Alternatively, call your hotel in Tasiilaq, as they often transport guests on tours by boat and may be able to accommodate you.

TASIILAQ (AMMASSALIK)

pop 1800

Set on the steeply sloping shores of placid Kong Oscars Havn, Tasiilaq is the largest community on Greenland's east coast and

the administrative centre for Ammassalik district. Noticeably more developed than Kulusuk (it has paved roads and a large supermarket), it is still a very laid-back place, with most of its people still hunting and fishing for personal food supplies.

While the town itself is in a beautiful setting, the local area is an outdoor adventurer's dream landscape, with fantastic kayaking, mountaineering and hiking on the craggy peaks, giant glaciers and ice-clogged waters that surround the town. To come here and not make an effort to get out on the water or into the wilderness would be a real shame.

Information

Ammassalik Tourist Office website (www.greenlandguide.gl/ammassalik) Regional guide with information on accommodation, excursions and travel.

Destination East Greenland (www.eastgreenland.com) The official tourism site for East Greenland.

Hospital (☎ 981211)

Neriusaaq Bookshop (☎ 981018; Nappartsimavimmut; ☎ 2-6pm & 7.30-10pm) Stocks souvenir books, maps and some English-language reading material. It also has a pay phone, a public fax service and one Internet terminal (per minute Dkr1).

Netcafé (☎ 249210; per half-hr Dkr30) Has a whole bank of computers and opens in the evenings only, usually from 3pm or 4pm until 8pm or 10pm.

Police (☎ 981448)

Post Office (☎ 981055) Has two ATMs inside.

Tourist office (☎ 981543; tourism@ammassalik.gl; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, noon-4pm Sat)

Sights

Start your tour of the town at the **Tasiilaq Museum** (☎ 981311; admission free; ☎ 10am-noon & 1-4pm Mon-Fri, noon-4pm Sun), housed in the old church (built in 1908). It has a wonderful collection of exhibits on the history and culture of East Greenland, including the largest mask collection in the country, some stunning old photos, beadwork, traditional costumes and carvings.

The pentagonal **new church** (☎ 981292; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sun) was built in 1985 and has an unusual steeple. Inside there's traditional and modern Greenlandic art and a model *umiaq* votive light.

Tasiilaq's oldest building, the **Citadel**, opposite the tourist office, was constructed in 1894 as the home of the first Danish missionary and his wife, who shared it with a trade manager, a carpenter and a sailor. The next

oldest building is the **Missionaries' House**, built in 1895 as a home for Danish missionaries. It also served as an impromptu church, school and hospital.

The original imposing **Trade Manager's House** dated from the 1920s, but it was destroyed by fire in the late 1950s and rebuilt shortly afterwards. In 1932 and 1933 Knud Rasmussen occupied the attic while filming *Palos Brudeførd* (Palo's Wedding; see p174).

Not so old, but still interesting, is the turf-roofed building known as the **Potato House**. It is a copy of a Greenlandic peat house, which traditionally would have housed between 15 and 25 people. The Potato House, however, was originally built in the mid-20th century for dry storage of vegetables and is still used to store potatoes.

