

# South Greenland

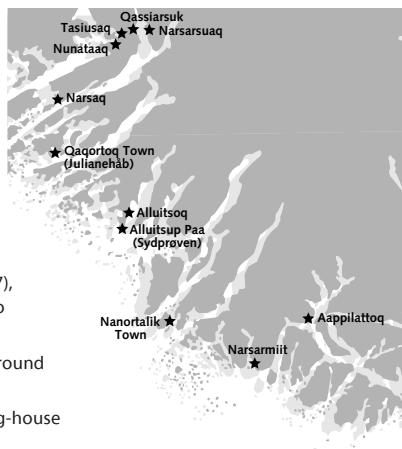


## CONTENTS

<b>Narsarsuaq, Igaliku &amp; the Narsaq Peninsula</b>	<b>97</b>
Narsarsuaq	97
Around Narsarsuaq	102
Qassiarsuk (Brattahlíð)	104
Around Qassiarsuk	106
Igaliku & Itilleq	107
Narsaq	109
Around Narsaq	113
<b>Qaqortoq Region</b>	<b>114</b>
Qaqortoq Town (Julianehåb)	114
Around Qaqortoq Town	120
<b>Alluitsup Paa &amp; Vatnahverfi</b>	<b>121</b>
Alluitsup Paa (Sydprøven)	121
Around Alluitsup Paa	123
Central Vatnahverfi	125
<b>Nanortalik Region</b>	<b>126</b>
Nanortalik Town	126
Nanortalik Island	129
Around Nanortalik Town	130
The Far South	132

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Sail through some of the world's most awesome fjords around **Aappilattoq** (p133)
- Unwind in photogenic do-nothing villages **Alluitsoq** (p124), **Narsarmiit** (p132) and **Alluitsup Paa** (p121)
- Hike the beautiful but easy trail between **Tasiusaq** and **Nunataaq** (p106)
- Stroll the picturesque old-town cores of **Qaqortoq** (p114) and **Nanortalik** (p126)
- Head for the inland ice from **Narsarsuaq** (p97), whether on foot, by helicopter or by boat into berg-packed Qooroq Icefjord
- Hire kayaks to explore the dramatic fjords around **Nanortalik** (p126) and **Narsaq** (p109)
- Discover how Norse settlers lived at the long-house reconstruction in **Qassiarsuk** (p104)



Blissfully scenic South Greenland is far more than a touristic also-ran to the big ice of Disko Bay. The bergs may be smaller, but the mountains are much more impressive, coming to an astonishing scenic climax in the far south. Archaeology buffs might also enjoy the widespread if rather indistinct Norse ruins.

The region's gateway, Narsarsuaq, lacks cultural appeal but is very well organised for easy day hikes and lovely short-hop excursions. The region's other settlements are all colourfully quaint, yet each is visually distinct. Relatively verdant Narsaq is pretty, very 'real', and graciously free of flies and mosquitoes. Along with bucolic Igaliku and historically fascinating Qassiarsuk, Narsaq is easily combined with Narsarsuaq for lower-budget short stays. Qaqortoq is the south's biggest town and a relatively vibrant cultural centre. Like loveable Nanortalik it has a small but delightfully photogenic old-town area. Nanortalik's sub-settlements are scattered among some of the world's most fabulous fjords with surreally spindly peaks and magnificently sheer granite cliffs. The scenery might well rate as the most memorable you'll ever see. In this area Nanortalik and Alluitsup Paa have the best accommodation, Narsarmiit has the most dramatic backdrop, and charming Aappilattoq enjoys an incomparable position commanding the very finest fjordlands.

All of the south's destinations are very well worth a visit, but it's most satisfying to leave the far south to last so that you progress from the subtle loveliness of Narsaq to the overpowering raw grandeur of ice-choked Aappilattoq. Try to allow much more time than you think you'll need, as everything depends on the fickle weather. Bring a few books to read on those inevitable foggy days.

## NARSARSUAQ, I GALIKU & THE NARSAQ PENINSULA

### NARSARSUAQ

pop 190

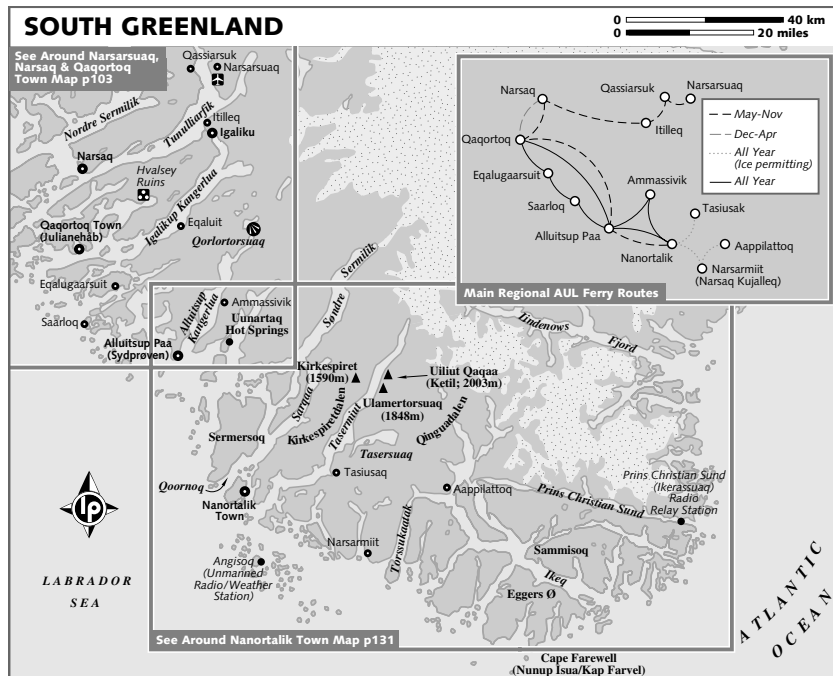
Not really a village but rather more than an airport, Narsarsuaq is the gateway to southern Greenland. The name means 'big plain'. Big by Greenlandic standards, perhaps, but don't expect Kansas. Indeed most of the flat area is filled by the airport's runway, alongside which Narsarsuaq settlement forms a rather haphazard scattering of buildings, hemmed in by the long scraggy Signalhøjen hill to its direct east. The architecture is functional but the setting is pleasant, with icebergs visible from the port and a very distant horizon of spiky peaks beyond the icecap. With the inland ice relatively acces-

sible (on foot), a nearby calving glacier to seek out (by boat or helicopter) and plenty of hikes and boat excursions to enjoy, Narsarsuaq makes an excellent, well-organised gateway to Greenland.

### History

In April 1941, after the WWII invasion of Denmark by Nazi forces, the USA agreed to create temporary supply bases in Greenland. The previously uninhabited Narsarsuaq Delta became Blue West One base practically overnight, months before the USA officially entered the war. A way station for transatlantic bombers, by 1945 it had become Greenland's largest settlement with a population of 12,000 and all the trappings of a small US town.

Contrary to the original agreement with Denmark, the base was not decommissioned after the war, and it continued well into the Cold War era. Usage of the base's hospital during the Korean War remains the focus of



much controversy (see the boxed text, p99). A plan of science-fiction proportions to construct a road over the icecap to Kangerlussuaq was eventually defeated by reality.

The hospital and much of the remaining base closed in 1958. Although a Norwegian company quadrupled its investment on salvage rights to the site, the area remained littered with intriguing debris for decades afterwards. The airfield turned civilian, and has since become Greenland's second international airport and a reconnaissance base for Greenland's DMI Ice Patrol (see p88).

### Orientation

Blue Ice Café and the youth hostel sell the region's three hiking maps *Narsarsuaq*, *Narsaq* and *Qaqortoq* (each Dkr80), various Saga maps, and a more general Eastern Settlement map (Dkr40) with notes on the most important Norse ruins.

### Information

#### EMERGENCY

**Clinic** (☎ 665211; airport bldg)

**Police** (☎ 665222)

### LAUNDRY

Washing machines in the youth hostel cost Dkr30 per load including powder.

### LEFT LUGGAGE

Lockers at the airport cost Dkr5 per 24 hours (maximum is 72 hours). Guests can leave bags at the youth hostel without charge.

### MONEY

Considering that this is one of Greenland's main gateway cities, it's surprising and inconvenient that there is no bank, bureau de change or ATM.

**Airport Administration office** (☎ 665266; B30; ☎ 10am-2pm Mon-Thu, 10am-noon Fri) Gives credit-card cash advances and changes foreign cash with no commission. Rates at the post office are better for larger amounts.

**Hotel Narsarsuaq** Exchanges cash and travellers cheques and gives cash advances on credit cards if you know the PIN. However, the supply of cash is finite and first call goes to guests.

**Pilersuisoq supermarket** It won't change money, but if you buy something using a credit card you can get cash back free of commission.

### POST

**Post office** (airport; ☎ 2-3pm Mon-Thu, 11am-3pm Wed & Fri) Sells stamps and fishing licenses. (Stamps are also available from the youth hostel.) Changes foreign cash at sensible rates but with a Dkr30 commission.

### TOURIST INFORMATION

**Blue Ice Café** (☎ 497371; www.blueice.gl; ☎ 9am-6pm Jun-Sep) Acts as a helpful tourist office as well as selling Blue Ice tours. A great library of Greenland-relevant books to browse and no pressure to buy. A useful range of maps and equipment plus everything from postcards to camping gas, to local honey and reindeer jerky.

**Hotel Narsarsuaq** Arctic Adventure representatives in the lobby (7-7.30pm only) are knowledgeable but often overworked.

**Tourist Information Desk** (airport) Staffed by a Blue Ice representative when international planes arrive.

### Dangers & Annoyances

Prevent kamikaze flies dive-bombing your ears and eyes by buying a head-net at Blue Ice Café or from the Hotel Narsarsuaq.

### Sights

The real attractions lie outside the settlement itself (see Around Narsarsuaq, p102, Qassarsuk, p104, and Igaliku, p108). However, there are a few oddments around town to keep you occupied.

**Narsarsuaq Museum** (admission Dkr20; ☎ 10am-6pm summer), accessed through the Blue Ice Café, is extensive and worth a visit. Displays take you through a variety of historical exhibits on the Norse, sheep farming and the US presence in South Greenland.

Opposite the airport terminal is the **Viking Millennium Stone**, an egg-shaped boulder inscribed with runes and an inscrutable Viking face design. It marks the visit of Queen Margrethe of Denmark in 2000 for the 1000th anniversary of Leif Erikson's American adventure. The anniversary's frolics and feasting are still fresh in local memories. Fixed to a rocky bluff behind the little playground, a bronze **Naomi Uemura plaque** commemorates the Japanese explorer extraordinaire. Uemura, who climbed Everest, dogsledded solo to the North Pole and crossed Greenland's inland ice north to south, looks distinctly uncomfortable to have been memorialized wearing a jacket and tie.

Crowned by a radio tower and forgotten war-era wooden poles, 240m **Signalhøjen** (Signal Hill) makes a handy quick hike for views

### THE HOSPITAL AT BLUE WEST ONE

What happened in Hospital Valley during the Korean War? Officially, nothing special. Narsarsuaq's museum displays letters from personnel who vouch for that official line. But the now-demolished WWII-era hospital near Narsarsuaq remains the source of many rumours. Conspiracy theorists believe that it secretly nursed terminally wounded US military casualties who were so badly mutilated in Korea that they simply could not go home. Their appearance, it was feared, would dampen the public's enthusiasm for war. Eventually, families would receive bottles of ashes and be told their soldiers had been killed in action. This theory forms the basis for John Griesemer's thinly researched pulp-fiction novel *Nobody Thinks of Greenland*.

True or not, the hospital remained strangely well guarded for years. Although US Defense Department documents about the base have since been declassified, anything relating to the hospital remains secret, so the rumours persist.

across the airport and fjord. The main gravel track winds up from behind the Pilersuisoq store. A sometimes boggy alternative foot-path skirts the reservoir behind the Youth Hostel.

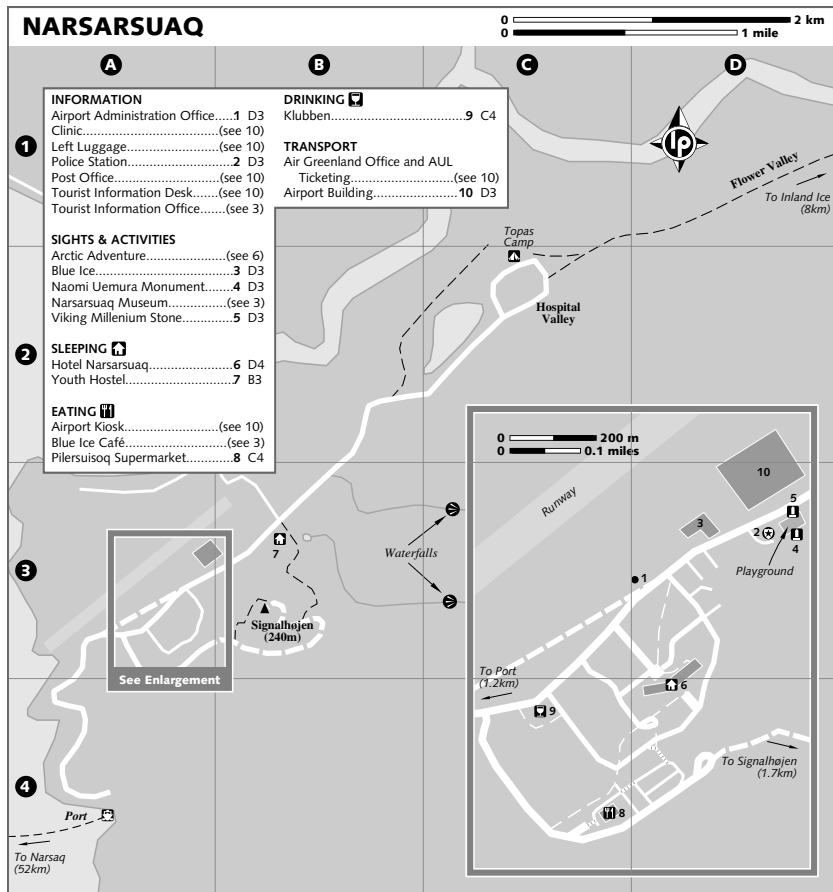
Hospital Valley, some 3km north of the Hotel Narsarsuaq, was the site of the controversial US military hospital **Blue West One** (see boxed text, above) but the only remaining structures are a lone fireplace and chimney and a few concrete foundations.

### Activities

Narsarsuaq is a good place from which to organise regional multiday hiking or kayaking trips, even if you eventually start from Igaliku, Qassarsuk or Narsaq. Enquire with Blue Ice about mooted winter snowmobile trips. The very taxing five-day **Greenland Adventure Race** (www.gar.gl; ☎ late Aug) is an 'Ironman' competition, where entrants run, cycle and kayak a punishing loop via Narsaq and Qaqortoq.

### Tours

**Blue Ice** (☎ 497 371; www.blueice.gl; Blue Ice Café; ☎ summer) is the mini-empire of multilingual



Jacky Simoud, and offers almost every service visitors might need including tours, transfers, the info-office café and youth hostel. Nowhere in the south is better organised to deal with independent travellers looking for summer-excursion ideas, and there's a fairly good chance of finding enough fellow travellers to ensure that a trip's minimum quota is attained. If you email your reservation several months ahead you might be able to get a guaranteed departure date for the excursion of your choice. For Qassiarsuk, transfers (Dkr120) and tours (Dkr450) run almost daily; tours to Qooroq Icefjord (Dkr450) and Igaliiku (Dkr900) run a couple of times most weeks, but the brilliant helicopter trips to the icecap and Mellemlandet

(Dkr1600) rarely reach the (varying) minimum passenger quota.

**Arctic Adventure** (☎ 665 240; www.arctic-adventure.dk; Hotel Narsarsuaq Lobby ☎ 7-7.30pm) runs various guided day trips, designed mainly for booked clients. It often works jointly with Blue Ice.

### Sleeping

There are two places to stay. Should both be full you may have to resort to camping, so book ahead.

**Youth Hostel** (☎ 665 221; www.blueice.gl/hotel.htm; PO Box 58; adult/child Dkr200/100; ☎ Jun-mid-Sep) This neat single-storey building sits all alone about 600m north of the airport, backed by a small mountain attractively ribboned with waterfalls. Dorms and showers are clean and

very well kept. The big sitting and dining room has a library of interesting books and is one of the best places in Greenland to meet fellow travellers; both they and the staff here are a great source of hiking and travel information. There's a well-equipped kitchen, and laundry facilities are available (Dkr30 per load). Accommodation prices assume that you'll bring your own sleeping bag, but you can hire one for Dkr50 per night. To camp in the yard costs Dkr100 per person including hostel facilities, but the ground is rock hard. From mid-September to May the hostel might open by arrangement for groups. At any time booking well ahead is strongly recommended. Nonguests may use the showers or the kitchen for Dkr30 each.

**Hotel Narsarsuaq** (☎ 665 253; www.glv.gl/hoteller/default.asp; PO Box 504; dm Dkr265, s/d Dkr995/1195, with private bath Dkr645/795) Built originally for those in transit through the airport, this functional hotel feels rather like a retirement home. The downstairs rooms with en suite are comfortable and recently renovated. Pairs of cheaper rooms share a bathroom and are a little more tatty, with curiously acrid dry air. Prices include breakfast. The dorms are not worth bothering with unless the youth hostel is full or closed.

Wild camping is possible in Hospital Valley, though the nicest area is taken up by an organised Topas/Blue Ice tour camp, complete with wigwam-style meeting tent. More appealing camping places are found further towards the inland ice.

### Eating

**Hotel Narsarsuaq** (mains Dkr185; ☎ 6-9.30pm) Upstairs is this semi-smart dining room with candles but rucked carpets. Its small selection of international dishes includes salmon with shellfish and chive hollandaise sauce. On Friday nights try the special Greenlandic fish platter. Whatever the official closing time you'd be wise to arrive before 7.30pm. The unpretentious ground-floor **cafeteria** (mains Dkr50-129; ☎ 6.30am-7.45pm) has school-style meals, but the Dkr60 set dinner is relatively generous.

**Blue Ice Café** (☎ 9am-6pm 15 Jun-15 Sep) While this is predominantly an information office, there's ice cream and coffee (from a machine) that you can consume at leisure while reading the books. When weather and mosquitoes oblige there's a sunny patio outside beside the airport's boundary fence.

When flights are expected, a counter in the airport's waiting lounge serves hot dogs (Dkr17 to Dkr20), open sandwiches (Dkr16) and apples (Dkr4). The central **Pilersuisoq supermarket** (☎ 10am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat) has a typical selection of produce, clothing and ammunition.

### Drinking

The town's only **bar** (Hotel Narsarsuaq upstairs; beers Dkr39; ☎ 7pm-midnight Sat-Thu, 7pm-1am Fri) is dull and uninspiring, with sparse wooden tables and a dartboard. On Thursday to Saturday before 10pm, happy-hour beers cost Dkr27. Klubben (the Club), not far from the supermarket, has a very local get-together party roughly every second Saturday in summer.

