

## **Greenland, Denmark, Sweden Arctic Circle Trail Expedition**

September 23 to October 8, 2008

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Exchange Rate: 5.5 Danish Krone (Dkk) to \$1 USD

### **Tuesday, September 23, 2008**

#### **Getting there**

After several days of a mad dash to get ready, my parents took me to the San Diego Airport. I had only booked this trip one week ago and was still working out the details at the very last second. I was literally taking care of credit cards for international travel on the way to the airport. Putting together last minute trips is okay for an experience, but doing this for trekking travel is a different matter. Really, it's dumb. I won't do this again, given the choice.

I caught my flight out of San Diego and was off without a hitch.

The connection in Chicago O'Hare was fine, other than having to navigate the maze of buildings to make it to international terminal 5.



Having the aisle seat on the Airbus 340 was handy for getting up and moving around a bit, as 8 hours in a seat will catch up with your backside. I didn't get but an hour of sleep on the flight. Taking a Tylenol PM might have been a good idea, but my brain was racing so much that it might not have helped anyway. Self-doubt, crazy thoughts of bailing out due to too much snow, not being able to make it at all and the conditions being too rough spun through my head. It all flew through my mind fast, just like how a child thinks about Christmas in December.

### **Wednesday, September 24, 2008**

I arrived in Denmark without any problems, other than being dastardly tired. I found the luggage office and dropped my mega-backpack, the 45-50 pound Gregory behemoth full of food and supplies for 10 days of hard backpacking in the arctic.

The information desk was able to provide directions to the Zleep hotel, only one train stop away from the airport, toward the city. The helpful lady at the train station window set me up with a 3-zone, 24 hour pass, for 60 Danish krone (Dkk), \$12US. This ticket allowed me to get to the city center, eat dinner and get back to the hotel and, ultimately, to the airport for the whole 18 hours I was to be here.



After a bit of wandering, I found the Zleep airport hotel and tried out the strange reservations from the GTAHotels.com site. It all worked out perfectly. The little piece of paper reservation was a life saver. A friend had saved me \$40US by directing me to this reservation system. There was also the chance to hit Sweden today, on this leg of the journey. But, I opted out of it in lieu of getting a good meal

and a full night's rest. My plan was to get over to Malmo on the way back, when more time was available and it was less risky.

### **Finding some grub**

Getting to the hotel, I bedded down for a nap. The nap was fitful and I only got one hour of effective sleep. It wasn't completely refreshing, though it beat being a wandering Copenhagen like a zombie. The impersonal girl at the hotel front desk was able to provide some ideas of places to eat as well as sites to see in the evening. I was then off to the train.

The prescribed city walk suggested by the airport tourist map was along a well traveled pedestrian-only path, reducing the likelihood of running into any trouble. I now regretted not bringing any sort of camera strap for my Nikon D200. This was to save weight, but the risk and inconvenience of carrying the camera body in hand became irritating. A thin 1" neck strap would have done wonders.

The only place serving dinner at this late hour was 100Dkk/\$22 US Italian shop. The food looked good, but I didn't come to Denmark to enjoy Italian. Knowing I'd regret passing up this obvious dinner location, I continued to walk on in search of something more Danish.

As anticipated, the only thing I learned that was real Danish fare was herring. And not much else. I ended up having the pleasure of paying 240Dkk/\$45US for a plate of salmon and rice. It was good, but not for that price. The Italian place looked much better in hindsight. The lesson here was to eat at the first decent place that looks good when it's late. You never know what you'll come across, if anything. Each city is different.



Compared to \$40US salmon, a plate of \$20 pasta and a more full belly sounded really good at 10pm. This was a repeat lesson of my trip to Paris years ago – don't pass up good places while searching for a guidebook suggestion. If it's tasty looking and reasonable, enjoy it right there.

There were two British chaps next to me who I couldn't strike up a conversation with at all. They seemed to be lost in their own worlds, not speaking with each other as much as they wouldn't talk to others. A Russian woman sitting beside the Brits appeared like she would like conversation, but when the waiter came by to take the order, the Russian woman came off cold. Not rude, just not inviting. This ended up being a solo dinner venture.



The walk back to the Zleep hotel took less time than finding dinner, as I know knew the route to take – I was suffering from the dude horse effect. That's where it seems to take 2-3x as long to go some place as it does to return from it. After returning to the hotel, I repacked my gear, showered and bedded down for the night at 10:30pm, about 1:30am my time.

