

Discover Greenland: The Natural Habitat Experience

Explore the Remote Arctic on Land & by Sea from Our Luxury Base Camp

Day 1: Keflavik, Iceland / Reykjavik

You are met on arrival at Keflavik International Airport and transferred to our hotel in Iceland's capital of Reykjavik, about a 45-minute drive. If you arrive very early, you may store your bags at the hotel while you enjoy exploring the compact city. This evening, learn about all that lies ahead in Greenland during a welcome dinner with our Expedition Leader.

Day 2: Reykjavik / Kulusuk, Greenland / Tasiilaq

Transfer to Iceland's domestic airport, just a short drive away, where we board our flight to Kulusuk, Greenland, about a 75-minute flight. From Kulusuk, we make a scenic transfer by helicopter to Ammassalik Island, landing in Tasiilaq, the small administrative center of East Greenland. Though it's just a 10-minute flight, it offers a preview of the magnificent scenery to come, with icebergs drifting below us and perhaps even a chance to spot a whale from the air.

Tasiilaq's charming collection of brightly painted wooden houses hugs King Oscar's Bay, surrounded by pointed peaks iced with glaciers. The vibrant town of 2,000 is a hub for outdoor adventure, from hiking and kayaking in summer to dog sledding and glacier skiing in winter. Most of East Greenland is uninhabited, however, except for a handful of small subsistence hunting communities. Greenland's east coast is often called "the back side" by those on the west, where most of the population, its capital and institutions are located. East Greenland's people had no contact with the outside world till the turn of the 20th century, and that isolation has fostered a distinct and resilient culture.

Our introduction to Greenland begins here where arctic wilderness and traditional lifestyles meet. On arrival, we convene at our hotel for a briefing before setting out to explore the area around Tasiilaq on foot, hiking into the Valley of Flowers above the scenic bay that fronts the town. Bring your camera: the ice-clad gneiss and granite peaks provide a backdrop for a vibrant landscape of waterfalls and small lakes fringed by arctic wildflowers in season.

Day 3: Tasiilaq—Whale Watching & Hiking

Though the interior of Greenland is covered by an ice cap nearly two miles thick, a few habitable areas exist around the bays and islands along the coast. The region we visit enjoys a surprisingly mild climate in summer, earning it the nickname "Arctic Riviera." Our exploration starts with a half-day whale-watching excursion in the open waters of the Greenland Sea. Traveling in an enclosed private motorboat, we cruise in search of fin, minke and humpback whales, and seals. The icebergs alone are worth the journey: these are ocean-going slabs of ice, some of which have been drifting for months or even years, driven down the coast by the strong southerly Greenland Current. Glaciologists believe that

some have even come from northern Canada, hundreds of miles away. Once they reach the outer edge of Greenland's fjords, they collide with ice that has broken off the Greenland ice sheet to form gigantic composites, sometimes mingling with the brash ice to create vast, frozen mosaics. Back on shore, we'll take a scenic walk along the coastline and visit Tasiilaq's small but fascinating history museum. Time permitting, we may also have a chance for a cultural encounter or two around town.

Day 4: Tasiilaq / Base Camp Greenland

After breakfast, we depart via boat or helicopter for our exclusive wilderness Base Camp, located on the east side of Sermilik Fjord. Our destination is close to the small hamlet of Tinit, which we'll visit at some point during our stay. The village is one of the most scenic outposts in East Greenland, with a spectacular view of Sermilik Fjord, littered with huge icebergs, and the ice sheet beyond. Behind the town, glaciated peaks rise over a mile high, jutting up like sharp black teeth. Tinit is home to fewer than a hundred hardy people crafting a subsistence fishing and hunting existence around challenging weather and constantly shifting ice conditions.