### Getting There & Away

#### AIR

Weather permitting, **Air Greenland** (☎ 665 288; Narsarsuaq Airport; www.airgreenland.com; ☎ 7am-3pm Mon-Fri) has flights from Copenhagen (Dkr2813, 4½ hours) at least once a week, three times weekly in summer. Flights between Narsarsuaq and Kangerlussuaq (Dkr3398, two hours) are sometimes laid on if Narsarsuaq's Copenhagen service is not operating. From June to early September **Air Iceland** (☎ 354-570 3030; www.airiceland.is) flies in twice a week from Reykjavik (not Keflavik) for around US\$400 (€340; half price if booked well ahead). The latter flight uses an **Atlantic Airlines** (www.atlantic.fo) aeroplane continuing from the Faroe Islands, but you'd have to buy two separate tickets to make a through trip.

Almost all domestic flights run on Monday, Wednesday and/or Friday, including shuttle flights to Nuuk (Dkr2408, 1½ hours) by Dash-7 aircraft, and helicopter hops to Narsaq (Dkr612, 15 minutes) and Qaqortoq (Dkr847, 20 minutes). Helicopters to Nanortalik (Dkr1392) fly direct on Friday mornings, but via Narsaq, Qaqortoq and Alluitsup Paa for the same price on Wednesday, giving you lots of fabulous extra views for the money. On Monday and Wednesday helicopters serve Kangilinnuit/Grønødal (Dkr1892, 50 minutes) and Paamiut (Dkr3252, 1¼ hours), returning the same day.

Be aware that all timetables change very frequently according to politics, weather and demand. KNR-TV teletext page 400 has the day's departure details.



**BOAT**

AUL tickets are available through **Air Greenland** (☎ 665 288; Narsarsuaq Airport; 🕒 7am-3pm Mon-Fri), which charges an outrageous Dkr75 ticketing fee. Tickets bought onboard only incur a Dkr50 surcharge, but as ferries are often full in summer most travellers grudgingly stump up the extra to book ahead.

From May to November the *Najaaraq Ittuk* runs between Narsarsuaq and Qaqortoq (Dkr215 to Dkr265, 4½ hours) twice weekly via Qassiarsuk (Dkr150 to Dkr185), Itilleq (Dkr150 to Dkr185) and Narsaq (Dkr150 to Dkr185). In summer it usually makes more sense to use a Blue Ice boat transfer to reach Qassiarsuk (Dkr200) and Itilleq (Dkr250).

From mid-June to August the coastal ferry *Sarfaq Ittuk* extends its route to Narsarsuaq, allowing weekly connections to Ilulissat (couchette/two-bed cabin Dkr3080/5115, 77 hours) via Aasiaat (Dkr2845/4750, 72 hours), Sisimiut (Dkr2395/3940, 59 hours), Kangaa miut (Dkr2125/3470, 52 hours), Maniitsoq (Dkr1995/3250, 48 hours), Nuuk (Dkr1700/2580, 37 hours), Paamiut (Dkr1045/1615, 23 hours) and Arsuk (Dkr840/1245, 15 hours).

From December to April you'll have to go by plane.

**Getting Around**

Free shuttles meet booked hostel or hotel guests from incoming flights and ferries. Hospital Valley is only about 40 minutes on foot, but hotel guests are given a free ride on request; hostel guests pay Dkr15. In either case, book some hours ahead. The Blue Ice Café hires mountain bikes (Dkr30/75/100 per hour/half-day/day), though they are of minimal use as the nicest routes (beyond Hospital Valley) are not really suitable for cycling. Blue Ice also hires single/double sea kayaks to experienced paddlers from Dkr400/500 per day or Dkr2000/2500 per week.

**AROUND NARSARSUAQ  
Towards the Inland Ice**

By far the most popular day hike from Narsarsuaq starts from the asphalt loop of Hospital Valley. An obvious gravel track leads up into pretty **Flower Valley** (Narsarsuaq Valley) then descends more steeply through unusually tall bushes towards a wide, flat hayfield ringed by rocky cliffs. Cross a plank bridge, then follow the stream's west bank, passing an impressive three-strand cascade that pours

off the Mellemlandet massif. The hayfield soon gives way to moraine. Jump the outflow of a pond where the path almost meets the main river. Thereafter wind over a rocky headland, curving around until you meet a straggly waterfall.

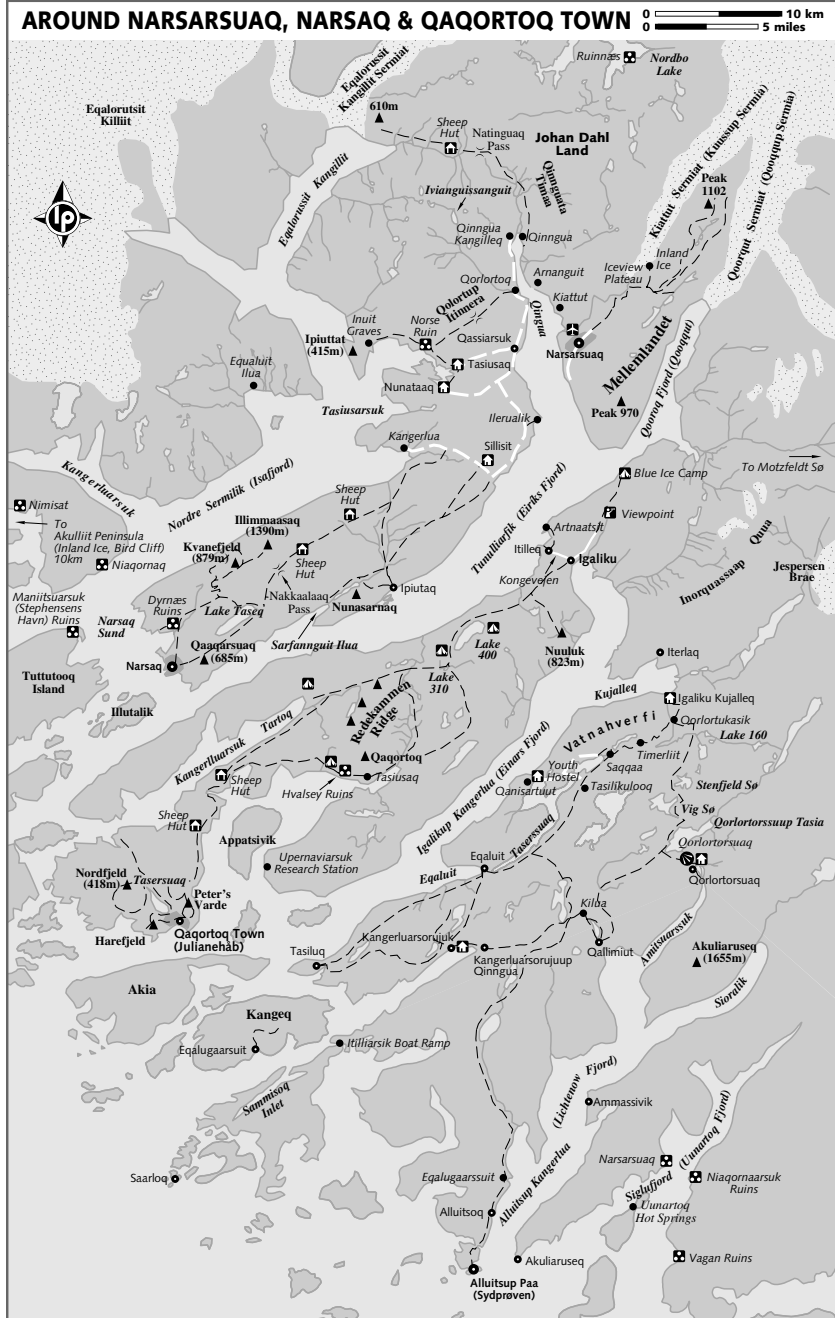
Up to this point the walking is easy and the views delightfully varied. Beyond, the milky-blue river curves away through a chasm that's impossible to walk through. To continue towards the inland ice you'll need to be fit and reasonably confident, as immediately after the waterfall you have to climb straight up beside it. The path is fairly obvious when you look for it and has thick blue nylon ropes to help you pull yourself up. However, in wet conditions it can be scary. Some older tourists reckon it's too much for them and criticise agencies that sell the walk as a guided excursion without suitable warnings.

After gaining around 300m altitude, you arrive on the stark but lovely pond-dappled **Iceview Plateau**. A prehistoric-looking lake is flanked by tundra and glacier-scraped boulders. Various viewpoints look down onto the grey-white crocodile skin of the inland ice. Except for all the flies, it's delightful (bring a head-net). To walk on the ice you'll need to descend again on a steep but fairly straightforward path from Iceview Plateau. It's traditional to bring a hip-flask of whisky to drink a hikers' toast chilled by 10,000-year-old ice cubes that you chisel off. This isn't quite as easy as it sounds, as much of the ice here is black with glacial debris.

The walk from Narsarsuaq to Iceview Plateau and back typically takes between five and six hours. To reach the ice face, add around 1½ hours down and back. Getting a ride to Hospital Valley saves you over half an hour each way. Guided hikes (Dkr400 with packed lunch) are available, but the route is pretty easy to follow without such help.

**Qooroq Icefjord**

Some 200,000 tons of ice a day calve off the spectacular face of Qooroq Sermiat (also called Qooqup Sermia) glacier into berg-choked Qooroq Icefjord. You will catch a glimpse of the fjord's mouth from any boat to Itilleq, Narsaq or Qaqortoq. To weave between the bergs towards the ice face, join Blue Ice's popular icefjord boat trips (Dkr450, three hours). These usually run twice weekly in summer. The money is well worth it if you



can get deep into the fjord. However, after prolonged southwesterly winds the surface ice can get so densely packed that boats won't get far at all. Ask carefully about conditions before you book.

To see the ice face from above you could hike strenuously across Mellemlandet (see below). Alternatively, you could take a helicopter excursion from Narsarsuaq. In perfect visibility these are well worth the hefty Dkr1600 cost, but flights are often cancelled due to bad weather or lack of customers.

Blue Ice Camp is an idyllic camping spot overlooking the fjord's mouth near Itilleq (see p107).

### Motzfeldt Sø

East of Qooroq Icefjord, a wide, incredibly barren valley of ferric-red scree leads to a large, elbow-shaped lake called Motzfeldt Sø. It's constricted by towering 1600m-high sides, though the total lack of vegetation makes the scale difficult to grasp. Lifeless and bare except for its two gently calving glaciers, its atmosphere is otherworldly and forbidding. It's very tough to reach or explore except by helicopter fly-through.

### Mellemlandet

Mellemlandet is a huge slab of bog-pocked uplands paralleling the Narsarsuaq Valley. Its central ridge rises to over 1100m towards the northern tip. Further south there are quite fabulous 360 degree views from **Peak 970**, east of Narsarsuaq. With perfect weather, Qooroq-bound helicopter excursions land here for a few photogenic minutes. Walking up from Narsarsuaq, however, is considerably tougher than one might expect. It's quite easy to get disorientated, and sudden white-outs could prove perilous as there are various small cliff ledges to avoid.

A somewhat easier Mellemlandet alternative is to hike directly up from the Iceview Plateau. Most of the route is jolly bog-hopping with occasional hidden streams to jump. However, to enjoy the prized view down to the Qoorqut Sermiat ice face you'll need to cross the large stream between lakes 475 and 505. Hiking maps show a path going straight across. However, its uneven sides mean that jumping this stream is only really possible in one direction. Coming back, you may struggle and get rather wet; it's dangerous if you slip.

If you're equipped to camp at least one night you could walk north right along the ridge to see the forking of two glaciers from Peak 1102. Super views are somewhat spoiled by abominable clouds of flies and mosquitoes in the warm months (until the first frosts of late August).

### Qinngua

#### pop 4

Maps and old trekking guides suggest hiking from Narsarsuaq to Qassiarsuk via a sheep farm called Qinngua. It's poor advice. The route is relatively dull by regional standards, the hikers' hut at Qinngua is now a private house, and you'll need tractor rides to cross rivers both at Qinngua and near Narsarsuaq.

### Johan Dahl Land

Johan Dahl Land is a huge, rugged massif north of Narsarsuaq. Empty and extremely harsh even for very experienced hikers, it still somehow attracts a trickle of hard-core masochists seeking utter isolation. Most hikers who've walked here admit that the relatively underwhelming views don't often justify the effort and danger. One possible exception is a viewpoint high above Ruinæs ruin site overlooking **Nordbo lake** and glacier. Descending Qinnguata Timaa to Qinngua is every bit as terrifying as the map would suggest.

### QASSIARSUK (BRATTAHLÍÐ)

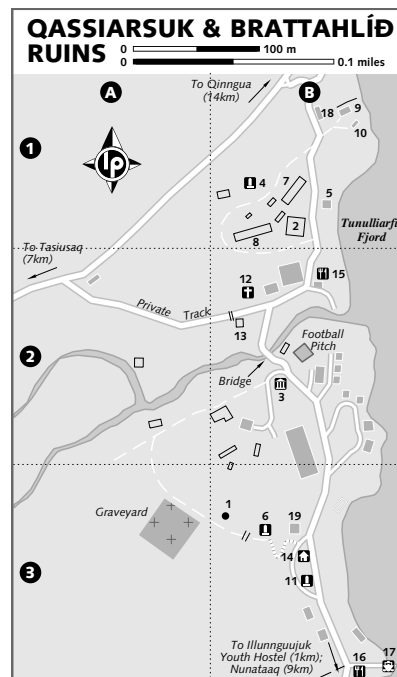
#### pop 60

Just 15 minutes by boat from Narsarsuaq, Qassiarsuk is a prettily situated fjordside village offering lovely, easy walks, a wealth of Norse ruins and a unique reconstruction of a Norse longhouse. Except perhaps in Narsaq (see p109), it's widely accepted to be the site of Brattahlíð, the place Erik the Red (Eiríkur Rauðe) chose for his farmstead, having scouted much of South Greenland in 982. Today's village dates from a successful 1920s experiment to reintroduce sheep-breeding. Most inhabitants are descended from the founding Frederiksen family, who also spread operations to Tasiusaq and Nunataaq.

### Sights

#### BRATTAHLÍÐ RUINS

It takes a lot of imagination or a very good tour guide to bring life to the 1000-year-old Brattahlíð ruins. The best story is associated with the **Þjóðhildur's Church Site**, a tiny,



#### INFORMATION

Post Office.....(see 16)

#### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Antique Tractor Shell.....	1	B3
Fourth Church Site.....	2	B1
Frederiksen Plaque & Museum.....	3	B2
Havsteen-Mikkelsen Sculpture.....	4	B1
Inuit Turf Hut.....	5	B1
Lief Eriksson Statue.....	6	B3
Manor House Foundations.....	7	B1
Norse Barn Ruin.....	8	B1
Reconstructed Longhouse.....	9	B1
Reconstruction of Þjóðhildur's Church.....	10	B1
Viking Millennium Monument.....	11	B3
Village Church.....	12	B2
Þjóðhildur's Church Site.....	13	B2

#### SLEEPING

Old Youth Hostel.....14 B3

#### EATING

Brattahlíð Café.....15 B2  
Pilersuisoq.....16 B3

#### TRANSPORT

Dock.....17 B3

#### OTHER

Birgit's House (Reconstruction Keys).....18 B1  
Kommunia Office.....19 B3

easy-to-miss squared horseshoe of slightly raised turf. Archaeologists believe that the first Christian church in the New World was built here in summer AD 1000. It's named for the Erik the Red's wife, who was a zealous convert to Christianity. When Þjóðhildur's heathen hubby remained obstinately unstirred by her faith, she tried to convert him by less subtle means – refusing sex until he got himself baptised. Erik never relented. However he compromised somewhat by permitting her to build a church, provided it was out of sight of his farm.

The church moved and was enlarged several times. The most obvious **Norse ruin** (still only two stones high) is thought to have been the fourth church site, probably dating from around AD 1300. Other ruins represent foundations of a **manor house** (purportedly on the site of Erik and Þjóðhildur's pad), along with several indistinct cattle and sheep byres, dykes and ditches.

### RECONSTRUCTIONS

A highlight of Qassiarsuk is the turf-covered **reconstructed longhouse** built and furnished to

a 10th-century Viking design. Norse sleeping arrangements were fascinating. The master and his wife got a special closeable sleeping box. (Þjóðhildur locked Erik out of his while waiting for her church.) Young girls safeguarded their virginity by sleeping on a separate upper storey. Everyone else dosed down communally, but overlord and slave classes would sleep on opposite sides, with the former enjoying the luxury of walls insulated by wood. Driftwood timber was a great luxury too good to burn, so day-to-day fuel was a dried mix of straw and cow-pats. Feeble lighting was provided by seal-blubber lamps, which can't have smelt great. A stream would probably have flowed beneath the house, forming a self-flushing privy. Notice how little storage space there is – people had virtually no private possessions.

A simple 2.5m by 4m rectangular building within an enclosure is a **reconstruction of Þjóðhildur's Church**. The altar-cloth was made from local wool using the loom displayed in the longhouse. The lovely driftwood cross above is by celebrated artist Aka Høegh.

An **Inuit turf hut** has been reconstructed fairly authentically from an 1870s design. It's accurate except for the door, which is an anachronism to allow easy tourist access. Originally, residents would have entered by crawling along the long snout of tunnel so that the hut could stay warm using only

seal-blubber lamps and the body heat of some 15 souls squeezed in together.

A look inside the reconstructed buildings costs Dkr40. When there's no tourist group around you'll need to get the key from **Birgit** (☎ 243116; B1002), who lives in the small red house above. Birgit speaks English.

### OTHER SIGHTS

Standing proud on a small hill above the Old Youth Hostel is a 3m tall, firm-jawed Viking figure armed with axe, sword and cross. This fine bronze represents **Leif Eriksson** (Erik the Red's son), credited as the first 'European' to have set foot on American soil, in 1000AD. It was erected on that event's millennium in July 2000 at a great celebration attended by Denmark's Queen Margrethe. The statue is actually a recast of a 1962 original made by August Werner for the Seattle World's Fair.

West of the statue are the graveyard, a rock-top cross and an abandoned **antique tractor**. Near the bridge, the **Frederiksen Plaque** commemorates Otto Frederiksen, the sheep breeder who refounded Qassiarsuk on 30 July 1924. That day remains a village festival celebrated in Frederiksen's original, tumble-down pioneer cottage, which stands behind the plaque. White with green trim, it also houses a cutely minimalist **museum** of shepherding life. It's usually left unlocked, even when nobody's there.

The current 1936 **village church** has a one-bell campanile and an attractively decorated interior. When it's locked, the key is available from the **Kommunia** (☎ 665026; B918; ☎ 8.30am-4pm Mon, 8am-4pm Tue, 8am-2pm Fri). Church paintings are by Hans Lyng, who also made the modest 1982 **Viking Millennium monument** that stands near the Old Youth Hostel.