Activities

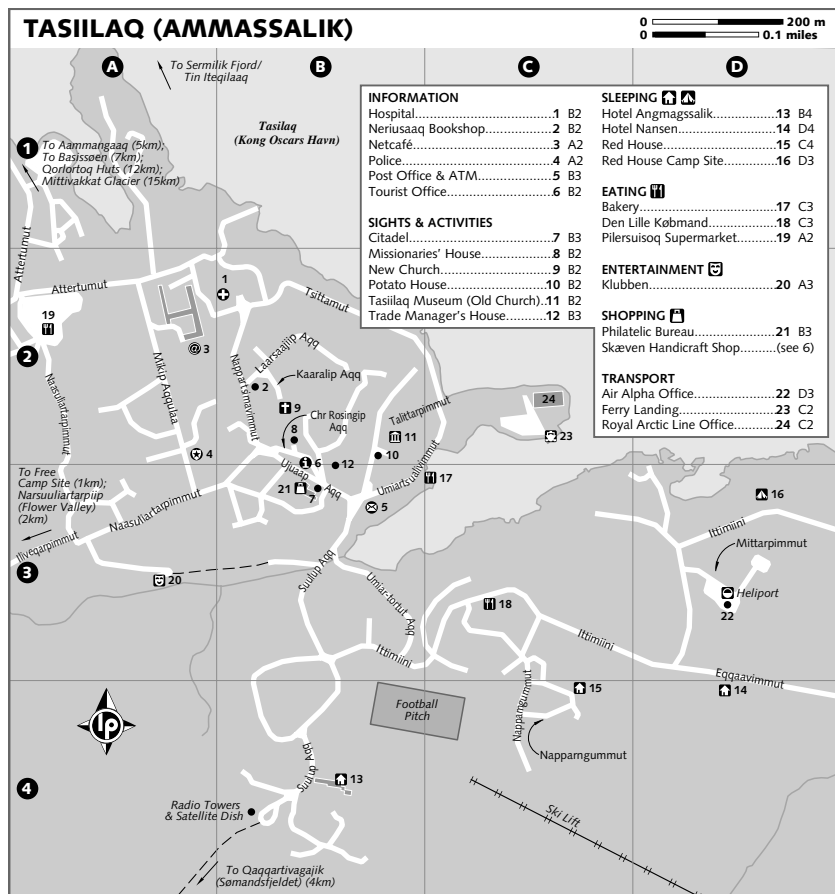
In winter a small ski lift operates just south of town above the prominent football pitch. Narsuiliartarpiip (Flower Valley) offers excellent cross-country skiing, and ski mountaineering in the surrounding area is usually excellent, with deep powder snow. Hotel guests can hire Nordic skis from Hotel Angmagssalik for Dkr50 per day. The Red House (see Sleeping & Eating, following) hires every type of ski imaginable and can supply all the equipment you will need for a ski tour, including tents, radios, stoves, fuel and food supplies, for Dkr400 per day.

For information on hiking and mountaineering in the area, see p210.

Tours

The only contact you really need in Tasiilaq is Robert Peroni at the Red House. His **Tuning Agency** (☎ 981650; www.eastgreenland.de) arranges socially and ecologically conscious tourism, and works hard to provide jobs and opportunities for local people and preserve the identity of East Greenland and its inhabitants. For low-impact and ethically sound tours or expeditions, this is where you should go.

The company creates tailor-made tours depending on the participant's wishes, skills and experience, and can provide everything from route advice to equipment, radios, fuel and food supplies. Guided hiking trips cost between Dkr100 and Dkr480, two- to three-hour whale-watching trips cost Dkr450, and boat transport to any starting point for a trip costs Dkr800 (the same by dogsled in winter).



The company can also arrange tailor-made hunting and dogsledding expeditions (price by agreement) and expeditions on the icecap (from five days to two weeks). It also hires kayaks and skis. For further information on kayaking tours in this area, see p205.

From 1 March to 15 May, Hotel Angmagssalik runs half-day dogsledding trips (Dkr545); one-day trips to Ikateq (Dkr985); and half-/full-day snowmobile tours (Dkr795/985). Nordic ski trips with dogsled support are around Dkr500, including equipment hire. All trips require at least two participants. In summer the hotel offers an iceberg cruise (Dkr295) and five-hour cruises to Ikateq village (Dkr495). Helicopter tours to 900m-high Mittivakkat glacier (Dkr1005) take 10

minutes each way, but allow 30 minutes on the icecap.

Hotel Nansen operates tours from June to September, including a two- to three-day trip to the Tasiilaq mountain hut (Tasiilaq Kuua; Dkr3000, three people minimum) at the edge of Kaarali Glacier. This strenuous four- to six-hour hike is suitable for experienced hikers only. Day trips to Polhems Fjeld (Dkr500, three people minimum) include a strenuous three- to five-hour hike to the 1003m summit, which offers incredible views of the icecap and Ammassalik Fjord.

Robert Christensen (☎ 981052) will hire out snowmobiles for Dkr1000 per day, or Dkr250 per hour with driver.

For boat charter or help finding a local to take you dogsledding or snowmobiling, contact the tourist office.

Festivals & Events

Every July Tasiilaq hosts the **Arctic Team Challenge** (www.atc.gl), a five-day combined stage and expedition race that takes four-person teams over a distance of about 250km and a total elevation of about 9000m of peaks in a series of challenges that include mountain trekking, glacier trekking, icefjord paddling and mountain biking. Only the hardy and seriously fit need apply!

Sleeping & Eating

The best free camp sites are in Narsuulartarpi, beginning 1km upstream from Klubben; security may be a problem. The Red House has an organised **camp site** (☎ 981650; Dkr60) near the heliport. The camp site has water and toilets.

