



Disko Bay

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Sit mesmerised by the natural force and beauty of **Ilulissat Kangerlua** (p176), the northern hemisphere's most prolific glacier
- Dogsled under the midnight sun on **Disko Island** (p186)
- Catch a gig at the **Aasiaat Rock Festival** (p185)
- Discover the roots of Greenland's past at **Qasigiannuit** (p181)
- Spend a night on a glacier at **Icecamp Eqi** (p180)



Many visitors to Greenland make a beeline for iceberg-studded Disko Bay, and more specifically to Ilulissat, the centre of the country's tourist industry. The town is home to star attraction Ilulissat Kangerlua (Jakobshavn Icefjord), the northern hemisphere's most prolific tidewater glacier. The massive ice-choked expanse it creates disgorges gargantuan icebergs – some weighing up to seven million tonnes – into Disko Bay, a truly stunning sight. Consequently, Ilulissat is well set up for travellers, but at times is overwhelmed by them.

The town's tourist agencies offer a huge variety of tours to and around the local glaciers, to wilderness camps and to outlying villages. For a real taste of the High Arctic, a trip to these smaller, less frequently visited settlements is highly recommended. These outposts see few visitors and offer an authentic look at life in the area. Alternatively, you could visit out of season and see Ilulissat in winter or early spring.

Out in Disko Bay lies the largest and newest of Greenland's islands, Disko Island. The bizarre geological landscape of the island makes for excellent hiking, and its relatively remote location means you'll have most trails entirely to yourself. Inland, the island has its own icecap, offering a chance to go dogsledding throughout the summer months.

For visitors heading north on the ferry, the Disko Bay area offers the first glimpse of the true north. At 300km north of the Arctic Circle you can expect perpetual day from late May to mid-July, and many visitors sleep restlessly as the sun circles day after day without setting. In winter the area is in darkness for six weeks and is normally the marker for the southern extent of the pack ice.

ILULISSAT REGION

ILULISSAT TOWN (JAKOBSHAVN)

pop 4470

This is it. This is why you came to Greenland and spent all that money. Ilulissat is one of those places so spectacular that it just makes everything else pale in comparison. Within walking distance of town you will be confronted with icebergs of such gargantuan proportions that they are truly incomprehensible – and you don't even have to take an expensive helicopter trip to see them.

The town is situated at the mouth of a 40km icefjord that produces 20 million tons of ice per day (equal to the volume of water used by New York city in an entire year), and the chunks that break off can produce tidal waves up to 10m high.

Ilulissat is Greenland's third-largest town and its most popular tourist destination, often overwhelmed with visitors between early July

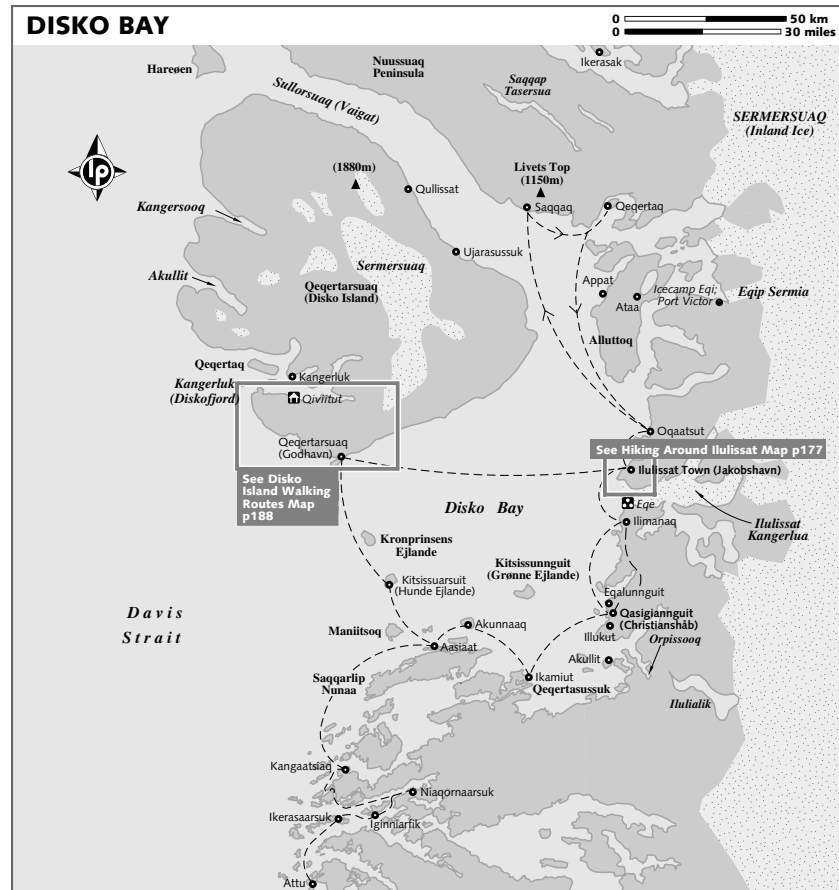
and mid-August. It's scruffy and unkempt and has a disorderly spirit that's noticeably absent in the tidier towns farther south, but the facilities are good and competition to pull in the tourist dollars is strong.

Six thousand sled dogs also call Ilulissat home, and their howling can keep the whole town awake at night. Do not approach them, however; they're not pets and can bite.

History

From 4000 to 3500 years ago, the Ilulissat area was inhabited by the Saqqaq and Dorset cultures. The abandoned village of Sermermiut, beside the icefjord, dates back perhaps 3500 years and is one of over 120 archaeological sites in the Ilulissat district. When the Norwegian missionary Poul Egede arrived in 1737, Sermermiut was the largest Inuit village in Greenland, with 200 people living in 20 or more houses.

The first Europeans to visit Ilulissat were the Norse, who sailed up the coast to hunt



seals and walrus. The next contact wasn't until the late 17th century, when Dutch whalers arrived and established trade with the Inuit. Some of the outsiders cheated the locals so much that the Dutch government placed the mistreatment of Greenlanders in the same category as piracy, with the same stiff penalties!

In 1780 the Danish king decided that monopoly trade would be appropriate for Greenland, and the nuisance Dutch whalers were ousted in the only naval battle ever fought in Greenland, just outside the town's present harbour.

Poul Egede officially founded Ilulissat in 1741, intending to use it as a summer mission and trading centre. The mission

was so successful that it attracted increasing numbers of local Inuit, and by 1782 Ilulissat had grown into a colony and later became the metropolis and service centre of Disko Bay. Today tourism, fishing and shrimping are the mainstays of the local economy.

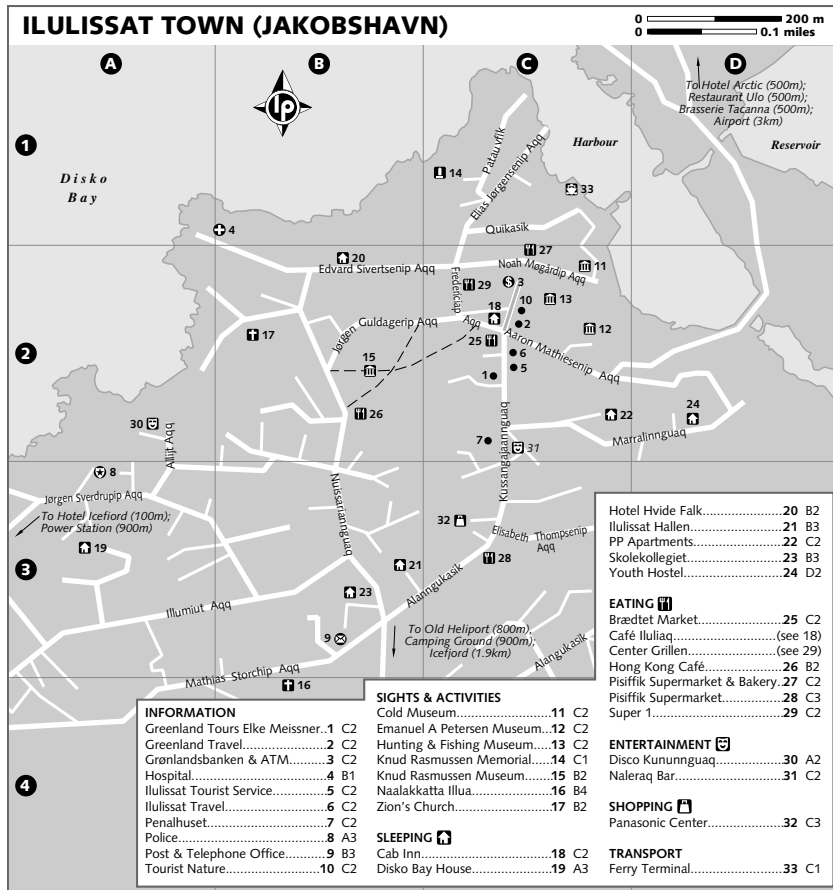
Information

Greenland Tours Elke Meissner (☎ 944411; www.visitgreenland.com/gtem; Kussangajannuaq B450; ☎ 9am-6pm)

Greenland Travel (☎ 943246; Kussangajannuaq 7; ☎ 10am-4.30pm Mon-Thu, 10am-4pm Fri)

Grønlandsbanken (☎ 947700; Kussangajannuaq 7) **Hospital** (☎ 943211)

Ilulissat Tourist Service (☎ 944322; www.its.gl)



Kussangajannnguaq 11; ☎ 9am-6pm) Internet access for Dkr40 per half-hour.

