



**GREENLAND: THE LAND OF ICE (AND SOME GREEN)**  
Summer 2019

Google Earth

Good and extraordinary afternoon. Taking advantage of this fantastic time that a certain Covid-19 has "gifted" us, I take this opportunity to send you this new presentation of the trip made during the summer holidays. I know it took me a long time to make it, but I hope it's worth taking a little time with it.

Why am I telling you this? Well, because the destination was ... GREENLAND. And already, in advance, I tell you that it is one of the most spectacular places I have ever been to. It is an island of large dimensions (more than 4 times Spain), populated only by just over 57,000 inhabitants (similar to the cities of Linares or Cuenca). That already gives you an idea of how wild and inhospitable it is.

How did we do it? Well, in almost the only possible way. That is, hiring the trip with the only company in the world that does it. This is Polar Lands, and it was set up years ago by one of the greatest and most famous polar explorers, Ramón Larramendi. In addition to the fact that it is Spanish, many of you will know it by appearing in chapters of the mythical series "Al filo de imposible".

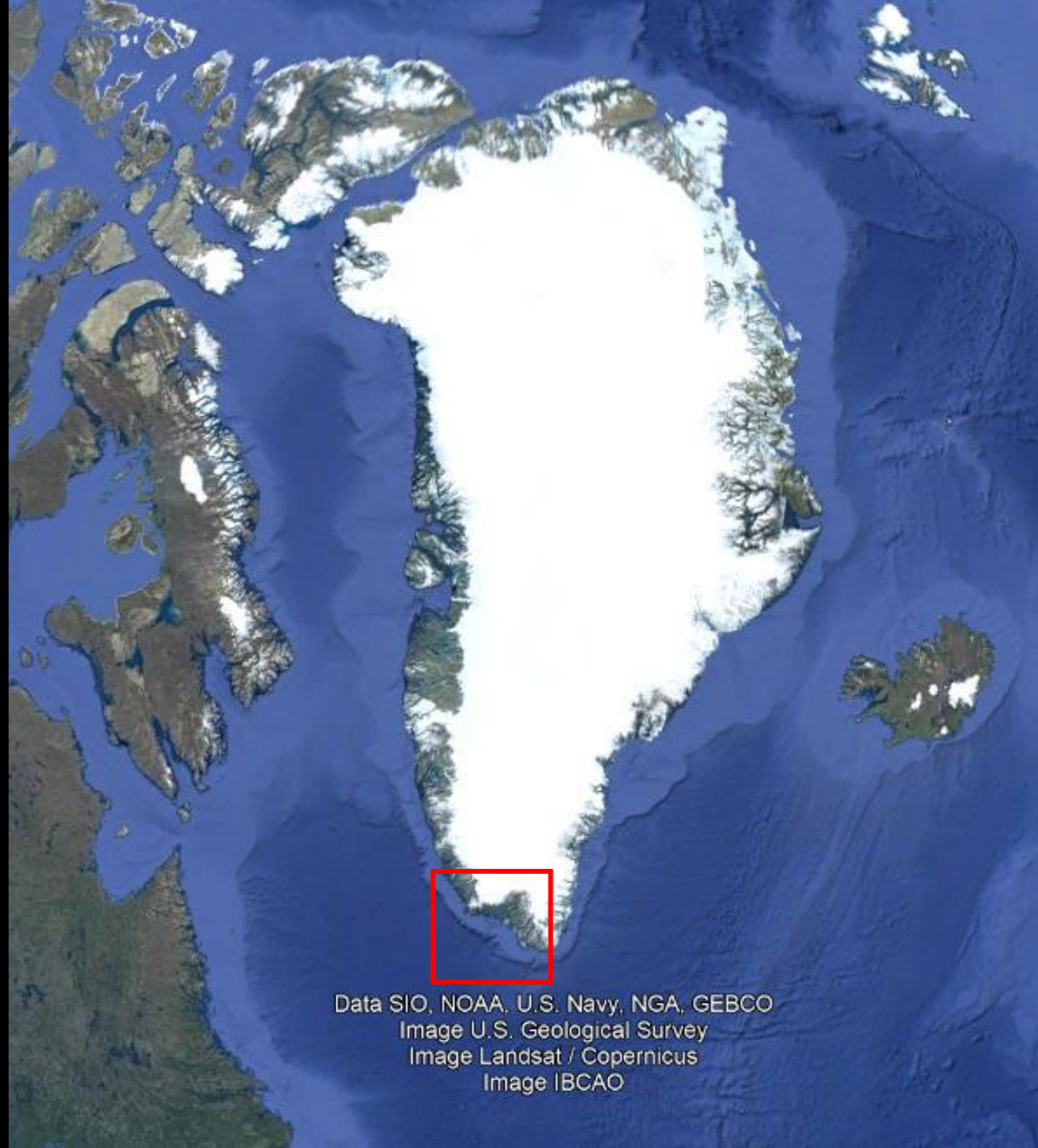
As its publicity brochure acknowledges, it is "an expedition where unforeseen circumstances may occur, where infrastructure is almost nil and logistical difficulties are enormous." And I assure you that it is so. There is no infrastructure of any kind and it is very very difficult to move from one place to another. It is an "organized" trip, but absolutely out of the ordinary. In addition to having common tasks (loading and unloading boats, preparing meals, etc.), it is an active trip aimed at "those who do not mind sleeping in a tent and who are used to riding in the mountains regularly".