Red House (☎ 981650; tuning@greenet.gl; s/d Dkr320/640; ☒ ☑) By far the best value, choice and experience in town, the Red House provides simple but comfortable accommodation in an incredibly friendly house with a fantastic atmosphere. You can also opt for hostel-style beds for Dkr240, and there's a kitchen for self-catering. The restaurant serves excellent traditional food, and non-guests are welcome. Breakfast costs Dkr70, lunch Dkr80 and a four-course traditional Greenlandic dinner Dkr180. For visits to smaller settlements, Red House can arrange accommodation with local families (Dkr150 to Dkr200); it's a fabulous opportunity to experience Greenlandic life first-hand.

Hotel Nansen (☎ 982101; www.hotelnansen.dk; s/d Dkr420/630; ☒ ☑) This bright, comfortable place has functional but comfortable modern rooms and a lovely high-ceilinged restaurant with wonderful views. All rooms have shared bathroom, and there's a kitchen for self-caterers. Rather strangely, the restaurant serves Thai food only (lunch/dinner Dkr90/140).

Hotel Angmagssalik (☎ 981293; arcwon@greenet.gl; s/d Dkr890/1050; ☒ ☑) Perched on a rocky outcrop above the town, this large and somewhat soulless hotel offers comfortable rooms and great views, though noise from the bar can be a problem. Rooms with shared bathroom cost Dkr495/695. The restaurant serves a buffet lunch and set dinner for Dkr165.

Self-caterers can resort to the bakery by the harbour, the giant Pilersuisoq supermarket and the after-hours kiosk **Den Lille Købmand** (☎ 11am-8pm).

Entertainment

The pub-disco **Klubben** (☎ 981299; admission Dkr65; ☎ 8-11pm Wed & Thu, to 3am Fri, to 1am Sat) is the best local action spot but may be some way off your idea of a good night out. If you can wangle an invitation from a member, you can get in free.

Both hotels operate rowdy and very sad bars where some locals attempt to drown their sorrows with bucketloads of alcohol until they are unceremoniously kicked out by the management. You'll do yourself and the community no favours by adding to the circus.

Shopping

Skaeven handicraft shop (☎ 981543; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, noon-4pm Sat) shares a building with the tourist office and stocks a good range of carvings, slippers, jewellery and mitts. Greenland's **Philatelic Bureau** (☎ 981075; www.stamps.gl) is based in Tasiilaq; you'll need to call to make an appointment.

Getting There & Around

AIR

All air access to Tasiilaq is via Kulusuk; the 15-minute **Air Alpha** (☎ 981689) shuttle between Kulusuk and Tasiilaq costs Dkr545. When ice conditions prevent the Royal Arctic Line supply boats from getting through, helicopter transport (all fares Dkr545) is also available to locations around Tasiilaq, including Isortoq, Tiniteqilaq, Sermiligaaq and Kuummiut. For Air Greenland and Air Iceland tickets, contact Hotel Angmagssalik.

Helicopters may be chartered through Air Alpha for Dkr16,500 per hour.

BOAT

Royal Arctic Line (☎ 981888; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-4pm Mon-Fri) boats carry 12 passengers and travel once weekly between Tasiilaq and Kuummiut (one way Dkr260, 3½ hours), Kulusuk (Dkr205, two hours), Isortoq (Dkr310, five hours), Sermiligaaq (Dkr330, 5½ hours) and Tiniteqilaq (Dkr270, four hours), stopping for an hour in each village. Ice conditions normally permit them to start running in early July, and the service continues until

routes are no longer passable. You should buy your ticket a day in advance if possible.

AROUND TASIILAQ

Hiking

This region is home to numerous adventurous routes and is truly one of the planet's most spectacular places. The Tasiilaq tourist office sells the excellent 1:100,000 *Hiking Map East Greenland – Tasiilaq* (Dkr300) with a book describing local routes; it also sells a 1:250,000 map (Dkr75). As there's a slight chance of encountering bears, seek local advice before striking out on a longer hike.

NARSULIARTARPIIP

The easiest day-hike close to town is the excursion up Narsuliartarpiip (Flower Valley/Blomsterdalen) past the cemetery and along the river. The walk has gentle gradients and a host of Arctic flora on display.