Ilulissat Travel (☎ 944300; www.ilulissattravel.gl; Aron Mathieseni Aqq 2ab; ☎ 9am-6pm)

Penalhuset (☎ 944925; Kussangajannnguaq; ☎ noon-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat) Stocks a selection of English-language books and a good choice of postcards.

Police (☎ 943222)

Post office (☎ 943655; Alannukasik; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri)

Tourist Nature (☎ 944420; touna@greenet.gl; Kussangajannnguaq 5; ☎ 9am-6pm)

Sights

KNUD RASMUSSEN MUSEUM

The lovely red house that once served as the town vicarage was also the birthplace

of Greenland's favourite son, Knud Rasmussen (see p174). It now houses the town museum (☎ 943643; www.ilumus.gl; Nuisariannnguaq 9; admission Dkr25; ☎ 10am-5pm Apr-Oct), dedicated to the Arctic explorer, anthropologist and author whose typically Greenlandic philosophy of life was summed up in his oft-quoted utterance 'Give me winter, give me dogs, and you can have the rest'.

One room is devoted to his expeditions and anthropological and linguistic studies across the North American Arctic. Other exhibits deal with Greenlandic traditions, early Danish life in Greenland, and ancient Inuit artefacts and history. There is also an exhibition on the development of Ilulissat and a large collection of photographs of the town.

EMANUEL A PETERSEN ART MUSEUM

Greenlandic landscapes are on view at the Emanuel A Petersen Art Museum (☎ 944443; Aron Mathieseni Aqq 7; admission Dkr25; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Sun), where most of the works are by the eponymous Danish artist. Petersen (1894-1948) was a prolific painter, and during his career he made several trips to Greenland to paint its extraordinary landscape and light. Through numerous exhibitions around Europe and his illustrations in *Greenland in Pictures*, published in 1928, he introduced the magic of the Arctic to the rest of Europe. When he died he left an extraordinary collection of paintings of early-20th-century Greenland, 66 of which are exhibited here.

HUNTING & FISHING MUSEUM

The newly renovated Hunting & Fishing Museum (☎ 944484; off Noah Møgårdip Aqq; admission free) emphasises the hunting and fishing traditions of the polar Inuit, and contains both traditional and modern tools, implements and conveyances, as well as a wooden dory. There are no set opening hours, but during business hours there's usually someone at the door; if not, ask for the key at the Knud Rasmussen Museum.

Nearby is the Cold Museum, housed in Ilulissat's oldest building, the tarred 'black warehouse' that dates from Ilulissat's commercial whaling days. It houses a collection of tools and machinery from the old trading settlement. Ask at the Hunting & Fishing Museum for the key.

CHURCHES

The missionary Jørgen Jørgensen Sverdrup managed to instil such religious fervour into his Ilulissat flock in the late 18th century that they set about raising the funds to build their own church. From 1777 to 1779 the Greenlandic residents of Ilulissat and nearby Oqaatsut collected 59 whales and 157 barrels of whale oil. Combined with the contribution of 25 whales and 52 barrels of oil from the Danish inhabitants, they managed to cover the costs of Zion's Church, a striking edifice constructed of heavy timbers. Inside the church a lovely votive ship hangs from the ceiling, and above the altar is a copy of the famous *Christus* by Bertel Thorvaldsen.

The church is only open on Sunday; at other times, visits must be arranged through the Ilulissat Tourist Service.

Ilulissat's other church, Naalakatta Illua (the house of Our Lord), was originally constructed at the coal-mining village Qullissat, on Disko Island, but when the coal ran out in 1972 the settlement was abandoned, and the following year the church was moved to Ilulissat. Whoever did the job apparently took quite literally Christ's admonition that his church be built upon a rock.

Festivals & Events

In mid-April each year Ilulissat celebrates the Arctic Palerfik, a three-day family dogsledding trip along the icefjord. Over 200 people generally take part, with as many as 1200 dogs making the trek. It's a fantastic way to meet the locals as well as a magnificent trip.

Ilulissat hosts the Arctic Midnight Orienteering Festival (<http://iog.ilulissat.gl>) each July. The event has challenging 5km, 10km, 15km and 20km courses across rough terrain. Races are held in the midnight sun, with courses of varying degrees of difficulty set out through the magnificent local scenery.

Tours

The four tourist offices, which are a combination of tourist office and travel agency, and Greenland Travel offer a bewildering number of tours. Each has its own speciality, and although you may sign up for a tour with one agency it may well be run by one of the others.

Many of the tours are offered by all the agencies, including two-hour guided town walks or walks to Sermermiut (Dkr150 to Dkr175); four- to five-hour guided walks to the icefjord (Dkr295 to Dkr325); boat trips to the icefjord (day/night Dkr400/450); and five-hour boat trips to Oqaatsut or Ilimanaq (both Dkr700). Day trips to the tidewater glacier Eqip Sermia and Port Victor (see p180) cost Dkr1395, including lunch.

Tourist Nature (☎ 944420; touna@greenet.gl; Kussangajannnguaq 5; ☎ 9am-6pm) runs a two-day trip to Ataa (see p179), including lunch at Oqaatsut, accommodation in Ataa, a traditional Greenlandic dinner and a trip to Eqi glacier (Dkr2895). A three-day version includes a full-day hike to the iccap at Eqi (Dkr3795). It also runs a combined boat and hiking trip to Ilimanaq, passing the icefjord en route (day/evening Dkr1095/1195), and six-hour fishing trips for groups of six to 10 people (Dkr850 per person).

KNUD RASMUSSEN

By far the most famous, and the most loved, of Greenland's explorers, Knud Rasmussen is Ilulissat's most celebrated son, born in the old vicarage on 7 June 1879. Kunuunnguaq, 'little Knud', as he became known, was the son of the local pastor and was of Danish, Norwegian and Greenlandic descent.

After completing school in Copenhagen, Knud tried his hand at a variety of careers, including opera singing and medicine, but it was his talent as a writer that earned him a place on the Danish Literary Expedition to Northwest Greenland in 1902. The result was his first book, *The New People*, about the traditional polar Inuit of the Melville Bay area. From 1906 to 1908 Knud joined the Ethnographical Expedition, which attempted to find the route travelled by early migrants to Greenland from Canada's Ellesmere Island.

Smitten by life in the far north, Knud and fellow Arctic enthusiast Peter Freuchen (who later wrote the book *Arctic Adventure*, which detailed many of their exploits together), established a trading company in Qaanaaq (Thule), with the objective of funding subsequent expeditions. Freuchen wrote: 'Rasmussen was something of a dandy and always carried a pair of scissors for cutting his hair and beard. Even in the most biting cold, he washed his face every day with walrus blubber and his footwear was the most beautiful in the Arctic.'

Their joint business was successful and, between 1912 and 1919, Knud conducted four more expeditions to Greenland. The experience gained from these trips led to what he hoped would be the fulfilment of his dreams: tracing the migration of the Inuit peoples from Siberia all the way to Greenland. The fifth Thule expedition set out in 1921 to gather ethnographical, archaeological, geographical and natural-history data from Greenland right across the North American Arctic. Knud visited all the Inuit communities in Arctic Canada and Alaska, collecting myths, legends and linguistic studies; he would have continued across Arctic Russia but was deported by the Soviet authorities.

The result of this trip was *The 5th Thule Expedition – The Danish Ethnographical Expedition to Arctic America*, which detailed linguistic and cultural differences between the Inuit groups across the region. It was also the basis for Rasmussen's best-known book, *Across Arctic America*. These projects earned him an honorary doctorate from Copenhagen University.

Subsequently, the sixth and seventh Thule expeditions travelled to Greenland's east coast. Knud also tried his hand at film direction, with the making of *Palos Brudéfærd* (Palo's Wedding) in the summer of 1933 in Ammassalik (now Tasiilaq). Sadly, during the filming he contracted food poisoning from pickled auks and died shortly afterwards, on 21 December 1933.

Ilulissat Tourist Service (☎ 944322; www.its.gl; Kussangajannuaq 11; ☎ 9am-6pm) offers a two-day hike to the cabin Himmelhytten (Dkr1775), two-hour twin-otter tours to the inland ice (Dkr2495) and a 30-minute helicopter or Twin Otter tour over the icefjord (Dkr995). At the time of research it was planning to offer diving from summer 2005.

Ilulissat Travel (☎ 944300; www.ilulissattravel.gl; Aron Mathieseniip Aqq 2ab; ☎ 9am-6pm) can arrange dinner with a local family (Dkr250); 30-/45-minute helicopter tours over the icefjord (Dkr1595/1895); an overnight stay in tents at the edge of the icefjord (Dkr4500); a two-day trip to Eqi (Dkr2390); and a guided day hike to Oqaatsut with return by boat (Dkr695). At the time of writing Ilulissat Travel was planning to have boat trips around Disko Bay four days a week from summer 2005.

Greenland Tours Elke Meissner (☎ 944411; www.visitgreenland.com/gtem; Kussangajannuaq B450; ☎ 9am-6pm) offers 20-minute helicopter tours to the icefjord (Dkr1695), and a flight to Lyngmarksbræen on Disko Island, with one hour of summer dogsledding (from Dkr21,000 for seven people plus Dkr750 per person for dogsledding).

Dogsledding tours, most of which run between November and April, are extremely popular and run by all agencies. They range from a quick spin around town (Dkr700, two hours) to a six-hour trip to Oqaatsut (Dkr1195 to Dkr1400). Ilulissat Travel operates tours to its Café Roofless Hut, 1½ hours' sled ride from town. From March to April longer trips are possible (two/three/four days Dkr2850/4350/6150), with overnight stays in a hunting hut or *iglo*. The Ilulissat Tourist

Service offers multiweek trips to Uummanuaq, Upernavik and Qaanaaq for real tough nuts; prices are by agreement.