This is the price to pay for knowing a site like this. If you meet these premises, go ahead, don't even think about it. You will never have invested your money in a better way. I assure. Now, finally, also take into account what a well-known Greenlandic saying says: "The climate rules in Greenland" 😊



Well, here I present the island. As I said before, its dimensions are significant. And as you can see in the image, almost all of its territory is occupied by a colossal mass of ice, one of the oldest on the planet, called inlandsis. Its approximate thickness is about 3000 meters approximately, cloth.

The peripheral areas are also mountainous and furrowed by thousands of fjords through which the ice advances inexorably towards the sea. A sea, by the way, which is also frozen for a good part of the year. It is what having a polar climate (ET) that softens in coastal areas.



The island has populated areas at its four ends. They are precisely the four brown areas of the image. The only form of communication between them is by plane, which, by the way, like everything in this space is extremely expensive. I repeat, very very expensive. You will be blown away by the price of things, but it is what it is to be a constituent nation of the Kingdom of Denmark.

Most of its inhabitants are Inuit (native peoples of the Arctic regions), who are dedicated to hunting, fishing and livestock.

Our itinerary led us to move through the territory included in the red box ...



... which appears here in greater detail.

Moving around this territory is extremely complicated and requires important logistics, as I said before. We communicated between places (yellow lines) using semi-rigid boats (zodiacs) which, as the brochure says, are "fun, exciting and make our trip a unique experience". And I assure you that it is so.

The rest of the trips were made on foot, in a series of also impressive walks (red lines), always in a group, and more or less hard.

I will tell you, like a diary, our visit to this spectacular place. I hope you like it...







**Day 1: Flight Reykiavik (Iceland) – Narsarsuaq (Greenland)**





It has always seemed to me that the views from the aircraft windows are unique, but in this case the trip from Reykjavic to Narsarsuaq is AMAZING. It's a two and a half hour flight, but arrival on the island is a fascinating thing. The contrast of colors, together with its extension to infinity, I assure you that they do not leave anyone indifferent.





I hope you agree with my appreciation of colors, right? Here you can see better that inlandsis that I told you about before and the glaciers that rush to the sea. Nunataks, fjords, rimayas,.... a whole lesson in glacier morphology ☺





The airport runway is at the end of that ice tongue that you see in the foreground. It is traveled longitudinally on the approach, with which you have a privileged view of it, of the mountainous ridge that runs along the margins of the island, and of the colossal mass of ice that, as you see, extends to infinity!





The tiny Narsarsuaq airport (Greenlandic, "great plain") was built as an air base by the Americans in 1942 as a supply stop on the route to Europe.

From there you have only two possibilities. One, that they come looking for you by helicopter. And two, that they come looking for you with a boat...







This second option is the most common and this was the case in our case. With a zodiac we cross to the other side of the fjord. The first thing that strikes you, in addition to the nervousness typical of the experience of traveling in such a vehicle, is the vision of the icebergs that, coming from a nearby glacial front, float in the waters of the fjord.





So we arrived at Qassiarsuk (the airport is directly opposite, on the other side of the fjord). It is a small Inuit settlement (of the order of 50 people, almost all farmers), founded by the Norwegian Erik Thorvaldsson (also known as Erik the Red) over 1000 years ago. There we spent our first night at Hostel Leif Eriksson (son of the previous one). It's the yellow building on the right.





**Day 2: Qassiarsuk – Tasiusaq**





After a good breakfast, a walk of several hours awaits us (at a leisurely pace) to a small refuge in another area of farms called Tasiusaq. During the 7-8 km route, to give you an idea, the dominant landscape is reminiscent of the one that can be seen in Spain in the Aigües Tortes National Park, in the Catalan Pyrenees (with its nuances, obviously).





The refuge we reached is located very close to the Sermilik fjord. What floats in the water is ice from icebergs from another nearby glacier, the Eqalorutsit. The stillness, the absence of noise, the tranquility and the isolation of the place overwhelm anyone.





