

# Hiking in Greenland

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**Greenland Tourism**

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*My mountain hikes began back in 1986, when I went hiking with a group of friends at about 500-1000 metres. It was an instructive trip in many ways. A simple thing like a whistle per hiker (only one of us had one) in case you get lost quickly reminded us of the desolate, harsh nature of the mountain. We got lost! After 20 hours of searching for each other it all ended happily. But the experience put things into perspective. What could easily have happened? Yes indeed, a respect of nature and good preparation are things to be taken seriously.*

*In this brochure I have cooperated with*

*Greenland Tourism in collecting plenty of good tips on how to prepare your hike. Naturally, there is more than one way of doing things. But experienced mountain hikers are people you should listen to if you want to avoid making stupid, elementary mistakes. Later on, your own experiences can suggest improvements and ways of simplifying your equipment. Books and articles can provide inspiration, but up in the mountains it is your preparation and your body that decide whether you will enjoy the experience or pay the price once the trip is under way.*

*John M. Pedersen, Sisimiut*

### Good advice

If all those in the group are beginners, it is a good idea to choose a trip that does not overchallenge you, e.g. a marked mountain route, possibly with a stopover in cabins. How do you set about finding the right route? It calls for a little research, including contacting various tourist offices and looking through descriptions of trips in books or on the Internet. After that, it is a good idea to study the maps more closely to analyse the route in relation to the 'level' of the group and to plan a realistic daily rhythm, e.g. 10-15 km per day in even terrain, and to take the wishes of the others into consideration – such as trout fishing, or looking more closely at historical attractions on the mountain.

The alpha and omega of a successful trip is proficiency in using a map and compass. Marked routes offer a certain degree of security to beginners – but what if the fog closes in? Then knowing where you are is a plain necessity! Practice makes perfect, so several trips together and using a map and compass before setting out on the real thing makes everyone familiar with everything. This experience is to be made use of on the mountain. Training trips teach you something else too: To get to know your equipment. You wear your boots into shape and get an idea of who is to be responsible for what also for the shared equipment, which ought to be shared among the hikers because of the weight.



## The hiker's 11 commandments

1. The physical shape you are in is obviously relevant for the hike. Adapt the route to what you are capable of carrying out. If you have health problems, these should be taken into account.  
Do not set out on a hike before you have trained and planned sufficiently.
2. Make absolutely sure to inform a tourist office in the area involved of your hiking route. This will enable them to search for you if necessary. Say where you live, what your destination is and when you expect to be back.
3. The weather is the alpha and omega of a hike. Listen to the weather forecast and always be observant of weather conditions. Hikers vary when it comes to their endurance of adverse weather conditions – but do not set out if the weather is bad.
4. Listen to good advice from experienced hikers.
5. Be prepared for bad weather and accidents, even on short hikes.
6. Never forget your hiking map and compass.
7. Never hike alone.
8. Turn back before the weather becomes critical.
9. Conserve energy and look out for resting places while there is still time.
10. Always have the necessary first-aid equipment with you.
11. Always have extra warm clothing with you, even on short hikes.



## Hiking maps

There are endless possibilities for hiking trips in Greenland – and too little space to mention them all here. A few routes are marked, but most trips in Greenland are along unmarked paths without bridges, signposts, etc.

You can always find areas with a suitable degree of difficulty, no matter whether you are a beginner or a mountain climber in the heavyweight class.

Greenland Tourism has published a whole series of hiking maps covering many different areas in Greenland, with routes marked in various colours that indicate levels of difficulty. On the back of the map there is information about mountain safety, equipment, route descriptions, etc.

You can read more about this at:  
[www.greenland.com](http://www.greenland.com)

The maps can be bought locally, or from:

### Nordisk Korthandel

Stuðstræde 26-30  
DK-1455 Copenhagen K  
Tel.: +45 33 38 26 38  
Fax: +45 33 38 26 48  
post@scanmaps.dk  
www.scanmaps.dk

### Atuagkat Boghandel

P. O. Box 1009  
DK-3900 Nuuk  
Tel.: +299 32 17 37  
Fax: +299 32 24 44  
atuagkat@greenet.gl  
www.atuagkat.gl

## Clothing

The main things about clothing is that it should keep you dry and warm. So it is necessary for sweat to be led away from the body. A cotton vest or a T shirt will admittedly soak up any sweat, but it is not warm. Sweat-conducting underwear is what you need, for it prevents you from getting cold. Sweat is led away from the body and absorbed by the next layer, which should be a fleece jacket or a shirt. After that, a sweater will help to insulate the body. To stay warm when the wind is strong, you should wear a windproof jacket or anorak.