The 1970 **Havsteen-Mikkelsen Sculpture** is a collection of stylised bronze shapes bolted to a rocky bluff. Erik and Bjóðhildur cuddle beneath astral and religious symbols. A dragon-head Viking boat prow rises towards a dangle-hatted 14th-century horseman. To the right, abstract squares represent the village ruins beneath an eagle symbolising death.

### Sleeping & Eating

There are two hostels, both with communal kitchens.

**Ilunniguujuk Youth Hostel** (☎ 665093, mobile 497 185; ekcf@greenet.gl; dm without/with sheets Dkr195/295)

This welcoming house is 1km south of the dock. There's no sign, but it's within the last farm compound, entered where the tractor road turns inland for Nunataaq. Beds are in small, cosy rooms, and there's an indoor toilet, but the shower is hidden away in a basement. Fjord views are especially lovely at sunset from the rather cramped room No 2. At the time of research, extra bedrooms were being added in the cellar of an adjacent building.

**Old Youth Hostel** (☎ /fax 665010; dm Dkr165) Now Spanish run, this unmarked faded yellow building has basic cell-like rooms. However, it's wonderfully central, handy for the dock and a great place to meet fellow hikers. There are kayaks and mountain bikes to rent, and outside there's good grass for **camping** (Dkr70 incl use of hostel facilities).

Quiet, appealing wild camping opportunities are available about 2km out of the village towards Nunataaq.

Brattahlíð Café serves coffee (Dkr10), hot dogs (Dkr20) and ice creams (Dkr15 to Dkr20), but only opens sporadically when there are enough tourists around. **Pilersuisoq** (☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat, 11am-1pm Sun) is the grocery shop beside the dock.

### Getting There & Away

Blue Ice boat transfers to or from Narsarsuaq cost Dkr120 per person either way, which is cheaper than AUL ferries. With some bargaining, Qassiarsuk fishermen might run you across for a similar price. Arctic Adventure's guided tour is more extensive but much more pricey. As long as passengers have booked, the AUL ferry *Najaaraq Ittuk* stops by twice weekly (May to November) heading for Qaortoq (Dkr245, four hours) via Narsaq (Dkr150 to Dkr185) and Itilleq (Dkr150 to Dkr185). By arrangement Blue Ice Itilleq-Narsarsuaq transfers can drop off or pick up passengers in Qassiarsuk (Dkr250 per person). For the classic trek to Narsaq, see p113.

### AROUND QASSIARSUK Tasiusaq & Nunataaq

pop 10 & 5

Hiking from Qassiarsuk to either of these two little sheep stations is joyously easy, as each is on an attractive but well-worn tractor road. The approach to three-house Nunataaq is longer but more beautiful. Tasiusaq has a

more open aspect and offers more exploration potential. Completing a delightful loop, the unmarked path between the two is fairly easy by Greenland standards and offers absolutely delightful views over the ice-dotted Tasiusaq inlet.

From Tasiusaq it's about an hour's hike north to the **Qorlortup Itinnera river**, which has there are nice fishing and camping possibilities. A small bridge gets you across to a metre-high **Norse ruin** first excavated in 1838. It's reasonably straightforward to continue around Tasiusaq Bay towards **Ipiuttat**, a 415m knob of peninsula with some Inuit graves. A few minutes before reaching the graves you could instead branch right and climb a saddle to the northwest. This path isn't obvious, but with the 1:100,000 hiking map it's easy to guess an approximate route. As you emerge on the far side there are memorable views across a berg-encrusted fjord towards the inner ice prongs of Eqlorutsit Killiit glacier.

### SLEEPING

Both hamlets have hostels. Both are family homes, but neither is permanently occupied and in summer hiking tour groups sometimes book both places – thus booking ahead is strongly advised. Ask a local to help you call via radio-phone Qaortoq ☎ 131.

**Nunataaq Youth Hostel** (☎ Nunataaq 43; house 8148; adult/child Dkr165/82.50) Now painted bright blue, this is a sweet family cottage with 12 beds, an indoor toilet, kitchen and shower booth. The wooden balcony offers distant glacier views somewhat diminished by tractors and a fuel hut in the foreground. The cutely old-fashioned sitting room even has a harmonium.

**Tasiusaq Youth Hostel** (☎ Tasiusaq 18; adult/child Dkr180/90; ☎ Jun-Sep) Variable dorm rooms and one pleasant double share a kitchen and ecofriendly solar-powered shower. The toilet is accessed from outside via the balcony. In winter, while the owners hibernate in Narsaq, they take bookings (in Danish) on ☎ 497775 or jfoufitter@greenet.gl.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

The full 22km loop from Qassiarsuk and back is easily walked in a day, but it's well worth staying at one of the farm hostels and exploring further. Qassiarsuk to Tasiusaq (7km) is less than two hours' walk. A much longer alternative way to hike back from Tasiusaq

is to follow the Qorlortup Itinnera river up and descend to the Narsarsuaq fjord near Qorlortoq. There's a nice waterfall en route and an easy track on the final section.

With notice, the youth hostels can generally arrange a 4WD transfer to or from Qassiarsuk for around Dkr250 per car. The tracks are possible by mountain bike, but the Tasiusaq-Nunataaq path isn't. The longer, steeper track to Nunataaq (10km) is the more attractive.

### IGALIKU & ITILLEQ

This port-and-village combination makes a great day trip from Narsarsuaq, a launching point for hikes or simply a nice area to unwind.

### Itilleq

pop 16

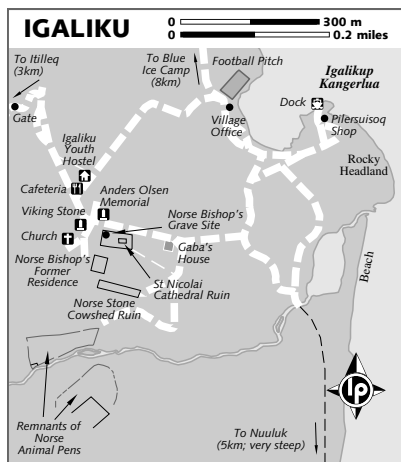
Gateway to Igaliku, tiny Itilleq ('The Crossing Place' or 'isthmus') is not a village but a very diffuse collection of relatively luxurious hayfields and scattered sheep farms. A lonely green hut north of Itilleq's cove beach is the waiting room for AUL boats. These stop between Narsaq and Qassiarsuk/Narsarsuaq twice weekly in either direction, from May to November only. Blue Ice offers boat transfers (Dkr250) to Itilleq from Narsarsuaq, though a minimum of eight passengers is usually required. The misleadingly regal name for the 3km gravel road to Igaliku is Kongvegen ('King's Way'), which dates from the 1921 visit of Danish monarch Christian X. Blue Ice has a beautifully situated **Blue Ice camp** at Narsarsuk, about 6km northeast of Itilleq with views of Qooroq Icefjord. However, access is easier by boat (Dkr250 from Narsarsuaq) or on foot from Igaliku.

### Igaliku (Igaliko)

pop 60

In Igaliku, Greenland really does appear idyllically green. Cottages are scattered about the base of a grassy amphitheatre on a hypnotically calm bay. Icebergs are rare here, but the milky-blue waters are surreally beautiful, trimmed by a horizon of mountains that remain snow-dappled throughout summer. Artists and Home Rule ministers alike have summer houses here. Even US Secretary of State Colin Powell (as he then was) dropped by in 2004, though not to pick





the plentiful summer flowers (see the boxed text, p200). Igaliku is most famous for the ruins of Garðar, once the religious heart of 12th-century Norse Greenland. But it's the soothing setting and lilted bucolic charm that you're more likely to remember.

## RUINS

Norse ruins dot the village. Sites of old stone enclosures and ancient irrigation dykes are meticulously marked on the Garðar archaeological plan, which is inset on the *Eastern Settlement* tourist map. However, in reality only three building foundations are easily discernible in the long grass. A guided tour (offered from Narsarsuaq by both Blue Ice and Arctic Adventure) might help fire your imagination.

In 1124 Greenland became its own bishopric. Within the two years it took for the first bishop to arrive from Scandinavia, the colonists had erected **St Nicolai Cathedral** for him in Garðar (Igaliku). By Norse Greenlandic standards it was elaborate. Windows used rough glass rather than stretched animal stomachs, the interior was decorated with soapstone carvings and a large bell called the faithful to worship.

Don't expect to see any of this. For centuries the building was gradually dismantled, the dressed stones being used for more practical purposes in homes and sheds. Today all that remains are a few hewn boulders in the buttercups, piled up at one point to give the impression of a doorway.

Beneath the cathedral site archaeologists have found 25 walrus and five narwhal skulls, which may have been charms held over from pre-Christian times. In 1926 a remarkable grave was excavated beside the ruins. For decades it was thought to be that of Garðar's third bishop, Jan Smyrill (though this is now disputed). The skeleton was adorned with a fine episcopal ring and held a walrus-tusk crosier. A missing foot and sheered-off cranium led conspiracy theorists to smell murder. Archaeologists suspect careless gravediggers.

Directly southwest of the cathedral's perimeter, the **bishop's former residence** is now little more than a rhu barb patch. South of this is a long former **stone cowshed** with relatively well-preserved walls and an intact rock-lintel doorway. The cathedral needed plenty of barns: Norse colonists paid ever heavier tithes, taxes and fines to the bishop, who merrily confiscated fields and received bequests until the church became Greenland's main landowner.

## OTHER SIGHTS

Close to the main ruins are two memorials: a recently sculpted **Viking Stone** and a plaque to **Anders Olsen**, the Norwegian colonist who founded modern Igaliku in 1783. The squat modern **church** is made of typical Igaliku sandstone, which has a distinctive mottled-pink surface that looks almost edible.

It's pleasant to stroll the rocky headland near the Pilersuisoq shop or hop across the minuscule stream to stare at the mesmerising water from the grey-pebble beach. With vastly more energy, hikers could fight their way up the steep northwest ridge of **Nuuluk** to its lumpsome 823m summit. For the less masochistic, however, the views are perfectly lovely if you just stroll for 10 minutes up the pass along the Kongevejen road towards Itilleq.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**Igaliku Youth Hostel** (☎ 642510; fax 666151; house 971B; dm adult/child Dkr175/90, with sheets Dkr350/175) Neat bunks share a sparkling indoor bathroom and a sitting room that doubles as an acupuncture studio. Attached is the town's pleasant, peach-walled **cafeteria** (lunch Dkr115, dinner Dkr150; ☎ 8am-10pm), where meals are only available if you order a few hours ahead. Pancakes and beer (Dkr35) are quicker.

## CLASSIC TREKS 1: IGALIKU-QAQORTOQ

South Greenland is relatively popular for multiday camping hikes, though even along the three most celebrated routes (see the two other Classic Treks boxed texts, p113 and p125) you'll only see a handful of hikers at any one time and there are virtually no way-markers. Good maps are essential.

The Igaliku-Qaqortoq hike takes four to seven days (five is usual). It offers a great wilderness experience and an attractive palate of views, and there's the added thrill of stumbling across Norse ruins at Hvalsey (p120). However, the section between Hvalsey and Qaqortoq is less appealing. It's an awkward and rather tiresome slog that you'd be best to skip. This is easily achieved heading towards Igaliku by joining the Qaqortoq tourist office's Hvalsey-boat tour (one-way tickets are available for hikers). The boat ride saves you a day and a half and means you'll only need to buy one map (the 1:100,000 *Narsaq Hiking Map*).

Groceries are sold at **Pilersuisoq** (☎ 666144; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat, 1-3pm Sun), beside the jetty. The annual village festival on 31 July is joyously alcoholic.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

On a few winter loops, AUL ferries from Qaqortoq call at Igaliku. However, in summer boat access is via Itilleq (p107), from which you need to walk 3km on a sloping but easygoing gravel road. The benches along the way have great views that provide a fine excuse for frequent rest stops. Hitchhiking with very occasional tractors or 4WD vehicles is possible for an agreed fare.

Local speedboat rides to Igaliku Kujalleq in Vatnahverfi (p125) can cost as little as Dkr100 per person, but Dkr250 to Dkr600 is more typical. Ask Gaba, the hostel owner.

## NARSAQ

pop 1708

Narsaq's pretty cottages sprawl colourfully across grassy undulations beneath the abrupt twin peaks of Qaqarsuaq and Tasiigaaq. Narsaq is one of the friendliest towns in

Greenland, has a brilliant museum and offers plenty of undertapped tourist potential for hiking, kayaking or day-tripping by boat. The town also has several cottage industries.

## History

The area is dotted with Norse ruins and, according to a controversial theory, Narsaq rather than Qassiarsuk is considered by some historians to be the site of Erik the Red's original Brattahlíð camp. The present settlement was founded in 1830 as Nordprøven, though it only gained town status in 1959. The shrimp-processing plant was originally opened in 1952 and partly supplied with labour by forcibly evacuating the village of Niaqornaq, on the northern shore of Nordre Sermilik Fjord. It now also doubles as a slaughterhouse for the region's sheep, which (while alive) do a miraculous job of keeping the area free of flies and mosquitoes. A local company collects icebergs to make designer ice cubes for export.

## Information

**Hospital** (☎ 661211; Aaninnguit)

**Laundry** (Block E) In the pink-ended apartment block across from the hospital. Buy Dkr100 *Vaskekort* prepaid cards at Brugsen supermarket.

**Police** (☎ 661222; Niels Bohr's Plads)

**Post office** (☎ 661255; ☎ 9am-3pm Mon-Fri) Has ATMs, changes money (cash only), sells Tusass SIM-cards, and is an agent for AUL ferry tickets.

**Public library** (Kong Frederik IX's vej; ☎ 7-8pm Mon, 3-5.30pm & 7-8.30pm Tue & Thu, closed Jun & Jul) Internet access.

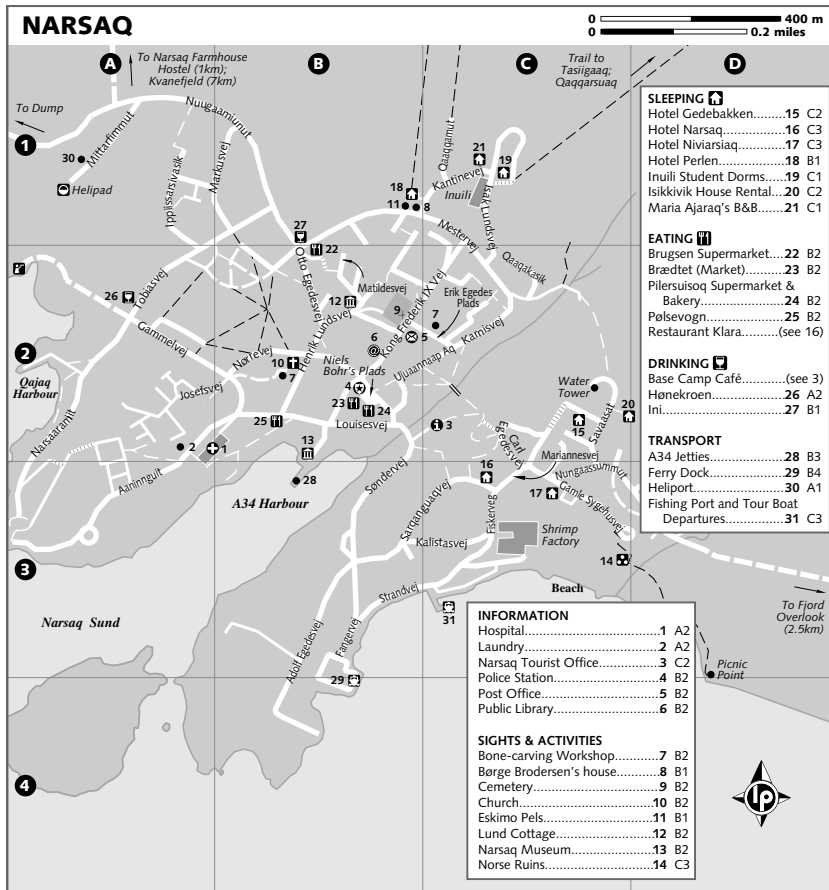
**Tourist office** (☎ 661325; www.2narsaq.gl; Sondervej B157; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm summer weekends) Incredibly obliging staff give away town maps, sell regional maps and have a well-stocked gift shop with mini café. Internet planned. Offers some transfers and limited excursions and can make arrangements for special interests.

## Sights

### NARSAQ MUSEUM

The buildings of historic Nordprøven trading station now house the delightful, very visual **Narsaq Museum** (☎ 661659, mobile 497859; www.narsaq-museum.org; Kirkevej B84; adult/student/senior Dkr25/free/free; ☎ 1-4pm Jun-Sep or by appointment).

Start your visit in the 1928 main building, marked A-34 on its roof for WWII identification. Here are various historical and cultural exhibits, a great little gift shop and, upstairs, a fine exhibition of traditional *qajaqs* (kayaks)



and hunting techniques. When you've finished, museum staff can open up the various other houses. A former blubber store contains a geological collection. An 1830s house (Narsaq's oldest) has an interesting display of printing presses and etchings from *Sujumut*, once South Greenland's main newspaper, which was printed here. There's also recent work by local artists, talented and otherwise. Upstairs is a very sweet one-room recreation of a 1950s shop, displaying everything from aged tinned apricots to scythe handles to wooden hoops for the tops of *qajaqs*. In a similar vein, a neighbouring low-roofed house from 1908 has been furnished with 1950s utensils, pinups of Jesus and Marilyn Monroe, and a wood-and-sealskin bed.

The appealing **Lund Cottage** (Henrik Lundsvej) is only accessible if the main museum can spare the staff to walk across town and open it for you. Henrik Lund (1875–1948) was a priest, painter and poet whose song 'Nunarp' has since become Greenland's national anthem. Outside the red-and-green cottage, amid wildflowers, his bust sports a Lutheran priest's ruff, and his bronze lips have turned blue – from graffiti, not Arctic cold.

#### NORSE RUINS

Narsaq's most significant **Norse ruin** is the oldest in Greenland to have been positively carbon-dated to the 14th century. And as it was abandoned relatively early (rather than being continuously redeveloped, as at Qas-

sarsuk), the longhouse ruin has helped give archaeologists a better idea of how the early Norse lived. Some historians even suggest that this, not Qassiarsuk, was the original site of Erik the Red's Brattahlíð. The site itself is marked by a slightly raised turf rectangle amid the buttercups. To get there, descend past house B909 through a gap in the wire fence and follow red-painted stones.

More Norse sites lie beneath the town's **cemetery**. A visitor to the town in 1894 noted that much of early Narsaq had been constructed using stones from this site. A fireplace, cooking pot and several stone tools were uncovered by gravediggers in the 1990s, but the sensitive nature of the location prevents further excavation.

#### Viewpoints

Striking twin peaks Tasiigaaq and Qaqqarsuaq form Narsaq's dominant geographical feature. A punishingly steep path climbs to the 400m-high saddle between the two. A longer but gentler option is to climb **Tasiigaaq** (450m) from the north, starting near the Farmhouse Hostel. **Qaqqarsuaq** (685m) is a tougher proposition but gives fabulous fjord views towards the dramatic saw-toothed ridge of **Redekammen** (Killavaat, 'the Comb').