In the small refuge, similar to the mountain ones that we have here, you have to prepare food for everyone and then scrub and leave everything as it was. The views are fantastic.





**Day 3: Tasiusaq - Qassiarsuk**





The next morning another new experience awaited us. We had the opportunity to kayak the so-called “bay of icebergs”. For 2 hours we sail with these boats between ice floes.





The size of icebergs can be enormous. Keep in mind that most of its surface is under water. So it is dangerous to get close. Sometimes they turn around. And it's not a joke. It happens. But of course, it is impossible not to be attracted by its striking colors 😊





In the afternoon we walk back to Qassiarsuk on a different path. The main novelty was that it rained a lot. Despite this, he gave us time to visit the ruins of Brattahlid, the capital of Viking Greenland, as well as the reconstructions of the first Christian church and the house of Erik the Red. We learned how difficult life must have been in this area during that period.

Since recently (2017) this area is part of the World Heritage Site.

I only have this borrowed photo that shows our delicate "position" before the elements.





**Day 4: Qassiarsuk - Qaleraliq**





The next day, with better weather, we went back across the fjord to walk through the Valley of a Thousand Flowers. As you can see, the meanders and the valley configured by the glacial retreat are spectacular.





The name of the valley is a bit exaggerated, but it is true that flowers with bright colors appear everywhere.





The route, first flat and then a steep climb, of approximately 12 kilometers (round trip), takes you to the Kiattut glacier. As you can see, this viewpoint allows you to have beautiful views of this glacier whose tongue does not stop going back. It is what global warming has ;-(





Back, with our beloved boat (the zodiac that I mentioned before and that you have in the image), we cross the Tunulliarfik and Ikersuaq fjords, where we meet again with gigantic icebergs, to finally enter the Qaleraliq fjord. Here we will spend the following days in this fantastic camp, isolated from the world and without electricity. Quite an experience in today's world, right?





**Days 5 y 6: Qaleraliq (Frentes glaciares e inlandsis)**





The Qaleraliq camp is a unique site for its isolation (there is nothing in hundreds of kilometers around) and for its location. The vision of three glacial fronts (which were once one, eye) leaves you speechless. But it is also that every so often a huge roar runs through the valley. What is it? For the sound of colossal blocks of ice falling into the sea. It is difficult to see because the sound comes before you. Incredible.





The activity of the day is twofold. On the one hand, go through the three glacial fronts with the zodiac. A prudential distance is necessary for two reasons: the first, because these floating blocks are much larger than they seem (remember what was said before); and second, because, as I was saying, it is very easy for ice to collapse, causing waves of an interesting size, and which could lead the boat ahead. You will be with me that better not to try it. The water is between 3 and 4 degrees centigrade.





Despite the distance, the ice walls impress a lot. One realizes how insignificant we humans are in the natural system, and also how much damage we can do. Here global warming has serious consequences with a gradual retreat from the glacier front of the Inlandsis. The decline has wild proportions.





I think the images convey that stillness and calm that I have told you about. In the whole day only our zodiac will pass through here (and it will be a little while only). There are some photos ...

















Claro, que la perspectiva cambia cuando te aupas a la masa de hielo. Los que hayáis estado en el Perito Moreno sabéis más o menos de lo que os hablo. La diferencia es que aquí llegas navegando y ni hay nadie, ni se le espera. Todo un lujo.





Equipped with the necessary material, we made a journey of about 4 kilometers on the ice. This allows you to see up close the whimsical formations that the water configures on its surface, and to perceive the dimensions of this place a little better.

You are going to allow me the expression, but you have to throw "balls" to be able to delve into the inlandsis in an expedition that can take you months, as some expeditionaries have done (among them Larramendi). I think there are few comparable adventures.





The camp has among its peculiarities that the tents are domes (geometric domes). In each of them there are two campaign bunk beds (those of canvas) with capacity for two people each. Then there is another dome that serves as a kitchen-dining room. Remember, neither electricity nor shower. To have water, wash and wash dishes you have to go to a nearby paddy that comes directly from the glacier 😊





The next day we hiked from the camp itself. We ascended through a singular sandy valley towards a promontory of approximately 400 meters high, from which we have a view of the fjord and the plant formation that surrounds us, the tundra.





Although somewhat remote, which is normal on the other hand, there we could see a couple of caribou. American subspecies of reindeer, is abundant in these lands and has, as a standard, ultraviolet vision.





The scenery is spectacular. The erosive action of ice on rocks is visible at all times,...





...the magnitude and grandeur of the landforms around us, in addition to...





...the colossal glacier of the interior of the island that spreads in multiple fjords like this one of Qaleraliq.





