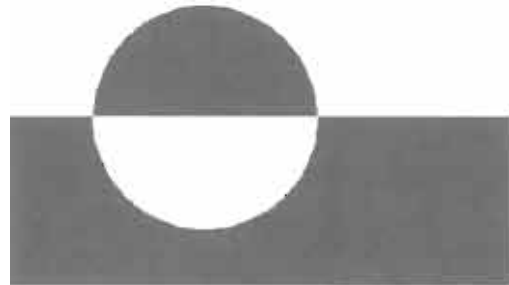


INFORMATION ON GREENLAND



Greenland is the largest island of the world. Its southern tip is on the same latitude as Oslo, Norway, ca. 60 degrees north. Its northern tip is the closest piece of land there is to the North Pole, ca. 83.5 degrees north. Between these two tips there is a distance of almost 2700 km (1636 miles). Greenland covers 2,415,100 square kilometres (approx. 1,463,696 square miles) of which only 384,850 sq. kilometres (233,242 sq. miles) is land; the rest is glacier which is up to nearly 3000 meters thick (9,380 feet)

The polar circle lies on ca. 67 degrees north which is where Sisimiut (Holsteinsborg) on the west coast is located. South of this all kinds of dogs are allowed; north of the polar circle, however, the Greenland Eskimo sledgedog is protected from other races of dogs. No other dogs are allowed. Dogsledging only takes place from Sisimiut (Holsteinsborg) and northwards. This also constitutes the border where solid sea ice covers most of the coastal area during winter. South of the polar circle sea ice is only seen in the deep fiords during winter season. There are three climatic zones in Greenland. North of 75 degrees north there is the high-arctic zone. Between 75 degrees and roughly 62 degrees is the arctic zone. South of 62 degrees lies the sub-arctic zone.

Average temperatures are:

In the high-arctic zone -24 degrees Centigrades in February, +4 in July;

In the arctic zone -14 degrees Centigrades in February, +6 in July;

In the sub-arctic zone -4 degrees Centigrades in February, +8 in July;

Peaks are more than -40 degrees Centigrades in the high-arctic, almost -40 in the arctic and around -20 in the sub-arctic area. In the summer peaks are roughly +8 in the high-arctic, +12 in the arctic and +18 degrees Centigrades in the south.

North of the polar circle air humidity is normally very low and in the rest of the country it is normally not very humid. The further north you get the smaller the annual precipitation between 10 and 22 centimetres.

Generally speaking Greenland is not a windy place. A daily wind blowing 0-5 metres per second is normal, occasionally going up to 8. Once in a while it blows 12-18 metres per second. On rare occasions it goes even much higher, blowing more than 30 metres per second. Most of the time, however, only little wind.

Time

East Greenland time is Greenwich +2 hours. West Greenland time is +3 hours.

Currency

Danish currency is used all over Greenland. It is called Danish krone, DKR. Most credit cards and cheques are accepted in banks. Only few shops accept credit cards. The best thing to do would be to open an account with GrønlandsBANKEN, bank of Greenland, and get a Dankort which is a Danish paying card used all over the Danish Kingdom in shops etc. Through bank connections it is possible to transfer money rather quickly from and to most countries all over the world.

Demography

Almost all of the population lives on the west coast, most of it south of the polar circle. The total number is approximately 56,000 people (fifty six thousand!) and it has never before been that high. Around 1908 the inhabitants amounted to a total of just 11.000 people. Today, the “capital”, Nuuk, has about 13,000 inhabitants, it is a modern town with the same agenda as most big cities of the world. Major towns have 3-5,000 inhabitants. Big settlements have about 1,000 inhabitants and small settlements have down to less than a hundred people living in them. One of the geographically biggest communities, Upernavik in the northwest, has 10 settlements scattered over a coastal area 450 kilometres long from south to north (281 miles). Most towns have 1-4 settlements of different sizes. East Greenland has only about 3,300 people. The Qaanaaq area (Thule), which is in the high-arctic, has less than 1,000 inhabitants. The population began to increase dramatically in the 1950’s when hospitals were built in all towns.