**Thursday September 25, 2008**

**Early morning in Europe**

As expected, I didn't sleep well from the jet lag. Wild thoughts ran through my head. Failure, bailout, what-if situations and the like filled my head after waking up around 2am. These thoughts, coupled with a slightly sore back from the plane ride, kept me tossing and turning, getting vague sleep until 4am. Then I fell asleep hard. 6am was my wake-up time and I bounced out of bed mentally, though the body was sluggish. Sleeping in was tempting. But, the schedule allowed only a small amount of time for leisure.

I showered and then enjoyed a 59Dkk/\$12US European style breakfast buffet at the Zleep hotel. There was no need to suffer crappy airport food when a 30 second walk down the hallway afforded bread, cheese, apples, juice, cream cheese, honey, yogurt and the like. Eating to my stomach's content, I returned to the room to do a final cleanup and get back to the airport.

### **Getting to Greenland**

Unlike last night's cranky female conductor checking tickets on a nearly empty train, this busy train had no one checking tickets.

Over at the airport, I decided to change all \$1000US I was carrying to Danish Kroner, since Kangerlussuaq (pronounced "kanger-lushwa") had no ATM and I didn't know what I would need in Greenland, especially in an emergency. And, I found that my REI Visa wasn't working at many places. Most required the European chipped credit card. I had notified REI Visa about the travel, but it seemed the computerized rejection system was stymieing me anyway. It was a 2.5% hit for the cash exchange. The change house had a purchase-sell split of 495Dkk to 520Dkk. This was far better than in the US with a 10-20% split.

The lines for the Air Greenland flight were much busier than expected. It was good I didn't sleep in. After changing money, getting the backpack checked in and making way through the long security lines, I almost left my passport, money and chapstick in an x-ray tub due to lack sleep. How I hate having to drop papers in buckets, as it's easy to lose things in the chaos. That's what some airports require. After all the chasing around, there were only 15 minutes before the plane began boarding.



The Airbus A330 was almost as nice as the A340 from Chicago to Copenhagen, as the only difference in coach was the lack of cup holders between the planes. We received notice that the safety instructions were only to be given in Danish and Greenlandic. Good thing I can read the little picture diagrams on the safety card.

### **Fly over inspection**

My seat-mate's ear buds droned out heavy metal music loud that I was able to hum along with. Though that was irritating, ultimately he ended up being nice guy. He was courteous, smiled and offered to pawn my trash to the stewardess. Maybe there's something to the rumor of endless smiles of Greenlanders. All during the flight, I tried to catch a little sleep to rest up for the trek. Again, thoughts of danger, difficulty and failure haunted my cat-nap dreams.

On approach to Kangerlussuaq, the pilot does a steeply banked, right-hand, 180 degree turn to let passengers get a good look at the landscape. You tilt 45 degrees, allowing a direct look at the ground. It was scary to have the plane feel like it was on its side. The benefit was the direct look at the ground that assuaged my fears. I was glad to have a chance to investigate ground conditions from the air. The snow was sparse. The landscape was clear and I saw every detail. What a relief! All my fears drained away like a popped water balloon. Excitement of success filled my head. Having to stay in Kangerlussuaq for 10 days was the backup plan B. Now, seeing the landscape, the undesirable plan B was not longer needed.

"I will not fail. This will be tough but doable. It's not waist deep snow for 100 miles."

Kangerlussuaq airport has only stairs. No cozy jetways swing out to greet you. Instead, Greenland welcomes visitors with a blast of arctic air. As soon as the plane parked, everyone on the plane began donning their heavy parkas and gloves. Not a good sign for what looked to be a sunny day.



The digital thermometer in the airport read -7C or 10 deg F, a bit colder than I had hoped. Still, it's good. Luggage takes 25 minutes to travel 200 feet from the plane to the luggage rack. There was a customs officer and drug dog waiting near the carousel, presumably to pick off smugglers.

I spoke to Keeta at the tourism desk inside the airport and purchased the three topographic maps I needed for Dkk 80 / \$16 US each. Good thing I brought lots of cash. There is no ATM here. These maps will be indispensable. It would have been safer to purchase them in advance if I knew how to get them. If the office was out of maps, I would have been in trouble. Keeta was also able to arrange the hostel for my last night in Greenland, 10 days in advance.

Prior to arrival in Greenland, I was able to contact Holger for securing white gas (20Dkk/\$4 per liter) for my stove. It was a very fair price, considering the store wanted to charge 30Dkk or \$6 per liter. Prior to departure, I looked up the Danish translation of white gas - "Rense Benzin", had I not been able to find Holger.