**Day 7: Qaleraliq - Narsaq**





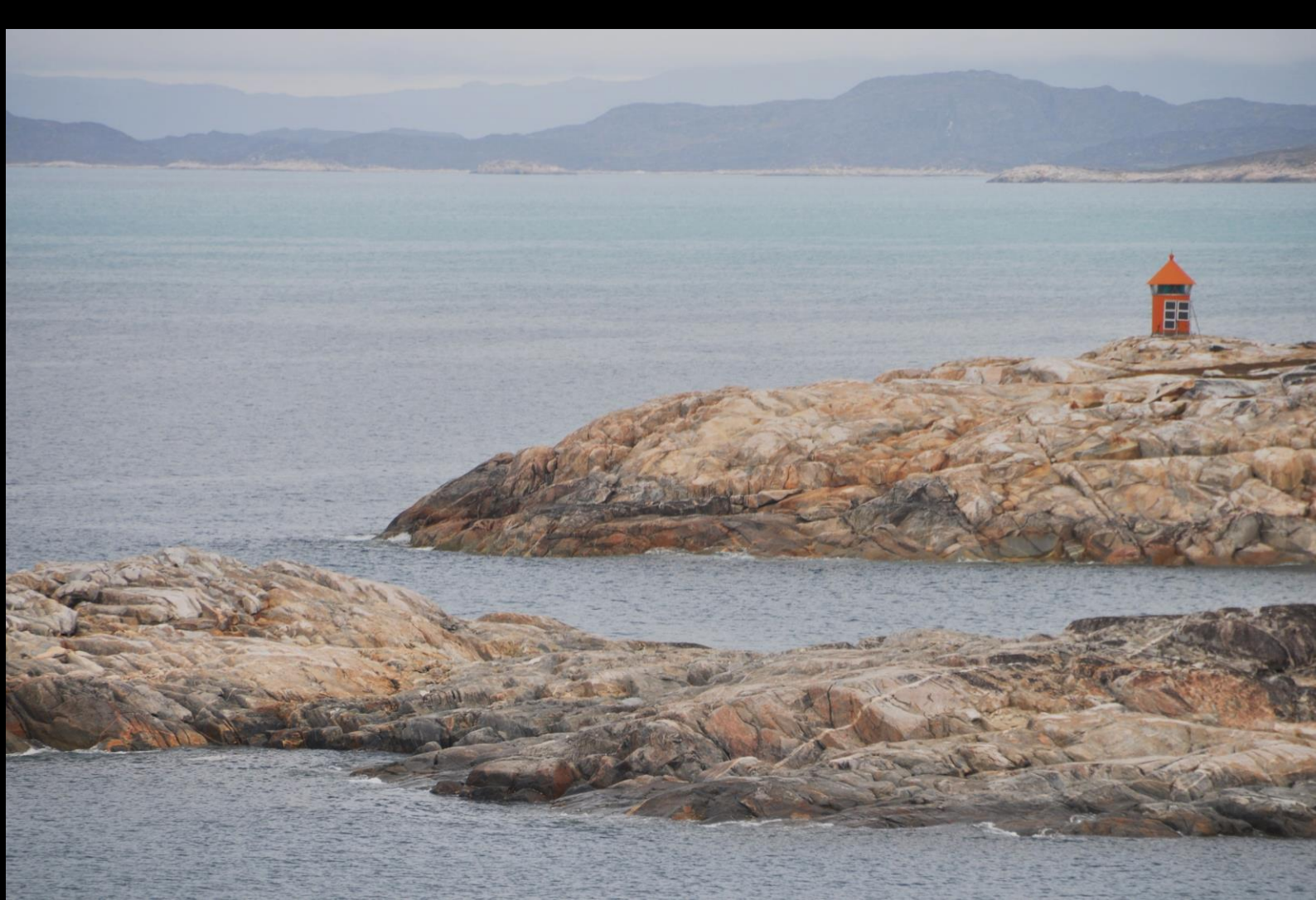
Our day begins collecting everything to leave the camp and march towards Narsaq. It is, as you can see, a small settlement (1500 inhabitants) where we will spend the day touring its streets, the fish market or the church. We will sleep in another small, but comfortable shelter, this time with electricity and a shower. A luxury!





**Day 8: Narsaq - Uunartoq**





After our day off, we leave Narsaq and navigate an intricate fjord system that is difficult to navigate. Fortunately, the different captains of the zodiacs know the way to a thousand wonders.

We make a stop in the tiny town of Saarloq where we drop our legs a bit after a long time in the water.





There we could observe one of the traditional arts of preserving fish, drying in the sun.





