

Greenland Directory

CONTENTS

Accommodation	214
Activities	215
Addresses	218
Business Hours	218
Children	218
Customs	218
Dangers & Annoyances	218
Disabled Travellers	219
Embassies	219
Festivals & Events	219
Holidays	220
Insurance	220
Internet Access	220
Laundry	220
Legal Matters	220
Maps	221
Money	221
Post	222
Shopping	222
Telephone	222
Time	222
Tourist Information	222
Women Travellers	223
Visas	223

ACCOMMODATION

A general overview of accommodation types is given below; more specific details are outlined in reviews in the destination chapters. Where a settlement has many options these are generally grouped by price band (budget then mid-range) and, within those categories, by value for money. Booking ahead is always recommended – not just in summer when availability is tight, but at any time, since many options are unmanned and the owners will need to meet you on arrival to provide keys. Some accommodation operates only in the summer (generally mid-June to early September). There's not usually any seasonal price variation, and rates are generally fixed and non-negotiable.

B&B/Homestays

Homestays offer wonderful insights into family life. While it may be possible to or-

ganise your own by asking around, certain tourist offices (notably those in Narsaq, Nuuk, Uummannaq and Upernavik) offer organised B&B schemes. Be aware that none are full-time businesses: they won't operate if the house owner is away or has family staying over. Typical rates are Dkr200 to Dkr325 with breakfast for your own room, or Dkr150 to sleep on a couch.

Camping

With no private land ownership, Greenland has very few restrictions on camping, though you should not camp near water-supply reservoirs or within 20m of historical ruins. Several hostels allow you to camp outside and use their showers and kitchen for around half the price of a bed.

Arctic ecosystems are fragile, and campfires are not permitted. There's little chance of finding any wood for one anyway.

Canisters of camping gas are available in small quantities from just a few tourist offices (including those in Narsarsuaq and Nanortalik). Methylated spirits (denatured alcohol) is sold in local supermarkets as *Borup Hush-oldnings Spirit 93%*. Petrol (*bensin*) is cheap

at around Dkr2.50 per litre but tends to be very dirty-burning. White spirit (Coleman fuel or Shellite) is known locally as *rense bensin* or *lampeolie* and is sold by some tourist offices, shops and petrol stations. Paraffin (kerosene) stoves can use *lugtfri* petroleum, available from hardware stores and certain supermarkets.

Hotels

Most Greenlandic towns have at least one hotel. Bigger hotels tend to be functionally comfortable if architecturally drab. Many offer older basic rooms with shared bathroom for around Dkr650/950 single/double, and smarter renovated rooms with private toilet and shower unit, towels, TV, kettle and instant coffee for around Dkr900/1200. Smaller hotels don't have reception desks, so booking ahead is often essential. You'll generally be met on arrival. Certain villages use the term 'hotel' rather optimistically to describe an empty house in which you can rent a room for around Dkr200 to Dkr500.

Huts

Dotted about the fjords are a wide variety of cabins and huts. Some are private, and others are run by the local municipality for use by passing hunters and fishermen or for shepherds during round-ups. The public huts are generally unlocked and available for anyone if there's space. In a few cases – for example, around Grønødal – you should prearrange things and occasionally you'll pay a small fee. Conditions vary from almost uninhabitable to well maintained with oil heaters and bunks. They're often to be found on the sites of otherwise abandoned villages.

School Hostels

During the summer holidays (effectively July), some colleges allow travellers to rent student rooms. Standards vary considerably, but typically you'll have to make arrangements through the local tourism authorities. Prices are roughly the same as for youth hostels. Several schools also have rather basic camping huts in the countryside, which may occasionally allow you refuge.

Seamen's Homes (Sømandshjem)

Five larger Greenlandic towns have a seamen's home – see www.soemandshjem.gl.

Historically, these were created as missions of the Danish Lutheran church to provide clean, safe lodging for transiting sailors and fisherfolk. Although still Christian-oriented, with regulations against alcohol and carousing, in price and quality they are increasingly hard to distinguish from other hotels. All have Danish-style cafeterias where you can usually fill up for around Dkr60.

Service Houses (Servishuset)

As a last resort, certain small villages with no formal accommodation allow visitors to stay in the community's service house. These typically contain a meeting room, a public laundry and showers provided primarily for locals whose houses have no running water. For a youth-hostel style fee you may get a fold-out couch, mattress or rough floor mat. There's zero privacy and minimal comfort. Arrangements can be hit-and-miss, and English is rarely spoken.

Youth Hostels (Vandrehjem)

Many settlements maintain a youth hostel. Some are run by tourist offices, travel agencies or private individuals, but none is affiliated with Hostelling International. Almost all have well-equipped kitchens and communal showers with (sometimes limited) hot water. You'll be expected to bring your own sleeping bag, though sheets are occasionally available, expensively, for hire. There are no curfews; indeed, some hostels are unmanned, and you might simply be given the key on arrival at the airport or port. Prices range from Dkr110 to Dkr325, but Dkr200 is typical.

ACTIVITIES

Fishing

Greenland offers great opportunities to fish for *kapisillik* (salmon) and especially *eqaluk* (Arctic char). The char (*salvelinus alpinus*) is a salmonid fish, and is possibly the ancestor of the trout. Some are resident in lakes, while others battle their way up fast-flowing streams from the fjords to their regular autumn spawning in freshwater lakes and the headwaters of rivers. These fish can weigh up to 8kg. Some 2½ hours by boat from Kangerlussuaq followed by two hours' bushwhacking is a waterfall on the torrential Robinson River (Angujartorfiup), where big char remarkably

PRACTICALITIES

- Greenland uses European-style **electric plugs**, which have two round pins. The supply is 220V to 240V at 50Hz.
- Trilingual **Suluk**, the semi-annual Air Greenland in-flight magazine, is free from airline offices as well as on aircraft.
- Radio Greenland (KNR) broadcasts a town-by-town **weather forecast** in English at 9.10am on summer weekdays.
- **Tippling** is not required in restaurants or in taxis.
- Some **TV films** are in English but subtitled in Danish (locals joke that Greenlandic words are too long!). Teletext page 400 has useful travel and airport information.
- Greenland uses the **metric** system (see the inside front cover for conversions).

manage to leap their way up around 8m of cascades. The river provides world-class fly and spinner fishing. More details are available from **Kangerlussuaq Tourism** (www.kangtour.gl) – see p164. Hundreds of kilometres of promising but largely unexplored water is found around Nuuk on the vast Nordlandet Peninsula (p149), and on rivers entering the Godthåbsfjord.

To reach the very best fishing rivers you will usually have to pay boat charters, camp, and trek often considerable distances. However, if you just want to feed yourself it's possible to incorporate char fishing with walking holidays in central and southern Greenland. In certain ponds and rivers, catching a meal is so easy that just a string with an unbaited hook will suffice.

Note that Greenland's char, though abundant, are vulnerable. Anglers should use debarbed hooks and practise catch-and-release for those fish they don't plan to eat.

Some supermarkets and sports stores carry limited supplies of fishing tackle. Non-resident anglers are legally required to buy a fishing licence. These cost Dkr75/200/500 per day/week/month. Application forms are available from tourist offices but the fee should be paid in a post office.

Hiking & Trekking

Greenland offers some of the world's most marvellous trekking for those seeking a total wilderness experience. Except for a few farm tracks in South Greenland, almost all walking is on entirely unmarked routes. On a bright, sunny day it's an incredible feeling of liberty to go bog-hopping at will across glorious moorlands or to wind your own course across gnarled rocky passes. The views are magnificent and the purity of light is magical. There's a mind-blowingly profound silence, broken only by ravens, trickling streams or the reverberating thuds of exploding icebergs.

