



September 11th, 2021, Lewisporte Canada

## GREENLAND

For 1 month, we have had the privilege to travel through one of the most beautiful and pristine countries we've ever seen.

In preparation to our trip to Greenland, we sent emails to several officials in the country, in order to know about the rules for visitors in Covid times. We were told that private yachts were forbidden to visit. But as Greenland was an important stepstone in our Atlantic crossing, we took the chance...



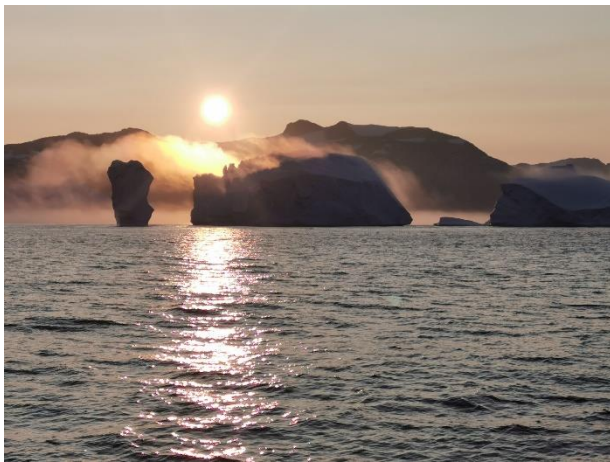
We reached Tasiilaq (65°32'N – 38°58'W), a village with 1500 inhabitants, after an uneventful crossing from Reykjavik. Although we were the first yacht entering in two years, we were cleared in by a friendly police officer without too many questions asked. Quite a relief...



## A bit of Geography

Greenland is the world's largest island, 80% of it is permanently covered by an ice cap, that lies like a dome over the country and reaches a thickness of 3km towards the centre of the country.

Coastal mountains force the ice through valleys, forming glaciers that actively 'calve' into the fjords.



Huge icebergs float to the sea, are often stopped in their track by protruding rocks from the seabed, and slowly break up and melt, while moving on weather and currents.

The cold East Greenland current carries the icebergs and polar pack ice South, around Cape Farvel, the infamous southern tip of Greenland, and up the

West coast, with the North going West Greenland current. Finally the South going Labrador current carries the ice South along the shores of Canada, until it melts in the warm Gulf Stream.

Going South from Tasiilaq, we had 300 NM of uninhabited, wild country ahead of us, home to majestic icebergs, polar bears and frozen land. We constantly had to evade icebergs and their offsprings (bergie bits and growlers), as explained in our previous [newsflash](#).

The Prins Christian Sund or Ikerasassuaq is an East West passage north of Cape Farvel (the feared south cape of Greenland, source of huge depressions, full of ice, a navigational hazard).

Most of the year, the East entrance to the Sund is blocked by as much as 50 NM of ice. We were lucky to find the entrance clear.





The sound is deep and relatively narrow, between mountains that rise from 1200 to 1500m high. The water is clear blue from the glacier silt, and several glaciers come down to the water level in the side fjords.

While the East coast is cold, arid and wild, with only two settlements along the entire coast, the West coast looks very similar to northern Norway, with deep fjords, glaciers, high mountains and green slopes with scrub. This coast is dotted with islands that hide little fishing



settlements and small cities. Of the entire population of 56.000 (!) in Greenland, approximately 50.000 live on the West Coast.

### People in their villages

Halfway through the passage of the Prins Christian Sund we stopped for the night in Aapillatoq (60°09' N 44°17' W), the first village we came across in more than a week, with a population of 70, all Inuit. Although only few people in the village spoke English, as it is very isolated, they came to see our doctor Jo on board to find a cure for their diseases, often related to skin problems from the cold and harsh environment.



While our kids played football with the local children, we could explore this small community that lives of fishing and hunting. Houses in Greenland are mostly painted in red, green, yellow and blue, adding some colour to the area.

The local supermarket typically sells a wide range of goods, ranging boat gear, clothes, dry and frozen food to guns and ammunition. Fresh groceries are only available when the coaster supplying the village passes. Amazingly, each supermarket, even in the smallest village, has a fresh bakery.





In Aapillatoq, the next morning, after summer holidays, school started again for the six children in the village, and the schoolyear was opened with a short ceremony and a speech of some of the elders. You could see how proud the dressed up (grand)parents were to see their children at school.

All small villages along our route are mostly populated with Inuit, the indigenous people that have been living in Greenland and Labrador Canada for thousands of years. For Western standards the Inuit have a very Asian look, with a dark skin.

In the villages, the Inuit live of hunting (caribou and seal) and fishing. The Greenland Company has established a small fish factory in each village, where the local fishermen sell their fish, caught from small boats with long lines.