We'll keep an eye out for whales as we travel, as they are frequently seen in these waters when ice conditions permit. The area is filled with evidence of ancient habitation, including graves and ruins of old Inuit sod house foundations, and we find it an evocative place to learn more about Inuit history and lore. Reaching our destination at Base Camp Greenland, we find ourselves in one of the most remote places on Earth. After settling in to our deluxe private cabins, we sit down for coffee, tea and refreshments. Later we'll convene for an orientation to our environs, followed by dinner and a lecture to further acquaint us with the remarkable natural history of the region. Through presentations and cultural visits during our stay, we also learn about Greenland's cultural heritage and aspects of modern life. Traditional Inuit identity is at the forefront in East Greenland more than most other places in Greenland, and we'll have opportunities for an authentic encounter with this vibrant, enduring culture that remains largely in harmony with nature.

Days 5–7: Base Camp Greenland—Exploring Sermilik Fjord

The landscape along Greenland's isolated and rarely visited east coast is wild and magnificent. Great fjords indent the coastline, penetrating far into sheer-sided mountains capped by the world's second-largest ice sheet, and Sermilik Fjord is the mightiest of them all. Our base camp provides a safe and comfortable outpost from which to explore this vast expanse of wilderness that lies just below the Arctic Circle. Though we are profoundly secluded, the wider region is dotted with a few isolated villages where Greenlandic Inuit people practice subsistence lifestyles in this uncompromising Arctic environment. In varied encounters, we learn about their culture, still based on fishing and hunting, and discover how they are retaining their traditions while adapting to contemporary life in the 21st century.

On Zodiac excursions we observe the rugged and ever-changing shoreline, navigating among a flotilla of icebergs in an array of wild shapes, some as big as buildings. We'll look for whales and seals, both of

which are present depending on ice conditions. Guided sea kayaking outings are also an option for exploring the waters around us. We spend plenty of time ashore, too, with walks and hikes for varying ability levels. Explore the mountainsides and wander near glaciers that wind down from the Greenland ice sheet. This huge ice mass—second in size only to Antarctica—stretches more than 1,500 miles from north to south, is nearly 2 miles deep at its thickest point and covers 80 percent of the island. We learn about the crucial role it plays in regulating the earth's climate, and see with our own eyes how rapidly it is being affected by climate change. Amid fields of Arctic cotton grass, look for Arctic fox and birdlife, including eiders, loons and possibly peregrine falcons.

The long hours of summer daylight allow for extensive exploration. But ultimately it's time to retreat each evening to our base camp, where we enjoy creative meals prepared by our accomplished camp chef. After dinner, gather for interpretive presentations by our naturalist Expedition Leaders who share their extensive knowledge of Greenland's geology, glaciology and human history. And, though the sun gleams in the sky much of the night here near the Arctic Circle, a good night's sleep is in order to refuel for the next day's adventures. Given that our wilderness cabins have real beds with full bedding (no sleeping on the ground in tents for our guests!), you'll be sure to get it, wrapped in the profound silence of our surroundings. Guests on later-season departures may even have a chance to glimpse the northern lights, if the aurora is active in the darkening night sky.

Day 8: Base Camp Greenland / Kulusuk

Bid farewell to Base Camp Greenland this morning as we make our way back to Kulusuk. Weather and ice conditions dictate which transportation mode we will take, but both offer spectacular views. By helicopter, we survey huge U-shaped valleys gouged by glaciers, beneath pointed peaks. By boat, we navigate the imposing fjord system, keeping an eye out for whales and seals and marveling at the ever-shifting tableau of drifting ice. On arrival in Kulusuk, we check in to our hotel, drinking in the stunning views that surround us. Celebrating an extraordinary adventure of discovery, wild beauty and camaraderie, we enjoy a farewell dinner on our last night together in Greenland.

Day 9: Kulusuk / Reykjavik / Depart

Though today is devoted to journeying back to the urban world, it is filled with magnificent Arctic scenery on view from the air. We meet our plane for the return flight to Reykjavik's domestic airport where our adventure together ends. From here, a transfer is included to Keflavik International Airport for homeward flights.

Please Note: This itinerary is meant as a guideline and can change due to weather and ice conditions. On some occasions, adverse conditions may require us to deviate from our intended itinerary, in which case we will provide the best available alternative. And we'll make a great adventure of it!