QAQQARTIVAGAJIK (SØMANDSFJELDET)

From the radio towers and satellite dish it's a stiff but straightforward climb up 679m-high Qaqqartivagajik (Sømandsfjeldet). Fit

hikers can do the return trip in three hours, but lesser mortals need more time. On clear days, the summit view encompasses Tasiilaq, Kong Oscars Havn, the inland ice and the wild iceberg- and floe-studded coastline – a truly spectacular sight.

BASISSØEN & AAMMANGAAQ LOOP

For a longer hike, there's a compact four-person mountain hut near the shore of Basissøen, northwest of Tasiilaq. Follow the shore northwest from town and cross the footbridge over the large stream that defines the first major valley. Basissøen lies in the next valley, north of the 641m-high peak Aammangaaq (Præstefjeldet). To reach the small hut, you must ford the river. You're now on the route known as the Sermilikvejen. The hut, which isn't exactly obvious, is embedded in the hillside about 20m above the lake.

From the hut, continue past a smaller lake, then up and over the low pass to lake 168 (Icy Lake). Cross the river and follow the lakeshore eastward. You'll reach an abrupt drop where Icy Lake drains into a convoluted

tangle of turquoise lakes with a dramatic waterfall that can be heard as a roar from several kilometres away. From here, it's easy going down the slope back to the bridge. This loop takes about seven hours from Tasiilaq.

You can also climb Aammangaaq from the south by going straight up the hillside above the bridge. The top is a bit steep, sandy and slabby. It takes three hours going up and 1½ hours coming down.

AAMMAQQAQ & THE SØEN

Begin as you would for the Aammangaaq loop, but instead of heading up to Basissøen keep following the shore. Ford the river, and after rounding the northern head of Tasiilaq Bay (Kong Oscars Havn) cross the base of the Aammaqqaq Peninsula; the free Qorlortoq hut lies over a largish river on the eastern side of the peninsula.

If you continue upstream past the waterfall, you'll reach the enormous Sø 1 (Qorlortoq Sø). Follow the western shore right around to the inflowing stream at its northern end, then turn north and keep climbing up the same valley, always keeping to the western side, past three more lakes, Sø 2, Sø 3 and Sø 4. At the southeastern corner of the fifth lake, Sø 5, is a wilderness camp established by the Tasiilaq tourist office. It consists of three mountain huts and an area for camping; huts cost Dkr300/1500 per day/week.

It's a full-day hike from Tasiilaq.

LONGER HIKES

Longer hiking possibilities include the challenging but classic hike across Dødemandsdalen to Sermilik Fjord. This and a range of other routes are depicted and described in the 1:100,000 *Hiking Map East Greenland – Tasiilaq*.

Mountaineering

A number of guides and tours are available for mountaineering in the area. **Robert Peroni** (☎ 981650; tuning@greenet.gl) at the Red House in Tasiilaq has over 30 years' experience as an accredited mountain guide and has led about 50 worldwide expeditions. He organises accommodation, expedition support (including transport), equipment rental (tents, cooking equipment, GPS, satellite phones, radios, kayaks, skis, pulks, ice axes, crampons, ropes and all the technical-climbing 'ironmongery'), permits, fuel and food. His company can also

supply guides qualified with UIAGM (Union Internationale des Associations de Guides de Montagne – the highest professional award in mountaineering).

Hans Christian Florian runs **Mount Forel Expedition Support** (☎ 981320; florian@greenet.gl), a guide service that assists in organising expeditions. He handles permits, fuel and insurance logistics, and organises helicopter and dogsled transport. He can also organise climbs on the highest local peak, 3360m-high Mt Forel, as well as a number of unnamed first ascents and the popular inland ice crossing between Isortoq and Kangerlussuaq. Budget on spending about Dkr750 per day for guided climbs.

Tangent Expeditions International (www.tangent-expeditions.co.uk) organises climbs of Greenland's highest peak, 3730m-high GUNNBjørnsfjeld, including a chartered ski-plane from Akureyri (Iceland), a guide, equipment, food and fuel. The trip costs around £4500 per person (minimum five people). You can also add climbs of the nearby Qaaqqaq Kershaw (The Dome; 3700m) or Qaaqqaq Johnson (The Cone; 3700m).