However, weather can change extremely fast. Once the fog comes down, a jolly afternoon stroll can become a nightmarishly dangerous series of stumbles, so come prepared with at least basic survival gear. In reduced visibility or heavy rain it's easy to get lost, injured or both. Even in good weather you'll need to be adept at reading landscapes. Thick, low-lying vegetation hides ankle-cracking crevasses. Rocks become

slippery when wet. Mossy bogs and hidden waterholes abound, and it may be necessary to take long, strenuous routes over lofty ridges or tough boulder fields to avoid dangerous stream crossings. A twisted ankle is unpleasant anywhere, but in Greenland it could prove fatal if you're hiking alone and unequipped – after all, no other hikers are likely to wander past in the next week or month.

The requisite 1:100,000 or 1:75,000 hiking maps are sold locally and are generally very accurate. However, they are not detailed enough to show every minor 10m-high cliff. Most importantly, be aware that dotted lines show 'proposed routes', not clear paths. In some cases these are perfectly navigable; in others they appear to have been simply dreamt up by the cartographer. Even along popular routes the terrain can become suddenly impassable, requiring long detours. Note that all maps show the (very considerable) local deviation between magnetic and geographical north (see p51).

There are trek notes on the backs of the maps, on the www.greenland.com website and in Torbjørn Ydegaard's very dated guidebook *Trekking in Greenland*. Although they are often helpful, occasionally these can be dangerously wrong or no longer applicable, especially regarding the whereabouts of huts and shelters. Always ask local advice before setting out. In recent years, several trekkers have gone missing in Greenland and have never been found. These warnings aren't designed to put you off trekking – there is no better way to appreciate the wilderness – but outdoor skills and careful preparation are important.

Trekkers, even day hikers, should tell someone about their plans and estimated time of return. Do remember to inform them when your trip is complete: rescue helicopters cost around Dkr60,000 per hour, and it's the missing hiker who pays. Forgetting to report arrivals or changed itineraries could very quickly make you poor. Note that crossing the inland ice requires a special permit and compulsory search-and-rescue insurance from the **Danish Polar Centre** (DPC; www.dpc.dk).

Icecap Crossings

Very experienced cross-country skiers can emulate Fridtjof Nansen and join one of the

annual expeditions across the inland ice organised by **Tangent Expeditions** (www.tangent-expeditions.co.uk) and **Hvitserk** (www.hvitserk.no). With just white infinity ahead for three exhausting weeks, some claim it's meditation, others that it's wanton masochism. Some crossings are accompanied by dogsled; on others you drag your own supplies.

If you cross the icecap in the far south the chore is much shorter (though still very tough going) and can be combined with trekking through more appealing landscapes. One such tour is offered by **Topas** (www.greenland-discoverer.com).

Icecap Visits

If you just want to touch rather than cross the icecap, that's much easier: hike from Narsarsuaq (p97), cycle from Kangerlussuaq (p162) or boat in from Narsaq (p109) or Tasermit Fjord (p130).

Kayaking

Greenlandic *qajaq* are the precursors of modern kayaks, and few places in the world are more mindbogglingly beautiful for sea-kayaking than Greenland's inner fjords. Though many people prefer to ship their own, it's increasingly possible to hire equipment locally, typically from tourist offices. However, if you've never paddled before this is not the place to start: renters want an assurance that you're reasonably experienced.

When kayaking, it's important to keep close to land. Good maps and charts are essential, given the sudden sea-fog white-outs. Rolling icebergs present real dangers, and the tidal wave created can wash your boat and tent off a beach if you don't pull up high enough when camping.

If that hasn't deterred you, great accessible areas to paddle include Tasermit Fjord (p130), Nuup Kangerlua (p154) and the sheltered sounds around Aasiaat (p183). The Ilulissat area is also superb but seriously bergy. One-way drop-off rentals mean the lovely route from Narsaq (p109) to Narsarsuaq is especially popular.

Mountaineering

Dramatic East Greenland has mountains that are almost as high as the Alps and much more extensive. Many peaks remain unclimbed. Major mountaineering

areas are around Tasiilaq (see p206) and in the Stauning Alps (see p212). The **DPC** (☎ 3288 0100; www.dpc.dk) must sanction any mountaineering ventures. This combined with the extreme isolation of the main climbing peaks means that mountaineering expeditions are generally best organised as part of a specialist tour.

Rock Climbing

Unlike mountaineers, rock climbers don't need official DPC clearance. For trad-climbers, Greenland's southern tip is a remarkable paradise of nearly pristine vertical granite. Walls and spires, many still unclimbed, rival those of Yosemite or Patagonia, yet are unusually accessible once you have a boat. Shipping in a couple of Zodiac dinghies will pay off if your group plans to stay a long time; otherwise, reaching different walls will require boat transfers. These must be prearranged, which will reduce your flexibility to attempt new challenges. Niels at the Nanortalik tourist office (p126) is widely acclaimed for his assistance with and understanding of climbers' needs, and can help by receiving your pre-sent gear. Kangerlussuaq (Evighedsfjorden), accessed from Maniitsoq (p155), also has superb climbing.

Many Greenland expedition reports are kept by the **British Mountaineering Council** (www.thebmc.co.uk), and basic trip summaries and planning advice are available online.

Rock Collecting

The world's oldest rocks can be found around Nuuk, and some pretty unique minerals can be sought, notably Tutupit near Narsaq (p109) and Cryolite's at Ivittuut (p138). Collectors may legally keep samples that are smaller than a fist, but see Legal Matters, p220 for related regulations.

Skiing

Cross-country skiing is possible nearly anywhere in winter, though spring temperatures are less forbidding. For downhill alpine skiing, small ski lifts operate at Grønnedal, Nuuk, Sisimiut and Tasiilaq in spring. Apussuit, near Maniitsoq, offers excellent helisking from April to July, but it's predictably expensive. The three-day **Arctic Circle Race** (www.acr.gl) is one of the world's toughest ski races.

Sky Gazing

Especially in the south, Greenland offers great opportunities to enjoy the spectacular aurora borealis (northern lights) from August to April. Walk beyond the areas of street lighting on dark, moonless nights and look above you towards the north.

ADDRESSES

Houses in Greenland generally have building ('B') numbers. As in Japanese towns, these are assigned chronologically, not according to their position along the road. However, some Greenlandic towns use both this system and street numbers in parallel. Thus Egedesvej B146 and Egedesvej 2 could be the same address. Egedesvej 4 would probably be next door, but Egedesvej B148 could be across town. The 'B' number is typically marked with a white-on-blue signplate; the street number (if there is one) with a black-on-yellow one. In smaller settlements the roads are not named.

BUSINESS HOURS

Typical business hours for banks and post offices are 9am to 3pm Monday to Friday. Standard shop hours in Nuuk are 10am to 5.30pm Monday to Thursday, 10am to 6pm on Friday and 10am to 1pm on Saturday. Town supermarkets open from at least 9am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday, and 9am to 1pm Saturday. Some open on Sundays as well. Bakery sections tend to open earlier, often around 7am. Village Pilersuisoq grocery shops generally close by 4pm. A few 'butik' or 'kiosk' shops selling groceries and sweets stay open till 10pm or midnight to cater to those desperate enough to pay mark-ups of up to 50%. By law, alcohol cannot be sold in shops after 6pm on weekdays or after 1pm on Saturday.

CHILDREN

Travelling with children in Greenland is not common, though many hotels can provide extra beds for kids. Most villages have a playground, and in Nuuk there's a floodlit skateboard park outside the youth hostel. Some Westerners might be disturbed by the very laissez-faire attitude of local parents who leave kids to amuse themselves all day entirely without supervision in potentially hazardous environments.

Disposable nappies and powdered baby milk are available in even the smallest village store.

Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children* is a good source of generally applicable trip-planning advice.

CUSTOMS

Travellers over 18 may import 1L of spirits (over 22% alcohol by volume) or 2L of fortified wine (15% to 22% alcohol), 2.25L of wine (under 15% alcohol) and 2L of beer duty free. Anyone over 17 may bring in 250g of tobacco, and 200 cigarette papers or 200 prerolled cigarettes. All travellers are allowed up to Dkr1000 worth of cosmetics and a maximum of 2kg of confectionery. There are various other limits on importing food and drink. Live animals, revolvers and automatic weapons are prohibited, though hunting rifles can be brought in if the airline gives permission.