Religion

Nearly all people are Christians, protestants. The church, which is a public one, is Lutheran-Evangelic. Although many are religious, not many attend church service every Sunday. Easter, Christmas (which begins on December 24th!) and New Year’s services are very well attended. Another important ceremony is “confirmation” where a person confirms his/her belief in God, Jesus and the Christian Faith. When babies are baptised, an adult answers for the child. When the child turns 13-14 he/she confirms it by himself/herself. Many consider this as the first step into adulthood and the child is given more responsibility. Some might say more freedom. However, the two go hand in hand.

Infrastructure

In the towns there are paved roads. The settlements have dirt roads. There are many cars in the towns when you take into account that you can walk from one end of the town to the other in about 30 minutes or less. Some settlements may have a caterpillar or a forklift truck. Many of the cars belong to companies or institutions but a lot of them are taxis. Only very few are private cars. The roads stop at town limits. There are no roads at all between the towns. There are no trains in Greenland. Some towns have buses. There are no buses between towns at all. It is not possible at all to drive from one town to another. Bicycles have become rather popular, MTB’s.

Passenger boats go regularly between towns in the season. Sea ice and drift ice naturally influence their schedule. Normally, though, each town is visited by a passenger boat 2-4 times a week. From Qaqortoq (Julianehåb) in the south it takes about a week to sail to Upernavik in the north, a distance of more than 1500 kilometres (almost 1000 miles). The boat has from 30 minutes to a few hours in every town and 10 minutes in the settlements.

There is one international airport in Greenland. It is situated at the bottom of a 175 kilometre deep fiord called Kangerlussuaq, Søndre Strømfjord, east of Sisimiut. It was built during the second world war by the Americans as an air force base. They left it in 1992. There are small airports in Nuuk, Sisimiut, Aasiaat and Ilulissat. Uummannaq and Upernavik will open new small airports during the year 2000.

The Americans also had an air force base in the south, in Narsarsuaq. Until the mid-1990's it was used as an international airport. Today it is used as a local main airport and is the centre for drift ice surveillance.

All towns have small landing areas for helicopters. Most settlements have even smaller helistops. Helicopters (S-61N) that can carry 24 passengers fly to the towns without airports. All other places are flown to with smaller helicopters (Bell 212) that can carry 9 passengers. There are also a few helicopters that can carry 5 passengers.

All aircrafts follow a summer schedule as well as a winter schedule. When it is dark in the winter season only the 50 seat DASH-7 de Havilland airplane and the big helicopters are allowed to fly even in darkness. The small helicopters only when there is enough light.

All towns have deep harbours that can take big ships. Most of the settlements can only take smaller ships.

Political Structure

The settlements and the towns all have councils. The members are elected every 4 years. Every town has a mayor. The settlements have representatives in the town councils.

Greenland has a Parliament which is elected every 4 years. Its members come from all over Greenland. The Parliament elects a government, usually consisting of the winning party alone or in coalition with another party or other members. This is called the Home Rule Government. Greenland also elects 2 members to represent it in the Danish Parliament. Greenland is, like the Faroe Islands, part of the Kingdom of Denmark.

The biggest party is Siumut, oriented towards social-democracy. The liberal party Atassut and the left-wing party Inuit Ataqatigiit are about equal in size. A movement called Kattusseqatigilt represent about 10-12% of the voters in Parliament.

Mass Media and Communication

There are two major national newspapers, Atuagallit and Sermitsiaq. Each is published 2-3 times a week and is flown to all parts of the country. They are bilingual: they are published in Greenlandic Eskimo and in Danish. A small monthly paper, Kalaaleq, is published in Greenlandic only. All newspapers and weekly magazines from Denmark are available but in Danish only. Some towns have local papers, published weekly or monthly.

There is one national, public broadcasting company, KNR: Kalaallit Nunaata Radioa TV-alu. The radio broadcasts in both languages, a majority of the programs in Greenlandic. A few towns broadcast local radio a few hours a week. There is one national TV channel. A few towns broadcast local TV a few hours a week.