### **Getting geared up and ready**

Holger brought much more fuel than I needed, as he didn't know I was traveling solo, so he had more than enough for me. He was kind enough to let me only purchase and pour what I needed. Holger was also surprised about the lateness of the season and the solo approach on top of that.

The airport rented lockers for 20Dkk/day, making it possible to leave a lot of gear not necessary for the trek. It is good to bring a spare lock to be self-contained, as that's what some people did. You also have the only key to the lock you rent. Don't lose it.

I walked over to the police station, marked Polize, to register for the trip as Keeta suggested. A surprised the young officer greeted me.

"You know the last person to go on this trip came through here a month ago?"

"No, but that's good to know."

"Do you have a radio? A group of Germans came through last month and called for information many times before calling for rescue when one broke his leg."

"No. No radio."

Both of my answers garnered a raised eyebrow.

The officer wrote down my contact and insurance information on a form specifically written for this trek.

### **Getting on the trail**

It seemed as though the group of Germans wasn't quite up to snuff, as they had called via radio several times prior to their incident. They asked for directions and other questions that brought their preparedness into question.

It is a 16km ride out to the start of the main trail to bypass a full day of walking on a dusty road. The ride costs 320Dkk (\$55US) to reach the hiking drop-off point near the Kelly Ville research station. It was extremely expensive, but spending the extra money was well worth it. We only passed one vehicle the whole ride and there was nothing to see along the utility road. Part of the ride goes up a very steep grade as well. The only water around the road is tainted saline by the ocean, making a first day from Kangerlussuaq to the satellite station a waste.

As my driver only spoke a few words of English and I none Greenlandic, I did my best to thank him, shake his hand and pay his fare. Off into the arctic wilderness I went. At 3pm.



The start of the trail was icy and slick, immediately making me wish I had brought my Yak Tracks (boot chains), at least for the first few hundred yards. I started hiking at 3pm. The extra weight of the Yak Tracks would have been well offset by the decreased risk of slipping being injured. It didn't take long to wish I had brought them more than once.

Distances on the 100,000:1 maps were deceptively far for me, as I was used to 24,000:1 maps. It took a day or two to recalibrate my perception of scale. The wider maps cut down on the expense and number of items to keep track of.

About 1 mile into the trek, I heard and then saw reindeer (caribou) hunters near the abandoned trailer by the first small lake. As the day wore on, I moved through the hills and it was nearly sunset and 7pm before I found a leeward area to set up the tent. The temperature dropped frighteningly fast as the last vestiges of sunlight faded from the sky. With the tent set up, I rushed to cook, eat and brush my teeth to bed down by 830pm.

### **Making camp**

Oh...brr, brr, brr. It's cold. Thank goodness for the Western Mountaineering Antelope sleeping bag, rated at 5 deg F. I would have frozen had I only brought the Megalight bag, rated at 30 deg F.

A Nalgene bottle of boiling hot water was a great salvation for chilled toes. Boil the water, pour it in the Nalgene bottle, make sure the cap is secure and stuff it into the foot box of the bag makes for a comfy night. Hot water bottles make the arctic experience almost civilized.



I had hoped for an aurora that night but the sky didn't cooperate. At 2am, clouds obscured the sky which is not a good sign for weather.

#### **Day 1 food**

Harry and David snacks	670 cals
Freeze dried mango	110 cals
Freed dried lasagna	670 cals
<b>Total</b>	<b>1450 cals</b>

#### **Friday, September 26, 2008**

Dang it! Some time during the night, my down-insulated Exped air mattress began losing air. Hopefully it's just the warm air in the mattress cooling down and causing the shrinking or a stuck feather in the valve. Nothing could be worse for sleep than having no insulation from the arctic tundra.

There was no aurora visible due to the clouds, but the clouds reradiated warmth back to me. My biggest fear was waking up to a foot of snow in the morning. I also had a dream that hooved animals were milling around me on the trail at night. It could have been true with the reindeer around here.

Waking up at 7am, my head was still foggy from the jet lag that retained a grip on me. I hope to shake that feeling after a good full day of walking today so I can get an earlier start. The white gas Dragonfly stove fired up easily and rapidly boiled my water for 290 calories of oatmeal, powdered milk and brown sugar.

#### **Day of errors**

While reheating the oatmeal, the pot boiled over, making a mess. That was not a good way to start out in Greenland.