Any bones or carvings from fin, sperm, blue and humpback whales may not be exported; neither may stuffed white-tailed eagles or even their feathers.

Souvenirs made of West Greenlandic minke whale, beluga whale, narwhal, polar bear, wolf and walrus products may be exported but only with a CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) permit. Most relevant shops have such permits prepared. However, if you buy privately you'll need to get local approval or send the item to the **Department of Environment & Nature** (☎ 345050; PO Box 1614, DK-3900 Nuuk) and hope it gets back to you before you depart.

You don't need permits to export seal, caribou and reindeer products, but be sure to check your home country's import regulations; for example, the USA prohibits imports of marine-mammal products, including seal furs.

Anything made before 1940 is considered to be a cultural artefact and requires an export permit from the national museum in Nuuk.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Theft is rare, and violent crime mostly results from family feuds or broken relationships, both of which are highly unlikely to affect most short-term visitors. However, alcohol-fuelled fights, including volleys of

beer bottles, are not uncommon in and around pubs, especially on pay-day Friday nights. Drunks can be scarily prone to inexplicable and violent mood swings, so be sensitive in bars and don't stay too late. Rampant sexually transmitted diseases (in 2002 gonorrhoea was more common than flu) should make you cautious about accepting the more intimate forms of Greenlandic hospitality.

Otherwise, most of the dangers found in Greenland come from nature. The perils are only severe if you're not properly prepared or if you ignore local advice. It's crucial to remember just how isolated you are. Twisting an ankle when hiking in the countryside could become a major catastrophe if nobody knows where you are: there's virtually no hope of anyone just wandering by. The conditions are extremely fickle, and you should be well prepared for cold and wet weather. Fog can descend suddenly, so while hiking you'd be wise to keep a stock of food and a survival bag in case you get caught and can't find your way back.

'If you don't fear the sea, you won't last a year in Greenland,' say local fisherfolk. If people tell you that the sea is too rough to go out, believe them. Even if it means missing a key excursion, it's not wise to push a reluctant boatman to make an unsafe journey. Small boats are easily swamped in strong winds, and the seas are so cold that your chances of swimming even a short distance to shore would be tiny. Flotation suits give you a few extra minutes to contemplate death should your boat sink. Even if you do make it to land, the chances of being rescued before you become hypothermic are minimal. There is a lifeboat-style rescue service, but it comprises only four boats for all of Greenland. Even helicopter rescues can take several hours – as well as tens of thousands of dollars – to reach you.

Polar bears are very rare and they generally avoid humans. Where they are a hazard locals will advise you to carry a gun and might lend you one. If you're cornered by a bear when unarmed, try to keep your cool (see p90).

Be careful how you store food when camping, to avoid attracting foxes.

Major summer annoyances are clouds of mosquitoes, midges and mini-flies, which seek out eardrums, shoot up nostrils and

make kamikaze attacks on eyeballs. They're at their worst in July, especially on wilderness hikes, when a head-net is virtually essential. Head-nets are widely sold for around Dkr40, some designs working best when worn over a baseball-style cap. Insects are curiously absent in sheep-farming areas, and fortunately few seem to come indoors. At night you'll rarely be bothered, and by mid-September most have disappeared.

DISABLED TRAVELLERS

Greenland is likely to be a challenge to disabled or infirm travellers. Except in Nuuk, lifts (elevators) are virtually unknown. In many towns stairways abound and streets are by no means always paved. Getting aboard ferries, planes and helicopters usually involves steps, and boarding smaller boats can involve some minor acrobatics. For the less able a cruise is often the favoured option. However, even on certain expensive excursions from cruise ships, some passengers have expressed surprise at the need to walk sometimes considerable distances as well as at the total absence of public toilets in remote areas. Don't expect bushes, either!

EMBASSIES

Greenland is represented abroad by Danish embassies and consulates. Consult www.um.dk/en for a full listing. There are no embassies in Greenland, though Finland, Iceland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden each have honorary consuls in Nuuk.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Celebrations and sighs of relief mark the end of northern Greenland's polar night, when the sun finally returns after its sojourn below the horizon. This occurs in mid-January in Ilulissat, in early February in Upernavik and in late February in Qaanaaq. Around Easter, villages north of the Arctic Circle hold dogsled races accompanied by general festivities.

Aasivik (Summer Settlement) was once a gathering of disparate Inuit groups meeting up in the warm summer months to trade, meet friends and tell stories. It was revived in modern guise in 1976 as two alcohol-free weeks of 'fresh air and fresh thought', a social and political gathering protesting against 'missionary culture' and encouraging traditional theatre, drum dances and

folk music. Over the years it became more like a pop festival and eventually petered out altogether. However, a revival is likely in July 2006, its 30th anniversary.

In summer some South Greenland towns and villages hold a sort of sheep rodeo that includes shearing, herding and other ovine-related competitions. In early August, the first day at school is a big event. New scholars are formally introduced to academic life, shaking hands with the head teacher while being cheered on by their families in the school grounds. Many people wear national dress and throw fistfuls of coins into the crowd.

HOLIDAYS

July is the main holiday season, with long days and temperatures at their warmest. However, transport and hotels fill up, flies and mosquitoes are at their peak, and the weather is not ideal. Late August is colder, but it's more appealing overall. In September many Greenlanders take time off to hunt reindeer.

Public Holidays

Public holidays observed in Greenland:

New Year's Day 1 January

Epiphany 6 January

Easter Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Monday (March or April)

Labour Day 1 May

Common Prayer's Day Four weeks after Good Friday

Ascension Six weeks after Maundy Thursday

Whitmonday Seven weeks after Easter Monday

National Day, Ullortuneq (Longest Day) 21 June

Christmas Eve 24 December

Christmas Day 25 December

Boxing Day 26 December

New Year's Eve 31 December (afternoon only)

INSURANCE

Although it's part of Denmark, Greenland is not covered by the European E111 mutual health-insurance scheme. Arrange your own cover. Travel insurance covering delays, missed connections and incomplete holidays is particularly advisable, as the weather simply can't be relied upon. Check that your policy covers any kayaking, climbing or hiking activities that you might plan.

Visitors from the Americas should also carefully check the small print on their fly-me-home coverage. Many policies (even

those tailored for expensive cruises) only cover evacuation flights that head in the direction of home. However, to reach the Americas from Greenland you must almost inevitably fly first to Copenhagen or Iceland and then double back. That's not your fault, but it breaks the rules and can thus result in a very expensive exclusion. See also p330 for further information about health insurance.

INTERNET ACCESS

Almost every town has had an Internet club at some point during recent years. However, few such ventures proved profitable and many closed forthwith. Public Internet access remains hit-and-miss and will generally cost a hefty Dkr40 to Dkr100 per hour. Richer locals increasingly have their own computers connected to the web for a tiny fraction of that cost. Schools and libraries are often online and sometimes allow free public use.

Accessing the Internet using a laptop is hopeless unless you subscribe to the local ISP, which is called **Greenet** (☎ 341255; www.greenet.gl, not in English).

LAUNDRY

Some hostels have washing machines. There are usually laundry services in hotels, but these are sometimes scarily expensive. In small villages public washing machines (Dkr20 per load) and dryers (Dkr10) are found in the service house (see p215), and you can buy individual tokens. In bigger towns they lurk in unpleasant housing blocks and you'll need a *Vaskekort til Vaskeriet* (a prepaid magnetic strip-card giving you Dkr50 or Dkr100 of wash-or-dry credit, which is generally more than you'll need as a passing traveller). Inconveniently, the cards are almost never sold on site, so you'll usually have to go to the nearest Brugsen supermarket to buy one. To save money, bring some soap powder and do your laundry by hand.

