

Northwest Greenland



CONTENTS

Uummannaq District	191
Uummannaq Island	191
Around Uummannaq	195
Upernavik District	196
Upernavik Town	196
Around Upernavik Town	199
Qaanaaq (Thule) District	199
Qaanaaq Town (Thule)	199
Around Qaanaaq Town	201
Siorapaluk	201

HIGHLIGHTS

- Dogsled through the dramatic fjords of **Uummannaq** (p193)
- Visit the site of the discovery of the **Qilakitsoq** mummies (p195)
- Traipse around the historic buildings of **Upernavik** (p196)
- Take a trip with a traditional hunter in **Qaanaaq** district (p200)
- Visit the traditional communities of **Siorapaluk** (p201) or **Inglefield Fjord** (p201)



Extreme distance and costs have long kept Northwest Greenland one of the least visited areas of the country, and the ensuing isolation has meant that it remains one of the least developed and least westernised areas of Greenland. It was less than 150 years ago that the last group of Baffin Islanders migrated to this area, and 40 years ago hunting was still the full-time occupation of most locals.

In the far north and in smaller communities many families still depend on hunting as their main source of income, and a ban on hunting and fishing by snowmobile or motorboat means that the dogsled and the kayak are still the primary means of transport for traditional hunters. The authenticity of it all hits you with the smell of dogs, drying fish and stretched skins wafting through the air. However, junk food, alcohol, snowmobiles, mobile phones, speedboats and prefab housing are increasingly encroaching on that traditional way of life.

Gloriously scenic Uummannaq, to the south of the region, is the only area with any kind of tourist industry, and even this means just a trickle of travellers and a few organised tours. Further north, life proceeds at a slower pace, and a successful trip will depend on your ability to make contacts with local people and get access to the vast beauty that lies beyond the towns.

UUMMANNAQ DISTRICT

UUMMANNAQ ISLAND

pop 1350

Fly or sail into Uummannaq (Heart-shaped) on a clear day and you'll be smitten. The towering red gneiss peak that dominates the tiny island lords over the colourful village below, where houses cling precariously to the steep rocky shore and a network of wooden steps plays snakes and ladders with the wind-ing roads.

Uummannaq Island sits at 70°N latitude, 600km north of the Arctic Circle, and it's famed as Greenland's sunniest spot. It is also one of the driest places in the country: mineral-rich desert landscapes dominate the nearby islands, creating a surreal image when set against the surrounding iceberg-littered fjord. Elsewhere in the region are soaring cliffs sweeping down to the sea, home to thousands of nesting sea birds.

In winter, darkness descends for two months, but spring ushers in excellent conditions for dogsledding, and in April the

town hosts the ice golf world championships (www.golfonice.com), where there are icebergs instead of bunkers.

History

Uummannaq has been a seasonally inhabited hunting ground for several millennia and found fame as a whaling district in the 17th century. The first permanent settlement, however, was founded on the Nuussuaq Peninsula in 1758 and shifted to the present site in 1763. Over the years it developed into a sealing district and service centre for the mines around outlying Maarmorilik and Qaarsut. Today shrimp-processing and halibut fishing sustain the local economy.

Information

The Tele-Post Center has two ATMs in the lobby.

Arctic Umiaq Line (AUL) office (☎ 951246; bktumd@aul.gl; ☎ 9am-3pm Mon-Fri)

Police (☎ 951222)

Uummannaq Tourist Service (☎ 951518; uumman-naq@icecaphotels.gl) At Hotel Uummannaq; hotel guests and tour groups are their definite priority.