This system is popularly referred to as the three-layer principle (windproof – insulating – sweat-conducting).

### Rainwear

Rainwear is needed for wet days. To begin with, you can make do with what you happen to have, but in the long run a set of rainwear that allows the skin to breathe is preferable. The rain-top must be able to withstand friction from the rucksack and should preferably be robust.

### Jacket

A good jacket with large, handy pockets is to be recommended. Fjällräven makes excellent functional, windproof jackets – but they are of course not the only ones. Again, go for quality. Remember that there should be room for a thick sweater under the jacket.

### Trousers

The choice of leisurewear trousers for mountain use is large. There are various

colours and, in recent years, manufacturers have begun to combine shorts and long trousers by the use of zips/Velcro. Make sure that mosquitoes cannot bite through them – otherwise you will be a walking tailor's dummy.

### Sweaters

A good, thick woollen sweater or a fleece jacket is a good thing to have as evening approaches, when the level of activity is low and the body needs to be kept warm.

### Underwear

Underwear of synthetic materials such as a mixture of viscose and polyester or polypropylene has good sweat-conducting properties.

### Socks and boots

What should one choose as an inner sock – wool, Coolmax or cotton? Twenty years ago, woollen socks with a natural grease content would have been recommended, or cotton. Today, other and perhaps better alternatives are on the market. As mentioned, cotton is good for absorbing sweat, but not to lead it away from the body. A pair of really sweaty socks can, in the space of a day's hiking, invite the trip's most unwelcome guest – blisters. Socks with sweat-conducting properties are a really good choice, e.g. Coolmax socks.

A thick ski sock or wool frotté is also a good choice as an outer sock.



A high, anatomically shaped boot, with good ankle support and a sturdy sole is to be recommended for your mountain trip. There are many types of boots in full leather, nubuck, suede – and the combined boots of robust nylon and suede/nubuck often have a Gore-Tex membrane which means they are waterproof and yet still allow the foot to breathe.

Should the sole be welted or vulcanised and glued on? There are lots of possibilities. As when choosing shoes, take a close look at boots you are thinking of buying. Are they sturdy enough? Can you twist them and bend the sole? Are they too soft? Try them with two pairs of socks on. There must still be plenty of room for your feet – the width and length of the boots must be sufficient for them not to pinch. They must also offer your ankles good support as well as the rest of the foot, so that you do not twist your ankle when hiking.

What terrain you intend to walk in also affects your choice of boot. If the ground is stony or hilly, you should choose a strong and slightly stiff shoe. If the terrain is easier, a nylon/suede boot may be the right choice. Remember to pack leggings and extra shoes.



## Equipment

### Sleeping bag

Down or fibre sleeping bag? If weight is important, down is lighter. Down does, however, have the disadvantage of collapsing if it gets wet and then it no longer insulates. Hollow fibre warms even if wet. There are many qualities of down as well as more than a handful of various fibre stuffing. A good down sleeping bag with a waterproof cover that 'breathes' takes up much less room and is much lighter than a fibre sleeping bag. Expensive, but you get what you pay for. No matter what you decide on, never buy a sleeping bag with continuous stitching, for that results in thermal bridges. On the mountain in summer you can make do with a sleeping bag that has a comfort temperature of around  $-5^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

Your sleeping bag must suit you. In other words, not be too broad or too long. Your body should not have to use an unnecessary amount of energy warming up the sleeping bag. So it is important that you try out the sleeping bag in the shop and get the right guidance. A good sleeping bag is a nighttime friend and can last for ten years.

### Rucksack

The most popular model is the anatomical rucksack (frameless rucksack), where everything has to be inside the rucksack, although tent etc. can be strapped on the outside. Fjällräven's frame rucksack still exists – here, too, everything has to be inside the rucksack, but there are more possibilities of attaching things to the frame, e.g. sleeping bag and other items, than on an anatomical model. Apart from that, the sack can be taken off and you can carry things on the frame. Try out the rucksack at your dealer's. Buy one that fits your back and the amount you can carry. It is still possible to try out 'filled' rucksacks at certain dealers'. That gives you a more realistic impression of what the rucksack will be like in everyday use. It is a good idea to choose a rucksack on that basis. If you want to be sure, buy recognised makes such as Lowe, Bergans, or similar. They last a long time.