LEGAL MATTERS

It's forbidden to disturb historic or prehistoric sites by camping or removing stones. Finds of potential archaeological interest should be reported to the **National Museum** (☎ 322611) in Nuuk (p147), which also has sole authority to grant export licences for

cultural artefacts, including anything made before 1940.

As part of the effort to conserve Greenland's wildlife, the export of certain animal products is controlled or completely banned (see Customs, p218).

Tourists need permits for hunting and fishing (see p216). For mountaineering expeditions, visits to the icecap (p216) or permits for the Northeast Greenland National Park (p213), apply well ahead to the **DPC** (☎ 3288 0100; www.dpc.dk; Strandgade 100, DK-1401 Copenhagen, Denmark).

Soft drugs, including marijuana, are illegal, and although locals seem to indulge in the latter with relative impunity, users do occasionally get arrested.

Police are generally low key and friendly. The prison system is perhaps the world's most liberal (see the boxed text, below).

MAPS

Saga Maps products cover Greenland's coastal areas with reasonable 1:250,000-scale topographical clarity for around Dkr80 per sheet. They are ideal for general travellers, although their use of old spellings and place names can be confusing. There's a discount for regional sets. There's special tourist sheets for the Eastern Settlement (far south), Western Settlement (Nuuk Fjord area) and Ammassalik Area (east coast) add historical information and some archaeological plans of the main Norse ruin sites.

If you're planning on going hiking you'll need Greenland Tourism's more detailed 1:75,000 or 1:100,000 trekking maps (see p216).

The relevant maps are almost always available for sale from local tourist offices. Virtually all are stocked by a shop in Kangerlussuaq Airport and by Nuuk's

bookshop **Atuagkat Boghandel** (☎ 321737; www.atuagkat.gl). Atuagkat Boghandel also offers mail order. Although its online ordering system is scarily lacking in confirmation messages or cancellation possibilities, maps arrive safely, and the postage charge (which is not quoted on the site) is only Dkr16 per map.

MONEY Currency

Greenland's currency is the same as Denmark's: the generally stable Danish krone (Dkr), which is equal to 100øre. Exchange rates are listed inside the front cover of this book. As there is no coin smaller than 25øre, cash registers automatically round totals up or down. Thus if an item is Dkr9.95 you'll save a tiny sum by buying three at once. For costs, see p10.

Exchanging Money

Travellers cheques are a poor idea in Greenland. You'll pay a Dkr75 commission to change them, and even then that's usually only possible at Grønlandsbanken in Nuuk, Qaqortoq, Maniitsoq, Sisimiut and Ilulissat. Changing cash (euros, US dollars and other major currencies) is cheaper (Dkr30), and where there's no bank it's generally possible in post offices. Even in the smallest branches, confused clerks can eventually manage this after a flurry of telephone calls. Still, it's wise to carry plenty of krone with you.

ATMs

With most common credit or debit cards you can withdraw money using ATMs at banks and a few bigger post offices. However, most are inside, and even hole-in-the-wall ATMs generally close between 6pm and 6am.

NAUGHTY BOY

The cheapest hotel in Greenland is Nuuk prison. While the most dangerous criminals are exported to Denmark's 'real jails', most other offenders are generally locked up only at night. By day many hold down jobs, make unescorted shopping trips and – most remarkably – even go on the annual reindeer hunt. That's right: they're given a gun. Well, as long as they're not drunk. This apparently lenient system makes more sense in Greenland, where there's effectively nowhere to run and so little incentive to escape. However, some provincial businesses dread Christmas, when prisoners come home for the holidays. Festive raids to steal alcohol can cost store owners much more in repairing the structural damage than in losing the value of the stolen booze.

Credit Cards

Major credit cards are accepted at better restaurants, hotels and shops, and at most tourist offices. Supermarkets and Pilersuisoq shops usually say that they take credit cards, and they can give cash back with purchases, but in smaller settlements the card-readers are frequently out of order, so you should have back-up cash.

POST

The postal rates for airmail postcards and letters weighing less than 20g are Dkr5 within Greenland and Dkr5.50 to most other countries. When sending mail poste restante, include the postcodes (DK-3920 for Qaqortoq, DK-3900 for Nuuk, DK-3952 Ilulissat for Disko Bay and DK-3913 Tasiilaq for East Greenland). It will help to speed things along if you add 'via Denmark' at the end of the address.

SHOPPING

Archetypal Greenlandic souvenirs are the work of local craftspeople. They include beadwork, seal-fur items and carvings, notably *tupilak*-style figures (p86). Fine local jewellery is made from local ivory, bone, antler and silver-set gemstones. Unusual Greenlandic gems include rare pink Tuttupit, which comes from Narsaq (see p109), and black Nuumiit, nicknamed the 'Greenland opal', which comes from around Nuuk. Virtually every town has a craft shop – they're often found within hotels or tourist offices. Paamiut has some of the cheapest crafts and is exaggeratedly famous for soapstone carvings. *Tupilaks* are generally better value in East Greenland. Nuuk and Qaqortoq are best for modern art. Before you buy any such souvenirs, refer to the information listed under Customs, p218.

CDs of Greenlandic music (p87) make interesting cultural souvenirs.

TELEPHONE

Greenland's country code is ☎ 299. There are no area codes, even for mobile telephones. To access an international line (including a line to Denmark), dial ☎ 00, followed by the desired country code, the area code and the telephone number. The directory assistance number is ☎ 118, and each call costs Dkr3.

Mobile, Satellite & Radio Telephones

Your mobile-phone company is unlikely to offer roaming service in Greenland. However, if it does the costs can prove to be exorbitant, so be sure to check with them before you go. The best idea is to bring your GSM telephone and buy a Tusass pay-as-you-go SIM card. For Dkr400 you get a local Greenlandic number and Dkr100 of call credit. Dial ☎ 801010 to check your credit balance. However, GSM phones only work in towns and major settlements or within direct sight of them for a range of approximately 30km. Satellite phones can be rented if you're planning a major expedition. Boats, hunters and even a few hostels beyond telephone range use VHF radios. To be put through, dial ☎ 130 (Aasiaat/Disko), ☎ 131 (Qaqortoq/South), or ☎ 132 (Ammassalik/East). Then give the recipient's radio-code name or number.

Call Costs

One-minute calls to Europe or North America cost Dkr2.04/2.79 from a private line/Tusass mobile. For calls to most other countries you'll pay Dkr2.89/3.64, but it's vastly more expensive to various Pacific islands, North Korea, Cuba, Guinea Bissau and Ascension Island (Dkr15/15.75). Pay phones are coin operated. You'll need a minimum of Dkr2 for a local call and at least Dkr10 to call internationally. Calling to/from satellite phones costs Dkr15/6.90 per minute.

TIME

Most of Greenland is three hours behind GMT, but note that Ittoqqortoormiit is one hour behind GMT, and Pituffik and Qaanaaq are four hours behind GMT. Between early April and late October, daylight-saving time adds one hour.

TOURIST INFORMATION

The national tourist information agency is **Greenland Tourism** (☎ 342820; www.greenland.com; PO Box 1615, Hand Egedesvej, DK-3900 Nuuk). The agency's superb website is a sensible starting point for all travel planning requirements. Greenland Tourism also publishes several beautiful, glossy brochures and the very helpful, free mini-guidebook *Explore Greenland*, which summarises the key practical information and tour options. If you're

writing or phoning from abroad you'll generally find it cheaper to deal with the extremely well-organised **Copenhagen office** (☎ 3283 3880; fax 3283 3889; www.greenland.com; PO Box 1139, Strandgade 91, PO Box 1139, DK-1010 Copenhagen K, Denmark). If you're looking for information in your own country, Danish tourist offices (listed on www.visitdenmark.com) can also assist.