We bought two halibuts from a local fisherman, one for the freezer, and one for the night's diner.

### **Whales**

Although your first iceberg is really something, after a while they become a normal sight in the Greenland landscape.

Not so with whales!!



Almost every day, while cruising along the coasts, we spotted whales in Greenland. It took us a while to learn how to identify a whale from his sprout, his dorsal fin, the shape of his back and his tail. We mostly spotted humpback whales, in Matsiitoq we saw the characteristic sprout of a sperm whale and we might have come

across some pilot whales and a Greenlander.





While travelling through the ice fields on the East coast, on a windless sunny day, we stopped our engines while surrounded by a pod of hunting humpback whales. Magical to hear them breathing, to see how easy these huge mammals glide through the water, hiding in the ice, apparently to avoid harpoon fishers. A moment never to forget, feeling so close and connected to these beautiful creatures, that were so nice to show their tail fins to us majestically.

Hunting for whales is strictly regulated, on older fishing boats one still finds a harpoon on the bow. In the Nuuk meat market, we were offered mink whale, seal meat and off course caribou, as we were there in the middle of the hunting season.

## Wood

During our week along the East coast, we had mostly sunshine, 10–12°C, which made for a very pleasant stay in the most extreme environment we ever came across. At night however, we were happy to have our Cubic Mini Stove to keep us warm, and, contrary to our original fears, we found plenty of wood in Greenland, from the abandoned fishing settlements, old radio stations and weather observation stations.





In Tovqussaq (64°52' N – 52°12' W), along the West coast, we explored an abandoned fishing village, and found some old oak casks, which we cut in small pieces, enough wood for a month!



In the abandoned settlements, it appears that, just one day, the inhabitants decided to leave, took their belongings, and left the doors of their wooden houses open.



Winter storms and nature have taken over, cooking fires, stoves, old railway systems to transport fish, oil barrels and generators lie around, in apparent harmony with nature.

While walking through the remains of these settlements, one can imagine the children playing football around the only goal still standing, while the men

bring in the cod for drying, and women take care of drying the fish, often to be exported to Portugal as bacalao.



## **Anchorage and harbours – East coast**

Almost every evening we found an anchorage, along the rough East coast:

**05/08/2021** – Dannebrog (65°18'N, 39°35'W), a deserted bay encumbered with ice bergs and bergy bits, hard to reach due to drift ice.