**A34 harbour** looks attractive from many angles. There are nice port views from the Hotel Niviarsiaq and from a rough picnic spot 10 minutes' walk south of the Norse ruins. **Qajaq Harbour** is loveliest at sunset. On moonless nights from early August, the aurora borealis (northern lights) can dance impressively: a suitably dark viewing point is down the unasphalted track behind the Hønekroen pub.

#### Other Sights

Narsaq has a relative wealth of craft industries. Most places allow you to wander in for free, though you may feel more comfortable and better informed visiting as part of a tourist office **town walking tour** (Dkr150; ☞ weekday afternoons), which also takes you to the museum and gets you inside the distinctive 1927 red-and-white timber **church** (☞ 9.30am Sun). A sporadically operating **bone-carving workshop** lurks in a scrappy low-rise hut west of the church. More interesting is **Eskimo Pels** (☞ 661001; www.eskimopels.gl; Mestervej; admission free; ☞ 8am–4pm Mon–Fri), a small factory where local women turn sealskins into designer bags and

#### TUTTUPIT, BLOOD OF THE REINDEER

A young Sami girl called Tuttu (meaning 'reindeer') found herself expecting an illegitimate child. Afraid to admit her pregnancy, she fled to the mountains to give birth secretly. There the blood of her placenta seeped into the ground, imbuing the rocks below with spiritual powers. This, according to Sami legend, is the origin of tuttupit (tugtupite, 'reindeer blood'), a rare soft mineral (Na<sub>2</sub>AlBeSi<sub>4</sub>O<sub>12</sub>Cl) valued by certain New Age cultures. The most common form has garish pink and red flashes. However, the stone is at its most impressive under ultraviolet light, when it glows with magical fluorescent greens and reds. Apart from tiny finds at Mt St Hilaire (Canada), tuttupit is found only on the Kola Peninsula (Russia), where the legend evolved, and on the mountains behind Narsaq. There's no commercial mining, but walkers occasionally find samples on Kvanefjeld or near Lake Taseq. Vivid red examples make highly valuable gemstones.

clothes. There's a decent gift shop attached. Both the wool workshop and the excellent ceramics workshop are presently closed but might re-open.

Narsaq is especially famous for its unique minerals, notably the curious semiprecious pink Tutupit (Tugtupite; see the boxed text above). The easiest way to see (and possibly buy) examples is to visit the impressive mineral collection of charming **Børge Brodersen** (☞ 661062, mobile 226932; www.narsaq.dk/bb; Mestervej 8866; admission free). It's in his private house, but anyone can ring on the doorbell and ask to have a look. **Peter Lindberg** (☞ 661518, mobile 497152; www.grstones.com) also sells local gems, mainly via the Internet. Norwegian-born **Harry Andersen** (☞ 661149, mobile 227523) offers motorboat rides to **Crystal Cove** (Dkr250 per person, three hours return) to let enthusiasts chip at clear calcite from a fjord-facing cliff. You might try searching for your own Tutupit on **Kvanefjeld** (see p114).

#### Sleeping BUDGET

**Maria Ajaraq's B&B** (☞ 661168; Kantinevej B990; per person Dkr200) This cosy, very real home has three guest rooms and a commanding perched



position near the Inuili culinary college. There's a good shared bathroom, and the breakfast is extensive. Maria speaks no English, so contact her taxi-driver daughter, Theodora (☎ 249694), who can collect you for free on arrival.

**Isikkivik House Rental** (☎ 662080; www.silamut.com; first day Dkr800, subsequent days Dkr400) Paul and Monica Cohen's tiny, super-cute cottage has a delightful picture window, a balcony and a multilingual bookshelf. Perched at the top of the village, you get wonderful views as far as the icecap. The bed is a very small double squeezed into a cupboard room – romantic or cramped? You decide. The little kitchen has running water, but there's no shower and the toilet is a Greenland-style bag-and-box affair.

**Hotel Niviarsiaq** (Gl Sygehusvej B503; dm without/with sheets Dkr250/350) This house-hotel with a fairly well-equipped kitchen now hires out beds youth-hostel style. Two rooms plus the wide terrace have lovely views over the harbour area. Shower and toilet are communal, and there's a washing machine (Dkr20) and a TV/dining room. Arrange bookings and keys through Hotel Narsaq.

**Narsaq Farmhouse Hostel** (☎ 661049, 572073; helgiouffitter@greenet.gl; dm/d Dkr160/420; ☎ May-Sep) Beautifully situated 2km northeast of the town centre on the Kvanefeld track, this former mink farm faces a photogenic curve of bergy seascape. However, the interior is rather tatty and haphazardly laid out. There's a shower in between beds downstairs in the main building. Double rooms are in hut structures with box toilets and no running water. Fishing equipment and two bicycles (Dkr75 per day) are available for hire. You may camp outside and use the hostel facilities for Dkr100. It's beside the Kvanefeld track. Turn off the asphalt, first right after the heliport.

There are some lovely wild camping spots around the bay beyond the Dyrnæs fence.

#### MID-RANGE

**Hotel Narsaq** (☎ 661290; hotelniv@greenet.gl; www.hotel-narsaq.com; Sarqanguaqvej B819; s Dkr800-950, tw Dkr1050-1150) The town has several little hotels, all run by 'Hotel Mama' Dorte and family. The Hotel Narsaq has the newest, smartest rooms and acts as reception desk for the others. Cheaper rooms share good but communal showers and toilets.

**Hotel Perlen** (s/d/tr Dkr750/1150/1450) Bland but neat and tidy twins have TV and bathroom. The singles are a big step down: clean, but cramped like university cells with shower booth but shared toilets. Bathrobes and duvet are provided. There's a fair-sized, functional sitting/dining room and kitchen.

**Hotel Gedebakken** (tw Dkr1250) The hotel's one-room 'apartments' with mini-kitchenette are pleasant enough but very overpriced. Sheets are provided.

**Inuili Student Dorms** (s/d Dkr750/1150; ☎ Jul) Bathrooms are shared between pairs of hospital-style rooms. You could rent both for Dkr1600, but that's still overpriced. At the time of writing, management was due to change in 2005; details are available from the tourist office.

#### Eating

**Restaurant Klara** (☎ 497728; Hotel Narsaq, Sarqanguaqvej B819; mains Dkr170-200; ☎ 6-8.30pm) Comfortably smart yet reasonably cosy, Narsaq's only restaurant serves extremely generous snowcrab starters, succulent reindeer steaks and a small range of other wholesome, well-cooked local delicacies including minke whale and muskox. Book ahead.

**Pølsevognen** (Louisevej; snacks Dkr12-40; ☎ 11am-6.30pm) This hot-dog wagon parked outside the Timimut Shop puts out plastic tables so you can eat your chips (small/big Dkr12/17) while overlooking A34 harbour.

If you don't want the seats, the same fast food is 30% cheaper from a stand in the **Pilersuisoq Bakery** (Niagomarssangmut B842; ☎ 7am-5pm Mon-Fri, 7am-1pm Sat, 8am-noon Sun), attached to the **Pilersuisoq supermarket** (Niels Bohr's Plads; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat, 10am-4pm Sun). **Brugsen supermarket** (Mestervej B1230; ☎ 9am-6pm) is slightly better stocked.

Several kiosks open later, and there's a small **brædtet** (market; Niels Bohr's Plads; ☎ Mon-Sat) for fresh fish, seal, whale meat and seasonal berries.

#### Drinking

**Base Camp Café** (☎ 661325; Sondervej B157; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm summer weekends) This is simply the appealing, sunny terrace of the tourist office, where you can get a coffee (Dkr5), soft drink (Dkr15) or chocolate bar.

**Hønekroen** (☎ 661002; Tobiasvej; ☎ 9pm-3am Thu-Sat) This converted chicken farm is now an extensive bar, billiard hall and dance joint

with live music after midnight Friday and Saturday. Low ceilings, dim lights and occasional volleys of beer bottles give it a deliciously disreputable edge, but it's certainly the liveliest place in town. Beer prices rise progressively from Dkr25 to Dkr30 to Dkr35 according to the time.

**Ini** (☎ 661360; Kantinevej; beers Dkr25-30; ☎ 9pm-1am Mon-Thu, 9pm-2am Fri-Sat) Fundamentally similar to Hønekroen, but quieter, slightly smaller and marginally less daunting to enter despite a total lack of signs.

#### Shopping

The craft workshops all sell their wares, as does the tourist office and the museum gift shop, which also has a very useful selection of books. The tourist office also stocks a few hiking maps.

#### Getting There & Away

##### AIR

At least once on Monday, Thursday and Friday and up to four times on Wednesday, **Air Greenland** (☎ 661488) choppers buzz across to Narsarsuaq (Dkr571, 15 minutes). On the same days there are hops to Qaqortoq either direct (Dkr351, 10 minutes) or via Narsarsuaq (Dkr533). The helicopter from Narsarsuaq to Grønnedal and Paamiut sometimes stops in Narsaq en route.

##### BOAT

The weekly Nuuk-bound coastal ferry *Sarfaq Ittuk* calls at Narsaq. Prices are slightly less than from Qaqortoq, with journey times 4½ hours longer from mid-June to August but 2½ hours shorter the rest of the year. Twice weekly the *Najaaaraq Ittuk* runs to Qaqortoq (Dkr150 to Dkr185, 1½ hours). Between May and November it also links Narsaq to Itilleq, Qassiarsuk and Narsarsuaq (Dkr150 to Dkr185, 2¾ hours).

You can arrange various boat transfers and charters through **Harry Andersen** (☎ 661149, mobile 227523), who's a great English-speaking storyteller. For two to four people reckon on Dkr600 per person to Qassiarsuk and Itilleq, and Dkr650 to Hvalsey Ruins and Qaqortoq. With a group of eight you'll usually pay less per person by booking through **Blue Ice** (☎ 497 371; www.blueice.gl; Narsarsuaq), eg Dkr400 to Narsarsuaq or Qaqortoq.

To take things really slowly, practised paddlers should consider heading for Narsar-

#### CLASSIC TREKS 2: NARSAQ-QASSIARSUK

Of the three classic multiday hikes, Narsaq-Qassiarsuk has arguably the most dramatic scenery. It's typical to take four to five days, and there's a choice of routes. Use the Narsaq 1:100,000 scale map. By far the hardest part is a nerve-racking descent on lifeless red scree from Lake Taseq to a lovely camp site near Sarfannnguit Ilua, though the views of Redekammen Ridge en route are a great reward. You can cut out this stage by taking a speedboat from Narsaq to the trout-rich lake at the head of Sarfannnguit Ilua (around Dkr150 per person for a minimum of three people). From here, despite some annoying scrub, the path is pretty straightforward and becomes a decent tractor path near Sillisit, where there's a small **youth hostel** (☎ 131-Radio 'Sillisit 29').

suaq by sea kayak. This is usually easier than kayaking from Narsarsuaq, due to prevailing winds. Blue Ice and Narsaq tourist office cooperate, making one-way rentals possible.

#### Getting Around

The tourist office runs transfers towards Kvanefeld (Dkr125) and to Dyrnæs (Dkr100) for a minimum of two passengers. Taxis cost Dkr16 per km in town. Drivers include **Theo** (☎ 496161), **Otto** (☎ 496449) and **Ole** (☎ 497600). Theo speaks English. Bicycles can be hired from **Helgi Jonasson** (☎ 572073; Farmhouse Hostel; per day Dkr75).

#### AROUND NARSAQ Dyrnæs

North of Narsaq a grand, U-shaped valley opens up splendidly to the east. Meanwhile, icebergs crack and burst fitfully in a photo-perfect bay to the west. Near the head of the bay is the Norse site of **Dyrnæs**, 300m off the Kvanefeld track where it turns inland just 20 minutes' walk beyond the Farmhouse Hostel. In the 11th century, Dyrnæs was the Eastern Settlement's richest homestead, as the wily landowner refused to pass on church tithes. He figured, correctly enough, that the pope would not find it economic to send agents all the way there to collect Peter's Pence. The Dyrnæs church foundations are now just a scattering of lichen-covered stones, but the

setting is delightful. The homestead's little spring still flows, and several smaller ruins lie hidden in the grass awaiting archaeologists, who last visited in 1932. A very congenial walk continues around the headland on sheep-mown grass between great, sometimes spiky boulders west of the Dyrnæs site fence.

### Kvanevfjeld & Illimmaasaq

The splendid U-shaped valley behind Dyrnæs passes through the rich hayfields of a sheep farm (noisy dogs) with a decent gravel track rising inexorably towards the dark, glacier-braided peak of Illimmaasaq (1390m). This is flanked to the west by scenically unremarkable but geologically fascinating Kvanevfjeld (879m). Together they form the heart of a massive volcanic structure. Instead of continuing its eruption cycle, it solidified slowly over millions of years, creating some 200 minerals, including uranium ores and the almost unique gemstone Tuttupit (see boxed text, p111). The track deteriorates some 7km from Narsaq (as far as a 4WD can go), then wiggles up hairpins to the concrete-sealed tunnel of a former uranium mine. This was used by eminent nuclear physicist Niels Bohr to supply his research laboratory, but fortunately it proved uneconomic to develop for commercial extraction. This didn't stop smugglers trying to waltz off with seven barrels of uranium ore in the mid-1980s. Fortunately, they were stopped by the police. The mine is now definitively closed, but you shouldn't drink the possibly radioactive water from the nearby stream.

Occasional red markings from here help you find the steep footpath up onto the top of Kvanevfjeld. Even if you don't find any interesting gemstones, there are some spectacular views north onto berg-packed fjords and the distant inland ice.

Alternatively, veer east from the main Kvanevfjeld track to the large 518m-high **Lake Taseq**, from which you could continue a multiday hike to Qassiarsuk via Sillisit (see boxed text, p113).

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

If you want a head start, the tourist office will take you 7km towards Kvanevfjeld for Dkr125 per person one way (minimum of two passengers). This makes for a much nicer day hike, and returning downhill you

face the attractively ice-dotted bay all the way to Dyrnæs.

### Fjord Trips

If you think global warming is just a theory, join one of the popular visits across Ikersuaq (Breddefjord) towards the **Akulliit Peninsula**. A nose of inland ice to its west still half-heartedly calves into the water, and boats drop you at a convenient jetty to let you touch the heavily fissured glacier. However, this ice face is only a shadow of its 1980s self, when it was reportedly over 100m tall and very active. The ice on the peninsula's eastern side is 'dead' – it no longer reaches the water. Nonetheless, the scene is more picturesque thanks to an almost sheer beige granite cliff with minimal ledges that offer nesting sites for thousands of Iceland gulls.

Some boat trips stop on the way back at Nimisat to see an **old Inuit settlement** that was only finally abandoned in the 1960s. Skulls are visible in the rough graves. There are more **Inuit ruins** at Manitsuarsuk (Stephensens Havn), on mosquito-blighted Tuttutooq Island. House sites date from 1350 to 1800, giving archaeologists a vivid impression of Inuit house development across the centuries, though perhaps the greatest attraction for tourists is the lovely view of Narsaq's mountain backdrop on the return voyage.

A four-hour speedboat charter to see all of the above from Narsaq costs Dkr550 per person for two or more people. Tourist boats from both Narsaq and Qaqortoq do a similar trip for around Dkr800, but these move more slowly, which can get rather dull. The ride is pleasant enough and the icebergs attractive, but the fjord-sides are somewhat monotonous and nowhere near as scenic those around Nanortalik.

On a very calm day you could buzz out by speedboat from Narsaq to the much more active **Qalerallit glacier** for about Dkr1000 per person. The scenery en route is similar.

## QAQORTOQ REGION

### QAQORTOQ TOWN (JULIANEHÅB)

pop 3100

Pronouncing Qaqortoq is a conundrum for the tonsils. Don't attempt it with your mouth full. South Greenland's most populous town, this is an artistic and visually distinctive

place. Behind a charming old town square, Qaqortoq's brightly coloured buildings huddle closely together, clinging to a rugged, steep-sided amphitheatre. This starkly rocky backdrop is an interesting contrast to the soft, open greenery of nearby Narsaq.

### History

Founded by Norwegian trader Anders Olsen in 1775, Qaqortoq was originally named Julianehåb after Queen Juliane Marie of Denmark. Local fishermen started to thrive on the cod trade, especially after WWI. While most of the world was in depression in the 1930s, Qaqortoq was enjoying a remarkable boom. The town's loveliest buildings date from this era, as does the cute little fountain, which for years was the only one in Greenland. Qaqortoq also boasted Greenland's first piped water and its first bathhouse. Thanks to its having a venue (the town's 1937 village hall, still standing), it became something of a local cultural centre, too. It remains a centre for expressive innovation, most obvious through the wonderful Stone and Man sculptures, which have turned urban boulders into living art. Meanwhile, the cod have disappeared, but Qaqortoq survives economically as a regional service hub, and it has Greenland's only industrial tannery.

### Information

#### BOOKSHOPS

The museum shop stocks a superb selection of tourist-oriented books. The upstairs section of Pisiffik supermarket sells postcards, CDs and just a few books in English.

#### EMERGENCIES

**Hospital** (☎ 642211; Maaliakasiup Av B909)

**Police** (☎ 642222; Torvet B134)

#### INTERNET ACCESS

**Net Café Nanok** (☎ 642121; per min/hr Dkr1/50;

☎ 3-10pm Mon-Fri, noon-11pm Sat, noon-10pm Sun)

Two Internet terminals lurk behind the game computers in this easy-to-miss little dive behind the Nanoq Bar.

#### LAUNDRY

**Laundry Errosisarfik** (Ground fl, Block J, JH Lytzensvej; ☎ 9am-7pm) Lurking in the second of four six-storey apartment blocks, the machines operate using washcards (minimum Dkr50) bought from the Brugseneeraq Minimarket.

#### MONEY

**Grønlandsbanken** (☎ 10am-3pm Mon-Fri) Changes cash/travellers cheques for commissions of Dkr30/75. ATMs operate 6am to 6pm.

#### POST

**Post office** (Anders Olsenvej B998; ☎ 9am-3pm Mon-Fri, payphone access 7am-7pm)

#### TOURIST INFORMATION

**Tourist office** (☎ 642444; www.qaq.gl; Torvevej B68; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat-Sun) Books homestay B&Bs, college hostel beds and outlying farmhouse accommodation, and organises several tours and excursions. The sizeable gift shop sells hiking maps and souvenirs. Internet (per 30 minutes Dkr50) and good free town maps are available.