On the island of Uunartoq we set up camp. This time we sleep in conventional tents in an absolutely solitary place. Remember, all the luggage, the shops and the food come with us in the zodiac. You have to download and upload it together.





Of course, not everything was going to be work. The island has a thermal area (the only one accessible in Greenland) that we enjoy richly. The white of the bottom is an iceberg. The contrast sensation is enormous with the warm water. And also with a local beer rich rich 😊





We were planning to eat our food, but we met an Inuit couple who reside seasonally on the small island. The man was coming back from fishing and was cleaning it. A little negotiation and...





....said and done. Rich little fish with baked vegetables for everyone ☺





**Day 9: Uunartoq – Kuusuaq (Tasermiut)**





The next morning, after the morning ritual, breakfast, pick-up and loading into the zodiac, we head towards the Tasermiut fjord. That day the misty atmosphere stood out, but also the majestic of the mountains that surrounded us, plus the tranquility of the place.





On the way to our final destination we made a couple of stops. The first was in the ruins of an old graphite mine (Amitsoq). They were exploited between 1911 and 1924. Industrial heritage haunts me, horroooooor.





The second stop was made in the small town of Tasiusaq. Surrounded by mountains it is an exceptional place to visit, but it is seen that not so much to live. At the end of the XIX all its inhabitants died of hunger. It was repopulated with the surviving relatives in the 30s of the last century. Today it has just over 50 inhabitants.





Going up the Tasermiut fjord we reach our next camp (Kuusuaq). We disembark, set up the tents and free afternoon. Some went fishing and others went for a walk. Some of us approach the peak on the left (Qasigeerneq). It has a certain resemblance to the Matterhorn...





...and a climb to its base with certain "complications". The summit seems difficult to conquer. But the view of the Tasersuaq Lake and the peaks that surround it were worth it after the effort made, or not?





The descent was enjoyable, until when we reached the shops a zodiac approached us to tell us that we had to collect everything and go to the next camp, located upstream of the fjord. Why? Well, because the next morning that same boat would have to take us up the fjord and the weather forecast is very bad, which would prevent it from picking us up. As in the next camp we would be 3 days, if we did not leave today, we would have to spend 4 days trapped. So, alé alé





**Days 10, 11 y 12: Tasermiut**





With the bustle of the previous day, in the end we arrived late to our new camp (where we will stay 4 nights, without electricity, running water or, of course, coverage). In the morning we discover the new location. To one side the majestic Tasermiut Fjord,...





... towards the other, the imposing vertical walls (bigwalls) that you see in the image. They are colossal rock walls of enormous dimensions, characteristic of this part of the island. Great climbers from all over the world come here to try to climb them. A challenge...





Most of the group took the first day off, to spend the second day on a walk to the base of these granite colossi. In front, the Nalumasortoq, which has two twin walls with a characteristic open book shape. Behind, the Ketil. And around several glaciers. I think it is difficult to find a more alpine landscape and, above all, wilder than this. Spectacular 😊





As I say, the vision of these great walls a little closer impresses, I assure you. Of course, to get closer you have to overcome a drop of about 750 meters and about 12 kilometers of route (round trip). Not bad.





The next day another walk, this time towards another of the moles, Ulamertorsuaq.





The wall already impresses from below, but as you get closer. It is 1,200 meters (200 more than the mythical Captain in Yosemite) and many extremely difficult climbing routes. Some, like the "Moby Dick" until 8a and with several 7c chained. There is nothing.





The views once you reach the base of the wall above the glacier, and the surrounding peaks, are spectacular again. Also think about the isolation of the place, to get an idea of the "atmosphere" you have. How long have you been without coverage for 4 days? And without electricity? And without running water? You think, what about the shower? Well where you imagine, in the fjord or in the streams that go to it. An experience 😊





The climatic rigor of this area does not prevent the existence of fauna. One of the days this nice hare allowed us to photograph her.

On the other hand, the purity of its waters allows for plenty of fish. One of the nights we savored those that were caught by some members of the group in the previous camp. Delicious!