Local Tourist Offices

Most towns have their own tourist offices, often with helpful multilingual staff. Levels of efficiency, professionalism and usefulness vary, but several offer organised trips, homestays, free town maps and plenty of local tips. It's well worth emailing questions and tour bookings months ahead of your planned visit. In off-seasons the offices aren't busy, and the most imaginative tourist offices can help individual travellers by pairing up those with similar interests so that both can save on boat-charter expenses. A great deal depends on the manager, however. Technically, the tourist office is not allowed to organise anything on (relatively cheap) boats that aren't officially approved and insured for tourists, but they are allowed to give you contacts for such boats. Whether they will do so is the real question, as tourist offices are currently being semiprivatised and have an increasing incentive to mention only their own official tours.

Most better tourist offices have a decent shop selling regional maps, hiking maps, souvenirs and relevant books.

In a few smaller towns the term 'tourist office' may in fact be a metaphorical hat worn by a distracted employee in the town office. These folks rarely speak English.

Hotels, seamen's homes and certain youth hostels also provide more basic tourist information, and might distribute local maps and brochures.

Weather

Weather forecasts are broadcast in English on KNR radio at 9.10am from Monday to Friday during summer. You can view the fairly reliable weather charts available on <http://theyr.net> by choosing Grønland. DMI ice maps are available online at www.dmi.dk/dmi/index/gronland/iskort.htm (see p89).

WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Single women travelling in Greenland don't generally encounter any special worries, hassles or funny looks that non-local men wouldn't also have to deal with. There's no need to mention a mythical husband as there might be in certain parts of the world. Staying late at a bar is not advised, however, and you might feel somewhat pestered as the beers chug down.

Tampons are available in even the smallest village stores.

VISAS

The tourist entry requirements for Greenland are similar to the entry requirements for Denmark, but be aware that Greenland is not in the EU or a party to the pan-European Schengen visa agreement. To enter Greenland, citizens of Nordic countries need only a valid identification card. Three-month visa-free stays are available to citizens of EU nations, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the USA, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Brunei, Israel and several central-European and Latin American countries. Most ex-Soviet and African nationals require a Danish visa. South Africans should apply at the **Royal Danish Embassy** (☎ 12-430 9340, 342 7620; www.denmark.co.za; Parioli Office Park, Block B2, Ground Fl, 1166 Park St, Hatfield 0028, Pretoria, South Africa) or the Danish consulate in Cape Town.

It is a requirement that all tourists applying for Danish visas must show bank-account details proving 'sufficient funds', a confirmed itinerary with accommodation bookings (or detailed explanations if you plan to camp) and proof of medical insurance coverage of at least €30,000. Before the visa is issued you'll also be expected to show a return ticket, though buying one isn't advised until the visa is approved. Note that you're supposed to apply in your country of residence. The Dkr260-equivalent application fee won't be refunded in case of visa refusal. Full regulations are listed on www.udlst.dk but upon consultation may prove to be somewhat flexible according to specific circumstances. The addresses of Danish embassies are listed on www.um.dk.

Technically, even those tourists who aren't required to have a visa must show that they have 'sufficient funds' for their

intended length of stay. However, customs and immigration formalities are normally rudimentary or nonexistent if you're en-

tering Greenland on a standard flight from Denmark or Iceland, unless you look particularly different.

Greenland Transport

CONTENTS

Getting There & Away	225
Entering Greenland	225
Air	225
Sea	228
Tours	228
Getting Around	229
Air	229
Bicycle	229
Boat	229
Car & Motorcycle	231
Dogsled	231
Kayak	232
Ski	232
Snowmobile	232
Tours	232

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Technically it would be possible to reach Siorapaluk, the northernmost settlement in Greenland, from Canada's Ellesmere Island – either overland across the ice, as Inuit outlaw Qitdlaq did in the 1860s (see p21) – or by kayak, like Jon Turk in the 1990s. Either will be an epic adventure – read Jon Turk's book *Cold Oceans* before you decide to attempt it. Otherwise, unless you're on a cruise, command your own boat or have sledged in from the North Pole, the only practical way to Greenland is by air. Most options are from Copenhagen (Denmark), but in summer there are limited connections from Iceland plus a handful of charter flights from Canada and Germany – at least, in some years.

ENTERING GREENLAND

Arrival in Greenland is remarkably low key. Passports aren't stamped, and you might not even notice that you've passed through customs at all. Before you do so, use the on-arrival duty-free shop to stock up on relatively cheap booze. It will make great presents even if you don't drink yourself. For visa information, see p223.

AIR Airports & Airlines

Greenland's main international airports are at **Kangerlussuaq** (code SFJ; see p162) and **Narsarsuaq** (code UAK; ☎ 665266; see p97). Departure tax is paid when purchasing tickets.

The only scheduled airlines licensed to serve Greenland:

Air Greenland (code GL; ☎ Greenland 343434, Denmark 3231 4223; www.airgreenland.com) The national carrier.

Air Iceland (code NY; ☎ 570 3030; www.airiceland.is; hub Reykjavik)

SAS (code SK; ☎ Denmark 7010 2000, Greenland 841030, UK 0870-6072 7727, USA 800-221 2350; www.scandinavian.net; hub Copenhagen) Not operating to Greenland at the time of writing, but plans future code-sharing with Air Greenland.

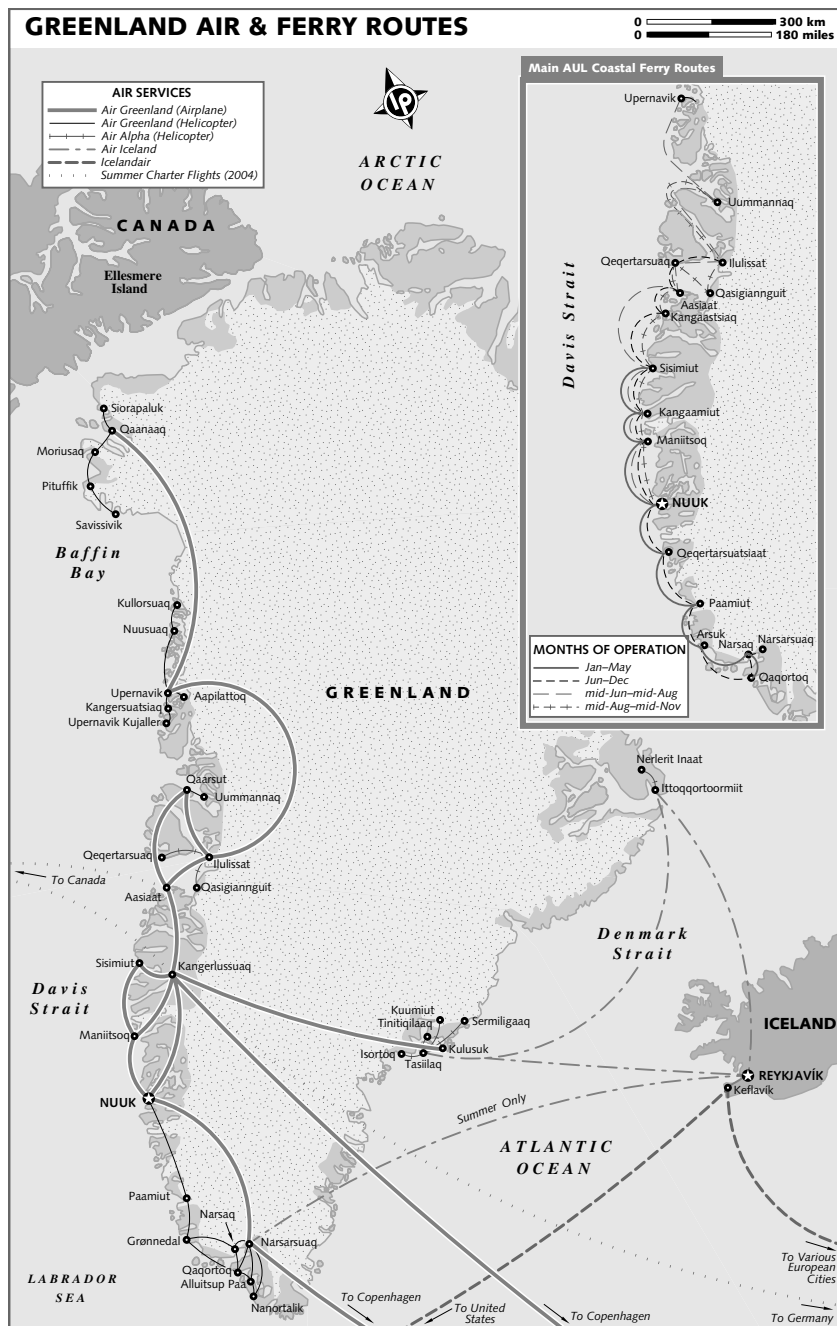
From Denmark

Year-round Air Greenland flies from Copenhagen to Kangerlussuaq four times weekly and to Narsarsuaq weekly. In summer there are two extra services on both routes. Either cost Dkr3607 one way (around €485). Standard return fares cost double. However, various discounts are available for unchangeable advance-purchase returns and for families travelling together. Booking six months ahead can net a considerable discount. It's well worth signing up online for Air Greenland's email bulletins; these sometimes alert you to discounts of up to 70%.

