

VOYAGE INFORMATION

Voyage Name	West Greenland Explorer
Voyage Code	WGE001G
Dates	15-25 May, 2021
Duration	11 days / 10 nights
Start	Nuuk, Greenland
Finish	Nuuk, Greenland
Ship	Greg Mortimer
Forms Due	15 February, 2021

Welcome!

Thank you for joining Aurora Expeditions on our West Greenland Explorer voyage.

The remarkable coastline of West Greenland has seen many changes since the first humans arrived over 4,500 years ago. Gain an incomparable insight into the wildlife, fascinating traditional cultures and ever-changing ice that characterises this compelling island on a special, exploratory voyage to one of the most remote regions in the world. Zodiac cruise among magnificent icebergs, spot whales and explore the extraordinary Disko Island.

ITINERARY OVERVIEW

Days 1&2	Nuuk
Day 3	Eternity Fjord
Day 4	Sisimiut
Day 5	Ilulissat
Day 6	Eqip Sermia
Day 7	Qeqertarsuaq
Day 8	Uummannaq
Day 9	Qasigiannuit
Day 10	At Sea
Day 11	Disembark Nuuk

VOYAGE HIGHLIGHTS

- Explore the Ilulissat Icefjord, a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Enjoy thrilling Zodiac-cruises to glaciers, amongst icebergs, and along rugged coastlines
- Hike to remarkable viewpoints that offer sweeping vistas across fjords, valleys and soaring mountain peaks
- Discover the cultural attractions in Nuuk, one of the world's northernmost and remote cosmopolitan capital cities

EXPEDITION INCLUSIONS

- Arrival airport transfer to group hotel on day 1
- One night's hotel accommodation including breakfast in Nuuk
- Half day tour in Nuuk on day 2 prior to embarking *Greg Mortimer*
- Group transfer from ship to airport in Nuuk on Day 11
- On-board accommodation during voyage including daily cabin service
- All meals, snacks, tea and coffee during voyage
- Beer, house wine and soft drinks with dinner
- All shore excursions and Zodiac cruises
- Educational lectures and guiding services from expedition team
- Free access to our onboard doctor for consultations relating to sea-sickness. A standard fee of US \$60.00 (reclaimable through your travel insurance provider) applies for medical consultations not related to seasickness
- A 3-in-1 waterproof polar expedition jacket
- Complimentary use of muck boots during the voyage
- Comprehensive pre-departure information
- A printed photo book produced with photos from your voyage
- Port surcharges, permits and landing fees

EXPEDITION EXCLUSIONS

- International or domestic flights, unless specified
- Transfers not mentioned in the itinerary
- Airport arrival or departure taxes
- Passport, visa, and vaccination charges
- Travel insurance or emergency evacuation charges
- Hotels and meals not included in itinerary
- Optional excursions not included in the itinerary
- Optional activity surcharges
- All items of a personal nature including but not limited to: alcoholic beverages and soft drinks (outside of dinner service), laundry services, personal clothing, medical expenses, gratuities, Wi-Fi, email or phone charges.

Note: A \$15 USD per person per day gratuity for the crew is automatically added to your onboard account. It is at your discretion if you would like to remove the tip (or increase/decrease the amount) when you settle your bill. It is not necessary to tip the expedition team members. This gratuity amount is included for suites as part of their 'Suite Benefits'.

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1 Nuuk

Arrive in Greenland's capital, Nuuk and transfer to your hotel. Upon arrival at your included hotel, kindly remind hotel check-in staff to provide you with Aurora Expeditions cabin tags. Please clearly label the tags with your name and ship cabin number. The remainder of the day is at leisure.

Accommodation: Hotel Hans Egede (or similar)

Day 2 Embark the *Greg Mortimer*

The northernmost capital in the world, Nuuk was founded in 1728 by the Norwegian missionary Hans Egede, and has more than 17,000 inhabitants. The centre of Greenland lies at the mouth of its very own fjord system, on the mid-west coast of Greenland. The fjord system, is the second largest fjord system in the world and is one of the country's main drawcards.

On an introductory tour, discover Nuuk's contrasting architecture from beautiful old buildings to colourful houses – one of Nuuk's trademarks, with the brightly-coloured houses providing a stark to the rocks or white winter snow. Stop by the newly renovated and roof-covered "brættet", where the day's catch of seal, birds and fish are sold. Other attractions in the town include the award-winning culture centre Katuaq, City Hall, the cathedral from 1849, as well as the National Museum, located down by the colonial buildings at the old harbor, with a stunning view over the fjord. The museum was established in 1966 and became Greenland's National Museum and Archives, offering a unique ethnographical collection. Discover the famous mummies and costumes from Qilakitsoq in northwest Greenland, as well as the world's oldest and almost complete intact skin boat the Pearyland Umiaq, whose well-preserved remains are estimated to date back to the 1470s.