Only KNR Radio and KNR TV broadcast news and weather forecasts. Videos are very popular. There is only one cinema in Greenland, in Nuuk. It is the so-called culture house built in the late 1990's. CD's are very popular, too. And music videos, also DVD's. Nearly all houses have a TV, probably all houses have a radio. Many also have a computer and some have access to the internet. Most homes have a telephone. Lately mobile telephones have become very popular, especially among the young ones. It began with the NMT system, now many towns have the GSM system and soon it will cover most of Greenland. The telephone system is digitalised. Telefax machines are used very much by companies, institutions, public offices and some private people (e.g. with an answering machine or with a PC and a modem). In this respect Greenland is like any other country of the western world.

Export – Products

Greenland produces fish for overseas markets: shrimp, cod and halibut are the main products. They are caught all year round, halibut from the frozen sea ice during winter. Sea salmon is also abundant in the season but since the mid-1990's North American anglers organizations have paid Greenland not to catch this fish for export purposes, thereby leaving lots of salmon to catch for themselves. Crabs are a new minor product.

Seal fur was an important product until Brigitte Bardot campaigned against the slaughter of baby seals by white Canadian hunters off the New Foundland. Baby seals are of no value at all to Eskimoes, yet the international community banned all kinds of seal fur which had a detrimental effect on the Greenlandic native hunters. Greenpeace went to Greenland more than a decade later to apologize because Greenpeace finds subsistence hunting sympathetic. Today there is a limited sale – limited because various "green" organisations in a few western countries oppose any use of any animal, be it for food or clothing.

From 1972 to the beginning of the 1990's a Canadian company ran a lead and zink mine in the Uummannaq district in the northwest. There are lots of minerals in Greenland – it is a rocky place – but people are afraid that extensive mining might pollute the food chain. Many resources have been found. In recent years oil has been on the agenda. Uranium, gold, silver and diamonds among others are also on the agenda. Molybdenum, zink, lead, copper and numerous other minerals in various parts of the grand island are almost inaccessible. If Greenland says go, a number of various parts of the grand island are almost inaccessible. If Greenland says go, a number of international companies are ready to invest in mining in arctic conditions in Greenland.

Tourism has in the 1990's been developed to a small industry. On the one hand Greenlanders are not comfortable with the idea of (white) mass tourism and on the other they welcome the income. In the past years the number of tourists visiting Greenland has risen. It is, however, also a question of logistics.

Houses

Nearly all houses are wooden houses. They are usually well isolated to keep the cold air out in winter. As a standard they are generally smaller than European and North American houses, thereby keeping heating costs at a minimum. From the mid-1960's to the end of the 1970's concrete apartment blocks were built. They are not very popular but needed for housing. All towns have running water all year round. They have toilets and bathrooms like in Europe and North America. Water and waste comes and goes in heated pipes to prevent it from freezing. As the ground is rocky the pipes are visible. There is electricity in all houses, 220 V (and 380 V).

School / Education

Nine years of schooling is compulsory. 1st grade is the same as kindergarten and children begin when they turn 6 years old. You can take 10th and 11th grade if you wish so. After school there is a variety of possibilities. Vocational training, business school, high school (or grammar school) just to mention a few.

Two languages are used: Greenlandic and Danish. The Greenlandic teachers are bilingual, they speak both languages. Most of the Danish teachers do not speak Greenlandic and many of them stay in Greenland for only a few years. This is due to the fact that there is not enough Greenlandic speaking teachers. The high school follows the Danish high school system and all teachers except the teachers of Greenlandic are Danish. All children are taught Danish and Greenlandic and from the 6th grade they are also taught English.

There is a very small university in Nuuk with just 4 departments (institutes). All other higher education is carried out in Denmark.