In winter you'd be advised to hire some proper fur clothing if you're planning on doing any dogsledding. Daily/weekly hire costs are Dkr200/1400 from Ilulissat Travel and Ilulissat Tourist Service.

Sleeping BUDGET

B&B accommodation (Dkr375) in private homes in town or outlying villages can be arranged by any of the tourist offices.

Camping facilities (☎ 944300; info@ilulissattravel.gl; tent/person Dkr50/60) including hot showers, a kitchen and toilets have been set up at the old heliport. Make sure you put all food in the kitchen, as wandering dogs may make a meal of your tent otherwise. You can sleep in a large communal tent for Dkr150.

It's also possible to hike out of town and find a suitable spot just about anywhere, but camping is prohibited in the Sermermiut Valley. The Ilulissat Tourist Service hires tents (per day/week Dkr150/875), sleeping bags rated to -40°C (Dkr50/250) and stoves (Dkr15/75).

Youth Hostel (☎ 943377; www.ilulissathostel.dk; Marralinnguaq 47-49; dm Dkr245 Jun-Sep, Dkr295 Oct-May; ☎) Functional twin rooms are available at the large and friendly hostel close to the centre of town. There's a kitchen, TV room and laundry (Dkr20) and plenty of outdoor seating space.

Ilulissat Hallen (☎ 943459; Alanngukasik 2; dm Dkr150) Very basic 12-bed dorms are available at the sports hall. There are simple cooking facilities and a communal TV room. Bookings can be made through Ilulissat Tourist Service.

Skolekollegiet (Dkr255-295) This sleeping option is sleeping-bag accommodation at the school dormitories; book through Ilulissat Tourist Service.

MID-RANGE

Hotel Icefiord (☎ 944480; www.hotelicefiord.gl; Jørgen Sverdrup-ip Aqq 10; s/d Dkr745/990; ☎) Pleasant, motel-style accommodation with good views over the bay is available at this new hotel. The modern, simply designed rooms all have coffee-/tea-making facilities, en suite and TV. Two self-catering rooms (single/double Dkr855/1150) are also available.

Cab Inn (☎ 942242; cab-inn@icecaphotels.gl; Fredericiap Aqq 5; s/d Dkr500/800) Simple but comfortable modern rooms with en suite are available right in the centre of town at this small hotel. The rooms are pretty small, and noise from the bar can be a problem at weekends.

Other options available through any of the tourist offices:

Disko Bay House (s/d Dkr525/575) Comfortable rooms with kitchenette and shared bathrooms.

PP Apartments (Dkr650) Self-contained units or full house rental (Dkr700-1000).

TOP END

Hotel Arctic (☎ 944153; www.hotel-arctic.gl; Mittarfimmur Aqq B1128; s/d Dkr995/1365; ☎ ☎; wheelchair access) Well removed from traffic and noise, this swish hotel occupies an isolated promontory north of town with a view over the bay and icebergs. The stylish rooms are some of the best in Greenland, and there are even a few surreal aluminium *iglos* (Dkr150 extra) as annexe accommodation. There are also a sauna, a solarium and a small gym.

Hotel Hvide Falk (☎ 943343; hotel.h.falk@greenet.gl; Edvard Sivertsenip Aqq 18; s/d Dkr985/1320; ☎ ☎) Showing its age a little, this hotel doesn't offer nearly as much as the competition, and rooms on the first floor are in need of a makeover. Ask for a room on the new second floor, where modern design, flatscreen TVs and great views await you.

Eating**RESTAURANTS & CAFÉS**

Café Iluliaq (Fredericiap Aqq 5; mains Dk46-125) Bright, modern and buzzing, this little place with plenty of outdoor seating has sandwiches, burgers and salads, more substantial meaty mains, and some excellent Thai food.

Brasserie Takanna (☎ 944153; Hotel Arctic; mains Dkr55-148; ☎ 6-10pm) Giant windows flood light into the hotel brasserie, where you can fill up on a good selection of light meals ranging from pasta or nachos to fish of the day.

Restaurant Ulo (☎ 944153; Hotel Arctic; mains Dkr72-210, 2-course dinner Dkr235) The fine-dining restaurant at the Hotel Arctic offers innovative, international fusion cuisine and wonderful views over the ice-filled bay. Greenlandic barbecues (Dkr295) are held on the terrace on Saturday from late June to late August.

Hotel Hvide Falk restaurant (Edvard Sivertsenip Aqq 18; 2-/3-course dinner Dkr195/228, mains Dkr85-170) Big windows provide an excellent view of

the ice-choked bay and a distraction from the dated décor at this hotel restaurant. The summer Greenlandic buffet (Monday and Thursday, Dkr198) is the real highlight, with a chance to sample polar bear, seal, muskox, caribou and local fish. On other nights the menu offers contemporary European cooking, and the Thai restaurant has a good range of excellent dishes (four courses Dkr189, mains Dkr85 to Dkr135).

QUICK EATS

For hot dogs, snacks or coffee, try **Center Grillen** (Fredericiap Aqq; dishes Dkr30-55), or the basic **Hong Kong Café** (Nuissarianguaq; mains Dkr35-65), which serves burgers, fish and some mediocre Chinese dishes.

SELF-CATERING

The best supermarkets are the **Pisiffik stores** (☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) on Alanngukasik and Noah Møgårdip Aqq; otherwise, try **Super 1** (Ilulissat Center Marked; ☎ 8am-9pm).

The *brædtet* is in the centre.

Entertainment

The best bets for quiet entertainment are the hotel bars. The Falkereden pub at Hotel Hvide Falk has a billiard table and good views over the ice. It sometimes has live music and it sells bar snacks (Dkr39). Pub Tuukkaq at Cab Inn has a disco with happy hour from 10pm to 11pm.

The **Naleraq Bar** (Kussangajaannuaq 23; cloakroom Dkr10-20) hosts Greenlandic bands, and offers either disco or live music and dancing nightly. Both it and the Disco Kununnguaq can get a bit rough at weekends.

Shopping

The tourist offices (except Ilulissat Travel) sell foreign-language books on Greenland, and local art and carvings. Camera supplies and processing (Dkr89) are available from the **Panasonic Center** (☎ 944601; Alanngukasik).

Getting There & Away

Greenland Travel (☎ 943246; Kussangajaannuaq 7; ☎ 10am-4.30pm Mon-Thu, 10am-4pm Fri) has AUL, Air Alpha and Air Greenland information.

AIR

Air Alpha (☎ 943004) has direct helicopter flights to Qasigiannuguit (one way Dkr945, six per week) and Qeqertarsuaq (Dkr945,

12 per week). Since schedules can change daily, be sure to check in advance, even if you have a confirmed booking.

Air Greenland (☎ 943988) flies eight times weekly to Kangerlussuaq (Dkr1578, 45 minutes) and Nuuk (Dkr2971, two hours), six times weekly to Sisimiut (Dkr2414, two hours), twice weekly to Qaarsut (Dkr1046, 40 minutes), three times weekly to Upernavik (Dkr3286, 1½ hours), and twice weekly to Qaanaaq (Dkr4296, 3¾ hours).

BOAT

Ilulissat is served by ferry three times weekly from Nuuk (Dkr1565, 42 hours), once or twice weekly from Qeqertarsuaq (Dkr290, five hours), twice weekly from Uummannaq (Dkr740, 16 hours) and once weekly from Upernavik (Dkr1150, 33 hours). Two local AUL ferries chug around Disko Bay, connecting Ilulissat with Oqaatsut (Dkr185, one hour), Saqqaq (Dkr260, 7¼ hours), Qeqertaq (Dkr265, 8¼ hours), Ilimanaq (Dkr185, one hour), Qasigiannuguit (Dkr200, three hours), Asiaat (Dkr310, nine hours) and other places.

Ilulissat Tourist Service also offers boat transfer to Oqaatsut (one way Dkr350) and Eqi (Dkr647), from Eqi to Ataa (Dkr250), and from Ataa to Ilulissat (Dkr624).

Getting Around

There's no airport bus. A **taxi** (☎ 944944) will cost between Dkr70 and Dkr100.

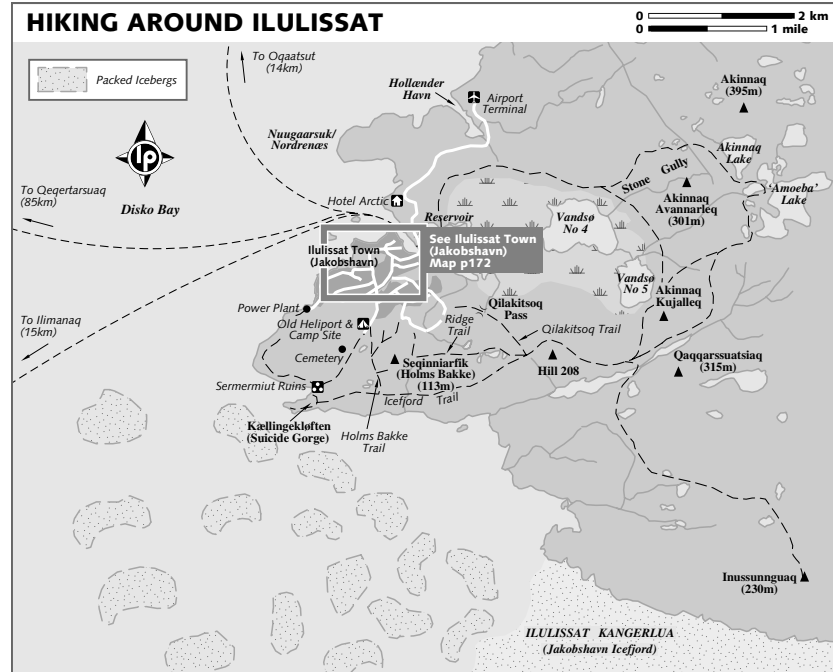
The Ilulissat **town bus** (Dkr10; ☎ 7.30am-10pm Mon-Fri) operates like a communal taxi and has no fixed route or timetable.