Late afternoon, embark the *Greg Mortimer* to commence your voyage.

Days 3 – 10 Exploring Greenland's West Coast

Over the coming days, you will discover the immense beauty of West Greenland, and in true expeditionary style, we'll keep our itinerary flexible as weather and sea ice determine where we go, what we do and see. We plan to visit the following places and hope for a few additional surprises

Eternity Fjord: located north of Maniitsoq town, this beautiful fjord offers numerous glaciers, Zodiac cruises through bergy bits, mountainous landscapes and perhaps a chance to hike or kayak under Greenland's impressive peaks.

Sisimiut: Greenland's second largest town, Sisimiut is the only place in Greenland that has an open-air public swimming pool and the town is famous for the old blue church with the gate made of whale jaws, which is located next to the cosy little museum, featuring a reconstruction of an Inuit turf house. Sisimiut offers hiking trails with various degrees of difficulty. The easier trails take you through town itself and its outskirts as well as into the mountains, where you will find spectacular vantage points.

Sisimiut is located approximately 54 kilometres/33.5 miles north of the Arctic Circle, meaning that during summer, you can experience midnight sun in here. Approximately 4,500 years ago, the Saqqaq culture arrived from Canada and settled in the area. They lived here for about 2,000 years, after which they mysteriously disappeared from the town. The Dorset culture arrived around AD 500 and stayed until the 1200s until they were replaced by the Thule culture, and today, the majority of the population of Sisimiut are descendants of the Thule culture.

The museum in Sisimiut allows you to experience local history as well as some cultural historical treats, exhibiting early life in Greenland. The town also has a cultural centre - Taseralik Arts Centre, where you can experience concerts, plays, films and much more, and its café offers a great views.

Hiking Excursion

Palasip Qaqqaa – The Priest Mountain

Perhaps one of the more challenging hikes offered to cruise expeditioner visiting Greenland. Palasip Qaqqaa is a 550 metres / 1,805 feet high mountain a few kilometres from downtown Sisimiut. The tour begins at the harbor where you are transported by bus to the starting point of the hike. The first part of the hike is along a small river with fresh drinking water, so remember a drinking bottle. During the hike you will see the local flora, perhaps encounter foxes, grouse and eagles are also present. If you're lucky you might even come across musk oxen. Throughout the hike, you will be rewarded with stunning views of Sisimiut and at the top, there is a fantastic view of town and the surrounding fjords and the sea.

Duration: 3-5 hours

Difficulty: The hike is steep in parts so a reasonable amount of fitness is required. The hike is along a pathway.

Important: the weather can change quickly so bring a light jacket. Hiking boots are necessary and mosquito repellent is strongly recommended.

Ilulissat is renowned for mountainous icebergs drifting from one of the most productive glaciers in the northern hemisphere an out into the Disko Bay. A short distance south of town is the mindblowing Ilulissat Icefjord, listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2004, and home of one of the most actively calving glaciers in the world, Sermeq Kujalleq (also known as Jacobshavn glacier). Sermeq Kujalleq produces about 20 million tonnes of ice each day, all floating into the Ilulissat Icefjord and Disko Bay. Ilulissat is the third largest town municipality in Greenland with more than 5,000 inhabitants.

Ilulissat Glacier is the most productive glacier, not only in Greenland, but in the northern hemisphere. The glacier is seven kilometres wide and more than a kilometre steep. It produces 43 million tonnes of ice and moves about 50 metres /164 feet a day. It is an amazing sight to see this enormous amount of ice and experience the awe-inspiring power of nature.

Conditions permitting, enjoy a Zodiac cruise at the mouth of the fjord and kayak through sea ice and icebergs. More than 40 million ton of ice flows out into the fjord 24 hours a day, resulting in gigantic icebergs that can be in excess of 100 metres on each side with a height of more than 100 metres above the water surface. These giants often become stranded at the end of the fjord, providing excellent opportunities to sail among them - an exceptional experience and certainly a highlight for many visitors to West Greenland.

Hiking in Greenland generally is mostly done on rugged unmarked tracks. However, in Ilulissat there are a few well-marked routes that take you along the Icefjord. An easy hike to the old settlement at the Icefjord takes about 30-45 minutes from the centre of town, leading to a fantastic spot at the edge of the Icefjord where a former settlement was situated. Different Inuit cultures have lived here during the last 4,000 years, and today you can still find artefacts, which witness their presence. Hear the story about the life and the customs of the Greenlanders before the Europeans' arrival; see the ruins, the kitchen mitten, and fell the permafrost with your own hands. The route to the edge has a walkway and when you reach the edge of the icefjord you can walk up a little hill for an even more breathtaking view. However, a moderate level of fitness and balance is required to summit the small hill as the terrain is rugged.