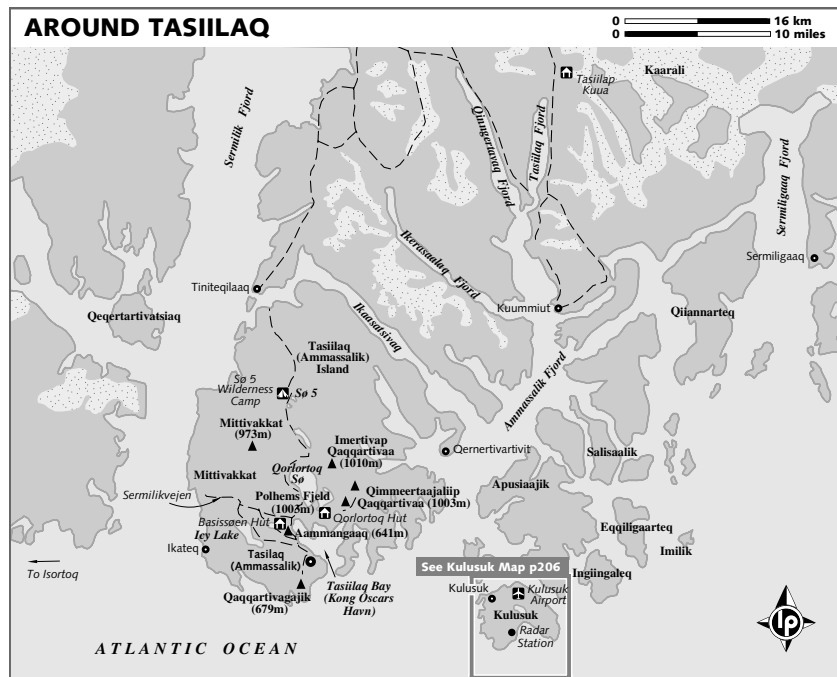
TASIILAP KUUA

The mountain hut at Tasiilap Kuua, perched dramatically at the edge of a glacier tongue at 750m, makes an ideal retreat and a base for climbing and mountain hiking. Beds cost Dkr125, and there is access to cooking facilities, but you must bring your own food and sleeping bag. It's accessible by speedboat charter from Tasiilaq for Dkr500 per person. Alternatively, you can take the Royal Arctic Line cargo boat to Kuummiut and arrange a charter from there. It can also be reached by helicopter. For arrangements, contact the keyholder, **Hans Christian Florian** (☎ 981320), in Tasiilaq.

ITTOQQORTOORMIIT (SCORESBYSUND VILLAGE)

pop 500

The world's longest and widest fjord, Kangerittivaq (Scoresbysund) was named for Scottish whaler William Scoresby, who visited in 1822. Near its mouth, Ittoqqortoormiit (Big House) village occupies an area rich in muskoxen, seals and polar bears. It's exaggeratedly nicknamed the Arctic Riviera because its climate is slightly less unstable than elsewhere. But don't expect Cannes.



Ittoqqortoormiit is the only real village for hundreds of kilometres around and sports a neat little red-painted wooden church and a small **museum** (info@ittkom.gl). The main attractions, however, are dogsledding, wonderful fjord-kayaking, and people-watching. Local residents are true Greenlandic hunters, mostly descended from Ammassalik (Tasiilaq) emigrants who sailed north in September 1925.

Facilities remain very limited, and if you arrive without local contacts and a planned itinerary you can't be sure of easily finding guides, kayaks or other necessary equipment. **Nonni Travel** (☎ 461 1841; www.nonnitravel.is) is helpful in making arrangements, and offers dogsledding adventures in Liverpoolland and kayaking tours round Milne Land. **Arcturus** (www.arcturusexpeditions.co.uk) offers sea kayaking around Scoresbysund Fjord's Syd-kap and Bear Islands (12 days for £3890, including flights).

Note that plentiful polar bears in this area are more than happy to have a human brunch. Hiking without a rifle is hazardous.

Ittoqqortoormiit time is two hours ahead of the rest of East Greenland and one hour behind Iceland.

Information

Danish Polar Centre (DPC; ☎ 3288 0100; www.dpc.dk)

Ittoqqortoormiit Municipality (www.ittoqqortoormiit.gl/) Has plenty of photos and information on its website.

Post office (☎ 911044; ✉ 10am-2pm Mon-Thu, 10am-3pm Fri)

Tourist office (☎ 991280; fax 991290; c/o Nonni Travel)

Sleeping & Eating

The seven-room **Ittoqqortoormiit Guesthouse** (☎ 991018; www.simonsen-holtz.dk; s/d Dkr325/450) is simple but reasonably comfortable with an equipped shared kitchen and communal bathrooms. There's a four-person **house** (per week Dkr3000) to rent 7km south by snowmobile at Kap Tobin hamlet. There's a **Pilersuisoq shop** (☎ 991044) and a Sumaar Kiosk. Camping isn't allowed in the village and would be unwise further afield due to polar bears.