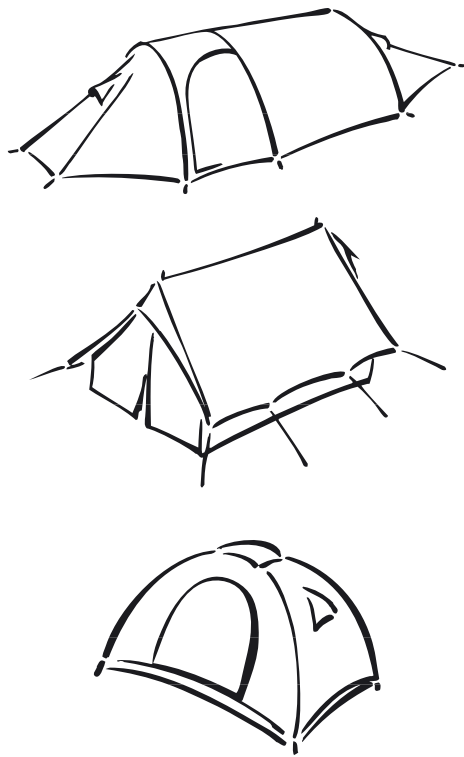
A cover for your rucksack is an idea for rainy days and for use in the tent extension, where the rucksack is placed on top of the cover to prevent it getting damp-stained. A good idea is to make extra straps of nylon webbing and attach them to the rucksack, so that the foam pad stays in place, or packing bags of nylon for clothing and similar items inside the sack, so everything is well under control.





## Tents

There are lots of good tent constructions: The tunnel tent, the traditional A tent, the dome tent etc. What you require of a tent is robustness and stability in rough weather. There ought also to be enough space for gear as well as people. This is always possible with a tunnel tent, which should be erected with the semicircular extension facing the direction of the wind, so that it has the least possible surface area to attack and the tent is able to withstand harsh weather conditions. A tent pitched on an even surface is comfortable to lie in. Make sure that there is running water close by – you will need it, among other things, for cooking. Choosing a tent can be difficult, since there are many constructions on the market. But it does not have to have been on Mount Everest to be a good one. A tent, such as Wolf 2000 for ex. costs upwards of approx. DKK 2000.



### Worth remembering

- For safety reasons, make sure before leaving for the hike that the tourist office has been informed of your planned route. They can then contact you if an emergency occurs.
- The locals know the area and life-saving service facilities best. Rely on their advice.
- Remember to bring: A first-aid box with medicine, blister plasters, suntan lotion and emergency rockets as well as a whistle, knife, astro/ life-saving blanket, toilet paper and sewing gear are musts.
- Mosquito net and mosquito oil.
- A notebook and pencil for keeping a diary can be useful.
- Gaffa tape, steel wire and a small pair of pliers are good aids for doing repairs.
- A nylon rope as a lifeline when wading is a good idea.
- A pair of binoculars is nice to have, and a cellphone is a good idea as long as within range.
- Fishing gear is great if the trip looks good for angling.



## Maps and compass

EA map shows details in the landscape. The vertical lines are called meridians. You use them when choosing compass direction. The contours are lines that show how steep or flat a mountain or hill is. Close lines indicate very steep slopes. There is also another very important thing on the map – the variation, which tells you how many or how few degrees the compass has to be adjusted.

The compass is your guide. The base plate has a magnetic needle that points in the direction you are to follow. The circle inside which the needle sits is called the dial. It can be turned, enabling you to adjust the variation. You must always take this into account, as the variation in Greenland can be as much as approx. 40 degrees. The red part of the needle points towards the magnetic North Pole.

If you are on the map and want to use the course in the terrain, you have to add the variation; if you have the course in the terrain and want to use it on the map, you have to subtract the variation.

Apart from compass variation, you also have to take into account that there are metals under the ground in some Greenland locations that can interfere with the working of the compass. In the event of this, or if you happen to lose your compass, it is important to note the surroundings and get your own bearings.