Optional helicopter flight: this excursion is the only way you can get close to the gigantic glacier. The 10-seater helicopter takes off from Ilulissat Airport and flies as low as safely possible, crossing hills, lakes and ice fjords. We land on the mountain at Kangia, in the middle of the preserved area, and for 30 minutes, you can revel in the incredible surroundings. We fly above the edge of the glacier and the icebergs in the fjord on the ride back to Ilulissat. Some of the biggest icebergs strand on a moraine underneath the water just outside the town, and it makes a wonderful finale to this excursion.

Duration: approximately 90 minutes

Eqip Sermia (Eqi the calving glacier): accessible only by sea, Eqi glacier is located 80 kilometres north of Ilulissat. It's one of the most active glaciers in Greenland. Although it's smaller than Sermeq Kujalleq glacier in Ilulissat, it's more accessible, and if ice conditions permit, we'll Zodiac cruise within safe distance, waiting for chunks of ice to calve, and hearing the deafening crash of the ice breaking off followed by the huge splash when it hits the water – an experience you won't soon forget. We may land our Zodiacs on a moraine and walk close to the glacier.

The Inland Ice Sheet is made of snow and when densely packed, it becomes ice. This procedure puts pressure on the air between the snow flakes and results in air bubbles. When the glacier calves, the air is released and this is what creates the explosion-like sounds. The oxygen-rich ice is a food resource for many animals; cormorants, guillemots, kittiwakes and the rare prairie gull is often seen nearby. Seals often live in the ice in front of the glacier and the great eagle can be spotted in the area. You may also come across grouse, hare and small arctic fox.

Qeqertarsuaq means "the large island" and it is indeed Greenland's largest island. The island lies in the middle of Disko Bay, about 70 km from the mainland and can be reached in a day's sailing. The island is different from the rest of Greenland due to its volcanic origin. The landscape is characterised by red-tinged basalt mountains, verdant hilltops, interesting rock figures and hot springs (not suitable for bathing).

Disko Island is well-known for its beautiful nature, abundant flora and interesting geology that made geological surveys possible from 1848. In 1906, the "Arctic Station" was founded and it is now the oldest manned field station in the arctic region. The Arctic Station conducts arctic research on bio and geo-related problems. With an area of 8,578 km², it is one of the largest islands in the world. If we're lucky, staff from the station may come aboard and share with you the work they do at the station.

The main town of Qeqertarsuaq is also called Qeqertarsuaq, and has about 850 residents. Qeqertarsuaq was founded in 1773 and is beautifully located by Disko Bay. The town is located on a peninsula and has a natural harbor. From spring to autumn, the area around Disko Island becomes a meeting ground for large whales such as bowhead whale and humpback whale – a perfect place for kayaking and Zodiac cruising for possible whale encounters. In the 17th Century, the first whaling stations were established on Disko Island and the optimal fishing areas drew many European whaling expeditions. Being located nearer to the Arctic Circle, during the summer months, you will see the midnight sun in Qeqertarsuaq, an experience that you won't have south of Sisimiut.

Uummannaq: Surrounded by steep islands, and an endless supply of icebergs from the Qarajaq Glacier, Uummannaq (meaning "heart-like") is the centrepiece of an archipelago where everyday hunting and fishing life plays out in the middle of one of nature's grandest creations in Greenland. As the ship approaches Uummannaq, have your camera ready and be out on deck as the vista is magnificent. Founded as a Danish colony in 1758 on the mainland, the settlement was moved five years later to this nearby island, where seal hunting was more plentiful. As you wander the town, through the snow and ice, watch out for the colourful local houses that are so emblematic of Greenland.

The iconic heart-shaped mountain of Uummannaq towers over the island, and the symbol of the heart is an unmistakable landmark for visitors. Nearby Qilakitsoq, a former settlement, but now an archaeological site, is

famous for the discovery of eight mummified bodies in 1972. The mummies which date back to 1475 AD, can now be viewed at the Greenland National Museum in Nuuk. Uummannaq is a great place for Zodiac cruising to explore the coastline, kayaking and hiking.

Qasigianguit

In summer, this is one of the best places in Greenland to encounter humpback whales as they converge in large numbers. The mountains around Qasigianguit offer excellent hiking opportunities, and the view at the summit of the town's most prominent peak, the 450-meter tall Mount Qaqqarsuaq, is worth the effort.

Day 10 At Sea

As we sail back south to Nuuk, keep a lookout for whale blows and the seabirds that trail our ship in the ever-present Arctic winds. Enjoy the time to reflect on your recent adventures in Greenland, share and exchange photos, and soak in the spectacular scenery of West Greenland.

Day 11 Nuuk

Arrive back in Nuuk where you disembark and farewell your crew, expedition team and fellow travellers. A transfer to downtown or to the airport is included.