Travelling from Copenhagen to Nuuk involves a change, and costs Dkr4285 via Kangerlussuaq and Dkr4955 via Narsarsuaq.

THINGS CHANGE...

Wherever you travel, exact transport details are vulnerable to change. This is particularly true for Greenland. The details given accurately reflect the connections in 2004, but from year to year the carriers operating to Greenland as well as the timetables they use can vary greatly. Use the information here as a guide to the sorts of possibilities to investigate, but check www.greenland.com to see whether services have been expanded, cancelled or rerouted.



GETTING TO DENMARK

Kastrup Airport (www.cph.dk) is 9km from the centre of Copenhagen. Trains run every 20 minutes to the central station (approximately €3, 13 minutes). Copenhagen is globally well connected, notably by airline **SAS** (www.scandinavian.net), part of the Star Alliance, and throughout Europe by budget airline **Maersk** (☎ 7010 7474; www.maersk-air.com). UK-based **EasyJet** (www.easyjet.com) flies to Copenhagen from London Stansted, Bristol, Newcastle and Berlin. Curiously, Norwegian airline **Wideroe** (www.wideroe.no) has a booking engine which covers several other airlines (including Maersk and SAS) and can sometimes give better prices out of Copenhagen than the airlines themselves.

Another cheap way to reach Copenhagen is by using **Ryanair** (www.ryanair.com) low-cost flights from London Stansted to **Malmö Sturup Airport** (www.lfv.se). Malmö is in Sweden, but it's easily accessed from Copenhagen via the remarkable 16km Øresund tunnel-bridge link. Connecting Flybus 737 (€15, 45 minutes) takes you directly to Copenhagen central train station. **Malmö Aviation** (www.snalskjutsen.com) has seasonal bargain flights from Malmö to Glasgow, Nice and Stockholm.

SLEEPING IN COPENHAGEN

Many passengers will be effectively forced to spend the night in Copenhagen. In the airport complex itself is a **Hilton hotel** (☎ 3250 1501; fax 3252 8528; www.hilton.com; s/d/tw Dkr1700/1700/1700). If they bed down tidily, ultra-budget travellers with next-day flight tickets are permitted to sleep till 7am in the seating area opposite the airport's main left-luggage office (between terminals 2 and 3).

In Copenhagen city a great room-finding service is available at **Use-It** (☎ 3373 0620; www.use-it.dk; 13 Rådhusstræde; ☎ 9am-7pm mid-Jun-mid-Sep, 11am-4pm Mon-Thu & 11am-2pm Fri rest of yr), which also offers free Internet. The **tourist information office** (☎ 7022 2442; www.visitcopenhagen.dk; 4A Vesterbrogade; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri & 9am-2pm Sat Sep-Apr, 9am-6pm Mon-Sat May-Jun, 9am-8pm Mon-Sat & 10am-6pm Sun Jul-Aug) can also help. It charges Dkr60 per booking but is conveniently close to the train station (facing the entrance to Tivoli) and also has an **airport desk** (☎ 3231 2447; terminal 3; ☎ 6am-midnight).

From Iceland

Twice weekly from mid-June till early September, Air Iceland fly into Narsarsuaq

(South Greenland) from Reykjavík (Iceland). Paperless tickets can be booked online, though the website can be somewhat temperamental – if you don't get a confirmation message on the Step 5 page, don't panic. Send an email, and Air Iceland can organise the booking manually. The flights cost Ikr30,000 (around €340) each way, but if you book well ahead and stay less than a month it's possible to get half-price bonus fares. If you wait till June to book a summer trip, there may not be any space left whatsoever, though those prepared to gamble can occasionally find last-minute bargains. Air Iceland also flies from Reykjavík to Kulusuk (see p204), and from Reykjavík to Nerlerit Inaat (Constable Point) once or twice weekly all year. The fare to Nerlerit Inaat is Ikr30,000 one way. From Kulusuk only, it's possible to continue to the rest of Greenland, but only at considerable expense. The summer flights to Kulusuk allow you to make a token day return to Greenland, a possibility offered by many tourist agencies in Iceland.

Air Iceland flights leave from **Reykjavík City Airport** (code RKV; ☎ 569 4100), which is a walkable 1.5km from BSI, Reykjavík's bus terminal, or Ikr500 by taxi. From central Reykjavík or the youth hostel take bus No 5.

Don't confuse Reykjavík City Airport with **Keflavik (Reykjavik International) Airport** (code KEF; www.keflavikairport.com), where virtually all of Iceland's other international flights arrive. That's some 50km to the west. Bus transfers from Keflavik to BSI cost Ikr1100; they depart around 25 minutes after each plane arrives, even late at night.

GETTING TO ICELAND

Generally, the cheapest way to reach Iceland is to fly from London Stansted to Keflavik on low-cost airline **Iceland Express** (☎ 550 0600; www.icelandexpress.com), which has one-way fares as low as UK£68, taxes included. Reaching Stansted from the rest of Europe is easy with a wide variety of low-cost airlines, whose fares are often cheaper than the train from central London. Iceland Express also has fares from Copenhagen to Keflavik for around €100. Iceland's national carrier, **Icelandair** (www.icelandair.net), has much more comprehensive connections to 16 European cities and five American destinations (Minneapolis-St Paul, New York, Boston, Baltimore-Washington

and Orlando). It can prove cost-effective to fly transatlantic on Icelandair, using its Iceland stopover as an opportunity to visit Greenland. Icelandair's London-Keflavik fares have fallen considerably to compete with Iceland Express.

SLEEPING IN REYKJAVÍK

Reykjavik Tourist Information Centre (☎ 590 1500; www.visitReykjavik.is; Adalstraeti 2; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & 10am-2pm Sun mid-Sep-May, 8.30am-7pm daily Jun-mid-Sep) has a free booking service and an extremely comprehensive accommodation listing on its website. The airport bus from Keflavik will, on request, continue past several town-centre hotels to terminate at the superbly friendly and eco-aware **City Youth Hostel** (☎ 553 8110; www.hostel.is; Sundlaugavegur 34; dm/tw lkr1600/4200).

Keflavik airport stays open all night, but Reykjavik City Airport does not.

From Canada

Great Canadian Travel (☎ 204 949 0199, toll free 0800 661 3830; www.greatcanadiantravel.com) operates a handful of summer charter flights between Canada and Greenland. In 2005 departures are 10 July and 17 July from Iqaluit (airport code YFB) on Nunavut's Baffin Island to Aasiaat (code JEG) on Disko Bay, with returns a week later (one way/return C\$650/1440). In August 2004 there were three additional flights from Ottawa to Kangerlussuaq via Iqaluit. Flight-only tickets are sold only as a fallback for seats not filled by the company's tour groups.

From Germany

In 2004 **Troll Tours** (☎ 82 92210; www.trolltours.de, in German) operated direct flights between Frankfurt and Kangerlussuaq (Greenland) for the bargain price of €699 return. Sadly, these were dropped in 2005 but may be restarted in future years. Check the website just in case.