#### Sights & Activities

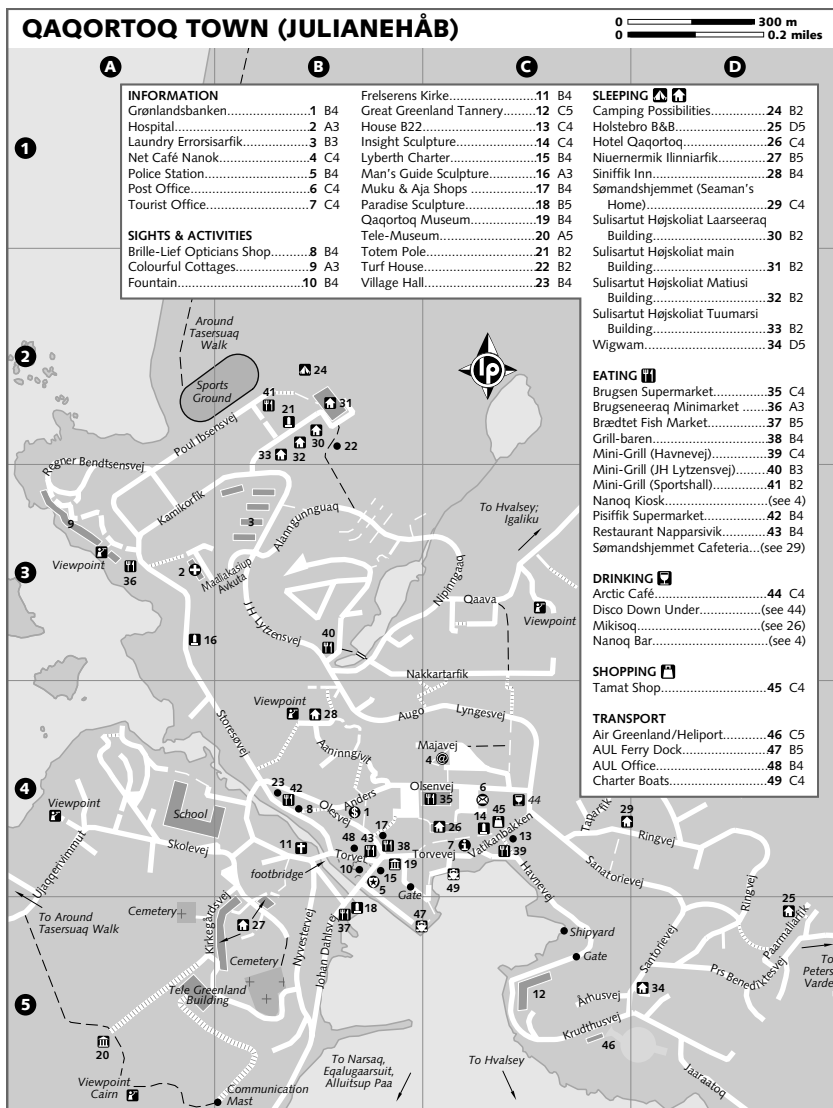
##### QAQORTOQ MUSEUM

**Qaqortoq Museum** (☎ 641080; geny@qaqortoq.gl; Torvevej B29; admission Dkr10; ☎ 10am-noon Mon-Fri & 1-4pm daily Jun-Sep) is housed in a tar-blackened 1804 building that was once the Julianehåb colony manager's house. Today its most unique features are right up on the top floor. Beautifully restored, with churchlike décor and curious 1930s swing-out sink stands, these were once the town's guestrooms. The red room was explorer Knud Rasmussen's base when he was preparing his later expeditions. The blue room hosted famous American aviator Charles Lindbergh when he was scouting sites for a Pan Am stopover airport. Seventy years later Qaqortoq's still dreaming of an airport.

The museum's ground-floor displays include local artefacts including an extraordinary gut anorak. Much of the space is used for a gallery of recent artwork that is possibly the best in Greenland. There's also a very tempting multilingual bookshop. There's a recreated turf house in the attractively overgrown garden (opened on request). Its interior is given a 'lived-in' feel with boots left to dry over a traditional blubber lamp.

#### TORVET & THE OLD TOWN

Tiny **Torvet** (the old town square) is a picture-book collection of sweet timber cottages around a famous if dinky little three-dolphin **fountain**. When there's enough wind to scatter the clouds of flies, benches here are a very popular place to meet or relax. It's especially cute at twilight, with candles glowing warmly



in the windows of Restaurant Napparsivik, a converted 1880 cooperage. Sadly overshadowed by the port chimney, the cute 1859 cottage housing **Lyberth Charter** (☎ 493352; Torvet B27) was the former Fortanderkabshuset (elders' council chamber). Red with green stairs, it retains the bronze 'colony bell' that once announced the start of work each morning. The

copper ship's lantern is a more recent addition, like the fake saloon doors. The present shop sells hunting and fishing equipment, offers boat charters, and displays a poster from the owner's days as a Danish guitar hero.

Set back a bit, **Muku & Aja Shops** (Olesvej B61) occupies an 1871 former blacksmith's workshop. It has wooden shingle roof, thick stone

walls, arched windows and a small cannon aimed at the Torvet.

#### OTHER HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Beautiful **Frelserens Kirke** (Saviour's Church) was prefabricated in Norway in 1826, but the ship delivering it got wrecked at Frederikshåb (now Paamiut) and only in 1832 was the miraculously salvaged timber erected on its current site. A lifebelt displayed inside is the only piece ever found from the wrecked *Hans Hedtoft*, Greenland's *Titanic*, which sank on its maiden voyage in 1959. Former Home Rule Premier Jonathon Motzfeldt was once vicar in this church.

When climbing **Vatikanbakken** (Vatican Hill), notice the attractive timber **House B22** (Vatikanbakken B22). This was once home to a KGH trader who, legend relates, was something of a *bon-vivant* playboy. Indeed on occasions he was found to be 'as drunk as a pope', hence the ironic name for the road on which he lived.

West of the Pisiffik supermarket is the 1937 **village hall** (Qaqortup Katersertarfia; Storesøvej B100; ☎ sporadic) with its neoclassical interior, stage and upper balustrade. To the east, the sweet little **Brille-Lief Opticians Shop** (www.brille.lief.gl; Storesøvej B26) is made of pink Igaliku sandstone and was originally built as Greenland's first public bathhouse (1931). It sells lovely postcards as well as spectacles.

#### STONE & MAN SCULPTURES

Ubiquitous local artist Aka Høegh had the superb idea of turning Qaqortoq's sometimes oppressive grey rock surfaces into a living sculpture gallery of curious faces, animals and abstracts. Several international artists have contributed since 1993, helping to keep ideas fresh. Many of the best are carved into the cliff that parallels Torvevej, notably behind the tourist office, where you'll find Aka Høegh's appealing **Insight** smiley faces. Beside the brædtet, Jun Ichi Inoue's **Paradise** is a disembodied stone breast which makes a curious foreground for colourful harbour photos. To find out what **Man's Guide** is, walk up Storesøvej beyond house B228. The Qaqortoq Museum shop sells a guide map (Dkr20) featuring all 31 works.

#### TELE-MUSEUM

On weekend afternoons it's well worth visiting the **Tele-Museum** (admission free; ☎ 1-4pm Sat

& Sun). It traces Greenland's role in the development of transatlantic communications and has such mechanical curiosities as 1900 telephone switching table which, although already archaic in Denmark, was sent for use in Nuuk in the 1950s. Most interesting are the timelines, which put regional history in context decade by decade. Hosted in the 1925 building of a former radio station, the museum has splendid views across town from its minuscule café room. For Dkr10 per person (minimum of eight people) you can arrange a private viewing – ask at Qaqortoq Museum.

#### TANNERY

The **Great Greenland Tannery** (www.great-greenland.gl; tours Dkr50; ☎ 3.30pm Mon-Fri) prepares sealskins for export and turns some into designer fashion items. A surprisingly interesting one-hour tour (organised exclusively through the tourist office) explains all about the tanning processes. Whatever your emotional feelings about fur (and in Qaqortoq you'd best appear to approve), remember that the industry is a crucial economic lifeline for both Qaqortoq and rural Greenlanders. Traditionally, the skins are just a by-product of seals hunted for food. Whatever guides may tell you, that's not always the case nowadays, judging from trips the authors have made with Greenlandic hunters. But without the skin trade several small hunting villages would lose their distinctive Inuit way of life and might simply die out altogether.

#### VIEWPOINTS

Qaqortoq has many great and varied viewpoints. The port itself is very colourful. For a magnificent townscape there are two good perches off Qaava and wonderful panoramas from a **viewpoint cairn** near the communication tower. That hill was used for centuries to spot arriving supply boats, and graffiti around the cairn goes back to at least 1835. The balcony of the Siniffik Inn is great for lovely sunset views across Lake Tasersuaq. Alternatively, wander around the peninsula, where Regner Bendtsensvej ends in an unspalled row of sweet, colourful cottages in great contrast to the ugly apartment blocks of Poul Ibsensvej.

For a superb view across the fjords to the rounded pyramid peaks east of Qaqortoq, walk a few minutes steeply uphill from the far end of Prs Benediktesvej. Pick a route



between the highest houses and walk from cairn to cairn. The highest and most spectacular of these viewpoints is known as **Peters Varde**.

#### OTHER SIGHTS

The sizeable if somewhat austere **Lake Taser-suaq** is a popular place for a half-day's walk (start from behind the sports ground). The rather derelict **turf house** near the Sulisartut Højskoliat is not original but was built as a student project. There's a curious wooden **totem pole** nearby.

#### Tours

From mid-June to late August the tourist office has guaranteed-departure tours to Hvalsey (p120; Dkr450, three times weekly), Uunartoq hot springs (p123; Dkr850, twice weekly), and the Akulliit Peninsula inland ice (p114; Dkr800). Town tours (Dkr150, minimum two people) and tannery tours leave the tourist office almost daily in summer. For details, see [www.qaq.gl](http://www.qaq.gl).

#### Sleeping

Although there appear to be numerous options, Qaqortoq's accommodation tends to fill fast, and reservations are highly recommended. The tourist office is expanding a list of possible B&Bs.

**Siniffik Inn** (☎ 642728; [www.siniffik-inn.dk](http://www.siniffik-inn.dk); qaqšana@greenet.gl; Aaningvit B-242; dm Dkr225) Looking out over the lake, this delightful red-and-yellow wooden youth hostel has an appealing terrace and a delightful lounge area with games and music system. The kitchen is extensive and a great place to meet fellow travellers, but the four- and six-bunk rooms could get very cramped indeed if full. At the time of research, a much-needed extra bathroom complex was planned. Breakfast (included) is served by the owner's charming family.

**Hotel Qaqortoq** (☎ 642282; [www.hotel-qaqortoq.gl](http://www.hotel-qaqortoq.gl); s/tw Dkr885/1095) Perched on the hill overlooking the harbour, this is a neat two-storey, wooden affair with an airy, plant-filled atrium. The small, rather overpriced motel-style rooms lead off lugubriously lit corridors, and the potentially pleasant harbour views are filtered through disappointingly narrow windows. Rates include breakfast. Occasionally you can get weekend specials with two nights' stay and at least one meal for Dkr1395 if you book online.

**Niuernemik linniarfik** (s Dkr200; ☎ Jul) Although only available in late June and July, these student rooms in wonderfully equipped six-room houses represent excellent value. Each six-room unit shares two bathrooms, a kitchen and laundry facilities. Don't waste your time contacting the college, as all tourist sub-letting is handled through the Qaqortoq tourist office. Book ahead.

**Sulisartut Højskoliat** (Folk Workers High School; ☎ 642466; [www.suliartut.gl](http://www.suliartut.gl)) There are a wide variety of room types in four separate units (listed below), though vacancies are often relatively sparse. Whichever room type you want, you'll first need to visit the large main building, where **reception** (☎ 8am-4pm; other times call ☎ 493490 to organise room keys) also sells postcards and some of the last available copies of Birgitte Hertling's *Greenlandic for Travellers* (Dkr110). The main building's cafeteria (it's best to order ahead if you're not on full-board) and free Internet room are available to all guests.

**Sulisartut Højskoliat main building** (s/d full board Dkr675/1100) Upstairs are new, functionally appointed en-suite rooms with a small communal kitchen.

**Sulisartut Højskoliat Laarseeraq building** (s/tw Dkr550-950/1100-1450) Here there are bigger VIP rooms with TV, plus some standard rooms with shared bathrooms. As with the main building, all rooms come hotel style with bed linen and include three meals a day.

**Sulisartut Højskoliat Tuumarsi building** (2-3-bed apt Dkr 750/1000) The apartments here are self-catering and are often full.

**Sulisartut Højskoliat Matusi building** (dm Dkr165) By far the cheapest Sulisartut Højskoliat option, with slightly tatty but perfectly reasonable two-bunk dormitories sharing a decent shower, a small kitchen and a Dkr20 token-operated washing machine.

**Sømandshjemmet** (Seamen's Home; ☎ 642239; [www.sømandshjemmet.gl](http://www.sømandshjemmet.gl); Ringvej; s/tw/tr Dkr695/920/1135) Prices listed are for pleasant if functional rooms with desks and private bathrooms with a small tub. Smaller rooms with shared bathrooms (s/tw Dkr555/765) can be pretty cramped, and the second bed is a foldout sofa. The communal sitting room has a library of (Danish) books and a piano. As with all seamen's homes, alcohol is prohibited.

**Wigwam** (☎ 642182; [vwstekni@greenet.gl](mailto:vwstekni@greenet.gl); Santorievej B300; s/tw Dkr650/750) This neat little red cottage that overlooks the helipad is available

for short-term rentals. Add Dkr285 per extra person. The owners are based down the road at No 276.

**Holstebro B&B** (☎ 641725; [kattaisbo@hotmail.com](mailto:kattaisbo@hotmail.com); Paarmaliarfik B816; r per person Dkr175) The Isbosethsen house offers a self-contained two-bed apartment downstairs. It's set in a luxuriant garden eccentrically decorated with animal horns and a Manneken Pis statue.

There's no official camping site, but there are possible pitches beyond the sports hall, behind the Sulisartut Højskoliat, if you can deal with Qaqortoq's ubiquitous flies.

#### Eating

**Restaurant Napparsivik** (☎ 643067; Torvet; mains Dkr198-225; ☎ 6-9.30pm Mon-Sat, group lunches by arrangement) In one of the loveliest beamed cottages on the old town square, this atmospheric eatery has tasteful art, wooden floors and a shiny copper serving bar. Dishes on the short menu use local fish and meat, very appetizingly served and garnished. On warm, sunny afternoons coffee (Dkr20) and cappuccino (Dkr28) are served outside.

**Hotel Qaqortoq Restaurant** (☎ 642282; mains Dkr190) Although closed at the time of research, the Hotel Qaqortoq restaurant has now found a chef whose new menu includes whale meat and Greenlandic lamb.

**Sømandshjemmet Cafeteria** (☎ 642239; Ringvej; mains Dkr45-55; ☎ 7am-7.30pm Mon-Sat, 8am-7.30pm Sun) A good-value Danish-style meal of the day is available 11.45am to 1pm and 5.30pm to 7.30pm (even the 'small' (Dkr45) serving is very generous). Open sandwiches and fast-food snacks are served throughout the day, and a pay-per-item breakfast is available before 10am.

**Grill-baren** (Torvej B578; burgers Dkr25-48; ☎ 6am-7pm Mon-Sat, noon-7pm Sun) The biggest of several fast-food outlets, Grill-baren doubles as a slot-machine gambling room, though there's a small area of outdoor tables to eat your hot dogs should the flies abate. There are other daytime Mini-Grills on JH Lytzensvej, by the waterside on Havnevej and operating sporadically within the sports hall on Poul Ibsensvej.

Self-catering options:

**Brædtet** (market; Johan Dahlsvej B928) Fresh fish and seal meat.

**Brugsen supermarket** (☎ 642285; Anders Olsensvej B852; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Thu, 9am-7pm Fri, 10am-2pm Sat, 11am-3pm Sun)

**Brugseneraq minimarket** (Storesøvej; ☎ 7am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-8pm Sat)

**Nanoq Kiosk** (Nipningaaq B695; ☎ 3-10pm Mon-Thu, noon-11pm Fri-Sat, noon-10pm Sun) Open late, but pricey.

**Pisiffik supermarket** (☎ 647000; Storesøvej B135; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat)

#### Drinking

**Arctic Café** (☎ 648080; Augo Lyngesvej B278; beers Dkr35; ☎ noon-midnight Mon-Sat) Don't expect coffee and cakes at Qaqortoq's primary drinking venue. It's easily recognised by the yellow VW crashing imaginatively out through an upper wall. In the afternoon the glassed-in terrace beyond the billiard tables can be invitingly warm and sunny. While occasionally boisterous, especially on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday band nights, this is a friendly place that can be hard to leave. Downstairs the **Disco Down Under** (☎ 10pm-3am Fri-Sat) attracts under-30s to a could-be-anywhere barrage of electronic dance rhythms, though it only gets busy after 1am.

**Nanoq Bar** (☎ 9pm-3am Fri) Older soaks seek late-night solace at this rougher-edged billiard bar.

**Mikisøq** (Hotel Qaqortoq; ☎ 5-11pm Mon-Fri, noon-midnight Sat, noon-11pm Sun) The fairly cosy bar of the Hotel Qaqortoq attempts to be something of a British-style pub.

#### Shopping

For souvenirs, visit the tourist office or museum shops. All-important antitly head-nets sell for Dkr28 at **Tamat Shop** (☎ 642576; Vatikankakken B205; 10am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat). For local CDs (Dkr145), look upstairs within Pisiffik supermarket.

#### Getting There & Away

The **AUL office** (☎ 642240; [bktju@aul.gl](mailto:bktju@aul.gl); Torvet B23; ☎ 10am-3pm Mon-Fri) sells ferry tickets from an old cottage in the historical area. **Air Greenland** (☎ 642188; ☎ 11am-1pm Mon & Fri, 8am-4pm Tue & Thu) has a ticket window at the heliport.

#### AIR

From Qaqortoq there are sublimely beautiful helicopter connections twice weekly to Nanortalik (Dkr1071, 25 to 40 minutes) and Alluitsup Paa (Dkr611, 15 to 55 minutes), and three or four days a week to Narsarsuaq (Dkr806, 20 minutes) and Narsaq (Dkr315, 10 minutes). For Paamiut (Dkr3876, 1½ hours) via Grønneal (Dkr2666, 40 minutes)

it's quite illogically cheaper to depart from Narsarsuaq.

### BOAT

Coastal ferries operate year round to Sisimiut (Dkr1600 to Dkr2130, 54 hours) via Kangaamiut (Dkr1395 to Dkr1860, 47 hours), Maniitsoq (Dkr1295 to Dkr1730, 43 hours), Nuuk (Dkr1075 to Dkr1435, 30 to 3½ hours), Paamiut (Dkr590 to Dkr780, 18 hours) and Arsuk (Dkr430 to Dkr575, 10 hours). The route extends to Aasiaat (Dkr1995 to Dkr2580, 67 hours) and Ilulisat (Dkr2110 to Dkr2815, 72 hours) from mid-May until Christmas.