Good thing I'd stocked up on Nalgene bottled water the night before, as the first pond I found was covered in an impenetrable 3 inches of ice. My small water bottle had frozen over during the night. That freezing caused condensation, getting my Antelope bag a little wet. It wasn't bad, just enough to teach me not to leave 0.5L bottles laying against my microfiber bag. After all this fooling around with water bottled and boiled over oatmeal, I didn't start walking until 830am, just when a few snowflakes began falling. This was my introduction to arctic weather. The snow was light, so there was no reason for me to turn back and make camp to wait out the weather. How long would I have to wait, anyway?

Down by the first lake, I saw 2 reindeer (caribou) at 200 yards, silhouetted in the blowing snow while resting. They moved out of sight silently, like ghosts. Only then did I see their bigger herd, about 300 yards off. After observing them for a few minutes, they bolted once I rose from my rock stoop.

The going started getting rough, as the snow started blowing hard. Ironically, the wind-whipped snow actually made following the trail easier, as the trail rut was now better defined. But, the trail was now covered treacherous ice, as I learned by stumbling more than once. I reverted to walking on the tundra weeds when the trail looked like it was covered in solid ice. Marching in the growth was slower going, yet it prevented a dangerous fall. It was now snowing hard.

### **Inadvertent swimming in a blizzard**

As I was traversing the snow-covered ice swamp created by Lake Qarlissuit, I partially broke through and took a little water in the boot. The Outdoor Research Croc gaiters prevented the boots from being inundated by water.



Trekking through the icy tundra is tougher than I anticipated. Also, in retrospect, printing the "what to expect" at each river crossing would have been good. The first crossing said, "Take off boots AND trousers."

The river crossing was deep and the bottom wasn't visible, so I stowed the camera and, while sitting on a rock to stay out of snow, pulled off my boots, socks and gaiters, then hiked up my shell pants up to mid-thigh. I thought about packing my boots so I had both hands free.

Wish I had.

Yelling into the wind from the searing pain of putting my bare feet on snowy, wet ground, I stood up. It was like stepping on hot coals as I walked to the edge of the river. Stepping in at first was okay, as the mush and rocks under the river surface were solid. Then, the next step into the marshy bottom introduced me to the arctic. I slipped, sinking nearly up to my waist in water. My boots and socks were dunked. I almost fell over with my pack. My pants were under water.

I regained my balance with two boots full of water.

I yelled, "NO!!", into the wind fruitlessly.

After a moment of stumbling on the grassy bottom, I avoided completely tumbling over. As I was now soaked, I just plowed forward, broke through the ½ inch thick river ice with my bare feet and got to the other side. I was mad, scared and depressed all at once. Both socks and boots were soaked through and the snow was blasting hard enough to sting my now flushed cheeks. It was time for an evaluation.

### **Evaluation of expedition on day 2**

Here I am, sitting on a rock, in a snow storm, soaked up to my thighs with drowned boots and socks in hand. The gaiters began to freeze solid from the merciless wind before my eyes. I needed to rapidly decide what to do.

Remembering a scene from, of all things, "Man versus Wild", I took handfuls of snow and quickly rubbed fluffy dry snow all over my wet legs. Doing this several times dried my legs up quickly. The dry snow absorbs the water. The only downside to this approach is the snow feels like broken glass on freezing wet skin. The shock of the cold snow on wet skin is head-spinning. But it worked. In less than a minute, my legs were completely dry.

Looking at my wet socks, I thought about grabbing a dry pair. My sloshing wet boots will rapidly soak the dry socks, doubling my problems. There was no reason to do this. Wool is supposed to keep warm when wet, right?

I wringed the socks, all while snow pelted my bare, wet feet with needle-like ferocity. Donning the damp socks, soggy boots and ice-covered gaiters took the pain of cutting wind and blowing snow off my legs.

This was the textbook circumstance for hypothermia and frostbite in a neat package.

After looking at the map, it looked like 3.5 miles to the first cabin. The only other option was to turn around and bail out. I didn't want to cross that river again, so there was no other option for me psychologically. I didn't want to swim the river during a near blizzard again. Going to the cabin, deeper into the Arctic wilderness, was my only choice.

## **Onward**

The trail turned steeply uphill. The boots were covered in an icy shell and yet my feet felt warm. Whether it was from insulation, nerve failure or pure will not to fail, I don't know. They just felt fine. It was eerie to be that wet and have seemingly warm feet.

Cresting the first hill, I ran into another small group of reindeer. The lead buck and doe came up really close to take a look at me, sniffing the air. The blowing snow made it difficult for them to identify me until a subtle shift in the wind to my back identified me. They disappeared into the flurries.