SEA

There are no ferries to Greenland. Royal Arctic Line cargo ships run roughly once a week from Aalborg (Denmark), but will not accept passengers. Yachtsmen should not underestimate the severity of weather conditions. Keep a careful eye on current **DMI ice reports** (www.dmi.dk/dmi/index/gronland/iskort.htm; see p88). **Imray** (www.imray.com) sells

HELICOPTER VIEWS

Helicopter rides aren't cheap, but the views can be utterly breathtaking. For the best views from standard Sikorsky S61 helicopters, try to get seats in the second row from the back. From these seats you can see out of window portals on both sides.

In the far south, helicopter fares are usually the same for direct or multistop flights between the same two points. If you're not in a rush, the multistop flight gives you much more air time and thus many more photo ops.

Arctic Pilot charts (NP11 for Greenland's east coast, NP12 for the west coast) and the *Faroe, Iceland and Greenland* pilotage publication.

Cruises

Cruises are inevitably expensive, but – when you consider Greenland's often awkward and pricey travel connections – they don't necessarily cost much more than equivalent land-based tours. Options are listed on p65. Prices vary enormously according to comfort levels and the number of stops. Be aware that ice conditions can force disappointing route changes.

TOURS

At least 90 international operators appear to offer such a surprisingly wide range of organised tours that you might imagine Greenland to be swarming with tour groups. In reality, the majority simply get their customers to a Greenland airport, where they are passed on to Arctic Adventure (in the south) or other local agencies further north. Even then you won't necessarily find yourself in a huge group. Indeed, if you choose remote options and less popular dates you might have parts of the tour to yourself. One major advantage of coming on a tour is that (weather permitting) your guaranteed-departure excursions and transfers will be honoured even when there are not enough customers to fill a boat. In similar circumstances independent travellers usually find their trips cancelled. The major tour operators:

Arctic Adventure (www.arctic-adventure.dk) Greenland's biggest private agency. Arctic Adventure offers

various Greenland tours, especially in the south. Its excursions and guide services are repackaged and sold by various agents throughout the world. Use the contacts listed on its website to find a relevant tour starting in your home country.

Great Canadian Travel Company (☎ 204 949 0199; www.greatcanadiantravel.com) Charter flights direct from Canada make its tours convenient and cost-effective.

Grønlands Rejserburo (Greenland Travel; ☎ 3313 1011; www.greenland-guide.gl)

Topas Tours (☎ 3311 6922; www.greenland-discover.com) Offers specialised hiking and adventure tours with its own team of very knowledgeable guides. These allow you to stay in some of the more remote sheep stations and do the classic treks without the dangers of hiking unsupported.

Troll Tours (☎ 2982-92210; www.trolltours.de) Uses direct charter-flight tours from Germany.

GETTING AROUND

Many tourists mistakenly believe that travelling in Greenland is only possible on a tour. In fact, public helicopters and coastal ferries offer truly splendid ways to see much of the country's great scenery. However, be flexible. Weather conditions mean you simply can't assume that a service will leave on time (or even on the scheduled day). The great Greenlandic word *immaqa* (maybe) is a necessary caveat. Greenland's national airline is commonly nicknamed Immaqa Air.

AIR

Considering its climate, huge size and minuscule population, Greenland is remarkably well served by air links. The main network is operated by **Air Greenland** (☎ 343434; www.airgreenland.com). **Air Alpha** (www.airalpha.com/greenland.aspx) runs a few helicopter connections to the east coast and around Ilulissat, and the Kulusuk – Nerlerit Inaat (Constable Point) route is, curiously, offered by **Air Iceland** (www.airiceland.is).

Unless otherwise stated, fares and flight frequencies quoted in this book are for one-way summer travel. In winter, flights are less frequent, and *immaqa* really comes into its own.

Be aware that, technically, Air Greenland's 20kg baggage allowance includes your hand baggage. Although it's not always strictly enforced, some agents will hit you

for even a single excess kilogram. Airport taxes are paid with your ticket purchase, along with an often hefty ticketing charge. Helicopter tickets and all purchases online through Air Greenland's website are presently exempt from this ticketing fee, though a charge is planned eventually. Note that web bookings are not e-tickets: you must pick up the paper tickets at the location you stated when booking online. Hopefully, this silly situation will change.

Helicopter flights in the south are bookable online, but regional village services in the north and east don't appear on general timetables. Village helicopter-shuttle services from Uummannaq, Upernavik and Qaanaaq cost the same flat fee regardless of actual distance flown.

BICYCLE

As long-distance transport a bike is useless. However, some consider it worth hiring one of the somewhat rropy rental bikes available in Narsaq (p109), Qassiarsuk (p104), and particularly Kangerlussuaq (p162), from which a rideable track goes all the way to the inland ice. In Nuuk (p144) there's enough asphalt to keep you pedalling for half a day, and there are some harsh off-road tracks in the surrounding region.

BOAT

Cargo Boat

On a few routes where there is no alternative service, the cargo ships of **Royal Arctic Bygdeservice** (www.ral.gl/royalarctic/dk/rab.htm, in Danish) are permitted to carry a few paying passengers. Tickets are sold through regional AUL offices, but schedules are not widely distributed. Book ahead, as passenger numbers are typically limited to 12.

Cruises

Several companies, including **Scantours** (www.scantours.com) and **Profil Rejser** (www.profil-rejser.dk, in Danish), offer watergoing tours billed as 'cruises', 'coastal steamer rides' or other such romantic names. In fact this usually means that they will simply book you a berth on the regular AUL ferry and add air tickets, a couple of hotels and the odd excursion during longer stops. The budget excursion would be well advised to compare the prices of putting together the same individual elements for themselves.

Ferry

Arctic Umiag Line (AUL; ☎ 349 900; www.aul.gl) ferries offer an ideal way to meet Greenlanders while you weave between icebergs, sail past majestic soaring peaks and pass through magnificent icescapes. Ice conditions allowing, summer services link west-coast villages from Aappilattoq, near Cape Farewell, to Uummannaq in the north. Note that no single ship does the whole route and that there are no ferries on the east coast. In winter ferries go no further north than Ilulissat. See the map on p226.

The ferries are safe and reasonably comfortable, but they're not always on time. Major delays are announced on Greenland's KNR-TV Teletext page 550, but boats can also arrive (and depart) early, especially at small ports. Always be at the dock at least 45 minutes ahead. Timetables are specific to periods of a few weeks or months, so check carefully that the one you're using is for the exact dates you need. Especially in summer it's worth booking as far ahead as possible, as passenger limits are strictly enforced.

Regular AUL passenger routes are divided into four regional groupings: west coast, south coast, Middle Greenland and Disko Bay.

MAIN WEST-COAST ROUTES

The long-distance west-coast routes are handled by two large ferries, both on weekly loops. The *Sarfaq Ittuk* shuttles between Qaqortoq and Nuuk via Paamiut, extending south to Narsarsuaq and north to Ilulissat in summer. In winter the *Sarpik Ittuk* follows a similar route, but from mid-June to mid-November – when the northern sea ice melts – it runs from Nuuk to Uummannaq via Disko Bay, and even ventures as far as Upernavik till mid-August.

There are various classes. Unless otherwise mentioned, prices given in this book's text are for the cheapest couchette class, which gives you a dormitory bed on a lower deck. By paying some 50% more you'll get a bed in six- or four-bed *kupe* cabin. Plusher three- and two-person cabins cost 70% to 80% more than couchettes, while a single cabin costs almost three times the basic fare and has a private toilet. There are on-board showers and a decent **cafeteria** (sandwiches Dkr38, breakfast Dkr50, lunch buffet Dkr90, dinner mains

Dkr65; ☎ breakfast 7am-9.30am, lunch noon-1.30pm, dinner 5.30-6.30pm). The aft-lounge has nice viewing windows, though a noisy TV makes it less than tranquil. A separate video room screens free movies, and the purser's office has a radio telephone (per minute Dkr10).

