

N.W Greenland Kayak/Climb expedition2022



General Trip Info

This was a 4 week trip to NW Greenland, flying in to Upernavik, then travelling round via kayak to islands in the general area. The plan was to head east towards the ice cap, with the aim of stopping off to explore climbing areas as we found them.

Our direction of travel was essentially dictated by the winds, ice and sea state, which resulted in us travelling right around Nutarmiut, spending a fair amount of time doing this as the climbing opportunities were plentiful and far better than expected.

With worsening weather, we headed back west and north for an explore; the rock quality wasn't as good generally, but the kayaking up near Aappiltoq around the icebergs was spectacular.

The campsites were varied, with some on tiny islands with no access to fresh water, whilst others on the larger islands offered a plentiful water supply and lakes for a dunk.

Despite having little tidal range, collapsing icebergs tended to propagate quite large waves, so for info, it's essential to make sure that kayaks are well above the high tide line overnight, and tied off to make sure they don't make a bid for freedom.

The icebergs in the area didn't really prevent access to places, but at times they were densely packed, and it's easy to see how you could get into a spot of bother if the wind changed and you

happened to be in the wrong spot. Getting around the N tip of Nutarmiut was pretty full with bergs and bergy bits, but this was the only place where the ice was close to forcing a change of plan.

Water is plentiful! We carried approximately 10L which was plenty for a couple of days when we were camping on the smaller islands. There are also plenty of streams running off the hillsides, so it's also pretty straightforward to replenish water supplies en route.

Fuel use was very light as the majority of evening meals and brews were cooked on an open fire. Most of the sites – even some of the smaller islands – had a plentiful stash of wood, so other than a few evenings when the weather was pants, or there wasn't sufficient wood around, we got a fire going. Total fuel use for the 25 days was 2 litres white gas and 1 can propane.

Weather and general conditions

Fabulous weather for the first 12 days, with seemingly endless sunshine and winds mainly blowing from the north. Generally winds were light in this period, often up to 10-15kts increasing a few times to above 20kts, but were short lived at this strength. Temperature in the sun was comfortably warm – T-shirt weather on the rock out of the wind.

The weather after this fine spell was more unsettled with some spells of rain and quite a lot of low cloud and fog. The rain was generally more like drizzle, with only a couple of days of proper activity limiting rain. Otherwise the conditions were more overcast, with winds varying from extremely light/calm, giving a fair bit of fog, to some more robust winds – mainly northerlies – increasing to above 30kts a couple of times. Even in the poorer weather the temperature remained pretty mild, with temperatures around 10 degrees but feeling considerably warmer in the sun and the calm conditions. Towards the end of the trip, the temperatures dropped noticeably, so paddling was considerably less comfortable - ie – the pogeys had to come out.

Climbing in the area

There is a wealth of opportunity to explore this area and climb new routes of all grades. Other than the routes at the first crag we visited, the rock quality was generally very good, with loose looking stuff easily avoided. Access was also straightforward as most of the routes we climbed had been spotted from the comfort of the campsite.

The big advantage of the 100-200m cliffs was that they afforded simple descents most of the time, involving a walk-off rather than abseil descent. There is plenty of scope for larger climbs with an abundance of cliffs that must be 500-900m high. The valley near camp 6 had heaps of large, impressive cliffs lining the eastern side of the valley – all ripe for exploring. Similarly the area south of Aappilattoq near camp 15 had acres of rock, although descents in this area looked more complicated as the topography was pretty complex.

Map of Camp Spots



Trip Summary with Camp Locations

- 6/7 Manchester to Copenhagen
- 7/7 Copenhagen to Upernavik
- 8/7 Collect barrels and sort kit
- 9/7 Depart Upernavik
Paddle 11km to small neck of land on Qaersorsuaq
Camp 1: N 72 45.916; W 55 53.651
Walk to recce cliffs near the campsite
- 10/7 AM: Climb – The Dogger 120m HVS
PM: Paddle 10 km to tiny island
Camp 2: N 72 47.162; W 55 37.106
- 11/7 Paddle 20km to tiny island
Camp 3: N 72 50.347; W 55 14.774
- 12/7 Paddle 33km to small granite island
Camp 4: N 72 45.802; W 55 0.378
- 13/7 Paddle 18 km stopping en route to check out some crags
Camp just round the end of a headland
Camp 5: N 72 38.539; W 55 16.723
- 14/7 AM: Scramble and easy climb up the headland on the ridge
Diff/ V Diff, 200m height gain with 2km length
PM: Climb: Rough Diamond VS 4c 25m
- 15/7 AM Paddle round into a large bay to camp below some large buttresses.
Camp 6: N 72 39.336; W 55 19.268
PM: Climb on the smaller buttress.
The line of least resistance MVS 175m
- 16/7 Climb on the larger LH buttress
Super Slab HVS/E1 5a 215m
- 17/7 AM: Climb Black is the new orange HVS/E1 5a 240m

PM: Paddle 8km to stop in a little bay
Camp 7: N 72 35.342; W 55 21.321

18/7 Paddle 20km to camp in a fjord called Tassiusaq
Camp 8: N 72 35.452; W 55 28.125