Bike hire costs Dkr100 per day from Ilulissat Travel.

AROUND ILULISSAT TOWN Ilulissat Kangerlua

One of the most awesome sights in Greenland and indeed the world, Ilulissat Kangerlua (Jakobshavn Icefjord) is one of the most active glaciers on the planet. Icebergs the size of small towns lie grounded at the mouth of the fjord, glistening majestically and emitting thunderous claps as they crack and fissure. The sight is guaranteed to leave an indelible impression on even the most jaded of tourists. In 2004 the icefjord was designated a Unesco World Heritage site.

The icefjord is also unique in that you don't need to take an expensive helicopter



flight or boat trip to see it – it's just a short walk from town. Head for the old heliport, 1km from Ilulissat, and follow the clearly defined path to the shore. The actual walk will only take about 20 minutes, but give yourself the whole day as you'll spend much of it sitting mesmerised by the spectacular views.

You can continue east along the shoreline to Seqinniarfik or as far as Inussussuaq, or return via the partially marked coastal route (see Hiking, below, for details).

Hiking

Local hiking clubs have marked a series of walking routes with blazed cairns. The best map is the 1:100,000 *Hiking Map West Greenland – Ilulissat*. The compass declination in this region is about 36.1°W.

SERMERMIUT

The easiest and most popular walk from Ilulissat will take you to the ruins of Sermermiut, Ilulissat Kangerlua and 113m-high Seqinniarfik (Holms Bakke), where the entire town of Ilulissat gathers on 13 January

to welcome the sun back after its six-week sojourn below the horizon.

Begin along the obvious track from the old heliport, 1km south of town, which passes through a valley and then descends gently to the shore. In a prominent grassy patch lie the remains of Sermermiut, an Inuit winter settlement that was first inhabited around 3500 years ago.

The peninsula jutting into the icefjord near Sermermiut has many inviting benches overlooking the mouth of the fjord. At the base of the peninsula is Kallingekløften, also called Suicide Gorge, after the cliff at its southern end. In times past, older people who were tired of life or becoming a burden on their families would come here to jump to their deaths in the icy waters below.

If you follow the well-marked track up the icefjord (taking either the Ridge Trail, which goes via Seqinniarfik, or the Icefjord Trail), you'll reach a narrow lake; head inland above its western shore and you'll strike the Qilakitsoq track back to Ilulissat via Qilakitsoq Pass. Alternatively, head across the stream and towards the shore

UNDERSTANDING ILULISSAT KANGERLUA

Ilulissat Kangerlua (Jakobshavn Icefjord) is the world's most prolific glacier outside Antarctica, and has been studied for over 250 years in order to develop our understanding of climate change and icecap glaciology. In the last 15 years the glacier has been slowly retreating; it has receded by more than 5km in the last two years.

At its face the glacier measures 5km wide, but only about 80m rises above the surface. Over a kilometre more of continuous ice lurks below the waterline. The glacier annually calves over 35 cubic kilometres of ice – that's about 20 million tonnes per day (enough to supply New York with water for a year) and about a tenth of all icebergs floating in Greenlandic waters.

The sea at the glacier face is 1500m deep, but the largest bergs, seven-eighths of which typically float beneath the surface, actually rest on the bottom. A 260m-deep underwater moraine lies across the mouth of the fjord, 40km away, and the ice backs up behind it until the pressure rises enough to either break up the icebergs or shove them out to sea. Consequently, the fjord is so choked with floating ice that liquid water isn't in evidence at all. It can take up to two years for the largest icebergs to reach the mouth of the fjord, and they may lie stranded in the bay for up to another year. They then move north with the currents before heading down the east coast of Baffin Island towards Newfoundland (both in Canada).

A trip around the icebergs stranded at sea is a truly amazing experience. The bergs you'll see are of two main types: those with a jagged, contorted surface have just broken off the glacier and drifted out to sea; those with a smooth surface have turned over on the way, and what you are seeing is the bottom of the glacier smoothed by years of grinding against the surface. You'll also see streaks of clear or blue ice in the bergs – this is where a crack has been filled with meltwater that has refrozen. The ice in the bay that comes from these cracks is translucent 'black' ice rather than white ice.

(about one hour) to stand at the edge of the choked icefjord.

An alternative way from Sermermiut back to town follows a marked route northward, which parallels the coast 50m to 75m above water level. If you keep following the coast you'll wind up at the power station (look for the tastefully painted stacks), immediately west of Ilulissat.

Don't go onto any of the small gravel beaches in the area; a sudden rolling iceberg or collapsing chunk of ice can create a tidal wave up to 10m high, sweeping anyone on low-lying ground to their death.

VANDSØEN

The five-hour circuit across the Ilulissat plain, past the five Vandsøen lakes, makes a pleasant and easy day hike, but the ground does get soggy in places. The area is noted for its rare flowers in July and August.

Begin by crossing the bridge above the harbour and continue on to the reservoir, where you turn east and follow its southern shore. Cross the river connecting the reservoir with the next lake upstream, then bear east and follow the highest ground available past three small ponds (Vandsøen Nos 1, 2 and 3) to Vandsø No 4.

After descending to Vandsø No 5, continue along the eastern shore to the lake's southern end. Follow the obvious track south over the hill and past a long, narrow lake. Walk west, above its northern shore, then bear north around hill 208 – or climb it for a nice view across the Vandsøen and the Ilulissat plains. Here you can follow the trail up and over Qilakitsoq Pass, which leads straight back to Ilulissat, or take the more scenic route down to Ilulissat Kangerlua to meet up with the icefjord or ridge tracks back to town.

AKINNAQ

A more challenging loop hike will take you to the mysterious-looking Akinnaq region east of the airport. Follow the Vandsøen route as far as Vandsø No 4, then cross the inflow stream, which streaks down a broad gully of shining slickrock. If you ascend the western slope of this gully you'll reach a wild and eerie landscape of boulders, peaks and small lakes.

If you follow the prominent ridge due east, you'll reach the largish craterlike Lake Akinnaq; from its western shore it's an easy scramble up Akinnaq peak (395m), which offers a view north to Oqaatsut and southwest

back to Ilulissat. Keep to high ground as you pass south of Lake Akinnaq, then descend slightly to an amoeba-like lake immediately to the southeast and cross its outflow stream, which tumbles over a series of miniature, terrace-like waterfalls.

Here the going gets a bit tougher, as you must traverse the slope southward against the lay of the land, which means constant ascents and descents over steep humpback rocks. If you're tempted downhill toward the west, you'll reach the eastern bank of Vandsø No 5 and thus rejoin the Vandsøen route. However, if you keep to the high ground, you'll eventually descend into the deep gashlike valley between Akinnaq Kujalleq and the area's most prominent peak, Qaaqarsuatsiaq. This valley is dominated by a long, narrow lake. If you follow the low ridge above its northern shore, you'll eventually meet the Qilakitsoq track.

Oqaatsut (Rodebay)

pop 52

After the heady delights and tourist clamour of Ilulissat, a visit to the lethargic village of Oqaatsut (The Cormorants) seems like a lifetime away. Just 20km north of Ilulissat, this tiny place has only a handful of vehicles, and sled dogs outnumber villagers four to one. Fishing and hunting are still the main focus of community life, and at low tide you can pick mussels off the beach.

The surrounding area has a rich collection of overgrown turf-hut sites, testament to the enduring presence of the settlement. The town, which is named after the bird colony that inhabits the nearby cliffs, first operated as a trading post for 18th-century Dutch whalers, who bestowed its Dutch name, which means 'bay of rest'. The original blubber house, cooperage and storehouse are still in use, and at the harbour you can see a large iron pot for storing whale oil and a hoist used to pull whales up on shore.

Oqaatsut makes a convenient destination for a two-day return hike from Ilulissat. Follow the dogsled track north from the airport to Bredebugt and follow the shoreline right around the bay to the lake Kangerluarsup Tasia Qalleq. Bear northwest to the northern end of the Qarajaq Cove to reconnect with the sled track into Oqaatsut. The hike takes six to nine hours one way.

You can camp on any flat ground around town other than on historic remains. The best place is on the plain south of town before the descent to the cemetery. Showers and toilets are available at the community service house, and you can collect drinking water from the shed by the bay.

Greenland Tours Elke Meissner (see p174) offers accommodation in the restored trading company buildings (Dkr250). The cosy old shop has eight beds, and the rustic cooperage can accommodate up to six people. **Restaurant H8** (☎ 948585; lunch/dinner Dkr150/160), a simple outfit in the former warehouse, is the only place to eat in town. The menu features anything from halibut, whale and seal to caribou and muskox.

The village also has a **Pisiffik shop** (☎ 9am-noon & 1-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

AUL's *Aviaq Ittuk* calls twice weekly on its way from Ilulissat (Dkr185, one hour) to Saqqaq (Dkr235, five hours).