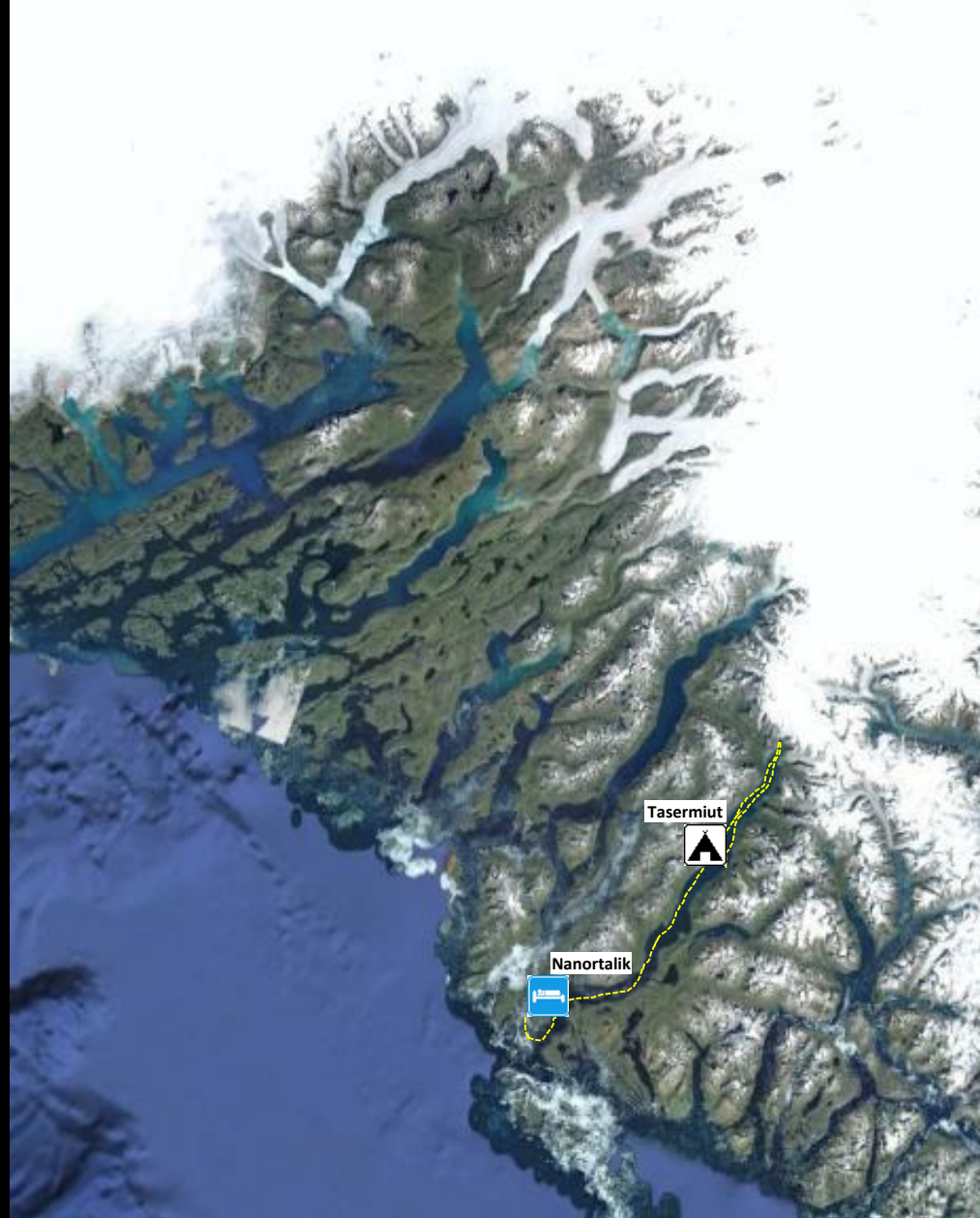






And some of the nights we could see northern lights. That yes, it is not easy to photograph it.





**Day 13: Tasermiut - Nanortalik**





After our long and interesting stay in this camp, we collected everything and embarked again towards the initial part of the Tasermiut fjord, where the glacier you see is located and which is called the same way. It falls about 1400 meters of unevenness from the top (the inlandsis) until it finally reaches the water. Not bad. It is a gigantic waterfall of ice that...





...impresses more as you get closer. Then you become increasingly aware of its dimensions and...





...the forces of nature that have been able to generate such a wonder. The rocks that emerge between the ice are called "nunataks".