Shops

There are shops and kiosks, grill bars with hot dogs (sausages) like there is in Europe. There are supermarkets, video shops, toyshops etc. Some settlements lack a variety of shops but they can get anything they want through the nation-wide half-publicly run KNI retailer or place an order anywhere they want. Snow scooters, for example (snow mobile) have become very popular in the 1990's. All kinds of electronic games are also very popular. Fruit, vegetables and other Western commodities (goods) are either shipped in or flown in. There is no age limit for buying tobacco but you have to be at least 18 to buy alcoholic beverages like beer, wine and liquor. These are only sold from noon till 6 o'clock when the shop closes. Nearly all sorts of clothes are available. What you cannot get, you get by mail order.

Sports

Some popular sports are football (soccer), handball, cross country skiing, ski slalom, badminton and Tai-Kwon-Do. All towns have a sporting hall (a gymnasium). North of the polar circle dogsledging is popular but in the decline among teens. A few youngsters also swim or waterski using suits. The water may have a temperature of up to a couple degrees above freezing point in mid-summer. In July-August some take a swim in shallow lakes but with care. In deeper lakes the water is too cold only 2 feet down, about 3-4 degrees above freezing point.

Leisure Time Outdoors

In the summer many love to leave town by boat or by foot, make a fireplace and enjoy a meal with family members or friends, or both. Those with boats may go fishing at sea for cod, go hunting for birds or for seals, in the fall (autumn) for ptarmigan and polar rabbits, to pick blackberries in

August-September. Many people use every opportunity to go into seaside or the countryside. Some have a wooden hut, others bring their tent to stay for the weekend, etc. In winter lots of people go skiing, cross country or slalom, or just go for a stroll. Lots of people still follow the changes of the weather or the changes of the tide. Those having snow scooters take a ride. When you go out in the winter it is important to wear snow goggles or dark sunglasses (spectacles) to prevent being snow blinded. North of the arctic circle some may go riding on their dogsledge – if the dogs are not used to bring home fish or meat on that particular day.

Food

Today a vast import of food from all over the world takes place. Tea, coffee, cocoa, sugar, all sorts of fruits from all over the world, grains, soft drinks made in Greenland on licenses from Denmark etc. If you eat traditional food you can get freshly caught fish, bird or meat from different mainly marine mammals at the local where hunters and small boat fishermen bring their daily catch of whatever is in season. These products are not exported, they are only brought to the home market. As the air is dry and cool, if not freezing, fish and meat are kept outside away from the sun. Some of it is dried, a little is smoked (in cooled smoke for 2-3 days : real smoke!). If you don't eat traditional food there is a vast variety of imported frozen vegetables (or canned), fish, beef, pork and lamb plus chicken, duck, goose, turkey and even ostrich. Dairy products are always available, milk and cream are UHT quality (treated in ultra high temperature for better preservation).

There are only very few restaurants. Beverages, especially alcoholic, are extremely expensive in bars and restaurants due to extremely high taxes. And in shops the price is very high compared with prices in other countries.

Tobacco, Alcohol, Sex, Partying

Generally speaking most people do not appreciate the dangers of neither tobacco nor alcohol like some people of the west do. They are considered to be pleasures, stimulants. A few, like in other countries, may even take refuge in them. These views may also apply to sex and partying. From the 7th grade and onwards pupils are enlightened with the dangers of tobacco, alcohol and unsafe sex. That they are responsible beings. However, their perception of living is regarded as a series of trials and errors. Maturation is a personal matter and care is taken so as not to disturb the integrity of a person. You may not approve of a behaviour of a person but if you decide what is best for him or her the decision may not be a lasting one.

There are, however, some who are very strongly against even the slightest enjoyment of alcohol. There is a movement with members in presumably every town and most settlements. They arrange get-togethers once or twice a week with different activities. A few, mainly sport enthusiasts, are against smoking tobacco.

The towns and settlements are small places with rather distinct boundaries. Children play outside relatively more than average American and European children. They do this and are encouraged to do so almost no matter the weather – or the darkness in winter. The older ones are supposed to look after the younger ones. Often a few adults take part in their game or play. When the midnight sun returns and school is out some parents let their children look after themselves playing outside the whole night long. They eat and sleep when they feel like it. A tremendous feeling of freedom. Coming to another country may seem difficult with all the rules and constraints. There is a big gap between a this-is-good-attitude and a don't-do-this-attitude. Not that it is an either- or but there are simply so many rules and this-is-dangerous-so-don't-do-it.

