



Hiking in Greenland

Commandments for hiking

The aim of the information provided in this flyer is to inform you about the safety regulations of hiking in Greenland and other issues that will make your hiking trip easier to plan and carry out.

Hiking maps

Before hiking, we recommend that you buy a hiking map of the area that you are visiting. The back pages of the hiking maps published by Greenland Tourism contain detailed information on local conditions and all sorts of information that is needed for a safe and enjoyable hiking tour.

The landscape

Greenland's impressive landscapes have attracted hikers for decades. The high, beautiful mountains, glaciers, icefilled fjords, flora and fauna, unspoiled nature and silence provide a unique experience of the Arctic. The air is so clear that mountains can be seen from a distance of 75-200 km. You will probably experience this before setting off for the hike – the target destination is often further away than you first expected. Ask for the best routes to walk at the tourist office.

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Hiking outside inhabited areas in Greenland is mainly for experienced hikers and it is necessary that your physical condition and sense of direction are good and that you know how to use a map and a compass.

On long tours you will be able to enjoy untouched nature far away from an inhabited place. Always assume that you will be left completely to your own devices and that only very limited assistance is available for the hill walker, such as marked paths, designated routes, sign posting, bridges etc.

When you have planned the route on the map carefully, you must inform the police, family, friends, hotel or the tourist office of the planned route, estimated duration etc., and remember to notify them when you have returned safely. The planned route should be followed as closely as possible as this is where a search will be initiated in case of emergencies. If you are too far away from the planned route, there is a risk that you will not be found. It is recommended to bring clothes with loud colors that can be seen from far away.

The following recommendations are a good help when hiking in the landscape. By keeping to the rules, the risk of accidents en route will be greatly reduced.

- 1. Don't start off on long walks without some previous training and planning**
- 2. Let someone (the tourist office or the place you are staying at) know where you are heading and when you expect to be back**
- 3. Pay attention to the weather and the weather reports**
- 4. Follow the advice of experienced hikers**
- 5. Be prepared for bad weather and accidents, even on short walks**
- 6. Always remember a map and a compass**
- 7. Never hike alone**
- 8. Turn back before things get critical**
- 9. Be aware of your strength; look for shelter while there is still time**
- 10. Always take along the necessary emergency gear**
- 11. Always bring extra warm clothes – even on short day tours**

Wind and weather

The weather in Greenland changes a lot faster than in other countries. In 10-15 minutes it can get foggy and thereby be difficult to find one's way, or a storm can rise and make it necessary to seek shelter for several hours before continuing.

Make sure your equipment is geared for sudden changes in the weather. Most people who suffer death in the mountains do not die from hunger but from low temperatures. Remember that climate and precipitation can vary radically within small

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distances. A good rule is to listen to the weather forecast before going on a hike. However, weather forecasts can be quite unreliable in Greenland as they cannot take local conditions into consideration.

The best months for hiking are from June to the middle of September.

Foehn

Foehn is a dry and warm wind. It arises from a high pressure area on the ice cap. A sure sign of a coming foehn storm are tall cumulonimbus clouds. The foehn can last 1-2 days and occur several times during the same month. Only very few tents can stand the pressure of a foehn storm; we therefore recommend that you dismantle the tent and seek shelter behind big rocks. For more information on how to recognize a coming foehn storm, ask the local tourist office or look at the back pages of the hiking maps published by Greenland Tourism.

Clothing

Three layers of clothing is recommended; the inner layer must be able to transform perspiration to outer layers; the middle layer must insulate against cold and outer layer must be wind and rain proof. See recommendation on what clothes to bring at the back pages of the hiking maps.

Survival technique

When going on hikes, you must always be prepared for the worst. In case of emergencies or accidents, it is important not to panic and not to give up. Accidents are always different, and it is impossible to make a list of how to avoid the different types of accidents or how to behave in each situation. However, the first rule is to give emergency treatment, to stabilize the situation and to keep the injured person warm and protected against sun, cold, rain and wind. After this, you can run for help. A large team can be divided into two and a minimum of two people can look for help. Remember to mark the place of the accident on the map.

Security

We recommend an ANNA-emergency kit supplemented with VHF-radio or ELT-emergency transmitter. The ANNA-kit has been designed especially for Greenlandic conditions. The kit consists of a whistle, a compass, flares (launching tube + cartridges), a signalling mirror, an astro blanket and a signal flag.

ANNA-emergency kit can be bought at the local marine supplies and the stores called Pilersuisoq.

Search and rescue parties

Search and rescue parties are the responsibility of the police in Greenland. As a general rule, a rescue is free of charge for the victim. However, if the accident is due to an act of folly or the rescue party is called unnecessarily, the police can issue an invoice to the victim.

Being found

In order to be found after an accident, it is important to draw attention to yourself in a very obvious way. This can be done by making signals with a whistle, mirrors, flares, distress rockets, flags, clothing, drawing SOS in large letters, etc. It is important that the signal can be seen from the air, as most rescue parties take place with helicopter. Do not discharge the flares until you can hear a helicopter as they only stay lit for a short period of time. When signalling with a mirror in nice weather, an aircraft can see you from a distance of 75 km. Many people are found too late because they did not make themselves visible from the air or because they left the planned route.

If you are close to inhabited areas or in an area with other hikers you can blow the whistle 6 times per minute every second minute. The answer to this signal is 3 whistles per minute.

We hope this information has given you an idea of what you need to know before hiking. For more detailed information, we strongly recommend that you plan for the hiking tour and buy a local hiking map. Finally, be sure to have all necessary gear. Please ask the local tourist office about local conditions and the daily weather forecasts.

We wish you an enjoyable and safe stay in Greenland!

Kind regards

Greenland Tourism

The National Tourist Board of Greenland

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