19/7 AM: Climb Birthday Buttress E2 5c 75m
PM: Paddle 8km above a beautiful sandy bay on Angnertussoq
Camp 9: N 72 35.787; W 55 39.208

20/7 Paddle 25km to camp on Quaersorssuaq up Sarqarssuaq
Camp 10: N 72 43.777; W 55 51.405

21/7 Walk up onto the tops once the rain had stopped

22/7 Poor weather

23/7 AM: Paddle 10km to paddle close to a clean buttress
PM: Climb – Rain Nearly Stopped Play HVS 5a 125m
Camp 11: N 72 42.014; W 55 43.191

24/7 Bad weather day drying out kit once the sun came out

25/7 AM: Climb – One Step Beyond E1 5B 125m
PM: Paddle 6 km
Camp 12: N 72 44.267; W 55 40.265

26/7 Paddle 10km. Stopped early due to wind.
Walk to check out crags in the afternoon
Camp 13: N 72 45.841; W 55 42.841

27/7 AM: Paddle 15km to Aappilattoq
PM: Explore and visit local shop then paddle 5km to small island to camp
Camp 14: N 72 54.594; W 55 40.460

28/7 AM: Paddle 10km through bergs to camp in an inlet
PM: Walk up the valley to check out the cliffs (utter rubbish)
Camp 15: N 72 50.463; W 55 29.324

29/7 Paddle 16km back to Camp 1. Horrendous mozzies first thing.
Weather deteriorated by mid afternoon

30/7 AM: Walk up behind camp to get views from the ridge – spectacular
PM: Climb – Sinister Dogger VS 4c 120m – POOR QUALITY!

31/7 Paddle 22km to camp in grassy inlet
Camp 16: N 72 46.400; W 56 02.781

1/8 AM: Climb – Cracking Line Gromit VS 5a 20m,
No Fan of Bob Marley VS 4c 20m
PM: Paddle 13km to cap in a small inlet opposite Sandersons Hope
Camp 17: N 72 44.445; W 56 08.046

2/8 Worsening weather so paddled back to Upernavik
13km

3/8 Top up provisions, then paddle back to camp at Camp16
PM: Climb – Guest House Blues VS 4c 25m

4/8 AM: Walk up the hills in the area
PM: Return to Upernavik

5/8 Kit sort

6/8 Get barrel ready for shipping back south

7/8 Social paddle round the island

8/8 Depart – or not! Cancelled Flight

9/8 On Standby to get flight – Failed

10/8 Paddled 10km out to camp opposite Sandersons Hope. Spectacular

11/8 AM: Paddled back to Upernavik
PM: Tried to get on a flight – Failed

12/8 Flew – Upernavik to Illulisat

13/8 Illulisat to Copenhagen
14/8 Copenhagen to Manchester

Equipment

Support was given by a number of shops and companies and was very much appreciated, namely:

Palm equipment – kayak kit

DMM – climbing hardware

Joe Brown Llanberis – Expedition Meals at a reduced rate

Tent meals – at a reduced rate.

Two barrels of kit were shipped out a couple of months beforehand, using Royal Arctic Line. This was very straightforward for the Denmark to Greenland part of the shipping, but the UK to Denmark and return, less so. The customs element getting the barrels out and back in is a pain in the neck – the barrel getting shipped back to the UK is still in Denmark as this is being written! My recommendation is to give plenty of time for the barrels to make the trip, with the longest delays being getting out of the UK.

There wasn't an issue with gear getting damp, or food going off in the 2 months of shipping. Anything that had a chance of going manky was vacuum packed and this seemed to do the trick. The food was all in one barrel with camping kit in another to avoid any fuel contamination or any spoiling of kit should there be a mouldy food situation.

Kayaks were hired from Nikolai Sorenesen (Kayak-North) in Upernavik. As well as a fleet of kayaks, he runs the Cafe de Upernavik guesthouse which is less than 100m from the sea, which is really handy for loading up. The kayak were Prion Kodiaks – massive!

There's a good supermarket in Upernavik which is well stocked, although this can be dependent on when the last ship came in with supplies. There wasn't an issue getting fuel, but things like camping meals aren't available, which is an issue if space is at a premium.

Trip Expenses

Manchester Copenhagen Return Flights	339
Greenland Flights	3100
Excess baggage	200
Accommodation and kayak hire Upernavik	1200
Accommodation Copenhagen 6/7 and 9/8	170
Insurance	1030
Parking Manchester	178
Food	600
Barrels – shipping return	350
Garmin inreach subscription	70

Total: 7240

Extra costs hopefully getting refunded by insurance:

New Manchester Flights	590
Accommodation Copenhagen 13 Aug	170
Excess parking -Manchester	100

Total: 860

Total contributions less £3000 grant: £5100

Route Descriptions.

Routes from Camp 1

Both routes are on a buttress on the S side of the neck of Camp 1. The routes end up via a scramble onto a ridge then have a walk down the ridge to return. Poor quality rock in the upper section.

The Dogger HVS 5a 120m

On the left hand side of the buttress is an obvious diagonal R-L cornerline.