The *Najaaraq Ittuk* serves Nanortalik (Dkr260 to Dkr350), taking 4¾ hours direct, 5½ hours via Eqalugaarsuit (Dkr150 to Dkr185) or 6¾ hours via Ammassivik (Dkr195 to Dkr245), stopping on any routing at Alluitsup Paa (Dkr160 to Dkr215). From May to November the *Najaaraq Ittuk* also makes two weekly runs to Narsarsuaq (Dkr215 to Dkr265, 4½ hours) via Qassiar-suk (Dkr150 to Dkr185) and Itilleq (Dkr150 to Dkr185), and visits Narsaq (Dkr150 to Dkr185, 2¼ hours) year round. In winter only the *Aleqa Ittuk* makes sporadic runs to Igaliku and Narsaq.

### Getting Around

Qaqortoq's local transport system consists of a single rickety minibus that runs eccentric 20-minute loops around town for Dkr10 regardless of distance. Supposedly the service is continuous, but in reality it's pretty sporadic. Many locals use **taxis** (☎ 641111, 642888 or 641414), though anywhere is walkable.

### AROUND QAOQTOQ TOWN Hvalsey (Hvalsø, Qaqortukukooq)

Stone structures at Hvalsey are the only Norse ruins in all of Greenland that casual visitors would easily identify as former

buildings. The relatively large **church ruin** (16m by 8m) even has window holes and door lintels in place. The **Great Hall** also has fine, metre-thick stone walls. Directly above the modern jetty is a notable circular **horse fold** enclosure, and nearby is the presumed **grave of Thorkel Farserk**, the cousin and follower of Erik the Red who founded Hvalsey in around 985. Totally alone beneath starkly imposing triangular peaks, the ruins elicit a strange sense of timeless awe, except when occasionally mobbed by cruise-ship escapees. Locals believe the site deserves Unesco World Heritage status.

Hvalsey was the venue for the last confirmed events before the mysterious disappearance of the Norse colonies. These were a 1408 wedding and the 1407 execution of a certain Kolgrim, burned at the stake for sorcery. Kolgrim's real 'crime' was seducing a daughter of the local sheriff. The booklet *Hvalsø – the Church and the Magnate's Farm*, by Joel Berglund, tells the full stories. It's available in English for Dkr35 at Narsaq Museum. In Qaqortoq Danish-language versions only are currently in stock.

Controversy currently surrounds the planning of future pylons to carry power to Narsaq from the planned Qorlortorsuaq power station. The most economic solution would string high-tension electricity wires right across the site, but that would ruin Hvalsey's pristine appeal.

Be aware that the site has no toilet facilities, no gift shops and no signs of modern life except for the jetty. There is no accommodation here or at Tasiusaq sheep farm, 2km east. If you're camping, please do so outside the demarcated ruins area.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

The approach by boat shows Hvalsey at its most impressive, backed by the reclining 1059m triangular rock face of Qaqor-

tukuluup Qaqaa. Qaqortoq tourist office runs regular half-day boat tours to Hvalsey via **Upernaviarsuk**, a passingly interesting agricultural research station. Charter-boat prices depend on comfort and engine size. Various Qaqortoq boat operators ask from around Dkr300 per person return, with a minimum charge of Dkr1000 to Dkr1500. Contact **Motzfeldt Rentals** (☎ 641045, mobile 493116), **Ole Peter Kleist** (☎ 494615) or **Peter Lyberth** (Lyberth Charter; ☎ 493352; per person Dkr480, minimum Dkr1450). An interesting alternative is to visit by speedboat from Narsaq (Dkr650 per person) and get dropped off at Qaqortoq on the way back.

Hvalsey is the ideal starting point for the classic three- or four-day hike to Igaliku. Use the 1:100,000 Narsaq hiking map. By contrast, walking between Hvalsey and Qaqortoq (1½ days) is miserably slow going through entangling vegetation and annoying boulder fields, rewarded by comparatively uninteresting views.

### Eqalugaarsuit pop 130

Relatively easy to reach yet completely off the tourist radar, this fleetingly picturesque, umbrella-shaped village protrudes from the southern underbelly of scraggy Kangeq Island. In two hours you can climb the steeply scooped valley behind the village following an impressive but often dry cascade. On top is a hummocky plateau peaking at 454m with various fine panoramas of the fjords and distant mountainscape horizons.

The **hotel** (Dkr200 per person) is actually a typical one-up, two-down cottage with equipped kitchen, box toilet and tap (but no shower). Booking is easiest through Qaqortoq tourist office, though key-holder **Kristine Poulsen** (☎ 649703; B593) does speak a few words of English. For Dkr75 extra you can share a family dinner at her house, which is opposite the village's bone-carving workshop.

Kristine can also help you find a local fisherman to take you up the fjord towards Kangerluarsorujuk (see p125) for as little as Dkr300. En route the most interesting stop is at **Itilliarsik**, where the long southern peninsula narrows to a mere 200m. An ingenious (though currently broken) system of winches and ramps has been built here to drag small boats across. This would save some 30km of rough seas on the journey to Alluitsup Paa.

AUL's *Najaaraq Ittuk* stops once a week in Eqalugaarsuit between Qaqortoq (Dkr185, one hour) and Alluitsup Paa (Dkr185, two hours). From May to August only, current timetables allow you to make a one-night return trip from Qaqortoq, leaving Wednesday afternoon and returning Thursday midday.

## ALLUITSUP PAA & VATNAHVERFI

Between Igaliku and Alluitsup Paa, the Vatnahverfi Peninsula has fish-filled lakes, a fairly mild climate, and relatively gentle moors and fells. These appeal to hikers (see the boxed text 'Classic Treks 3', p125) much as they did to the early Norse settlers whose ruins dot the region, many of them unexcavated. For a gentler experience simply relax in Alluitsup Paa and take small boat trips, perhaps staying the night at one of the several lonely sheep-farms that offer homestays. Most of the latter are single-family affairs, so call ahead in case everyone's away.

### ALLUITSUP PAA (SYDPRØVEN) pop 510

Alluitsup Paa combines the appeal of a relatively traditional hunting-and-fishing village with some wonderful accommodation that's unique in South Greenland for its seafront open-air balconies. Colourful cottages are sprinkled across a series of low, rocky gullies and pretty harbour inlets that are somewhat reminiscent of Cornwall. It's the logical base for visiting the Uunartoq hot springs.

### Information

**Internet café** (☎ 619204; per 30 min/hr Dkr25/35; ☎ 1-6pm & 7-11pm)

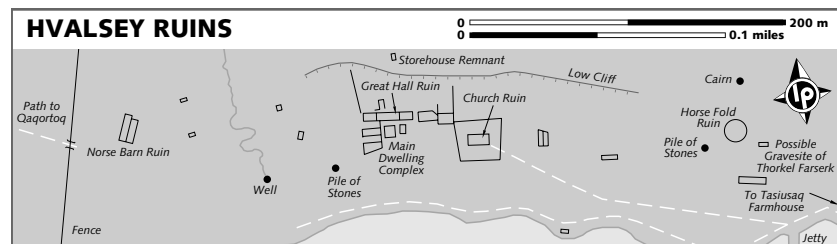
**Laundry** (☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri) It's much more convenient and no more expensive to use the hotels' Dkr30 wash-and-dry service.

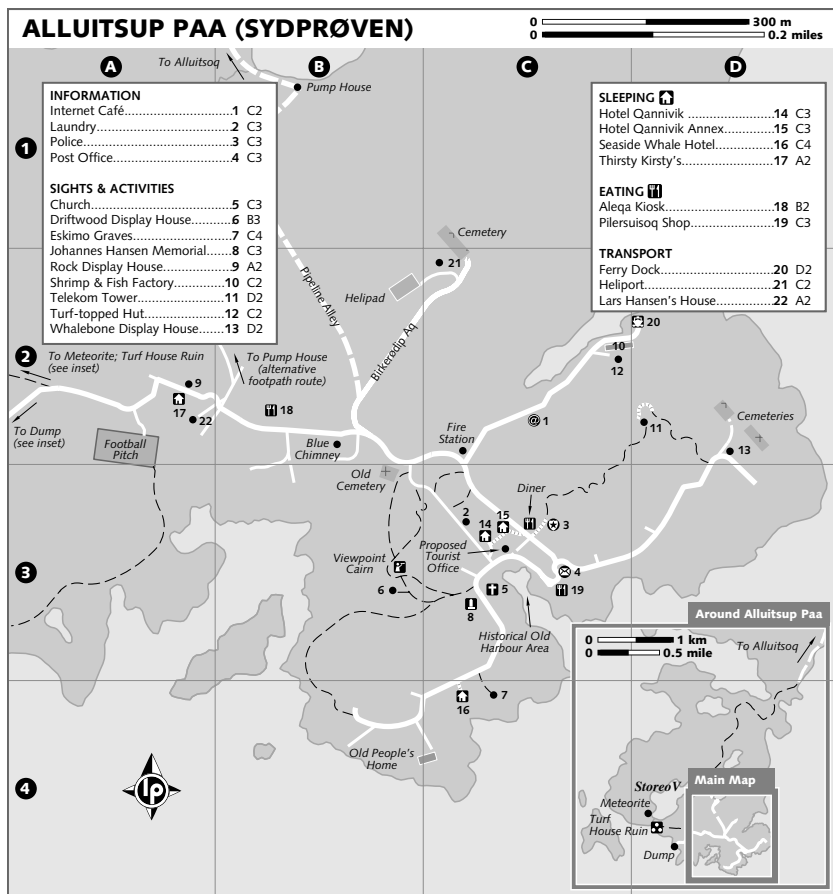
**Post office** (☎ 10am-2pm Mon-Fri) Gives credit-card cash advances and sells AUL ferry tickets.

**Tourist office** Planned but not yet operational in the old stone salt-house in front of the Hotel Qaannivik. At the time of research a full-time, multilingual summer guide was mooted to be available from 2005.

### Sights

Across the small, historical harbour area or from your balcony at the Seaside Whale





Hotel you could happily gaze for days towards the powerful horizon of Sermersoq Island. There, waves of dramatic grey granite cliffs turn a magical rose-pink at sunset, appear to snarl diabolically in wild sudden storms and make a great backdrop for the opera house-sized icebergs that queue up in the bay like oil tankers awaiting a docking berth.

Climb to **viewpoint cairn** or the **telekom tower** for easy panoramas, and notice three **houses** (coincidentally all yellow) with outdoor displays of wave-smoothed rocks, driftwood and whalebones respectively. Opposite the **Johannes Hansen Memorial**, try to peep inside the 1926 red timber **church** (☞ 10am Sun), which has a lovely interior with wooden colon-

naded upper galleries. The new tourist office will be able to get you in and organise someone to play the harmonium for you. It'll also arrange tours of the brand new **shrimp-and-fish factory**, culminating in an appropriate fish dinner. The curious wooden **turf-topped hut** behind was a primitive cold store for an earlier factory almost a century ago. The easiest-to-find **Inuit graves** are the pair beside a house just east of the Seaside Whale Hotel. Ten minutes' walk around the south shore of Storeø (Big Lake) there's a grassy **turf-house ruin** where the lake drains into the sea. This was for centuries an Inuit hunting camp. From here cross the stepping stones and walk less than 100m further along the lake-side to find a red-tinged, metre-tall **meteorite**

that rings metallically when struck with the stone that sits on top and marks it. Although only 15 paces from the water, it's easy to miss amongst other lichen-mottled rocks.

## Sleeping

**Seaside Whale Hotel** (☎ 619209; ekjaer.boegeholt@greenet.gl; s/d/tw Dkr925/1175/1175; ☒) Three lovely sea-facing rooms share a long terrace above the mesmerising sea-battered rocks. Views are brilliant, and the rooms combine a bright professional elegance with some artistically personal touches. A small toilet-and-shower room is attached, and there's coffee making paraphernalia. Breakfast (at the sister Hotel Qaannivik) is included. There are also two bigger family apartments with a kitchen but no view. All rooms are nonsmoking. The same charming owners run the **Hotel Qaannivik** (s/d/tw Dkr675-725/925/925), a poorly marked cream building in the old-harbour historic area. The four rooms share two bathrooms, and rates include buffet breakfast with freshly baked muesli-bread. The nearby **Annex** (dm Dkr350) is a very comfortable mini hostel with three triple-bedded rooms sharing a bathroom and fully equipped kitchen.

**Thirsty Kirsty's** (☎ 619146; kkran@greenet.gl; blue house B985; Dkr200) If and when she's in residence Kirsten Løgstrup offers sleeping-bag space and her bohemian spare room with its distinctive botanical features. Nicknamed 'Thirsty Kirsty', Kirsten is an eccentrically philosophical former teacher and crane-driver with plenty of stories to tell in English, German or Danish and many useful local contacts. Expect the unexpected, and bring a bottle or 10.

## Eating & Drinking

**Hotel Qaannivik Restaurant** (☎ 619199; room 6; dinner Dkr125; ☞ 7.30-9.30am, noon-1pm, 6-7pm) This attractively appointed place has standing candelabra, wood and rattan furniture, and Greenlandic costume designs. You should book in advance for the set lunch (Dkr70 to Dkr95) and filling home-cooked dinner of the day.

The small fast-food diner was not operating at the time of research. The mid-sized **Pilersuisoq Shop** (☞ 9am-4.30pm Mon-Thu, 9am-5pm Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) does mini-pizzas (Dkr15) and plain hot dogs (Dkr10). The tiny **Aleqa Kiosk** (1-6pm daily & 7-9pm Mon-Fri) sells crisps and candles.

The **bar** (beers Dkr40; ☞ 9pm-3am Fri) below the Hotel Qaannivik is a typical bare-bones local affair. Space is limited, so revellers tend to spill outside and dance beneath the aurora. On a good night it can be super-friendly, and fights rarely result in much bloodshed.

## Getting There & Away

Twice weekly helicopters fly to and from Nanortalik (Dkr611), Narsarsuaq (Dkr1220) and Qaqortoq (Dkr635). There's no Air Greenland ticket office, but Karen Kjær from the Hotel Qaannivik doubles as heliport manager and can arrange bookings.

The *Najaaraq Ittuk* ferry calls in three times weekly in each direction between Qaqortoq (Dkr210) and Nanortalik (Dkr185). Once a week the Qaqortoq service stops in Eqaugaarsuit. A different day the Nanortalik boat goes via Ammassalik.

The hotels and new tourist office will be able to alert you to group trips to Uunartoq and beyond. It may be cheaper to contact boat owners directly, though prices and availability can vary wildly. Teachers **Lars Hansen** (☎ 619138; house B933) and **Johannes Rosing** (☎ 619280) offer particularly reasonable rates but are often too busy. Lars speaks English.

## AROUND ALLUITSUP PAA Uunartoq Island & Fjord

Near the west coast of Uunartoq Island, Greenland's best and most accessible hot springs bubble gently at between 34°C and 38°C. That's not incredibly hot, but it's warm enough to laze happily in a couple of outdoor pools watching icebergs float by surreally a few hundred metres beyond. Apart from a small changing hut there are no facilities, just wild flowers and, on summer weekends, groups of picnicking or camping locals. The springs have been known since the Norse period, when they were considered medicinally valuable and belonged to a Benedictine convent at **Narsarsuaq** (not the airport but an isolated ruin across the fjord). That site's excavation in the 1930s was interrupted by WWII – Karen at Alluitsup Paa's Hotel Qaannivik can tell you the full romantic story.

On the island's southeast coast are the relatively extensive **Qerrortuut Inuit ruins**, 26 house sites that were inhabited in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In the 1920s a set of naturally mummified human remains



was discovered here amid remnants of carved wooden toys and personal artefacts. They're now in the Harvard University collection.

There are dozens of other indistinct ruins to explore on the nearby mainland shores of Uunartoq Fjord, notably at **Niaqornaarsuk**, once a Norse sheep farm and manor house.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

From Alluitsup Paa, you can charter motorboats to drop you at Uunartoq Island and pick you up at a specified time. Typical costs per person are in the Dkr300 to Dkr500 range (minimum Dkr1000) for the return trip, which can include Alluitsoq (Lichtenau), though price variation is considerable. At weekends you might be able to hitch a ride with local families, but the atmosphere is better midweek, when you have the place to yourself. Twice monthly in summer there are tour boats from Qaqortoq (Dkr850 per person, eight hours return) organised by the Qaqortoq tourist office. Once a week in summer Blue Ice in Narsarsuaq (p99) offers a Dkr2000 day-return excursion including Narsarsuaq–Alluitsup Paa helicopter transfers. It's feasible to arrange a charter boat from Nanortalik.

### Alluitsoq (Lichtenau)

pop 2

At first sight Alluitsoq looks like a picture-postcard fishing village. The little cupola-topped wooden church in a sea of buttercups is well kept with fresh candles. Rhubarb and potato patches are backed by clapboard homes and stone-and-timber sheep barns. The harbour arc of grey-white sand is ringed by golf-course-green turf. However, closer inspection reveals that almost every house is empty. It wasn't always this way. Founded in 1774 as the Moravian mission settlement of Lichtenau, this was once, incredibly, the biggest village in Greenland. In 1814 it was the birthplace of Samuel Petrus Kleinschmidt, who produced the first Greenlandic translation of the Bible. However, the mission was closed down in 1900 and the village withered away. Today there's just a single old couple in residence, though there are plans to develop the site as a holiday-camp village. Primarily the clientele would be Danish union members and their families, but spare capacity would likely be available to drop-in tourists.

Walking from Alluitsup Paa (about 5km, two hours) is pleasant, but the just-discernible path is easy to lose at several points. Follow the pipeline footpath north out of Alluitsup Paa and walk around the west side of the first lake, crossing the stream near a small red pumphouse. A slight double-back may be required to loop anticlockwise round the bluff blocking the narrow isthmus that makes Alluitsup Paa virtually an island. Once across this isthmus, climb somewhat but return as soon as possible to the coastal path, which becomes increasingly clear as you approach Alluitsoq. It's easier still to take a boat from Alluitsup Paa (Dkr100 to Dkr200) and then walk back. From Alluitsoq you could walk on to Igaliku Kujalleq (p125) in several days via Kilua, near Qorlortorsuaq (opposite).

### Alluitsup Kangerlua (Lichtenau Fjord)

Across the fjord from Alluitsup Paa on a spear-tip of peninsula is minuscule **Akuliaruseq**, a two-house village with its own little church. **Ammassivik** (Sletten) is a big enough village to have a shop and school. It's very attractively situated, especially when viewed across the fjord from the southwest. There's some decent short-distance hiking if you can stand the thick clouds of summer midges. Accommodation is possible at **House No 907** (per person Dkr150). As well as a twin bedroom, it has a big lounge furnished with sofa beds. There's a box toilet and a kitchen with a wonderfully old-fashioned wrought-iron stove, but there's no running water. Keys are available from **Vera Lund** (☎ 617360; house B934) who lives between the Pilersuisoq shop and the little school with its glass pyramid roof. She speaks only Greenlandic.

As you move further north the fjordsides get steeper, with several long, narrow ribbons of waterfall. Although the views are not as awesome as those around Aappilattoq (p133), a boat ride past the glacier-gouged Akuliarusersuaq (1655m) is very scenic.