If you lose your compass and map, it is difficult to reach your destination. Should this happen, it is, however, possible to find the four points of the compass with the aid of a precise watch. Before midday, you let the hour hand point towards the sun and half the distance between the hour hand and 12 on the watch. This direction is south. After midday, you find south by halving the distance between 12 and the hour hand. When you have found south, you can also work out north, east and west and thus navigate without a compass in an emergency.

## GPS

A more recent aid is GPS, Global Positioning System. This is a radio navigation system used throughout the world. GPS is a kind of electronic compass.

It is based on a constellation of 24 satellites and their ground stations. It is as if every square metre of the earth's surface gets its own 'address'. With the very advanced GPSs it is possible to measure to an accuracy of less than one centimetre.

GPS receivers have become quite inexpensive, which means that the technology is available to almost everyone.

Today, GPS is used on planes, on boats, in cars, etc. It can also be a good navigational aid when on the mountain. There are a number of different, programmable systems, but ask at your local dealer or search on the Internet, for product development is rapid. Read and learn more about GPS at: [www.trimble.com/gps](http://www.trimble.com/gps)

## Hiking maps

Before setting out on a hike, you ought to acquire a hiking map of the area you are thinking of visiting. On the back of hiking maps from Greenland Tourism there is detailed information about local, climatic, geological and safety conditions for that particular area as well as much more information that is necessary for your trip to be safe and good.

A total of 19 hiking maps have been made of North, South, East and West Greenland. They can be bought at various tourist offices around Greenland and in the shops listed on page 2.



## Cooking gear and food

Food is a pleasure and provides your body with energy for a new day. A successful trip depends, among other things, on your surplus energy, so eat at least three regular meals a day, supplementing with snacks between meals. And do not underestimate your need of fluids, so drink before you become thirsty.

When you get hungry, it is best if food can be prepared quickly and safely. There are many good stoves for meths, petrol and gas, but for beginners the Trangia storm stove is probably the best choice. It is easy to use and reliable.

A standard Trangia includes two saucepans with lids. The lid can also be used as a frying pan should you catch a trout or two.

The standard version is sufficient – tea pots and various accessories take up space and, despite their low weight, are not really necessary. Apart from your Trangia, a plastic mug for cocoa or soup and a tablespoon are probably enough. You can save weight by using the saucepan as a plate, but if more than one person is using the same gear, have some light, deep plates with you as well. Meths consumption is approx. 0.1 litre per person/day. If you are impatient and feel that 10-12 mins is a long time, you can install gas in the Trangia for about £45, after

which you can boil water in about 4 minutes. Expect to use about 1 canister per person on the trip.

The only accessory you need for the Trangia is a nylon pot scourer, fusees and a lighter.

For food, see the packing list, which includes a brief list of the most essential items. Remember to eat snacks between meals – raisins or small chocolate bars are a fine source of energy around mid-day. If you want to bake your own bread or get tips on food, consult *Adventure World* no. 34, March/April 2001.



## Packing list

Here is a suggestion for equipment sufficient for 1 week of hiking. Vary the list according to your own needs. Pack your rucksack practically, with the things you will need every day at the top. The heavy articles are to be placed closest to the body in the top half of the 'sack' to achieve

a good weight distribution. Sharp items, such as cooking gear, can be packed inside clothing. Use a packing list! Weigh all the equipment before setting out. Once you know the weight and how much space things take up, it is easier to place the things that must be brought.

### Clothing (to be worn):

- Sweat-conducting vest
- Underwear
- Cotton socks/hiking socks and thick woollen socks (for boots)
- Shirt
- Mountain trousers or combat trousers
- Jacket/ Anorak
- Hiking boots incl. leggings
- Cap
- Jacket; *Leather gloves, sun glasses & lip salve, map, compass, whistle and poss. altitude meter*
- Trousers: *Knife, astro blanket*

### Rucksack (Anatomical)

\_\_\_\_\_ kg

Top pocket: Medicine, camera, rainwear, mosquito net and balm, dubbin, toilet roll.

Inside space/ under top pocket: Wallet, health insurance, etc.

