



Paamiut – 16/08/2021

When preparing to navigate Greenland, one reads about icebergs, sea ice and ice charts, but in the back of your head, with the current climate change, you don't expect to come across them.

Prior to departure from Iceland to Greenland, we sent an email to the Danish Meteorological Institute (DMI), requesting regular email updates of the ice situation, as mentioned in the pilot.

While approaching Greenland from Reykjavik, on a three day crossing, we studied the Ice Chart sent to the Iridium by DMI. Some icebergs and growlers were marked on our path.

In thick fog, radar on, ice positions plotted on the charts, we continued with care. At 0.5nm distance we skirted a large radar contact, which we had been monitoring for an hour. The early morning watch saw the typical drop in sea water temperature from 11 to 6.5° C, and in the fog they could guess the contours of a large white

object, but we never really saw our first iceberg coming.



How different by midday, when the fog cleared on our approach to Tasiilaq, where we were confronted with tens of huge white masses floating by, 20–40m high, 50–100m long, silent, awfully beautiful and menacing.

Icebergs calve off glaciers, where the end of the glacier reaches the sea in a fjord. All year round, the cold East Greenland



current carries icebergs and heavy polar pack ice southwards in a belt of 50–100nm wide.

While we sailed south along the East coast, DMI reported a berg of 4 by 2km, supposed to be passing our track. Such giants, that typically have a height to draft ratio of 1:5, can be stuck on the seabed in 200m deep water, slowly breaking up over time.



As a result, south of most icebergs, one finds icefields with bergy bits and growlers, ranging from 10–20m to car size and smaller ice, carried by current and wind in different directions.

Each iceberg has its own shape, trimmed along break lines by the waves and the weather. One can spend days watching

them, and like in clouds you recognise all kinds of animals and familiar shapes. They never seem to bore.

For ships and the local communities in Greenland, they are a navigational hazard to reckon with, as the icebergs can block the entrance to a passage or an anchorage and for example drag fishing gear away. The Iscentralen (Ice Patrol) of DMI monitor the ice situation around Greenland on a permanent basis, they draw up the daily ice charts and can be contacted for advice.

With Monara, we were lucky to pass giant icebergs in very calm weather, on sunny days, and although catching their magnitude is difficult, they are perfect objects to photograph, with their different shapes, colours ranging from white over grey and



green to blue. Occasionally such a huge berg breaks up, a chunk the size of an apartment building comes down with a huge cracking noise, causing a small tsunami, and the remaining berg repositions itself in the sea, rolling over tens of meters, in search of a new balance, leaving a trail of smaller bergy bits in its wake.



One evening, on our way to an anchorage, we entered an icefield at the entrance of a fjord, and were stuck all night. Using our search light, we poled our way through bergs of all different sizes, pushing away car size bits from the bow, manoeuvring round larger bergs, trying to avoid being stuck in this cold, dangerous world. By 4 am we were back in open water, exhausted and humbled by the dark side of the ice.



While we were visiting the abandoned radio station in Ikerasassuaq, a 20 ton iceberg moved in behind Monara, blocking our way out through the narrow passage. By setting both engines forward, while attached firmly to the dock, we managed to push the berg far enough in the Prins Kristians Sunds, to make our way out.



Both Monara and her crew had the most exciting and adventurous passage between Tasiilaq and Ikerasassuaq, 300 nm along Eastern Greenland without any village, only surrounded by ice and whales. Into the Wild...

After a week, we were happy to enter the magnificent Prins Kristians Sund, for some more relaxed cruising between 1500m high mountains in one of the most beautiful fjords in the world...