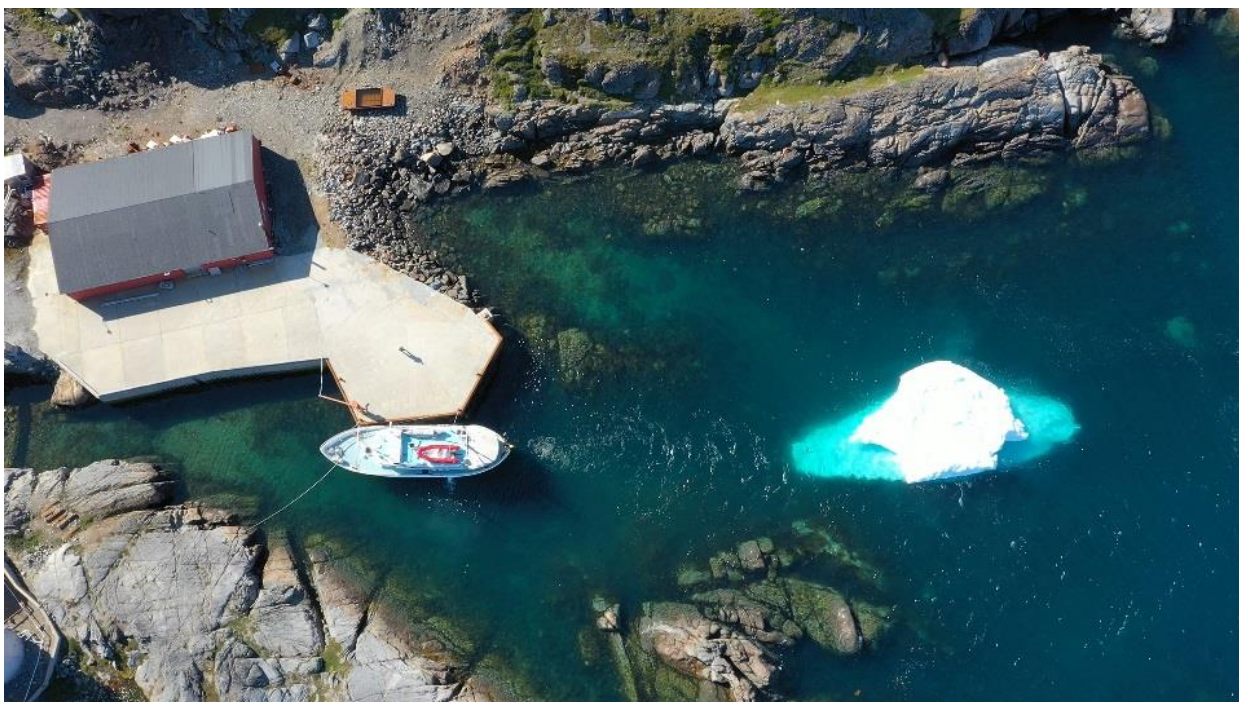


**07/08/2021** – Timmiarmiut (65°32'N, 42°10'W), an old deserted weather station, where ice bears have been spotted in the past. In Timmiarmiut we stopped by an iceberg with the Zodiac to replenish on ice cubes for the gin tonic. Unfortunately we ran out of tonic and haven't found any in the small stores in the villages we came by...

**08/08/2021** – Qutdleq (61°32'N, 42°17'W), an old Loran station situated in a protected bay on an island in the middle of ice fields, appearing out of the dense mist while approaching.

**09/08/2021** – Ikerasassuaq (60°05'N – 43°10'W), the entrance to the Prins Christian Sund – an unmanned large radio station, where an iceberg blocked our exit the next morning. We had to use the engines to push the iceberg out of the entrance.





### Anchorage and harbours – Prins Christian Sund and West coast

Contrary to the East coast, the West coast is greener, more fertile, the fjords can be entered without the risk of being stuck in the ice, you find small villages and settlements hidden behind the many islands along the coast and in the fjords and the climate seems more gentle.

**10/08/2021** – Aappilatoq (60°09' N – 44°17' W) – Fresh halibut, straight from the hook and first school day for the six local kids.

**11/08/2021** – Uunartoq (60°30' N – 45°20' W) – A hot spring that has been known to the Norsemen and is mentioned in Nordic sagas. Quite a special feeling to sit in a



natural hot tub, while the icebergs float along in the fjord, and the only sound in the evening is the occasional breaking up of an iceberg with loud cracks.





**12/08/2021** – Narsarsuaq (61°09' N – 45°26' W) – main airport of SW Greenland, where we dropped off four crew members (Pauline, Ankie, Carl, Jo). Special treatment for a local PCR test, flight to Nuuk that took two days due to bad weather, flight to Reykjavik postponed, flights to the continent rescheduled, it took until Monday night for them to reach their homes. Our first of several experiences with difficult air travel to and from Greenland.

**13/08/2021** – Narsaq (60°55' N – 46°03' W) – First internet café since leaving Reykjavik, at 10€/person per hour, with a locally brewed delicious beer.

**14/08/2021** – Nunarsuit Island (60°48' N – 47°05' W) – Home to caribou and sea eagles along the inner passage, avoiding Kap Desolation

**15/08/2021** – Kangaarssuk (61°28' N – 49°00' W) – desolate anchorage in the mist

**16/08/2021** – Paamiut (62°00' N – 49°40' W) – large fishing village with a big supermarket, they even sell Yamaha guitars.

**17/08/2021** – Qeqertarsuaq (63°05' N – 50°41' W) – small fishing village, with piles of caribou heads, witness of the active hunting season.