A 15-minute stroll inland from its picturesque harbour inlet, appealing Qallimiut consists of just six houses, four barns and a cute little church with a working harmonium. The scattered village occupies a lovely position overlooking fjord and lake across potato patches and rolling hayfields that are sandwiched between rock-and-moss ridges. There are half-hearted plans to develop one of the empty houses as tourist accommoda-

tion. In Kilua, about 5km further inland by tractor road around the lake, **Hans Nielsen** (☎ 619712) can arrange accommodation for hikers walking the main Vatnahverfi trek. Note that Hans doesn't speak English.

The fjord's northwestern spur squeezes through the narrow, forbiddingly steep-sided Amitsuarsuk fjord, which dead-ends at the Qorlortorsuaq jetty. From here, **Qorlortorsuaq** is a leisurely 3km walk inland along a tractor road through bucolic, emerald-green meadows and around a shallow lake. Long before you arrive you'll see the handful of houses impressively overshadowed by the dramatic gushing of Greenland's biggest waterfall. But not for long. Sadly, these 75 vertical metres of roaring pure energy will soon disappear into the pipes of a new hydro power station. But even then it should be worth climbing to the lip of the upper Qorlortorsuaq Tasia feeder lake for lovely, dizzying views back across the meadows towards Akuliarusersuaq Mountain. The lonely, well-equipped homestead 900m south of the falls will be available for rent to tourists or workers once **Elias Nielsen** (☎ 619603) completes his new farmhouse. At the time of research, this was expected to be sometime in 2005, with beds expected to cost Dkr80 to Dkr150.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Once a week in either direction an AUL ferry follows the Nanortalik–Ammassivik–Alluitsup Paa–Qaqortoq route. Beyond Ammassivik there's no public transport. Chartering a decent motorboat from Alluitsup Paa to Qorlortorsuaq via Ammassivik and Qallimiut can cost anything from Dkr800 to Dkr2500, so ask around carefully. Very occasional tour boats charge Dkr1000 per person on the same route. Boat rides direct to Qorlortorsuaq from Alluitsup Paa should become easier to arrange once the power-station building commences in earnest. From Qorlortorsuaq it's possible to walk to Igaliku Kujalleq in one long day, starting up the west side of Qorlortorsuaq Tasia from the Qorlortorsuaq power station/falls. Maps are essential.

### CENTRAL VATNAHVERFI

#### Igaliku Kujalleq (Søndre Igaliku)

Igaliku Kujalleq is built on the historic Norse site of **Unðir Höfði**. Relatively substantial church ruins remain near the dock and

### CLASSIC TREKS 3: VATNAHVERFI

Use the 1:100,000 Qaqortoq and Narsaq hiking maps to navigate the charming web of multi-day walking possibilities. Try avoiding lower valleys that can be clogged by annoyingly thick bushes. The classic route goes from Igaliku Kujalleq via Qorlortorsuaq and Kilua (near Qallimiut), eventually emerging at Alluitsup Paa (p121) or Kangerluarsorujuk (below), but there are many variants. Well-respected **Topas** (www.greenland-discoverer.com) organises two-week group treks sleeping in sheep farms and huts, including one of their own near Jespersen Bræ glacier.

the two-house **youth hostel** (☎ 666913, mobile 492270; soffiannuag@yahoo.dk; dm Dkr175). The hostel is often unstaffed, as English-speaking owner Sofiangak Kristiansen lives 5km away at Qorlortukasik.

The hostel can provide meals including a big brunch/breakfast (Dkr150/75). It also hires out bicycles (Dkr150 per day) on which you could pedal a track that winds round several lakes to Timerliit, Saqqaq, Taslikuloq and Qanisartuut, where there's another **hostel** (☎ 649412; qanisartuut@greenet.gl; dm Dkr225).

Either hostel can arrange boat transfers to and from Igaliku or Narsaq for around Dkr600. Some hikers walk from Igaliku to Iterlak and get picked up there. However, this trek is overrated, saves no money and involves wading at least one very cold river en route. Rivers between Iterlak and Igaliku Kujalleq are too wide to ford unless you trek well up towards Jespersen Bræ glacier.

### Kangerluarsorujuk

The grassy bowl around Kangerluarsorujuk farm is rendered photogenic by the curious 'graveyard' of stray icebergs caught near the dead end of the long, straight Kangerluarsorujuk fjord. The super-friendly Nielsen family speak good English and rent a cosy **hut** (☎ 649415; kang27@greenet.gl; dm Dkr225) with kitchenette that could sleep up to four squeezed together. It's serenaded by a stream rich in Arctic char. Costs include breakfast and showers in the homely main farmhouse, where the yard is adorned by geological curiosities. Pick-ups from Qaqortoq or Eqalugaarsuit cost Dkr600. Arranging your own ride from Eqalugaarsuit may cost less.

Simplest of myriad possible hikes is a pleasant 2km stroll by tractor road to the hospitable if rather ramshackle Kangerluarsorujuk Qinnua farm (no accommodation). Avoid walking alongside Ammassiviup Tasia lake – the going is annoyingly tough due to bushes and many mosquitoes.

## NANORTALIK REGION

If you visit only one area of Greenland, the Nanortalik region makes a superb choice, provided the weather and the ice situation oblige. If you're touring extensively in South Greenland, save the Nanortalik area as the finale or you may find everywhere else a slight anticlimax.

### NANORTALIK TOWN

pop 1540

Nanortalik town colourfully fills a fairly flat but eccentrically edged peninsula on a moorland island that rises to two chunky heights with great viewpoints. The town's historic southern quarter retains oodles of charm and offers sea views peppered with islands and icebergs. Leave as much time as possible to visit the surrounding fjords, which are backed with astonishingly spiky granite spires.

### History

The Norse name for Nanortalik Island was Hrakbjarnarey (Bear Hunt Island), and doubtless it was a hunting ground used by both Norse and Inuit people, though details are scanty. In 1797 a permanent trading and supply depot was set up by Julianehåb traders at Sissaritoq (see p129). The population shifted to Nanortalik's present location in 1830 to make use of the better harbour facilities. The region's main export was whale blubber and seal products, seals being particularly attracted to the ice floes that crowd the local fjords in early summer. However, in the 20th century declining demand for seal products resulted in the abandonment of many outlying settlements. The summer ice that had been a boon to seal hunters made Nanortalik much less viable as a fishing base.

### Information

**Hospital** (☎ 613211; Isua)

**Internet café** (Jujuqaat Aqq) Upstairs in a blue cube building above the music studios; computers are set up,

but at the time of research there was nobody to run the place.

**Laundry** (Chemnitzip B480/2; ☎ 8am-8pm) Buy wash cards from Brugsen supermarket.

**Police** (☎ 613 222; Roskildip Aqq)

**Post office** (☎ 9am-3pm Mon-Fri) Behind the tourist office. Changes cash (but not travellers cheques) with a Dkr30 commission. Two ATMs.

**Tourist office** (☎ /fax 613633; mobile 490298; nanortalik@greenet.gl; Lundip B128; Postboks 43, DK-3922 Nanortalik; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat & Sun) The ever-helpful Niels does all in his power to help and is often able to juggle boat charters to match tourists and climbing groups, saving both a lot of money. The tourist office doubles as AUL booking office and contact point for the town's hostels. It rents climbing and fishing gear and kayaks, and has ADSL Internet (per 15 minutes Dkr25). The extensive shop sells maps, camping gas, souvenirs and Greenlandic music CDs. You can exchange US dollars, UK pounds and euros without commission but at a poorer rate than in the post office. Credit cards are accepted. For cash advances the 3.75% charge is passed on.

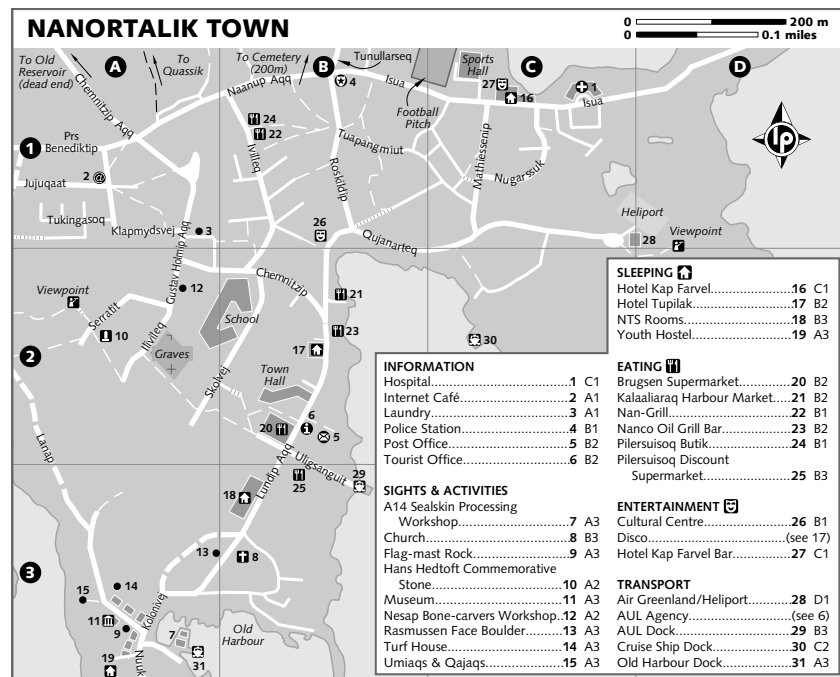
### Sights

#### OLD HARBOUR AREA

Nanortalik's old harbour area is incredibly picturesque. With red picket fences, carpets of yellow flowers and painted timber cottages it looks like a film-set New England fishing village that's been given a pantomime mountain backdrop. It's well worth strolling around several times at different tides and times of day to enjoy it in a variety of light conditions. Beside a set of mini cannons you can climb stairs up the curious egg-shaped **flag-mast rock** for a bird's-eye view. The most striking building is the distinctive 1916 **church** with its white, rocket-shaped façade. Nearby is the large **face boulder** that locals consider bears a likeness to national hero Knud Rasmussen. To see why, sit on the bench 40m south of the church and look over your left shoulder. The dockside building marked A14 on its roof (as a WWII aerial identifier) is a **sealskin processing workshop** where you might see pelts being salted and scrubbed. Nuuk St ends near the tiny youth hostel cottage on a little peninsula with lawns and fine sea views.

### MUSEUM

Most of the other lovely harbour-area buildings date from the 19th century and are now elements in the multifaceted **town museum**



(☎ 613406; nanortalik.museum@greenet.gl; Kiffat B7; admission free; ☎ 1-4pm Sun-Thu Jun-Sep, Tue, Thu & Sun Oct-May).

The green shingle-fronted building with attached bell was once the general store. Next door an 1852 blubber house exhibits *qajaqs* and hunting paraphernalia, while the 1839 oil-boiling house has somewhat gruesome vats, big cauldrons, presses and winches. Along Kiffat Aqq is the **museum office** (B7), hidden at the back of which are displayed costumes and a mid-20th-century room. In an 1840 house beyond is a collection of radio equipment and a small **geological display** (house B18). The museum **bakery** (B6) is said to date from 1860, but the ovens are fairly recent. There's also an **old cooperage** (B122), stables and a reconstructed turf hut with its walls plastered in old newspapers. Near the waterside is another **turf hut** (partly built, showing construction methods) and some sealskin tents. There are often several *qajaq* and *umiaq* boats on drying stands nearby.

On request, the museum will open specially for groups, but it then charges Dkr25 per person.

### OTHER SIGHTS

If you don't want to climb Quassik there are several places within town to get some lovely, effortless views. For the magnificently jagged horizon of Sermersoq, stand behind the Hotel Kap Farvel or on the view rock just southeast of the heliport. For seaward views, sit on the youth hostel lawn or stroll up to the radio mast on Serratit. The **commemorative stone** at this point is for the *Hans Hedtoft* shipwreck; the ship went down off Cape Farewell in 1959 with no survivors.

It's possible if not mind-blowingly interesting to visit the **Nesap bone-carvers' workshop** (☎ 613540; Gustav Holmpip Aqq B176; ☎ irregular).

### Activities

In this region, climbers have an unparalleled choice of vertical rock walls and granite spikes to get their clips into. Many peaks are as yet unclimbed, and even the most popular 'standard' routes are mostly for very advanced trad-climbers. Comparisons are with Patagonia, Norway's Lofoten islands and El Cap in Yosemite. This would be the ultimate place for base jumping. Check out the photos

on [www.nanortalik.gl](http://www.nanortalik.gl). Niels at Nanortalik tourist office is reckoned to be one of the most climber-friendly tourist officers on the planet. He keeps collections of expedition reports, and can offer detailed assistance if you're organising transport and provisions shipments.

Nanortalik Island and Tasermiut Fjord are spectacular places for sea kayaking. The tourist office hires out kayaks (per day/week/fortnight Dkr400/2000/3500), but only to experienced paddlers: the fjords have sheer-sided sections with no available sheltering beaches, so this is not a place for beginners.

## Sleeping

Nanortalik has a good accommodation selection for so small a place but nowhere has a reception desk, so book ahead. You'll be met on arrival and given a key.

**Hotel Kap Farvel** (☎ 613294; [www.kapfarvel.gl](http://www.kapfarvel.gl); Isua B304; s/d from Dkr625/1000, with bathroom s/tw Dkr900/1125) The better rooms with en-suite bathroom might not be five star, but they're among the best appointed in Greenland. Bed linen and lamps are stylish; coffee, tea and a kettle are provided; and there's a welcome marzipan when you arrive. Views across the fjord to craggy Sermersq are truly idyllic. Curiously, the building itself looks less than appealing, and there's no obvious entrance so dropping in unannounced is not a good idea. There are smaller, older rooms with shared bathrooms, but in that lower price bracket you'd be better off in NTS. The hotel website advertises dormitories, but that refers to the **Hotel Tupilak** (dm/tw Dkr250/500), which despite the name is now run as a hostel. It's a little less cosy than the old youth hostel but much more spacious, and it has a worn but welcoming sitting room looking out towards the harbour. Several 'dorms' have only two bunks and can be rented as rooms. There's a decent kitchen, and guests have free use of the sauna. Arrange bookings and keys through the tourist office.

**Youth Hostel** (Nuuk; dm Dkr195) This delightful eight-bed cottage seems to have been built for Lilliput. There's a sweet, well-equipped little kitchen and communal sitting room, a shower and a Greenland box-toilet. Just outside, a picnic table has fine sea views. Organise bookings and keys through the tourist office. Camping on the lawn outside with use of the hostel facilities costs Dkr100.

**NTS rooms** (☎ 613386; [nicoh@greenet.gl](mailto:nicoh@greenet.gl); Lundip B254; s/d/tr Dkr550/700/900) These very neat and clean, if somewhat impersonal, furnished mini apartments are near the church. Each has a table, an equipped kitchen and a fairly large shower room. Triples have an extra sitting room.

## Eating

**Hotel Kap Farvel Restaurant** (☎ 613294; mains Dkr105-190; ☎ 7.15-9.30am, noon-1.30pm & 6-8pm) This highly recommended restaurant is fairly reckoned to be one of the best in rural Greenland. Celebrated chef Per Grenå cooks local ingredients with a delicious modern twist. The excellent vegetarian alternative is much more than a token garnish. There's a Dkr85 multi-item lunch deal, and the very filling Dkr125 two-course set dinner is superb value. Reserve a few hours ahead so that the appropriate fresh supplies can be purchased.

**Nan-Grill** (☎ 613580; Ivilleq B1344; ☎ 11am-8pm Sun-Thu, 11am-9pm Fri-Sat) The grill has the standard hot-dog and burger selection.

**Nanco Oil Grill Bar** (☎ 613210; Lundip; snacks Dkr16-56; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri) Served from a side room in the petrol station, the same standard selection is advertised with disarming honesty as 'Junk Food'.

## SELF-CATERING

**Brugsen supermarket** (Lundip B376; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Thu, 8am-6pm Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Includes a bakery counter, open from 7am.

**Kalaaliaraq Harbour market** (☎ variable, Mon-Sat) Sells whatever may have been recently caught or picked, from seal ribs to berries to potatoes.

**Pilersuisoq Butik** (☎ 9am-7pm)

**Pilersuisoq discount supermarket** (☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat)

## Entertainment

At the side of the Hotel Kap Farvel there's a pleasant if sometimes rowdy **bar** (☎ 6pm-midnight Mon-Sat; beers Dkr39). There are fairly frequent bingo nights at the **cultural centre** (Lundip). You could listen at the door of the church when the talented town choir practices (early most evenings), and on special occasions (eg when cruise ships pay for it) you can see *qajaq*, *umiaq* and folk-dancing demonstrations performed by children in costume. Dancing is more perfunctory at the disreputable Hotel Tupilak **disco** (☎ 8pm-3am Fri), which produces plenty of broken glass.

## Getting There & Away

The tourist office doubles as the **AUL agency** (☎ 613633). **Air Greenland** (☎ 613288; Qujanarteq 1371; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 7am-5pm Wed) is within the heliport.

## AIR

Fog willing, Air Greenland has Wednesday and Friday helicopter shuttles to Alluitsup Paa (Dkr570), Qaqortoq (Dkr995), Narsaq (Dkr1426) and Narsarsuaq (Dkr1295). Each ride is spectacular and well worth the money.

## BOAT

The *Najaaraq Ittuk* sails up to three times weekly between Nanortalik and Qaqortoq (Dkr350, 4¼ to 6½ hours) via Alluitsup Paa (Dkr200). Once weekly in each direction there's a stop in Ammassivik (Dkr235); on a different run there's a stop in Saarloq (Dkr260) and Egalugaarsuit (Dkr275). The highlight of a trip from Qaqortoq is the section between Alluitsup Paa and Nanortalik, passing between forbiddingly tall mountain walls down Sermersuup Sarqaa sound.

Once a week between mid-November and April the tiny *Ketil* goes to Aappilattoq (Dkr225, 3½ hours), returning the same day. This is an unmissable voyage of quite exceptional scenic wonders, but weather and ice conditions mean it is often cancelled.

## Getting Around

The tourist office hires out the enclosed 12-seat *Ketil* (Dkr1320 per hour when moving, Dkr550 waiting time), can help match you with fellow travellers to spread the costs of boat charters, and occasionally arranges excursions of its own. Other boats are not officially licensed for passengers. Nonetheless, you can arrange your own (uninsured) rides with local fishers. Reckon on around Dkr3000 to Kirkespirdalen, Dkr5500 to the end of Tasermiut Fjord and Dkr7500 to Prins Christian Sund (ice permitting) for up to eight passengers. A useful first contact is **Niko Hansen** (☎ 613386; NTS rooms).

## NANORTALIK ISLAND

Nanortalik is on a manageably sized island that offers several excellent part-day hikes. Each route is best started by walking north up Tunullaritseq St from Nanortalik town's tiny police station, passing the fairly photogenic cemetery and then bearing left on Isaf-

jordurip Aqq, a doglegged street that looks like a colourful suburban afterthought. Some 150m beyond the end of the asphalt, having passed some gravel pits, the main tractor track swings west past a shallow lake and continues towards Qaqarsuasik and various east-coast ruins. Alternatively, continue north on a small but fairly obvious footpath that rises steadily through berries and later follows a small stream to ascend Quassik.