Otherwise, Greenland Tours Elke Meissner offers transfers from Ilulissat (one way/return Dkr350/550), and also runs a guided day trip from Ilulissat for Dkr750. Travel on to Icecamp Eqi (Dkr350) can also be arranged.

Ataa

If you feel like getting away from it all, the abandoned settlement of Ataa, 60km north of Ilulissat, is now a wilderness camp among the tumbledown remains of the village. Excellent kayaking, canoeing and fishing are available on nearby Lake Tasersuaq.

You can stay at the **Smilla Holiday Centre cabins** (☎ 944420; touna@greenetnet.gl; camping Dkr45, unmade bunk Dkr165, s/d Dkr295/390), used in the film *Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow*. The camp is run by the Ilulissat-based Tourist Nature (see p173), which can organise a complete trip including boat transfer, accommodation, meals and use of kayaks for Dkr775 per day. It also offers hiking and sailing tours (from Dkr85), seal safaris (Dkr300), guided hikes (Dkr115) and treks to the icecap at Eqi (Dkr695). Kayak, canoe and windsurf hire costs Dkr275, and fishing equipment can be hired for Dkr250. All-in weekend packages including transfer, accommodation and full board cost Dkr2395. Boat transfer from Ilulissat costs Dkr1250 return.

Port Victor & Icecamp Eqi

For easy access to the inland ice, a trip to Port Victor, about 60km north of Ilulissat, takes you to within 3km of the massive tidewater glacier Eqip Sermia. The area was used as a base by French polar expeditions from 1948 to 1953, and the derelict base-camp hut is still standing.

Uphill from the original base is Icecamp Eqi, run by Ilulissat Travel (see p174). The camp has fantastic views over the sea and ice. Its excellent wilderness hotel has ensuite cabins each with its own terrace. The group also runs Café Victor, where meals cost from Dkr150. A day trip to Eqi including lunch at Café Victor costs Dkr1395, and an overnight stay costs Dkr2390 (Dkr995 per extra night).

Campers can arrive by boat (one-way Dkr647), stay several nights for free and leave another day. It's well worth the money.

Ilimanaq (Clauthavn)

pop 90

Little has changed in Ilimanaq since the community was founded in the 18th century. The original houses still stand, and even today there are no cars in the village. Life revolves around the cycles of nature, and fishing is the mainstay of the economy. From mid-June to early September there are good chances of spotting whales in the waters off Ilimanaq, which are also a great spot for sea-kayaking.

Although there's no formal accommodation option, you can camp anywhere or the tourist offices in Ilulissat may be able to help you find B&B accommodation.

ILULISSAT KANGERLUA HIKE

For a look at ice-choked Ilulissat Kangerlua from a southern perspective, make a day hike north along the coast to Aappaluttuarsuk. En route you can visit the three ancient ruined settlements Iglumiut, Avannarliit (Nordre Huse) and Ege.

If you have more time and don't want to return the way you came, walk east along the shore for a couple of kilometres (with great views of the fjord all the way) and turn inland over the pass to Tasersuaq Qalleq. Follow the western shore of the lake south to the next lake, Tasersuaq Alleq, then turn due west and return to Ilimanaq by climbing directly over the mountain.

You can also walk between the two Tasersuaq lakes and cross over to the convoluted Tasiusaq Bay, which is cut off from Disko Bay by the icefjord itself.

ILIMANAQ TO QASIGIANNGUIT TREK

A relatively easy four-day trek covers the 35km from Ilimanaq to Qasigiannguit. The landscape may not be overwhelming, but the hike isn't difficult. The best available map is Greenland Tourism's *Hiking Map West Greenland – Qasigiannguit*.

Start by walking south along the coast to meet the marked dogsled track. From the broad open area marked Narsarsuaq you can continue south along the uninteresting dogsled route or head east towards hill 320. Skirt this hill to the north and east, then turn south and climb up to the pass. When you're immediately west of hill 430, turn southwest, and keep going until you reach the small lake immediately west of hill 420. Follow its outlet river down to the western shore of Qinguata Tasia and cross the isthmus.

After climbing partially up the other side you'll reach the head of a long, narrow lake. Follow its eastern shore to the end, then bear east and then south around the eastern slope of Salleg (marked 'Sagdeq'). Near the southern end of Salleg, follow the western shoreline of Sallup Tasia. At the end of this lake, strike west toward the outflow of lake 90, which may only be crossed at low tide. Once you're safely across, follow the western shore of this lake down the valley into Qasigiannguit (see p181).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The AUL boat *Aviaq Ittuk* stops at Ilimanaq once a week on its journey between Ilulissat (Dkr185, one hour) and Qasigiannguit (Dkr185, 1¼ hours).

SAQQAQ

pop 177

One of the nicest villages on Disko Bay, Saqqaq is a friendly place set in relatively lush surroundings on the southern coast of the vast Nuussuaq Peninsula. The cluster of brightly coloured houses is framed by the backdrop of **Livets Top** (1150m) to the northeast.

Archaeological excavations west of the settlement revealed the existence of the Inuit culture, later named the Saqqaq culture, that inhabited this area between 2900

and 4400 years ago. Today the village survives mainly on income from its meat- and fish-processing plant.

The **village church**, built in 1908, is particularly photogenic. Also worth a visit is **Hannibal's House**, the former home of Danish Greenlander Hannibal Fencker, who served as the trading-station manager and was dedicated to improving local living conditions. He supplied Saqqaq's electrical generator, grew vegetables in the 24-hour Arctic daylight, reared village orphans and promoted secondary education for villagers. Although he died in 1986, his big red house and greenhouse garden – the world's most northerly – remains a tourist attraction of sorts.

There's plenty of hiking on the great Nuussuaq Peninsula. Use the 1:250,000 *Saga Map Nuussuaq*. To warm up, make the taxing day hike to the summit of 1150m Livets Top, immediately northeast of Saqqaq. It provides incredible views of the area. The finest destination, though, is the unforgettable emerald-coloured lake Saqqaq Tasersua, which slices through the heart of the peninsula. The return walk takes five days. Saqqaq is also a common starting or finishing point for the demanding 10-day trek across the peninsula to Kuusuup Nuua, near Uummannaq. It's better to do the trip from north to south, as transport is easier from Saqqaq.

If you'd like to stay in Saqqaq you may be able to arrange accommodation at the communal service house or with local families. The communal service house has benches and floor space people can sleep on if necessary, but no phone number. A small community shop stocks basic food items.

The *Aviaq Ittuk* calls to Saqqaq twice weekly on its rounds through Disko Bay and to Ilulissat (Dkr260, 6¼ hours).

QASIGIANNGUIT (CHRISTIANSHÅB)

pop 1340

The bright houses of Qasigiannguit adorn the rocky shores at the foot of a steep escarpment in Southern Disko Bay. The rounded hills and valleys surrounding the town, and the regular *föhn* (warm, dry winds that flow off a mountain slope) that bring warm, clear weather in summer, make it an excellent spot for hiking. The area also has a wealth of historic interest, with house sites, meat caches and hunting blinds easily visible. Despite this the town receives few visitors and remains

a sleepy kind of place where the locals are genuinely glad to see you.

From July to October whales visit the waters around Qasigiannguit and often come close to shore; they're easily visible from the hotel terrace.

History

The Qasigiannguit area has been inhabited for over 4500 years, and remnants of the Saqqaq, Thule and Dorset cultures have been found here. The earliest evidence yet discovered of habitation in Greenland is the skeleton of a Saqqaq woman who lived around 3800 years ago on the nearby island of Qeqertasussuk. Excavations on the island revealed some of Greenland's oldest and best-preserved remains, most of which are now displayed at the town museum.

The town was founded in 1734, but flooding and icy winds from the east made the original site unfavourable, and in 1764 the town was moved across the bay.

Qasigiannguit briefly operated as a military post to protect Danish whaling interests from Dutch 'intruders', and it experienced a minor trade war between Denmark and Holland in the mid-18th century. When the rich offshore shrimping grounds were discovered in the early 1950s the town numbered just 245 people, but the construction of the shrimp-processing plant in 1952 soon saw the town grow. Today halibut fishing and processing is the mainstay of the local economy.

Information

Hospital (☎ 911211; Takuuk Peqqissaavik)

Police (☎ 911222; Poul Hansensvej 23)

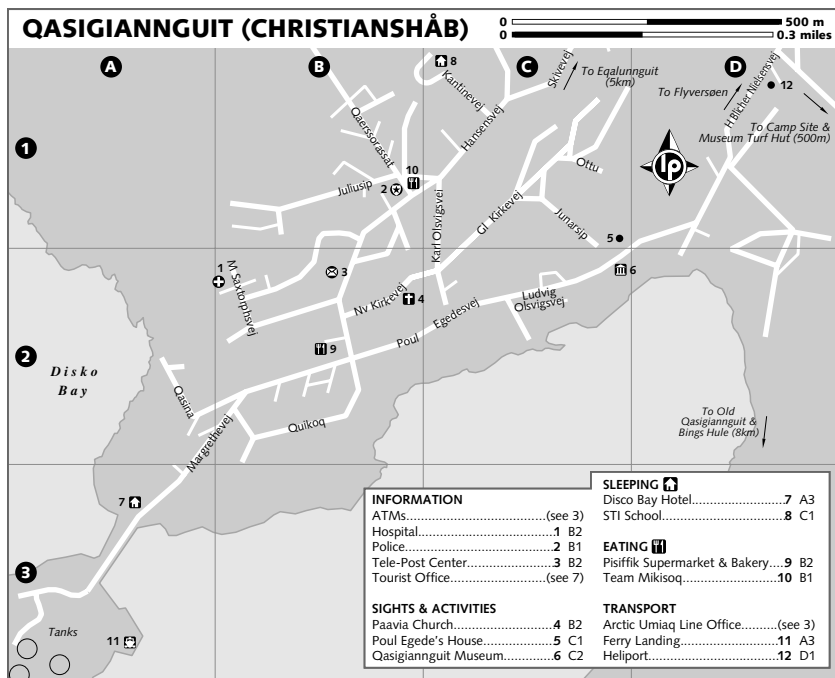
Post office (☎ 911355; Poul Hansensvej 5) Has two ATMs and the AUL office.

