

Greenland

A Land of Contrast

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It has been said, "That once you have seen the world, you can go to Greenland," where you encounter sights unlike any you have seen before. Photographic opportunities are everywhere. Greenland is the world's largest island and one of the world's oldest landmasses. Most of the island lies under a 1000-foot blanket of ice. The surrounding seas contain mountains of floating icebergs.

Disko Bay, on the west coast is crowded with icebergs. Semi-trailer sized chunks are towed into harbors, chipped into cubes and exported to Japan and Europe to chill drinks.

The glacier at Disko Bay advances 100 feet in a day and yields huge bergs, some weighing 70 million tons, which float around the arctic waters for centuries. But not all is ice and snow. The coastal areas in summer are green and colorful. In southern Greenland, you will find sheep farms, vegetable gardens, colorful villages and a hot spring where you can bathe while watching icebergs drift by in the fjord. Nuuk, the largest city and capital, has approximately 14,000 residents

and the people are friendly and willing to have their pictures taken. A 75 to 300 zoom lens will take good head shots.

A few isolated villages are found on the east coast and the far northwest. However, most of the people live on the west coast. Fly into Kangerlussuaq on the west coast and from here you can spot and photograph caribou and musk ox as well as get a good look at the ice cap that covers 85 percent of Greenland. Since most photographers visit in the summer time, you won't have to worry about cold weather affecting your camera batteries, but you will need to compensate when photographing white icebergs.

There are no highways in Greenland, so a plane can take you to Ilulissat (meaning iceberg), which is surrounded by mirror-like seas clogged with icebergs. A glacier more than three miles wide flows an average of 100 miles daily, spitting icebergs into the sea. A midnight cruise among the icebergs in the summer can be a good photographic opportunity. The sky changes colors constantly as the sun sets, only to rise again and

Colorful sky





House on rocky slab

set the sky aglow. The icebergs take on the color of the sky. Be sure and take lots of film and memory cards. You will also want to have a wide-angle lens: a 28 to 150mm would be perfect.

Ummanak, which translates as “heart,” is a town that sits on a little island at the foot of a very distinctively heart-shaped mountain surrounded by small islands, peninsulas, glaciers, and seas rich in whales and halibut. About 2,600 people live in town and in nearby settlements. In winter, when the seas freeze over, people drive their cars or go by dog sled on the ice to nearby settlements. Planes use the ice as a runway in winter.

Ummanak is an interesting town with unusual rock-geological formations known as *basement gneiss-a type* of granite deformed by intense pressure and heat into a striped and swirled surface. Black, white, and rose swirls characterize the bizarre granite formations, which change color with the light. You will want to photograph these formations. The town rambles over these striated rocks, anchored with pipes and cables. Colorful single family homes, dogs galore, sledges, kayaks, and trapping tackle make up the village. Some traditional turf-built houses, an impressive granite church, the old yellow blubber house, a small wonderful museum and the colorful harbor are sights to take in on short walks about the town. Be sure to have your camera with you.

You can take an all day boat trip that stops to visit the island of Qilakitsoq, where Greenland’s most important archeological find was made in 1972. Well preserved mummies of six adults and two children that dated to around 1475 were discovered

in a cave. Today the mummies are on display at the museum in Nuuk. A big passenger ferry will take you back to Kangerlussaq to fly home. The ferry makes several stops along the way. One is Sisimuit, which is Greenland’s northernmost town with an ice free harbor in winter and its most southernmost town with dog sled traffic. Every winter the Arctic Circle Race, with contestants from all over the world is held here. This is a three-day, 100-mile event.

Greenlanders are friendly, hospitable people. Their land is one of contrast—brilliantly colored flowers and gigantic icebergs, the Midnight Sun and the Northern Lights. As a Greenland poet wrote, “I get dizzy of all this beauty and shiver with happiness.” ■

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Boat anchored off island