## East Coast Ruins

Of several inconspicuous Norse and Inuit ruins, the most extensive is **Sissarissoq**. The original site of Nanortalik (1770-1830), it once had a shop, a manager's residence and blubber-storage facilities as depicted on the signboard (Danish and Greenlandic only). Today the remnants of stone-and-peat dwellings in a thick patch of buttercups are easily spotted by heading for the white cross on a coastal rock less than 10 minutes' easy walk southwest of the Vandsø reservoir where the tractor track ends. Another 10 minutes beyond, past a dyke and a **yin-and-yang mosaic**, romantic visitors use the rounded white pebbles from **Pukitsut beach** to spell out eternal valentine initials on the bog grass. As you walk back towards Nanortalik you may spot the site of the **Nanertaliutaa ruins** amid more buttercups on the first headland northwest of the Vandsø Reservoir. The small, listing basalt pillar here is known as the **Bear Stone**. It's a lintel from one of the ruins and supposedly got its name when it was used by a spilloit Inuit boy to tie up a pet polar-bear cub.

## Quassik (Ravnefjeldet)

It takes just over an hour to climb 308m Quassik (Ravens' Mountain) for sublime 360-degree views encompassing the eccentric spires of Sermersq island. There are glimpses of Kirkespiret's raised rocky finger and Tasiusaq Bay, plus the lovely iceberg-spangled island seascapes to the south. The walk is pretty easy with only one very short steep section and a few boggy patches, but allow plenty of time to gaze from each of the three subpeaks. True to its name, guardian ravens will be watching you.

## Qaqarsuasik (Storfjeldet)

If you want to go higher, it's not too difficult to climb the island's highest massif, Qaqarsuasik (Storfjeldet), though there are no



marked paths. Beware, though, that the southern summit (559m) has an especially naughty tendency to suddenly vanish into fog. Accordingly, be very cautious when walking here, as the peak's western flank drops away almost vertically as sea cliffs. View-seeking locals generally stick to the northerly subpeak **Apussigajvitseq** (482m).

## AROUND NANORTALIK TOWN

There are numerous opportunities for spectacular boat rides in the region's fjords, notably to Tasermiut (see below) and in the Aappilattoq area (see p133). By kayak or motor launch you might consider heading up Qoornoq sound to **Umiiviarisuk Island**, where there are a number of hunters' cabins on the north tip. Further up the same impressive waterway at the pointy southern tip of Am-itsoq Island are the ruins of an abandoned **graphite mine**, where the rocks shimmer with an iridescent film of carbon grease. Amid scraps of rusting extraction equipment are several hazardously decaying mine tunnels. **Kirkespirdalen**, a valley named for the spindly vertical protrusion of Kirkespiret (1590m), is Greenland's Klondike, with burly Canadian labourers and massive lorries working a new **gold mine**. The mine is not yet open to tourists, but in the future Nanortalik tourist office hopes to arrange excursions, including panning for your own golden souvenir. It's possible to hike across to Tasermiut Fjord from here, or to continue a boat tour to the hot springs at Uunartoq Island (p123).

## Tasermiut (Ketils Fjord)

Grand and beautiful, Tasermiut winds some 70km northeast from Nanortalik to the nose of a tidewater glacier. The fjord's landscapes are a symphony of grandly chiselled mountains interspersed with relatively lush U-shaped valleys. These are backed with yet more clusters of dangerously overhanged mountains that seem drawn from a Tolkien fantasy. The drama starts as you round the nose of **Jakobinerhuen** (634m), a bare-stone peak resembling two canoodling walrus. Commanding a scenic mountain-ringed bay, the fjord's only village is picturesque little **Tasiusaq** (population 100). Beyond the photogenic **Nuugaarsuk Peninsula** (with its sheep farm and school summer camp), Greenlanders are excited to see that rarest of phenomena: trees. A few diminutive pines grow beyond

the Kuussuaq river, outlet of Lake Taseruaq, behind which Qinnquadalen approximates a small forest.

Further up the fjord, Tasermiut's top attractions are the towering finger of **Kirkespiret** (1590m), the gleaming vertical rock-faces of **Ulamertorsuaq** (1830m to 1858m, 'Uli' to climbers) and **Nalumaasortoq** (2045m, 'Nami'), plus the rocky horn of **Ketil** (2003m) with its 1400m granite wall. Beyond lies the green, mosquito-rich valley of **Klosterdalen**, site of a Norse-era Augustinian monastery, of which some very limited ruins remain.

The fjord ends in another flurry of photogenic peaks and a pair of massive, retreating glaciers. Sermitsiaq has already recoiled into its valley, but Sermeq still reaches the fjord. With a small boat you can land and touch the ice, which slopes up in a cracked, slow-motion cascade to over 1300m, pegged by two rocky *nunatak* fangs.

## HIKING

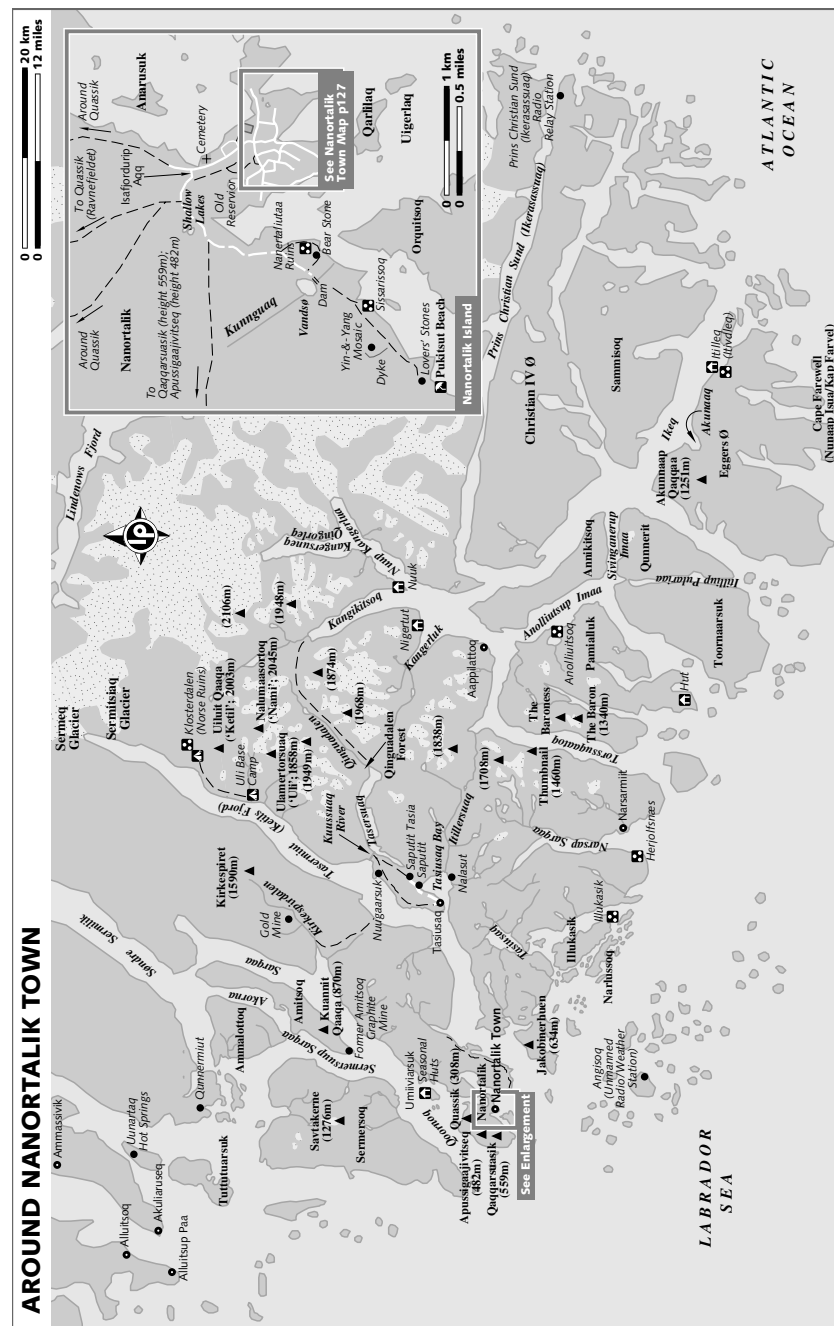
There's a 1:100,000 scale Tasermiut hiking map, but don't be fooled – most of the walking in this region is extremely taxing, with some difficult or downright dangerous river crossings and lots of bushwhacking through overzealous shrubby growth. Nonetheless, with such gorgeous surroundings you may find it all worth the struggle. A relatively easy short hike is the bouncy bog-hop between Tasiusaq and Nuugaarsuk. For all other routes take careful advice before setting off.

## SLEEPING

Take a tent. Tasiusaq has no formal accommodation, though **Peter Andreasen** (Green house) reportedly offers homestays. Nanortalik school's Nuugaarsuk camp-hostel is beautifully situated, but it's so rundown with graffiti on its walls that at the time of writing management was refusing to accommodate tourists. It's still worth enquiring, and repairs are mooted. Climbers typically strike a base camp at the mouth of the unnamed valley some 5km south of Klosterdalen, allowing convenient attacks on both Uli and Ketil.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

On Wednesday evenings the *Ketil* mini-ferry makes a quick return dash from Nanortalik to Tasiusaq (Dkr185, one hour each way). That trip makes a very scenic excursion, but to see the most dramatic granite peaks you'll



need to join a group trip or charter a boat (around Dkr5500) to Klosterdalen or beyond. If there's nobody to share with, consider riding the *Ketil* to Aappilattoq instead.

## THE FAR SOUTH

The landscapes east of Nanortalik are quite simply some of the most beautiful on earth. Access and facilities are limited, but the wonderful villages of Aappilattoq and Narsarmiit are stunning places to unwind, and the fjords beyond are unforgettablely beautiful when not hidden by fog or blocked by ice.

### Narsarmiit (Narsaq Kujalleq/Frederiksdal)

pop 127

Greenland's southernmost settlement, Narsarmiit has a glorious northwestern backdrop of rocky spires best viewed by walking 2km east along a narrow asphalt lane out to the lighthouse and then looking back. Although the village is less convenient than Aappilattoq as a base for reaching the very finest fjords, the accommodation options are better, and there are a fine **church**, a **sealskin workshop** (☎ 618561) and various short-distance hiking opportunities.

### HISTORY

The present village dates from an 1824 Moravian mission that was named Frederiksdal to honour King Frederik VI. Materials for the delightful 1826 church with its perfect little central bell cupola were transported all the way from Qaqortoq in *umiaq* skin boats. Even more extraordinary were the shopping-spree trips made by east-coast families, who would paddle down from Tasiilaq to buy a gun or a few fish hooks from Frederiksdal's store; the return trip might take three to five years. Since WWII the village has hosted a radio navigation station. Until the 1980s it was Greenland's node on the Canada to Iceland telecommunications cable, and today it relays crucial signals between aeroplanes and the transatlantic air-traffic control centre in Gander Newfoundland.

### SLEEPING & EATING

**Tele-Frederiksdal** (☎ 618539; kef@tele.gl; s/d/tw Dkr450/450/450) The communication station is a modest collection of blue and cream buildings tucked away 500m east of the village. It has three slightly worn but very comfortably fur-

nished buildings. Each has equipped kitchen, hot shower, flush toilet, TV room and up to four bedrooms. The biggest also has a billiard table and a super-cute bar, though you must bring your own drinks. Knud and Jaspur speak great English. Note that, while tourists are welcome, reservations can't be 100% guaranteed: the accommodation is designed primarily for visiting technicians, who may arrive suddenly if emergency repairs are required. In such cases your best shot is the **service house** (☎ 618577; sleeping space Dkr125). What you get there is a fold-out couch or floor space in the village meeting room, entered through the public laundry. Camping is best beyond the helipad towards the lighthouse, where the infuriating flies aren't as bad and several streams provide good fresh water. **Pilersuisoq store** (☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) stocks limited food supplies. Seal meat is available in such abundance that, if you have a knife and a bag, you can often help yourself from a freshly skinned carcass left on rocks by the harbour.

### Herjolfsnæs

Across the dramatic Narsap Sarqaa fjord from Narsarmiit lies the windswept Norse site of Herjolfsnæs. It was established by Icelandic merchant Herjólf Bárðsen, who arrived with Erik the Red in 985. Unlike other fjord-head Norse stock-rearing settlements, this was primarily a trading station and would have been the de facto entry and exit point for all medieval commerce between Greenland and Iceland/Norway, hence its relative wealth. Between two arcs of unusually sandy beach, the most visible ruins are of the 13th-century parish church, with piled, cut stones up to a metre high and equally thick. There's also a distinct turf-walled hall close to the concrete shell of a failed 1960s sheep farm. An information-board map shows several more ruins, and there are yet more an hour's walk away at Sandhavn, where much of the settlement's Norse population probably lived.

Archaeologists discovered some of the oldest garments ever found intact preserved in the permafrost beneath the Herjolfsnæs churchyard site. Replicas are on display at the Nanortalik and Narsaq museums.

Boat access from Narsarmiit (around Dkr200 return, 10 minutes each way) depends on reasonably good weather, as the mooring

points are guarded by dangerous submerged rocks. A reliable, good-humoured boatman with decent spoken English is **Kristian Kvist** (white cottage B785).

### Aappilattoq

pop 160

Superbly photogenic Aappilattoq (Augpilattoq) sits on a perfect natural harbour, a cleft pyramidal rock face soaring above it. The village surveys an astounding panorama of fjords and bare, spiky peaks. It's so hemmed in by cliffs as to make hiking beyond the lovely rock-knob viewpoints virtually impossible, but its situation is ideal for boat trips into Greenland's most beautiful inland waterways (ice permitting). Unbelievably untouched by tourism, the village economy revolves around seal hunting. If you're not squeamish, and have extremely warm clothing and nerves of steel, the cheapest and most thrilling way to visit the area is by joining a seal hunt. But do be aware just how vulnerable those open, single-engine hunting boats are to the ever-shifting ice and how minimal your chances of rescue are should you have a problem!

Even if you don't stay in Aappilattoq, the ride there and back from Narsarmiit or Nanortalik is an absolute must if you have the opportunity and the good weather to enjoy it.

### SLEEPING & EATING

Homestays are somewhat awkward to arrange, but councillor **Lars Isaksen** (☎ 617605) sometimes accepts individual travellers to sleep on his sofa (Dkr150), and he might feed you too. He speaks no English, but his home is a delightful village archetype, and his son-in-law Anthon is an active hunter with a sturdy if uncovered speedboat.

The village service house is the yellow building No1438 in front of the school. For 200Dkr you could sleep on the bare mattress or the foldout sofa in its communal TV room. You'll need to clear this with caretaker Titus Amalie (red house No 1436 on the small ridge directly south of the service house), but as he has no phone it's wise to send messages ahead via the school (☎ 617625).

Although there's precious little flat space, camping is possible and rather idyllic in several flat, mossy depressions that you'll find as you climb the rocky domes beyond the

very makeshift circle of bollards that form the heliport.

**Pilersuisoq store** (☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) is surprisingly well stocked for so small a village. Fish is sporadically sold at the portside.

### Around Aappilattoq

The grandeur of the region's scenery is extraordinary and worthy of several day trips if you can manage to afford and arrange them. The easiest taster and indeed one of the finest boat rides anywhere is along **Torsukattak** (Torssuqaataq). Crammed with towering granite cliffs, this fjord squeezes all the spiky splendour of Tasermiut (see p130) into a third of the distance. Better still, the spectacle is relatively cheap to gawp at thanks to the public AUL ferry, which passes through between Narsarmiit and Aappilattoq. It's surely the most spectacular passenger ride anywhere. The majestic granite walls of Torsukattak and **Pamiialuk Island** have obvious appeal to climbers: the 1340m spire nicknamed the **Baron** was first climbed in 2004, the nearby **Baroness** wall (600m) is increasingly popular, and the 1460m **Thumbnail** is reckoned to be the world's highest sea cliff.

Northeast of Aappilattoq it's a relatively quick flit up **Nuup Kangerlua** to two splendid tidewater glaciers, which have awesome ice walls that calve regularly into the fjord. **Prins Christian Sund** (Ikerasassuaq) is a channel over 60km long with more glacier noses, several fine waterfalls and a parade of half a dozen rounded tipped peaks lining the southern flank of its most picturesque western end. It gets less impressive further east, where there's a permanent radio station but no village. Some cruise ships promise routes through Prins Christian Sund, but this can never be assured as in some years the fjord never entirely clears of ice and passage might prove impossible.

Possibly the most spectacular fjord in all of Greenland is the superlative **Sivinganerup Imaa** south of Aappilattoq, running east between veritable cathedrals of rocky spires. Twin islands **Qunnerit** and **Toornaarsuk** are joined here by a land bridge so insignificant that one can take a Zodiac dinghy across at high tide into **Illiupul Pulariaa**, a fjord so dark, narrow and high sided that it's positively eerie. The grandeur continues on **Eggers Ø** island, where **Akunaq Inlet** leads to an idyllic if fly-blighted

trout stream and frames the surreally sharp needle peak of **Akunnaap Qaqqaa** (1251m). At **Itilleq** (Itivdleq) there's a four-bunk heated hunters' hut (free but often full) at the base of an enchanting abandoned village. Here you'll find well-preserved turf walls, overgrown angelica gardens and a big cross at a fjord lookout. An easy 15-minute stroll past some Inuit graves and up a hummocky rock bluff brings you marvellous panoramas over the **Ikeq fjord** and east across otherworldly lakes to the island's spindly mountain spine.

Pudding-shaped **Cape Farewell** (Nunaap Isua/Kap Farvel) is a pale, barren rocky outcrop that's considered Greenland's southernmost point (though this status ignores Uummanarsuaq and several islets). Icebergs and Cape Farewell's infamous currents sank the *Hans Hedtoft*, Greenland's *Titanic*, in 1959. For scenery the cape isn't inordinately spectacular, but seals are common and views

improve dramatically if you venture up the inlets in Eggers Ø's deeply indented southern coast.

### Getting There & Away

Once a week (currently Wednesday), weather conditions permitting, the 12-seat mini-ferry *Ketil* sails out and back from Nanortalik to Aappilattoq (Dkr225, 3½ hours) via Narsarmiit (Dkr185, 1¼ hours). It's a fabulous ride but, especially in May and June, ice can block the route completely and a helicopter service might be substituted (Dkr450 to Narsarmiit).

A chartered open boat along Torsukattak (going between Aappilattoq and Narsarmiit) usually costs Dkr400 to Dkr700. Friendly Aappilattoq hunter and boat-owner **Themo Bejaminsen** (☎ 617666) speaks some words of English and can get you almost anywhere that the ice allows for a negotiated fee.