

South Greenland

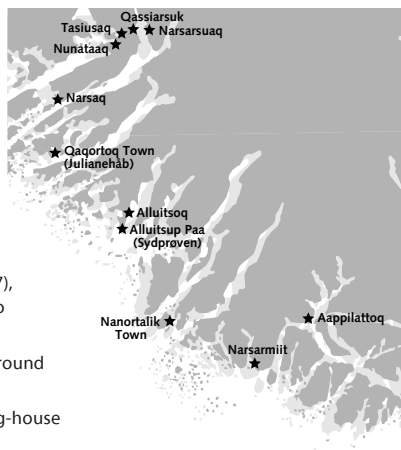


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HIGHLIGHTS

- 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, Narsarmitt 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, Igaliku & 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 Bluie 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