Tourist office (☎ 911081; discobay@icecaphotels.gl)

At the Disco Bay Hotel and only open whenever someone's around. It's primarily concerned with tours and hotel guests.

Sights

The **Qasigiannguit Museum** (☎ 911477; www.museum.gl/qasigiannguit; Poul Egedesvej 24; admission free; ☎ 1-5pm Mon-Fri & Sun) has an excellent collection of finds dating from the Saqqaq culture to the present Inuit culture. Fantastically well-preserved items recovered from excavations in Qeqertasussuk have a permanent home in the museum and give a detailed picture of life in Greenland's earliest Stone Age culture. Artefacts from the site are evidence



that society of that period was far more advanced than previously assumed. The finds include a large collection of tools and the northernmost discovery of the now extinct great auk. There are also natural-history displays and exhibits of hunters' clothing.

Next to the museum is **Poul Egede's house** (built 1734), Greenland's oldest wooden building. The structure was moved to its present location in 1806, and was used as a shop and provisions store until 1990.

Also worth a visit is the **Paavia Church** (Nv Kirkevej), built 1969. The nave symbolises an *umiaq*, and the altarpiece is a glass mosaic decorated with a huge cross and golden sun surrounded by a polar bear, whales, fish, a kayak, an *umiaq*, and the pagan spirits scurrying from the light of Christianity.

Activities

HIKING

Qasigiannqut is an excellent area for hiking, with gentle hills and lush summer vegetation. The new (1:100,000) *Hiking Map West Greenland – Qasigiannqut* shows the various hiking routes in the area.

Worthwhile day hikes, marked with painted blazes, will take you 5km north to Eqalunnguit (1½ hours), a beautiful place favoured by locals for fishing trips, or 8km south to Illukut (Bryggerhusbugten; 2½ hours), where Old Qasigiannqut was founded in 1734. The colonial governor's house and several other log buildings, meat caches, hunting shelters and kitchen middens are along the coast.

About 20 minutes' walk to the south, over a low pass, is the cave Bings Hule, which was the site where ancient shamans were initiated. Ironically, it was named after the first missionary to the colony, who used it as a quiet retreat. From the cave, continue south and east, around the back of the ridge, for a straightforward climb to the summit of Qaaqarsuaq (456m). It affords a stunning view over Disko Bay and takes three to four hours.

The walk between Qasigiannqut and Ilimanaq (p180) takes about four days. For more information on hiking around Qasigiannqut and details of multiday hikes, visit www.sydforisfjorden.dk.

Tours

During summer the tourist office organises two-hour guided town tours (Dkr120); two-hour *kaffemiks* (Dkr100); a four-hour midnight tour to Qaaqarsuaq (Dkr450); a four-hour boat trip to the old whaling station (Dkr575); a full-day boat journey out to Grønne Eiland, a group of islands rich in archaeological remains and home to one of the world's largest Arctic-tern colonies (Dkr695); and a full-day boat trip out to Garnet Bay, a garnet-encrusted cliff, and Akulliit, an abandoned settlement (Dkr965).

The winter programme from December to April includes three- to four-hour dog-sledding trips (Dkr700), a two-hour aurora borealis viewing trip by dogsled (Dkr765), and half or full day ice-fishing trips (prices by agreement).

Many tours have minimum participation numbers, so book ahead if possible so that the tourist office can try to gather a group.

Sleeping & Eating

The best free camp site can be found east of the heliport and football pitch, where there's a toilet hut and piped water. The tourist office can book B&B with local families (Dkr275) or rooms at the STI School (Dkr275).

Museum turf hut (☎ 911477; lm@qasqom.ki.gl; per day/week Dkr150/800) For an authentic Greenland experience you can stay at this traditional turf hut with its plank beds and simple décor. It has no heating or running water but is surprisingly warm and bright.

Disco Bay Hotel (☎ 911081; discobay@icecaphotels.gl; Margrethevej 34; s/d Dkr850/1150) Large, comfortable rooms with en suite are available at this modern hotel overlooking the sea. The bright and airy restaurant serves decent European food and some Greenlandic specialities, though on quiet days only the daily special (Dkr55) is available.

Other eating options:

Pilersuisioq (Poul Hansensvej 1) Local supermarket and bakery.

Team Mikisioq (☎ 911100; Qaarsorasat 11; mains Dkr20-45) The local grill bar.

Getting There & Away

AIR

In summer you can fly by helicopter to/from Ilulissat four times weekly (Dkr945) and to Qeqertarsuaq (Dkr945) three times weekly.

FROZEN ASSETS

Most visitors to Disko Bay come to see its world-famous icebergs, but the 'berg bits' of Disko Bay ice – that is, the semi-trailer-sized chunks – are towed into harbours, chipped into cubes and exported to Japan and Europe to chill drinks. That scotch you order in a Tokyo pub may contain 25,000-year-old cubes from the frozen heart of Greenland's icecap, and the air that fizzes out as they melt has been trapped since long before anyone ever heard of smog alerts.

BOAT

Two of the big **AUL** (☎ 911546; bktjch@aul.gl) ferries sail in once weekly on their runs between Nuuk (Dkr1505, 46½ hours) and Ilulissat (Dkr200, three hours) or Uummannaq (Dkr825, 20 hours). The smaller ferry calls in three times weekly and calls at all local settlements, including Aasiaat (Dkr225, 8½ hours), Ilulissat and Qeqertarsuaq (Dkr305, five hours).

AROUND QASIGIANNQUT Akulliit

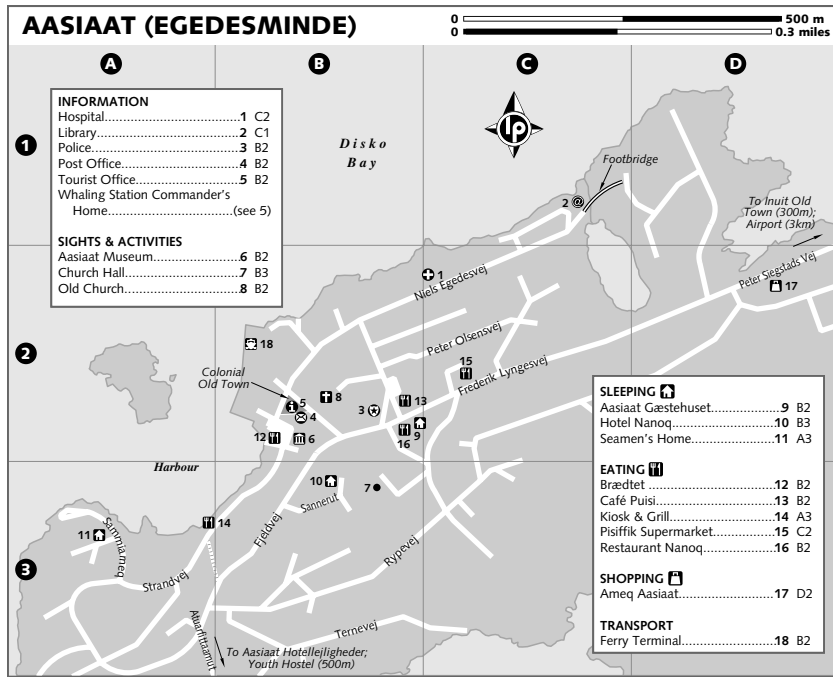
The abandoned village of Akulliit provides a serene and silent antidote to modern living. The former settlement is now used as a hunting camp and summer base for locals, but you can stay in the restored school building (Dkr250) in August and September. It's pretty basic but has a decent kitchen. Bookings can be made through Qasigiannqut's tourist office, which also offers boat trips to the area.

SOUTHERN DISKO BAY

AASIAAT (EGEDESMINDE)

pop 3130

Located on an island on the outer edge of a beautiful archipelago, Greenland's fourth-largest community is a sleepy fishing town surrounded by low hills and rocky islets. This relatively flat area at the southern entrance to Disko Bay lacks the dramatic peaks of other coastal towns, but makes a good base for whale watching, kayaking and gentle hiking during the summer months and for cross-country skiing in spring.



Aasiaat means 'the spiders', but it's probably a derivation of Aasiat, 'the gathering place'.

History

The original site of Aasiaat, immediately south of the present town, had long been locally called Eqaaluksuit, but when Niels Egede founded a settlement there in 1759 he renamed it Egedesminde in honour of his father, Hans. It was out of the way as a trading post, so in 1763 it was shifted to its present location.

Prosperous trading alternated with repeated smallpox epidemics, and the population was decimated four times by the disease. At one point only 21 people remained alive. During WWII a small American base was established near the mouth of Aasiaat's harbour, but when the base shut down the town's fortunes stagnated, and for years primitive methods of fish salting and shrimp processing carried the meagre economy. In the mid-1980s an efficient fish- and shrimp-processing plant was established, and today Aasiaat prospers once again.