Arctic Umiaq Line: Passenger ships in South Greenland and up the west coast



For more information about travel to Greenland visit http://www.greenland-guide.gl/travel_accom.htm.

Background Information on the Greenlandic Culture

General information

In 1979 “Homerule Government” was introduced into Greenland. Thereby giving Greenland the status of a distinct nation within the Kingdom of Denmark. Usually, the two cultures exist together without problems; however, there are tensions because the minority culture is also the old colonial power, and it is often Danes who have the most powerful positions in the Greenlandic society. Danish language and culture is relatively dominant today, mainly in the larger towns, where you can get by without speaking Greenlandic. On the other hand, very few people speak Danish in the smaller towns and villages. Danish, as a language, is strengthened by the fact that you must speak Danish, if you wish to study in Denmark.

The two languages are fundamentally different and it can be very difficult to learn the other language if you have grown up with the other one. Here is an example of how different the two languages work:

Negative questions, such as “You were not in school yesterday?” are common in Danish. If the student answers the teacher’s question with Greenlandic logic, he will answer: “Yes” (yes, I was not in school yesterday) or “No” (No, I was in school yesterday). In Danish and English the answer would be the opposite.

Families

In Greenland, children are brought up to respect parents and their elders. Everybody has a responsibility towards all the children, and you may observe parents in a supermarket, who correct other peoples’ children. Older siblings have a responsibility towards younger ones. The parents trust that wherever the children go, there will be another adult or older child to take care of their child. Also, towns are often no larger than it will permit a parent to find their child easily. It may seem to outsiders, as if there are no restrictions. Therefore, it may also be difficult for an exchange student from Greenland, to understand the importance of rules and restrictions in other countries, and to understand the importance of telling a hostfam, where one is going, when going out.

Traditionally boys in Greenland were highly valued because of their role in the family as providers. As children the boys spend a lot of time with their fathers learning these skills but without responsibilities in the home. The girls, on the other hand, are expected to have responsibilities in the household. Today, according to many Greenlandic girls, there is still a tendency to have this unfair division of duties.

Christmas, New Year, Easter and birthdays are big events and cause for celebration.

Leisure time

Only Greenland's largest town, Nuuk, has a movie theatre and a small café-milieu – and to travel between towns in Greenland may be a question of a 12-hour journey by boat or a costly trip by plane. Therefore each town is very isolated. Leisure time activities are limited and very different from many other places in the world. Joining a choir or Scouts or a sport are some of the activities – others include activities in nature. Most families North of the polar-circle have a dogsled team and/or snowmobiles. Many people fish and hunt, and it may be difficult to differentiate between leisure and work. Hunting is an integrated part of Greenlandic culture, where especially seal-hunting requires experience and skill.

Although the distance between towns in Greenland is great, the distances within a town are short. You can reach the sports-centre or a friend in five to ten minutes. Greenlanders visit each other informally very often. There is a limited choice of television programs from Denmark and a few programs produced in Greenland. Instead, it is a very popular pastime to watch videos. There are two newspapers in Greenlandic and good libraries with Danish and Greenlandic books. Danish or other newspapers take at least 24 hours to reach Greenland.

Behaviour

- People from Greenland may seem quiet and introvert. In Greenland, where there are few people everywhere, you can always be heard. Therefore, you only speak if you really have something to say.
- Strangers are welcomed, but it takes time to get to know and trust strangers.
- People from Greenland do not usually talk about their feelings, especially not boys. In a small society people need to protect themselves, because otherwise everybody may get to know all about you.
- In Greenland, people are often perfectionists. People are afraid of making an error and be laughed at.
- People need to be able to see far.
- People need to be able to be alone

This is a very general description, and upbringing and behaviour-patterns will vary greatly depending on the persons parental background. You can come from Greenland and have Danish/Danish parents, Danish/Greenlandic parents or Greenlandic/Greenlandic parents.

Students may have spent their whole life in Greenland and there may be some, who have only lived there for the past couple of years.