SOUTH-COAST ROUTES

Of boats working the south-coast routes, the most useful is the *Najaaraq Ittuk*, which sails between Qaqortoq and Nanortalik three times a week, with varying intermediate stops. May to November it also links Qaqortoq to Narsarsuaq, Narsaq and Itilleq (for Igaliku). December to April the tiny *Aleqa Ittuk* runs fairly sporadically between Qaqortoq and either Igaliku or Nanortalik. Weekly from Nanortalik when ice and sea conditions allow, the 12-seater *Ketil* makes a superbly scenic one-day run through the south's most splendid fjords to reach Aappilattoq.

MIDDLE GREENLAND ROUTES

The most useful of the limited middle Greenland routes is the weekly run between Sisimiut and Itilleq on the *Mima*.

DISKO BAY ROUTES

There are three boats, of which the most useful to tourists is usually the *Aviaq Ittuk*. It hops between Aasiaat, Ilulissat and Qasiqiannguit several times a week, stopping at least once weekly in Kitsissuarsuit, Ikkamiut, Ilimanaq, Oqaatsut, Qeqertaq and Saqqaq. The *Nukaraaq Ittuk* makes short trips from Aasiaat to Kangaatsiaq, Niaqornaarsuk and Attu. The *Inuuteq* shuttles between Ilulissat and Qasiqiannguit on Wednesdays and Fridays in midsummer.

TICKETS

Note that fares rise around 35% between mid-June and late August. There are discounts for seniors (25% in summer, 50% in the off season), children under 12 (50%), and infants under two (90%).

Where there are no AUL offices, tickets are usually available at the village post office nearest to the port. For a Dkr50 surcharge you can pay once aboard the ferry. However, this depends on space availability. Ship-capacity regulations are strictly adhered to, and it's not uncommon for boats to be fully booked in advance, especially

in midsummer. There is a waiting list for places on fully booked boats, so there's still a chance of getting aboard even the fullest ferry if somebody fails to show up. But if you are not flexible with your schedule (ie if waiting an extra week or two would be a problem) it's worth booking tickets as far ahead as is humanly possible.

BOOKING FROM ABROAD

Although the www.aul.gl website has timetables for each month plus full tables of prices, it is not yet possible to buy tickets online. You can make a reservation by email, but you must pay in full at least two weeks before departure or the reservation will be removed from the system. If you're not likely to be in Greenland a fortnight before departure, the only way to pay is by bank transfer to Bank of Greenland (SWIFT: GRENLGX, IBAN GL426471 00014 29 59-8). You'll also need to cover the hefty transfer fees. Hopefully, they'll come around to accepting credit-card bookings eventually.

Tour & Charter Boat

Many towns have one or two medium-sized 'tourist boats' that have regular safety inspections and are expensively licensed for carrying tourists. Day trips organised by tourist offices have to use such boats. Because you can split the cost with up to a dozen others, these tours often prove the cheapest way to reach the popular destinations to which there is no regular public transport. In and near Narsarsuaq, Blue Ice (see p99) runs a particularly useful network of tourist-boat transfers in summer.

However, when there are few tourists such tours and transfers are generally cancelled. The cost of chartering a licensed tour boat is exorbitant. Fortunately, nearly every Greenlandic family owns a motorised dinghy or powerboat of some description, and finding someone to take you to an out-of-the-way place generally isn't too difficult. The rate you pay depends on negotiation, friendship and luck, and can vary quite extravagantly. Officially, the Hunters & Fishers Association has fixed fees for chartering; they start at around Dkr1300 per hour for a small speedboat (half price for waiting time). In practice, however, you may be quoted just about anything, including absurdly high or

low prices. The best way to charter is generally to be patient: ask around in the village, and within a day or two you may well find someone who is going where you want to go. If so, reckon on paying Dkr300 to Dkr500 as a token petrol fee. Alternatively, someone may offer to take you for an agreed fare (the cost is much higher if it's a special journey).

Note that unlicensed boat operators aren't insured to carry 'passengers', so they can't advertise for tourist customers even though they may actually do tourist trips unofficially. Such operators cannot be used by tourist offices, though a few tourist offices nonetheless pass on names for you to call yourself. Note that not all boatmen are reliable: some unlicensed boats could be dangerous, so a solid recommendation is important.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Most of Greenland's 2520 cars and 72 buses are in Nuuk. Nonetheless, even in smaller towns that could be crossed on foot in five minutes, many people seem to jump in a car whenever they set foot outside. By European standards petrol is remarkably cheap (prices are similar to those in the USA), so drivers seem unconcerned at leaving engines running while they shop. Nobody's likely to steal a car, as you simply can't drive far from any town. Indeed, thanks to glaciers and impossibly rugged terrain, there are virtually no roads at all beyond city limits. Very minor exceptions include a few tractor tracks around Narsaq and Qasiarsuk, the 5km gravel road from Grønødal to Ivittuut, and a 70km network of rough roads around Kangerlussuaq. None warrants renting a car, though there are a surprising number of taxis even in the small towns. There are only 10 motorcycles registered in the whole country, outnumbered nine to one by fire engines.

DOGSLED

In the long months of snow and frozen seas, many people in Arctic and East Greenland still get around by dogsled. Greenlandic mushers harness their dogs in a fan formation, as opposed to the more complicated and tangle-prone inline formation used by their counterparts in Alaska and below-the-tree-line Canada.

For visitors a winter sledding tour can be both exciting and memorable. Tourist

dogsled trips ranging from one-day samplers to two-week expeditions are offered from Tasiilaq (p206), Uummannaq (p191), Ilulissat (p170), Sisimiut (p158) and several smaller Arctic villages. Typical costs are around Dkr1200 per person per day. The best season is from March to May, when days are longer and temperatures not as extreme as in midwinter. Summer dogsledding is only possible on Disko Island. Except around Tasiilaq, Greenlanders aren't permitted to keep sled dogs south of the Arctic Circle. (Similarly, other dogs cannot be kept north of the Circle; this is to prevent interbreeding that might weaken the genes of highly valued sled dogs.) Accordingly, dogsledding isn't available in Nuuk or elsewhere in southern Greenland.

KAYAK

For information, see p217.

SKI

Before Fridtjof Nansen slapped planks on his feet and set off across Greenland's inland ice in 1888, skis were not well known. Indeed his escapade was widely considered to be reckless and quite potty. Nowadays, however, the icecap crossing is more a race than a world-shattering epic, with surprising numbers making the trip each year. Average crossing time is around 25 days, but the record is a mere week. However, it still requires a lot of planning and written permission (see p216).

Shorter-distance cross-country skiing is possible in many areas.

SNOWMOBILE

From December to March snowmobiles are popular, especially in the south, where

dog teams aren't allowed. This is a thrilling but potentially dangerous way to travel, especially if you're not used to the heavy steering and potentially reckless speeds. Don't head out alone, and study carefully the rules of driving to avoid accidents or collisions with cross-country skiers. Insurance problems mean that legally renting a snow mobile is virtually impossible, but if you ask around you can often charter a taxi-style ride.

TOURS

As getting beyond the main hub villages isn't always convenient, even independent visitors may find it easier – and, at times, cheaper – to participate in organised excursions to reach certain destinations. In Ilulissat (p170) there are four tour companies; elsewhere most local tours are organised through tourist offices or organised by outfitters. Departures depend on minimum quotas, and with a group you'll often be better off chartering your own boat. For more information, see Tour & Charter Boat, p231.

Greenland Outfitters

A group of specially qualified guides known as outfitters can provide customised itineraries, possibly including hiking, mountaineering, kayaking, sailing, dogsledding, snowmobiling, fishing and/or bird-watching. Most speak at least some English, and they are licensed and insured to guide travellers. Those in smaller villages usually have only a few tourist visits per year, so their services can be very personal, but you might need to give them considerable warning so they can get time off from their day jobs. **Greenland Tourism** (www.greenland.com) has a town-by-town outfitter listing.