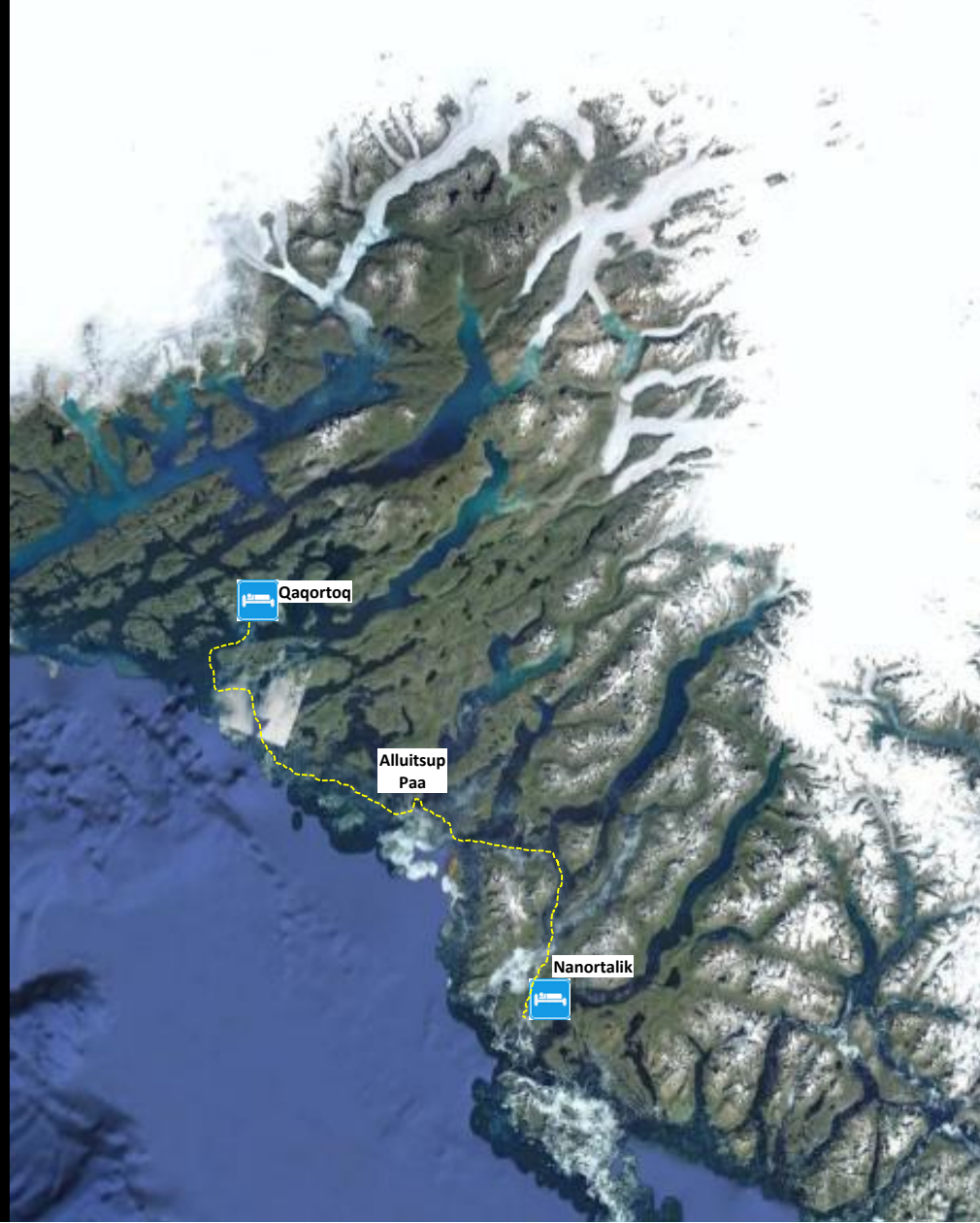
Look at the deep blue of the ice. It is hypnotic. Be careful, this is one of the thousands of glaciers that the island has. The pity is that they do not stop going backwards due to the melting of the ice. Photos from previous years demonstrate this :-)





Going back all the Tasermiut glacier in the zodiac we arrived at our destination, Nanortalik (literally, "the place where there are polar bears", although it is very rare to find them). It is the southernmost city (2000 inhabitants approx.) In the country and is usually isolated for most of the year. There we enjoyed an interesting visit to the Museum of Inuit Culture and Traditions (and electricity, shower and delicious food. All a luxury)





**Day 14: Nanortalik - Qaqortoq**





The next morning, taking advantage of the good weather, we took a walk to enjoy the location of this city and...





...discovered with horror the impact of the arrival of a huge cruise ship on the tranquility of the place. Thousands of people had been disembarking in batches very early, with the sole objective of walking a few hundred meters down the main street to its end, to rush back to the souvenir shop, before returning to the ship again. It could be Benidorm and it wouldn't matter to the staff. The Inuit museum as if it did not exist. What irrationality and nightmare this overtourism ;-(





In a “super necessary” stop halfway, we made a stop in the small fishing village of Alluitsup Paa. Only Inuit fishermen and hunters live here and the site is, as they say, in the middle of nowhere. What a way of life so different from ours and how authentic, of course.





And so we arrive at the most important city in southern Greenland, the photogenic Qaqortoq. It was founded in the late 18th century and today has about 3,000 inhabitants. Like the rest of the cities on the island, it only has roads inside the urban space. The connection between population centers is only possible by sea or air. Hence the difficulty of traveling on your own.







