

Searching for Icebergs in Greenland

The Adventure Kids travel throughout [Greenland](#) in search of glaciers, icebergs, and cocktail ice.

Luxury Experience Magazine readers know that we are cocktail aficionados, so when a recent trip took us to Greenland, we decided to go on a mission in search of icebergs and ice for the perfect cocktail experience.

Our iceberg travels took us to [Ilulissat](#), and [Kangerlussuaq](#) where our guides told us that Greenland, the world's largest island (810,810 square miles) has been covered by an ice cap, which extends to 85% of the landmass, for the last 2-3 million years although the active glaciers continue to melt and recycle endless times.

Glaciers are formed by the compression of continual falling snow, usually around one meter each year, on the surface of the ice cap, and from the pressure of the compacted snow, the ice forms.



Icebergs form when pieces of a glacier break off in a process called "calving" and float out into the open water. Icebergs can be as large as 15-storey buildings and what they say about the tip of the iceberg is really true, as only 1/8 of an iceberg is visible above water, making boat navigation through iceberg strewn waters extremely difficult. As the calving icebergs come close to shore, they turn, often creating large waves.

We had our first glimpse of the ice cap from the airplane's windows flying over Kangerlussuaq. Reading about the Greenlandic ice cap before our trip did little to prepare us for the breathtaking vistas that unfolded before our eyes. Necks craned to the windows, we shot photograph after photograph of the ice cap.



View from the Plane

Appetites whet, we could not wait to see the ice cap, glaciers, and the icebergs up close, although we did

Created by: Debra C. Argen and Edward F. Nesta

have a brief look at the distant icebergs in the Kangerlussuaq harbor after we had landed, as we walked on the Kangerlussuaq tarmac to board an [Air Greenland](#) flight en route for Ilulissat, the third largest town in Greenland with a population of 5,000 (after Nuuk, 15,000, and Sisimut, 6,000), and located 300 miles north of the Polar Circle.



It was in **Ilulissat**, that we had our first close-up view of icebergs in Disko Bay from the balcony of our hotel. Ilulissat means icebergs in Greenlandic, and the whiteness of the icebergs stood out in sharp contrast against the startling blue sky and the azure water.

Our Guide, Finn Siegstad of [World of Greenland](#), told us that glaciers produce 40 million tons of ice per day, which is enough to supply 15 million people with water for one year. Greenlandic or Kalaallisut is an Eskimo-Aleut language, which is a polysynthetic, descriptive language, and there are 49 terms for snow and ice.



We took a walk down to Disko Bay where small icebergs floated close to shore, and learned that when you see blue lines or blue ice on the icebergs, it is newer ice, and Finn demonstrated this by reaching into the chilly waters and pulling out a large white piece of an iceberg. When he broke the piece open, there was hard, almost clear ice inside, which he estimated could be as old as 125,000 years. As the ice froze, it trapped air, and scientists are able to analyze the air captured in the ice to learn about the environment of the past.



Not one to miss out an opportunity to have the perfect cocktail, when he offered us a piece of the 125,000 year old ice, we immediately pulled out a bottle of Grand Marnier poured shots onto the ice. Cocktailians are always taking about the size of the ice, and where the water for the best ice comes from, so does ice

make a difference? You bet it does!



We enjoyed every sip of what were the most perfect, and the most expensive, if you figure in the price of an airplane ticket on Air Greenland from the United States to Greenland, drinks that we ever consumed.



Taking a boat trip on the Ilulissat Ice Fjord, named a [UNESCO](#) World Heritage Site in 2004, provided us with a closer look at icebergs, and we were enthralled as Captain Edward deftly maneuvered his boat, Katak, passing massive floating ice-mountains where we looked down into the clear water to try to visualize the actual size of the icebergs.



Braving very cold weather, we took starboard and port positions on the boat, we photographed and filmed continually throughout our 5.5 hour trip, which included a stop by for lunch at the island settlement of **Ilimanaq**, our index fingers numb with cold, trying to capture the almost unfathomably essence of the Greenlandic icebergs. Each iceberg is unique, exquisite, and mind-boggling, when you consider their age.



The day was cloudy and overcast with mist and dense fog, that at times we could not see the truly immense icebergs until our boat had almost reached them, and when we did, our hearts raced in awe and excitement. Imagine coming alongside icebergs taller than 15-storey buildings and longer than city blocks, and you can imagine the adrenalin level going on during that boat trip.



However, when it comes to icebergs, size is not all that matters. When Captain Edward adroitly maneuvered the boat through the smaller iceberg strewn waters that formed a line that we had to pass, like a quarterback running through the defensive line, our blood rushed when it seemed like we had narrowly missed avoiding the icebergs. With the fog, mist, icebergs, and icy waters around 1 - 2° C (34 - 36° F), flashbacks of the movie Titanic played vividly in our minds.

Returning to the dock, hypnotic images of our day spent on Disko Bay on the Ilulissat Ice Fjord and seeing icebergs created a lasting memory that we will never forget. Not having our fill of icebergs yet, we hiked to the **Sermermiut** valley twice during our stay to see more icebergs.



Ilulissat Ice Fjord

Walking along the marked rock strewn dirt path down to the water, our eyes were once again dazed by the sighting of large icebergs not far from shore, and noticed a sign that said Extreme Danger and advised not to walk on the beach, due to the possibility of a risk of sudden tsunami waves caused by calving icebergs.



Ilulissat Ice Fjord

We continued our climb up the steep path over rocks to the top of the hill, and if we thought that the icebergs in the harbor were amazing, we were absolutely speechless by the sight of a "carpet of icebergs"

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immediately below us. There were icebergs in all sizes that nudged against one another looking very much like a giant jigsaw puzzle, and gave the appearance that you could literally walk across them from one iceberg to another.



Sitting on the rocks and quietly listening to the absolute silence and stillness of the icebergs, we suddenly heard a loud gunshot-like noise. Startled at the sound, it took us a few seconds before we realized that the noise that we had heard was an iceberg calving, and we savored that exquisite moment and realization that we had just witnessed an extraordinary part of history and nature.



We settled back on the rocks and kept our eyes peeled to the iceberg "puzzle" watching for movement to see if the icebergs readjusted their positions. When it appeared that all was calm, we ventured further on down the rocks, and (Edward) reached into the icy waters and picked up a large piece of an iceberg so that he could experience the impact of nature. With freezing hands he held the iceberg for a moment before gently returning it to its rightly place in the water.

From Ilulissat, we flew to **Kangerlussuaq**, to see the ice cap during our layover before our return flight to the United States. Our Guide, Jørgen Larsen, of [Kangerlussuaq Tourism A/S](#) drove us 16 miles (25 km)



to experience the magnificence of the ice sheet, driving over a rugged terrain of sand dunes, rocks, and up and down twisting dirt roads where the ride was almost as exciting as looking across a gorge and seeing the massive ice sheet; well almost as exciting.

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Having "been there, done that," Greenland is truly a destination that must be experienced. This is a very special place where one has the opportunity to witness nature and evolution continuing to evolve day by day. We cannot wait to return!

Please other articles on **Greenland** in the **Destinations, Hotels and Resorts**, and **Chefs' Recipes** (**English** and **Danish**) sections.

For information on **Greenland**, please visit the websites: [Greenland Tourism and Business Council](#), www.Greenland.com, [Nuuk Tourism](#), www.Nuuk-Tourism.gl, [Visit Ilulissat](#), www.VisitIlulissat.com, and [Kangerlussuaq Tourism](#), www.KangTour.gl.

For information on **Air Greenland**, please visit the website: [Air Greenland](#), www.AirGreenland.gl.

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