P1 15m 4b: Up a slab to a ledge following the diagonal crack

P2 15m 4b: Up rt then back left into the crack line to belay below a roof

P3 20m 4a: Up the wide crack then traverse L to belay in a chossy nook

P4 15m 5a: Step up and R to get back into the main line and make an awkward step up and R to easier ground

P5 60m: Scramble over broken ground to the ridge

Sinister start to the Dogger VS 4c 120m – last 2 pitches AWFUL

Start L of the dogger to the L of the diagonal crack

P1 15m 4c: Up the wall to stepped blocks to belay on a ledge

P2 25m 4a: Head a few m left into a chimney. Head up this then work up and R to belay in the corner line of the dogger

P3 15m 4a: Traverse L to belay in the chossy nook

P4 30m 4a: Head up and L then over exceptionally loose and unpleasant ground to belay by a gully

P5 40m: Scramble to the ridge.

Routes from Camp 5

Easy Ridge 2km with approx 200m climbing.

Head up from the camp and scramble onto the ridge from the L. The ridge can be climbed easily at D/V.Diff, with options of harder buttresses all the way up.

Rough Diamond VS 4c 25m

Obvious cracked slab up and left of the camp. Clean rock and well protected.

Routes from Camp 6

Above the camp site are 2 buttresses, the RH one being slightly smaller. The first route goes up the RH buttress, the others up the larger LH one. Descent is a walk off down the gully that separates the two buttresses

MVS 175m The route starts just R of the centre of the buttress

P1 35m: Up blocky ground to belay under a roof

P2 25m: L and up a leaning groove, the over less stable blocky ground.

P3 25m: Up over loose ground leading to a large vegetated ledge

P4 45m: Up a lovely clean slab followed by a short steeper section then blocky ground

P5 45m: Scramble to the top

Super Slabs 250m HVS/E1 5a

Start on the right hand side of the buttress at the start of the gully

P1 25m Climb a curved crack to belay on a big ledge

P2 50m Climb a cracked slab trending R, then up a groove/flakes that lead through a notch in the skyline – an excellent pitch

P3 50m Trend up R leaning grooves. Easy but no gear

P4 50m Up slabs into grooves and past a small roof. Spartan gear

P5 40m Up slabs to a R heading break. Follow this then head easily to the top.

Black is the New Orange 240m HVS/E1 5a

Start at the foot of the buttress under some obvious black streaks

P1 50m Up the wall, into a groove, then belay when the rope runs out – Bold

P2 40m Up a system of easy grooves to belay below an amazing looking corner (we reckon this is probably E3)

P3 50m Break R up a shallow groove then up through a steepening crack

P4 50m Up the corner then over broken ground and slabs to belay L of a cracked slab

P5 50m Up the cracked slab avoiding the hard section on the right

P6 40m Easy climbing to the top.

Route from Camp 8

Slabs up to the right of camp. The route goes up the obvious crack line on the bottom slab. Descent is an easy walk off down the gully to the right of the buttress

Birthday Buttress E2 5c 75m

P1 15m 5c Follow the obvious crackline to a ledge

P2 20m 4b Head up into a groove and work diagonally right to a ledge with loose blocks

P3 20m 4b Up past a loose looking flake to belay below a corner/chimney

P4 20m Scramble to the top.

Routes from Camp 11

All the routes are on the buttress to the north of the camp. Descent is a walk off to the W.

Rain Nearly Stopped Play HVS 5a 125m

Starts to the L of the toe of the buttress beneath a diagonal overlap

P1 35m 5a Head up to the overlap, then make a rising traverse to arrive at a short corner. Follow this, then a stepped corner to belay on a large ledge beneath a tapering corner.

P2 35m 5a Head L around the corner to climb a short crack, then up an L to climb a curving crack, heading right at the top to belay by a diagonal R break

P3 15m 4a Follow the break to its end, then head up the crack to belay on a large ledge

P4 40m 4a Head L then work up to a large ledge beneath the big roof.

Scramble L over some loose ground to find the grassy ramp to descend

One Step Beyond E1 5b 125m

Start just beneath a huge detached block at the RHS of the buttress

P1 30m 5b Climb up onto the top of the block. Step across a crevasse then make an awkward step up past a flake to easier ground leading to a belay by the big obvious ramp

P2 40m 4a Head L to a curving crack and climb this to reach the ramp. Follow this to belay below a triangular roof

P3 15m 4c Climb the crack on the LHS of the roof to belay on a big ledge

P4 40m 4a Head L then work up to belay below the massive roof

Scramble off

Routes from Camp 16

From the camp, boulder hop round the bay, then head up to a small lake with a crag above it. To the L of this crag is a ramp with a short clean wall at the top. All three routes are on this wall.

Cracking Line Gromit 20m 5a

Climb the cracked wall to finish up a rounded crack.

No Fan of Bob Marley 20m 4c

Go up the R side of the wall to a ledge. Head R for 2 m to reach a short jamming crack to the top

Guest House Blues 20m 4c

Start on the R and head diagonally L to end up in a short corner on the L. Ascend this working round to the R to finish.

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