In addition to touring and gossiping, we were able to enjoy a pleasant evening stroll before dinner...





...at one of the few restaurants in the city, an exotic Thai! Very fresh and delicious everything, by the way.





**Day 15: Qaqortoq - Qassiarsuk**





Our return trip continued and sailing we reached the Itilleq jetty through the Tunulliarfik fjord. From there on a pleasant walk we approach the small town of Igaliku. This small settlement of less than 50 inhabitants (World Heritage Site) was once Gardar, archbishopric and religious capital of Viking Greenland..





From there, a little sad because this was over, we went to a new surprise. On our way suddenly giant icebergs began to appear floating in the middle of the sea. Where did they come from?







We soon discovered it, from the impressive Qooroq glacier. One of the most active glacial fronts on the island,...





... that, as always, as you get closer it shows you its true dimensions, while increasing the density of ice floes.



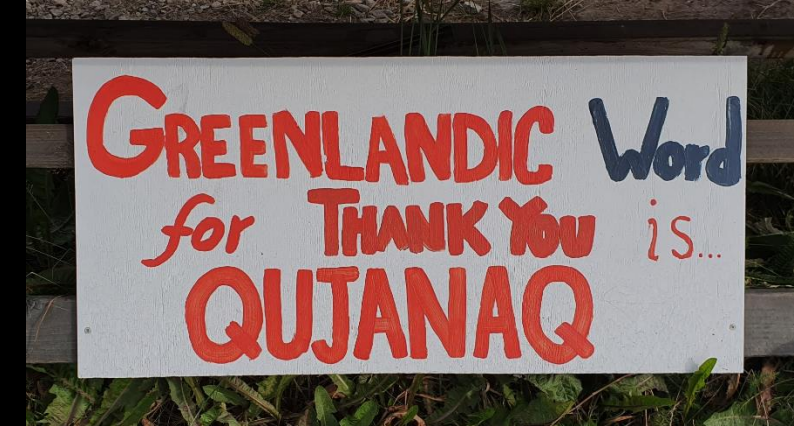


The environment is fantastic and of an amazing tranquility, only broken by the fall of new blocks to the sea. The best possible ending to this adventure





Here are some images of curious issues that we have encountered on our journey, such as these children from Alluitsup Paa (above), surprised at our arrival, and the girls from Nanortalik (below) who seem to be seeing aliens.







Pilar



Carlos



Joffrey

Tatiana



Domitille



Mónica



Sergi



Gilles

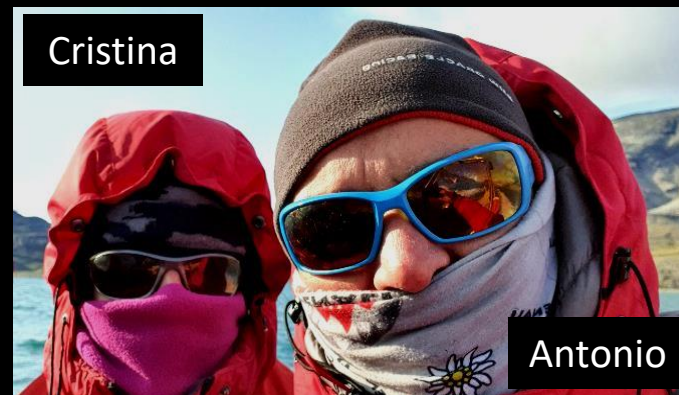


Camille



Tabea

Cristina



Antonio



Blandine

Here you have the members of the group (I hope I have not been confused with the signs) and also our main mode of locomotion, the zodiac that I have told you about. The white bulge in the middle is our backpacks, tents, and food, and the usual way of travel is sitting on the edges. These machines run that peel them and it is interesting cold when sailing in them, hence our outfit.





And that? Well, look, they are the “solid organic” remains of the group from the Tasermiut camp. There the regulation is very strict and you have to bring everything back. Of course, "everything" goes in individual bags that each deposited in these drums.

The history of the baths in the camps is also interesting. There are those in which the solid is separated from the liquid. There are those that are mixed. There are those in which it is buried and, like this case, that they come back to you.

This seems like a joke, but these logistical questions are also fundamental. You don't get an idea of how complex everything is in a space like this. Chapeau for super organization. Thank you.





I would like to finish with this image that shows us taking a final vermouth in an incomparable setting, and also thanking all the members of the group for the good vibes prevailing and the magnificent moments we have spent on this trip. Special mention for our guide, Gilles (in the center of the image), who at all times was aware of the group and made the trip a vital experience. Thanks to everyone, really



I leave you with some classic author licenses. Take care and see you next time























