### Main section:

- |  |          |
|--|----------|
| Gore-Tex rainwear (or in top pocket of rucksack)     | _____ kg |
| Trangia storm stove, plates, spoons, etc.            | _____ kg |
| Matches (safety and fusees), lighter and pot scourer | _____ kg |
| Woollen vest   | _____ kg |
| Thermal jacket/ coat                                 | _____ kg |
| 1 extra pair trousers and 1 shirt                    | _____ kg |
| 2 pairs underwear                                    | _____ kg |
| 2 pairs socks (cotton/ sweat conducting)             | _____ kg |
| 1-2 pair(s) woollen socks (thick)                    | _____ kg |
| 1 towel  | _____ kg |
| Book, notebook and pencil                            | _____ kg |
| Min. 0.7 litre meths/ 1 gas canister                 | _____ kg |
| Food (see details on next page)                      | _____ kg |
| Pocket knife and toilet articles (toothbrush, etc.)  | _____ kg |
| Thermal trousers or long underwear                   | _____ kg |
| Poss. mini crampon (climbing iron)                   | _____ kg |
| Nylon rope   | _____ kg |
| Steel wire, instant glue                             | _____ kg |
| Flat-nose pliers with cutting edge                   | _____ kg |
| Gaffa tape   | _____ kg |
| Extra straps with buckle for rucksack, etc.          | _____ kg |
| Sleeping bag (incl. cover, etc.)                     | _____ kg |
| Knee support, aspirin, Tiger balm, blister plaster   | _____ kg |
| Poss. fishing gear                                   | _____ kg |

**On your rucksack:**

Canteen (full) \_\_\_\_\_ kg  
 Poss. tent in compression strap of rucksack \_\_\_\_\_ kg  
 Foam pad for sleeping bag \_\_\_\_\_ kg

**Rucksack weight – own equipment – total:** \_\_\_\_\_ kg

**Shared equipment (min. for e.g. 2 hikers):**

First-aid box (medicine, tiger balm, bandages, blister plasters, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_ kg  
 Suntan lotion, moisturising cream \_\_\_\_\_ kg  
 Sewing gear \_\_\_\_\_ kg  
 Tent & accessories (stakes, groundsheet, rubber hammer) \_\_\_\_\_ kg  
 Shampoo and soap \_\_\_\_\_ kg  
 1 dishcloth \_\_\_\_\_ kg  
 Plastic bags \_\_\_\_\_ kg  
 Salt, sugar, etc. \_\_\_\_\_ kg  
 20 m nylon rope \_\_\_\_\_ kg  
 Torch \_\_\_\_\_ kg  
 Extra compass and map (poss. copy) \_\_\_\_\_ kg  
 Poss. binoculars \_\_\_\_\_ kg  
 Emergency rockets (only use if people can see them!) \_\_\_\_\_ kg

**Weight per hiker:** \_\_\_\_\_ kg

**Food ration per hiker per week:**

8 freeze-dried meals \_\_\_\_\_ kg  
 Bulgur/ couscous \_\_\_\_\_ kg  
 Potato powder (to mix with water) \_\_\_\_\_ kg  
 Raisins, chocolate, etc. \_\_\_\_\_ kg  
 0.8 kg porridge oats \_\_\_\_\_ kg  
 4 packets tomato/mushroom soup \_\_\_\_\_ kg  
 4 bilberry/fruit/rosehip soup \_\_\_\_\_ kg  
 4 bread-blocks, hardtack or homemade 'dry bread' \_\_\_\_\_ kg  
 1 kg cocoa (to mix with water) \_\_\_\_\_ kg  
 Coffee, tea \_\_\_\_\_ kg  
 Sweets \_\_\_\_\_ kg  
 Various spices \_\_\_\_\_ kg

**Total weight for food:** \_\_\_\_\_ kg

**TOTAL WEIGHT FOR YOUR RUCKSACK:** \_\_\_\_\_ KG

[www.greenland.com](http://www.greenland.com)

[www.vandreture.dk](http://www.vandreture.dk)

[www.vandring.dk](http://www.vandring.dk)

[www.walklex.dk](http://www.walklex.dk)

[www.tilltopps.com](http://www.tilltopps.com)

(Swedish website with good hiking tips)

[www.etojm.com](http://www.etojm.com)

(Norwegian website)

[www.friluftssiden.dk](http://www.friluftssiden.dk)

(about mountains and fly-fishing)