Getting There & Away

All access is via Nerlerit Inaat (Constable Point). The Pilersuisoq shop is the Air Alpha agent in Ittoqqortoormiit.

AROUND ITTOQQORTOORMIIT

This area is great for **mountaineering**. Greenland's highest peak is Gunnbjørnsfjeld (3730m), between Tasiilaq and Ittoqqortoormiit. Fly-in, fly-out ascents are among the trips offered by **Tangent Expeditions** (☎ 1539 737757; www.tangent-expeditions.co.uk) and **Hvitserk** (www.hvitserk.no). For other companies, see p68 and p67. These companies also run expeditions into obscure areas of the Northeast Greenland National Park, giving you a crack at previously unclimbed peaks in the Stauning Alps and Dronning Louise Land. It's best to have some cross-country skiing ability, but most routes are fairly straightforward for experienced mountaineers.

Nerlerit Inaat (Constable Point)

The happy by-product of failed oil-drilling tests was the construction of Nerlerit Inaat

(Constable Point) airport. There's no village, but the **airport hostel** (☎ 993 850; dm Dkr260) and cafeteria operate for stranded or waiting passengers. **Air Iceland** (www.airiceland.is) has triangular services starting in Reykjavik (Iceland). On summer Wednesdays and winter Saturdays it flies first to Constable Point (as the place is designated on the airline's website), then to Kulusuk and then back to Reykjavik (Ikr15,000 to Ikr30,000 each leg). On summer Saturdays and winter Wednesdays the direction reverses. In mid-winter there's only one loop weekly. To reach Ittoqqortoormiit, **Air Alpha** (☎ 993858; www.airalpha.com/greenland.aspx) runs helicopter shuttles (Dkr545) as many times as is necessary to transfer all the passengers from the Air Iceland flight. Air Alpha also operates charter flights to Northeast Greenland National Park for scientists and mountaineers.

In spring you can dogsled the 50km to Ittoqqortoormiit in eight to 10 hours.

Northeast Greenland National Park

Greenland's only national park is also the world's largest, encompassing some 972,000

sq km. That's the entire northeastern quarter of Greenland. Most of the park is ice-cap and mountaintops, but coastal tundra provides a haven for muskoxen and polar bears, while dramatic fjords shelter walrus and whales. There are no tourist facilities whatsoever. Getting anywhere near it is a full-blown expedition, so only the most determined mountaineers and Arctic researchers tend to make it. Carrying a rifle is obligatory, and you'll require permits issued by the Danish Polar Centre (DPC; see opposite). Apply by December of the year prior to your intended visit. **Arcturus** (www.arcturusexpeditions.co.uk) offers various specialised expeditions.

Access is by Air Alpha charters from Nerlerit Inaat (Constable Point) or direct from Iceland. Monthly **twin-otter flights** (www.dpc.dk/Res&Log/ProjectPlanner/Platforms/Dkhavn.html) supply Danmarkshavn meteorological base via **Zackenber** (www.zackenber.dk), where accommodation is available for approved scientists. More scientific facilities are available at Station Nord, 933km from the pole. Apply through the DPC.

THE SIRIUS SLEDGE PATROL

Before satellites, East Greenland's weather stations were essential for predicting Atlantic storms. During WWII this information suddenly attained immense strategic value for transatlantic supply shipping and bomber flights. With Denmark occupied by Germany and no army of its own, Greenland set up a tiny volunteer force to watch for enemy incursions along the 1600km of almost uninhabited east coast. A thrilling mini war ensued, in which a 19-strong German contingent tried to set up their own base on Ella Island. Sniffed out by the barely armed volunteers, the Germans counterattacked and burnt the allied weather station at Eskimones (now Daneborg).

After the war Denmark's military formalised the East Greenland force, which became the Sirius Sledge Patrol. Such dogsled patrols still watch the coast today, doubling as wardens of the Northeast Greenland National Park.

Patrol members are selected from elite officers of the Danish army and work in pairs. Their harsh two-year stints take them between extraordinarily isolated hunting huts in temperatures that can dip to -50°C. Denmark's Crown Prince Frederik gained enormous local respect for serving on the patrol in 2000.

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