Information

Hospital (☎ 891092; Niels Egedesvej 47)

Library (☎ 892463; Niels Egedesvej; ☎ noon-3.30pm, 7-8.30pm) Allows a half-hour of free Internet access.

Police (☎ 892222; Fredrick Lyngesvej 9)

Post office (☎ 891555; Niels Egedes Plads1)

Tourist office (☎ 892540; aasiaat.tourist@greenet.gl; Niels Egedesvej 6; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat)

Sights & Activities

Start your visit with a trip to the small **Aasiaat Museum** (☎ 892597; Niels Egedesvej; admission Dkr20; ☎ 1-4pm Mon-Fri, 1-3pm Sun). The collection includes an interesting array of carvings, archaeological finds, old photos, birds and a turf house outside.

Aasiaat's older buildings are clustered around the harbour area in the **colonial old town**. Perhaps the nicest is the whaling station commander's multistorey home, constructed in 1778 and relocated to Aasiaat when the station was abandoned in 1826. There's also the **old trading manager's home** (which now houses the tourist office), the **old church** and a monument to Niels Egede, Aasiaat's founding father.

The **church hall**, on a hill overlooking the town, has a sizeable collection of paintings by well-known Danish painter Per Kirkeby. Across the bridge east of the centre is the picturesque traditional hunters' community in the **Inuit old town**.

The terrain around Aasiaat is relatively flat and ordinary for hiking, but the 10-sq-km island is easily explored. The low hills behind town offer some fine views across the archipelago and make an excellent area for cross-country skiing between March and April.

Festivals & Events

During the last week of August or the first week of September the town hosts the four-day **Aasiaat Rock Festival** (www.nipiaa.gl), featuring mainly Greenlandic bands alongside a clutch of groups from Scandinavia, Italy and the UK. A festival pass for access to all gigs costs Dkr400.

Tours

The tourist office offers several day tours, but most have minimum participation numbers, so you'll need to organise a group or cough up the full tour price. Options include three-hour whale-watching cruises from June to September (Dkr550); six-hour whale-watching trips with visits to abandoned settlements (Dkr870); a town walk with a visit to a local family for a *kaffemik* and tasting of traditional Greenlandic food (Dkr150); a three-day boat and trekking trip to see muskox and caribou, followed by kayaking to a glacier (Dkr6895); and two-/eight-day kayaking trips (Dkr1800/8225). In winter two-/three-hour dogsledding or snowmobile trips cost Dkr650/850 and a three-day dogsledding trip costs Dkr5795. Shark fishing may also be a possibility; ask at the tourist office for information. For more details, visit www.greenland-guide.gl/aasiaat-tourist.

Sleeping

Camping is possible anywhere in the rocky tundra knolls behind town. There are also numerous hunters' huts around the archipelago that are open to hikers. The tourist office can organise B&B for Dkr375 per person per night.

Youth Hostel (☎ 892195; vinther@greenet.gl; dm Dkr250; ☎) The basic but functional youth hostel is a bit of a hike from the airport and

sits at the western end of the lake, about 700m south of the tourist office. It has a large kitchen, shared facilities and a laundry.

Seamen's Home (☎ 892711; Sammiarneq 9; aasiaat@soemands hjem.gl; s/d Dkr450/650, with bath Dkr695/920; ☎) Situated by the harbour, this place has a good choice of newly renovated rooms with TV. The older rooms with shared facilities are a little shabby, though.

Hotel Nanoq (☎ 892121; hotel-aasiaat@iss.gl; Sannerut 8; s/d Dkr795/975; ☎) Perched on a hill overlooking town, the hotel offers spacious rooms with en suite, TV, telephone, video and minibar. The décor is comfortable but fairly functional.

Other options:

Aasiaat Hotellejligheder (☎ 892195; vinther@greenet.gl; apt Dkr695-1295) Comfortable three-bedroom apartments with modern décor, large rooms and cooking facilities.

Aasiaat Gæstehuset (☎ 892233; fax 892232; Frederik Lyngesvej 16; s/d Dkr500/600) Simple rooms with bathroom.

Eating

Seamen's Home cafeteria (Seamen's Home, Sammiarneq 9; mains Dkr50; ☎ 7am-10pm) Popular with local fishers, this place is a good option for simple but excellent-value meals. Meat and two veg supplement the fast-food options, and the daily specials are usually a good bet.

Café Púsi (☎ 891112; Pollersvej 12; mains Dkr40-70; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Fri, 11am-8pm Sat & Sun) Basic but cosy, this simple little café serves up a choice of burgers, chips and sandwiches as well as a good selection of mediocre Thai dishes.

Restaurant Nanoq (☎ 892121; Frederik Lyngesvej; mains Dkr90-150; ☎ 6pm-midnight) Not exactly a happening spot, this is the only restaurant in town, and you need to let them know a day in advance that you'd like to eat! Fortunately, the food is pretty good, but most people come to drink as it's also the only bar in town.

Other eating options include the **Kiosk & Grill** (dishes Dkr20-40), which sells greasy burgers and hot dogs, and (for self-caterers) the Pisifik supermarket and the braðtæt.

Shopping

The local leathercraft shop and handicrafts centre **Ameq Aasiaat** (☎ 892797; Peter Siegstadsvej 4; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) focuses on traditional tanning, drying, sewing and embroidery skills. There's also a small sealskin processing plant.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Air Greenland (☎ 892787) flies every day except Sunday to Ilulissat (Dkr671, 25 minutes) and Kangerlussuaq (Dkr1223, 45 minutes). Helicopter connections are available at Ilulissat for Qasigiannuguit.

BOAT

AUL (☎ 891644; bktjeg@aul.gl) ferries call in at Aasiaat once weekly en route between Nuuk (Dkr1355, 33½ hours) and Ilulissat (Dkr310, nine hours), with stops at Qeqertarsuaq (Dkr225, 3½ hours) and at Qasigiannuguit (Dkr225, 8½ hours). Two other local services run to all the other district settlements, including Ilimanaq (Dkr245, seven hours) and Kitsissuarsuit (Dkr185, 1¼ hours).

AROUND AASIAAT

Kitsissuarsuit (Hunde Ejlände)

pop 110

For a glimpse of life in an isolated settlement, a trip to tiny Kitsissuarsuit, on an island 21km northwest of Aasiaat, is a good idea. Although there are no sights of specific interest, the settlement is renowned for its traditional arts, particularly the crafting of *qajaqs* and *umiaqs* and decoration of leather products. Ask at the tourist office in Aasiaat about accommodation with local families. The ferry sails between Aasiaat and Kitsissuarsuit twice weekly (Dkr185, 1¼) in summer.

KANGAATSIAQ

pop 670

Kangaatsiaq was only founded in January 1985, though the settlement itself is much older. Fishing and seal hunting are still very important to the local people, and the evidence is all over town: drying racks for fish, stretched sealskins, and the sounds and smells of hundreds of sled dogs. East of town a 150km fjord system makes a wonderful destination for exploration by boat or canoe.

There are few facilities, but **tourist information** (☎ 871077; www.kangaatsiaq.gl) is available through Kangaatsiaq Kommunia. It can organise five- to 18-day kayaking, dogsledging and camping tours around the district (five days Dkr4500).

The Kommunia can also provide accommodation at municipally owned hostel **The**

Lodge (Dkr200), with space for six people. More comfortable accommodation can be found with local families for Dkr395. Contact **Hans Aronsen** (☎ 232734; kalloq@yahoo.dk), **Severine Inu-sugtoq** (☎ 871354; siiva2@greenet.gl) or **Allan Glasdam** (☎ 871032; glasdam@greenet.gl). Choices for food are limited to the local grill bar or the Pilersuisoq shop.

The big ferries call at Kangaatsiaq en route between Nuuk (Dkr1280, 33 hours) and Ilulissat (Dkr395, 15 hours), and a smaller vessel sails four times weekly between Kangaatsiaq and other southern Disko Bay villages including Aasiaat (Dkr185, 1¼ hours). A six-hour stopover in Kangaatsiaq is possible on Tuesday and Thursday.

DISKO ISLAND

Greenland's largest and newest island combines spectacular rock formations with dramatic scenery, an interior icecap, several warm springs (with water 3°C to 10°C), unexpected flora and a galloping glacier that moves up to 100m a day. Despite this, the island sees few visitors and is a haven of calm. Those who make it this far will be rewarded with wonderful hiking opportunities and the chance to go dogsledging under the midnight sun, with fantastic views over Disko Bay and the massive icebergs below.

Apart from Qeqertarsuaq, tiny Kangerluk (Diskofjord), 30km to the northwest, is the island's only other permanent habitation.

QEERTARSUAQ (GODHAVN)

pop 998

Set against a backdrop of magnificent basalt mountains and spectacular rock formations, Qeqertarsuaq is the only significant town on the island. Although there's little to see in the town itself, the water-absorbing porous basalt hills make the area lush with vegetation, clusters of stranded icebergs glisten majestically offshore, and there are excellent hiking opportunities nearby.

History

Godhavn, the Danish name of Qeqertarsuaq town, means simply 'good harbour', and the protected waters of the bay meant that European whalers settled here long before a formal trading post was established in 1773. Trade flourished, and the town remained

the most important community north of Nuuk until 1950. However, as other Disko Bay communities began to prosper, Qeqertarsuaq sank quickly into its present obscure position. Today hunting and fishing are the primary sources of income for the local people.