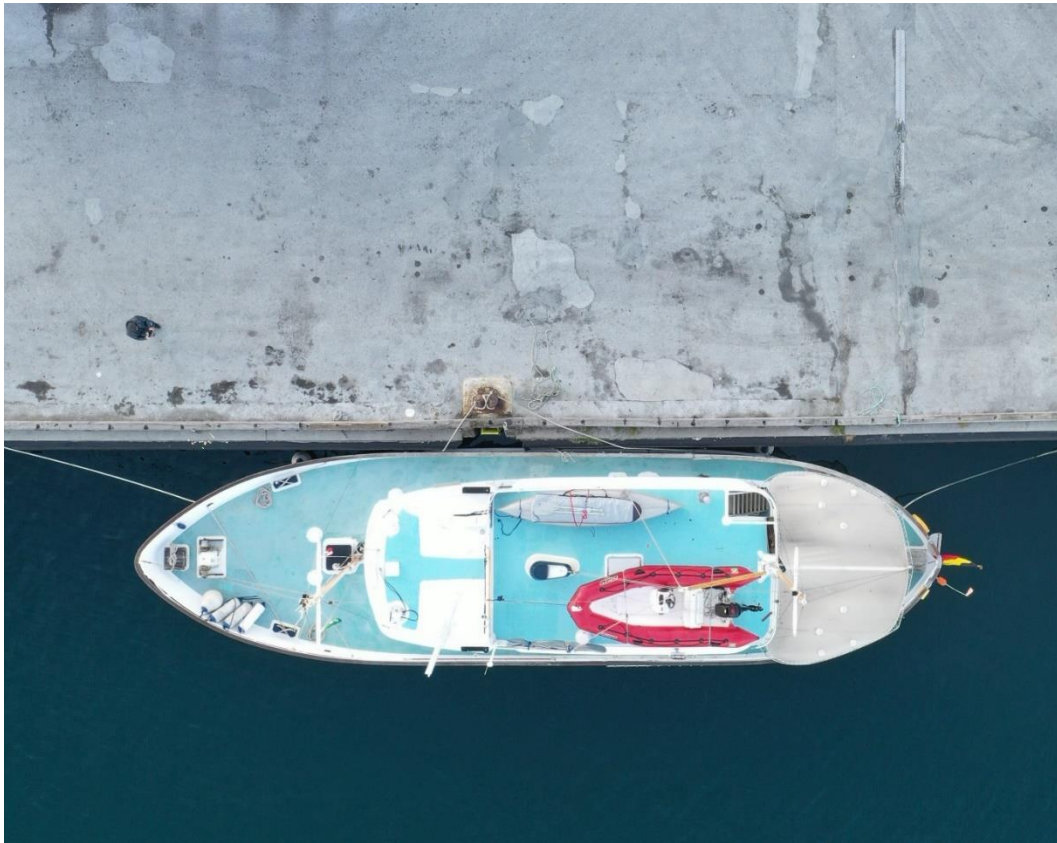


**18/08/2021** – Marraq (63°26' N – 51°11' W) – large bay with light blue glacier silt water, protected from the sea by huge sand dunes, a WW2 American air base, that has been completely bulldozed away, only leaving sand plains.





19/08/2021 – Nuuk (64°10' N – 51°44' W) – capital of Greenland with 15.000 inhabitants, traffic lights, a shopping mall, several large supermarkets. Felix has to leave us here, takes 2 days to attempt to leave Nuuk by plane as the plane's engines wouldn't start...



Martha Luna and Jan decide to take a four day trip into the Nuuk fjord system

**22/08/2021** – Qornoq (64°32' N – 51°06' W) – anchored in a bay shallow enough to stop the icebergs from approaching to close. Qornoq used to be home to 500 people fishing and drying the cod, that entered the fjord in huge quantities. Now a settlement with two permanent inhabitants and nicely painted summer houses for Nuuk residents.



**23/08/2021** – Kapisillit (64°26' N – 50°16' W) – this small fishing village, which names means salmon, is located near the only river where salmon spawn in Greenland. From the beach in the bay we cross the ridge to admire the Kangersuneq Isfjord, filled entirely with icebergs. Along the beach we find delicious mussels.

**25/08/2021** – Qooqqut (64°15' N – 50°55' W) – several taxi boats from Nuuk arrive here to drop off people, to visit the local restaurant. If you bring your own fish, they prepare it for you, we go for delicious steak and lamb, the first restaurant in more than a month!





**26/08/2021** – Nuuk (64°10' N – 51°44' W) – time for grocery shopping, in preparation of our Davis Strait crossing. Awaiting our new crew (Arne, Olivia, Jeanne, Leon), that will assist us with the crossing. Their flight is diverted to Disco Bay, home to the largest icebergs. See side story from our resident journalist Arne.

**29/08/2021** – Tovqussaq (64°52' N – 52°12' W) – abandoned fishing harbour in a large bay, source of our oak fire wood.

**30/08/2021** – Maniitsoq (65°25' N – 52°54' W) – a larger town situated under the sugar loaf mountains, Maniitsoq lies at the head of Hamborgerland, a paradise for hunting, heli skiing and fishing. Carribou are brought in by small speed boat. Time to organise for our PCR test in the local hospital.



**31/08/2021** – Appamiut (65°40' N – 53°11' W) – a nice secluded anchorage, with a magnificent view on the mountains and glaciers of Hamborgerland. Special treat for



our last anchorage in Greenland, borealis aurora (norther light) keeps the crew up long past midnight.



01/09/2021 – Maniitsoq  
(65°25' N – 52°54' W) – PCR  
tests, last grocery shopping,  
Leon leaves is for Belgium,  
while we prepare for the  
Davies Strait crossing.

A caribou stew will  
remember us of this  
magnificent Greenland  
expedition while underway to  
Canada!