Information

Hospital (☎ 921090; Adam Mølgård-ip Aqq)

Kommunia (☎ 921277; Oqalfluffip)

Police (☎ 921222; Piitarsuup Aqq 16)

Post office (☎ 921055; Holten Møllerip Aqq 3C)

Qeqertarsuaq Tourist Service (☎ 921628; www.qeqertarsuaq.gl; Adam Mølgård-ip Aqq B82; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Sat Jun-Aug, 10am-3pm Mon-Fri Sep-May)

Sights

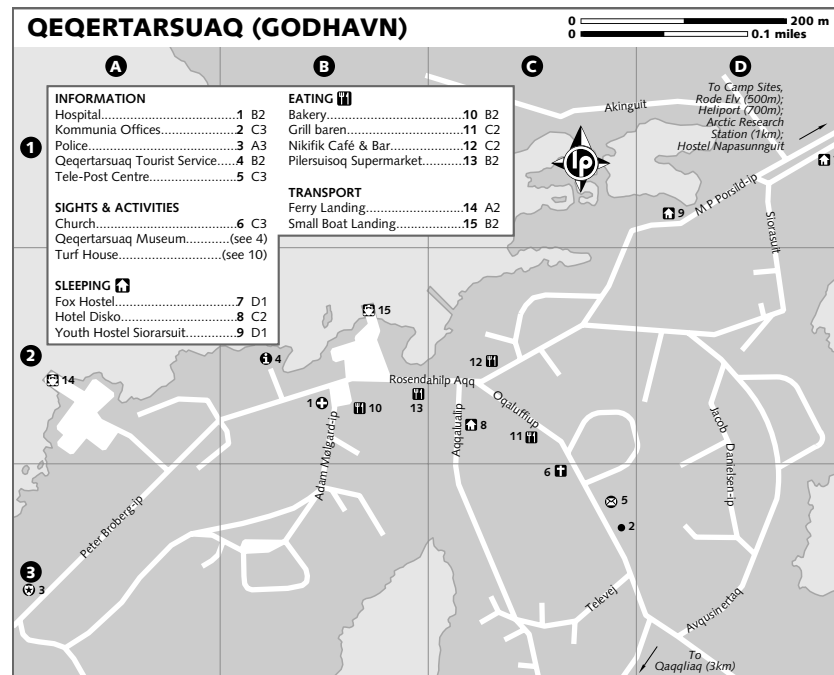
The **Qeqertarsuaq Museum** (☎ 921153; Juaanng-uup Aqq 2; adult/child Dkr10/free; ☎ 10am-2pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat), in the beautiful former inspector's house at the harbour, has exhibitions on the town's history, including the colonial and whaling period; the Arctic Research Station; and Greenlandic Christmas customs. The museum also houses a col-

lection of works by Jakob Danielsen, local artist and hunter.

Just by the town bakery there's a traditional **turf house**, which has been left intact but is uninhabited.

Qeqertarsuaq's unique and odd-looking octagonal **church** was designed by Danish architect Bojsen-Møller in 1915. Known to the locals as 'God's little inkpot', the bell-tower resembles a storybook wishing well. Occasionally, locals will dress in traditional clothes for Sunday services at 10am, but this is not a tourist attraction.

The **Arctic Research Station** was founded by the University of Copenhagen in 1906. Today it carries out field work and holds classes for university students; its library, opened in 1966, contains the largest collection of Arctic studies in Greenland. Visits must be organised in advance. Contact the station through its secretariat in Copenhagen. Information about who to contact is on the website www.nat.ku.dk/as/indexuk.htm. Alternatively, you could try the tourist office when you arrive – it's practically impossible to contact by email or phone.



Behind the station one of the island's warm springs allows three species of orchids and the carnivorous butterwort to grow, but the plants are extremely fragile and should not be touched.

At **Qaqqaliaq**, or Udkiggen (The Look-out), the southernmost tip of Disko Island, stands a red-and-white tower that was used by early whalers as a lookout. Its frame was constructed of four whale jawbones and looks like an American football planted in the headland. Whenever a whale was spotted, a cannon was fired to alert the fleet and set the hunt in action. Qaqqaliaq is about a 30-minute walk from the village and is still the best spot for whale watching.

Tours

The tourist office organises dogsledding trips in summer on Lyngmarksbræen, high above the village. Getting there requires reasonable fitness, as you must hike to the base hut, which can take between three and four hours. At the hut you'll meet the dogs and handlers for a 1½-hour tour (Dkr750) by dogsled with fantastic views of Ilulissat and the icebergs. Staying overnight in the hut costs Dkr1350 including meals.

Short guided hikes (one to three hours) to Kuannit, Qaqqaliaq, Blæsedalen or the Arctic Research Station cost Dkr175. The tourist office also organises Greenlandic barbecues (Dkr225), and in bad weather you can try your hand at making your own souvenirs with free use of the tools at the

community workshop. You just need to pay for some antler to work on.

Winter dogsledding varies from two hours (Dkr600 including lunch) to a three-day visit to Kangerluk (Dkr3990 including meals and accommodation).

Sleeping & Eating

There are lots of dry, level camp sites across the bridge over the Rode Elv, and northward along its banks, with dry toilet facilities and water from the river. You can shower at any of the hostels for Dkr20. The tourist office can also arrange B&B accommodation with local families for Dkr300.

Fox Hostel (☎ 921273; autobyg@greenetnet.gl; MH Porsildip Aqqutaa 11; s/d Dkr500/700) This large house can be rented as one unit (three/six people Dkr1500/2200) or by individuals. Accommodation is in twin rooms or small dorms. There's a large kitchen with washing machine and a TV/video room for guests' use.

Hostel Napasunnguit (☎ 921628; qeq.tourism@greenetnet.gl; Kuussuunnguup Aqqutaa 13 - 160; dm Dkr195) This basic hostel is located in the old meteorological institute out of town and has a few double rooms and a larger dormitory as well as good kitchen facilities and a common room.

Youth Hostel Siorarsuit (☎ 921026; juliane@greenetnet.gl; PH Rosendahlip Aqqutaa; dm Dkr195, with linen Dkr295) Located close to a black-sand beach, this simple hostel has single, double and twin rooms, a dormitory and a large living/dining area.

Hotel Disko (☎ 921310; qalut@greenetnet.gl; Aqqulaliip Aqq 3; s/d Dkr650/950; ☒) Small, standard rooms with en suite and TV are available at the town hotel, and guests are welcome to use the hotel kitchen themselves.

Nikifik Café & Bar (☎ 921450; Rosendahlip Aqq 9; mains Dkr50-65; ☺ Mon-Sat) The only real choice for food in town is the dimly lit Nikifik bar, which serves a decent but uninspired array of fish and meat dishes. On some Friday and Saturday nights there is live music.

Other eating options:

Bakery (Adam Mølgård-ip Aqq) Bread and pricey sandwiches.

Grill baren (Oqaluffiup Aqq 4) The usual greasy burgers and hot dogs.

Pilersuisoq supermarket (PH Rosendahlip Aqq 2)

Getting There & Away

Air Alpha (☎ 943004) helicopters fly to/from Ilulissat (Dkr945) 12 times each week and Qasigiannuit (Dkr945) up to four times each week.

AUL ferries serve Qeqertarsuaq weekly, offering direct connections to/from Aasiaat (Dkr225, 4½ hours) and to/from Qasigiannuit (Dkr305, five hours).

AROUND DISKO ISLAND

Hiking

Disko Island is a vast and uncompromising wilderness, measuring 120km from north to south and the same from east to west. Trekking is limited to the most accessible areas on the southern peninsula near Qeqertarsuaq. In summer travelling any further into the interior would amount to expedition-level trekking. However, in winter it's possible to do it relatively easily by dogsled. Unfortunately, there's no way to reach the glacier in Kuanerssui Valley. The best map is the Greenland Tourism 1:100,000 sheet *Qeqertarsuaq*.

KUANNIT

A fine 6km walk east from Qeqertarsuaq follows the beautiful coastline to Kuannit (Angelica), where there's an impressive outcrop of basalt columns to spark the imagination.

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About halfway along the route is the formation known as Elephant Rock - looking west, you can see the ears, head and trunk of an elephant on the shore. It's impossible to continue further east from Kuannit because the cliffs drop right into the sea. Nor can you travel further east by walking around Skarvefjeld, as the route is blocked by a gaping ravine.

SKARVEFJELD

From Qeqertarsuaq it's a straightforward climb to the summit of Skarvefjeld (925m) which is visible from Blæsedalen. Follow the southwestern ridge up the mountain to the truncated summit. It's important to go in clear weather, as parts of the route are frequently obscured by fog.

ITILLEQ & KANGERLUK LOOP

This is another excellent walk, which requires five days or more. The coastline west of Qeqertarsuaq is relatively easy walking, but at times you'll have to divert up the slope and away from the shore. From the pleasant beach at Killit, which was once the site of a Dutch whaling station, follow the steep but negotiable coastline northward to Itilleq, then turn inland and ascend through the broad and easy pass Itinneq Killeq. Watch for the well-formed basalt columns on Luciafjeld, east of the valley.

After descending to the coast at Kangerluk Fjord (Diskofjord), turn east and follow the shore to the mouth of Blæsedalen, from where it's a long but manageable route over the pass back to Qeqertarsuaq. The valley's eastern side is easiest, but the river crossing is difficult.

Another route takes you from the terminal moraine at Blæsedalen's mouth. Walk east along the shore of Diskofjord to the head of Kangerlakk Fjord and then ascend the Brededal Valley until you reach the Tunusua Valley. From the mouth of the Tunusua Valley turn west and climb up it to cross the 567m-high pass back to Blæsedalen, then follow this valley southward to Qeqertarsuaq. This adds about two days to the total hike.