Then, a herd of shaggy musk ox appeared at the edge of my vision, occasionally obscured by sheets of snow. When I moved to get my camera, they circled themselves. At about 200 yards away from them, I began yelling at the Roman phalanx of other-worldly beasts. As I wasn't sure how they would react to me, I didn't want to be charged and stomped. I yelled and waived my arms. It was laughable but it worked. As much as I wanted to see musk ox close, the risk of injury or worse wasn't worth it. It was good to know musk ox can be scared away. Just about then, the snow abruptly stopped. In another 20 minutes of marching, the first hut appeared at the edge of the 19-mile long Lake Amitsorsuaq. Thank the Lord. The first hut on the Arctic Circle Trail was a welcome sight.



## **Recovery of the whole expedition**

At the Katiffik (Bryllupshytten or Wedding) hut, I closed the door and pulled off the squishy boots and socks, collecting myself. If only there was a hair dryer. Good I had several spare pairs of socks.

But wait! After a cursory inspection of the tiny cabin, I found a few votive candles. Salvation! After setting the boots upside down precariously perched on a few empty butane canisters, well above the lit candles, for 2 hours, my boots were completely dry! The socks were still wet but I was saved.

It was windy and cold outside. It was cold inside. There was no aurora after the muddy gray light blended into inky blackness. I wolfed down my freeze dried lasagna and bundled myself into my fluffy down Antelope sleeping bag, falling asleep at 11pm.



#### Day 2 food

Oatmeal, dried milk, brown sugar	290 cal
2 sticks of butter in oatmeal	400 cal
Cheese	500 cal
Raman	380 cal
Almonds	200 cal
Yogurt snack	80 cal
Harry and David moose munch	600 cal
Freeze dried lasagna	520 cal
<b>Total</b>	<b>2970 cal</b>

#### Saturday, September 27, 2008

Woke up at 7am. Late again. Ugh. I spent some time photographing the little peninsula on the lake, then set about inspecting and selecting a canoe to cross the lake. There was only one undamaged canoe to choose from, so there wasn't much thought involved.

After eating and cleaning up, I consulted the map and looked at the sky and prevailing wind. Fortunately it was an east wind, to my back. If the wind was against me as a solo canoe pilot, it would have been nearly impossible to make the journey. A canoe is like a sail on an open lake. I chose the best paddle along with a backup as well as a life jacket. A second jacket was brought to kneel on. The paddle was wooden, making it heavier than the aluminum, though it was more durable and less cold to handle. The backpack was tied inside the canoe to the gunwales and a final check was made.

As I departed shore, the wind caught me 100 feet out. There was no return. It would be nearly impossible to paddle back into this sort of wind. Off I went at 10:30am.

#### Crossing Amitsorsuaq Lake while seated

My Dad trained me during Boy Scouts to lash the pack inside the canoe. If the canoe capsized, the pack would be on the bottom of the lake in seconds. And that would be that. I also carried a bailer bucket in the boat for the worst case. It was tied down as well. There was no room for error, as there were threatening clouds, I was by myself and the next person wouldn't happen by until March, if I needed help. And then, there will be a few feet of snow and ice on the lake.



After an hour of paddling, I passed the small island and then headed on to the first point on the lake. Interestingly, it took an hour to attain each land feature, making gauging progress easy.



As the dashed path on the map suggested a good crossing point, I guided the canoe to the large island and began across. It took about 1 hour of paddling to cross Amitsorsuaq Lake. All the while I gave occasional glances over the shoulder, watching the weather. I chose travel on the north side of the island, the lee side away from the wind. It made travel a bit smoother. I took a small risk and explored the island a bit. The canoe was double knotted to the shore shrubs which I checked for fastness before leaving the boat. As I climbed up to the peak for an unbeatable 360 view, my mind kept playing with me. In my mind's eye, I could see the canoe floating away from the island and me becoming a permanent resident. With reindeer droppings on the tiny island and no reindeer present, it was clear that the huge lake iced over and land animals traveled here in winter. Waiting for ice on the lake would be the only escape, saving me from swimming in a 45 degree lake. However, that escape was a month or more away. Not a viable option.

After capturing the 360 photo of the surrounding lake, I headed back down to the canoe and set off, beginning the daunting lake crossing. It took another hour of paddling with the wind to cross the lake.

The going was slow, but compared to hiking high ice-covered rocky bluffs I was passing, it became clear that sitting for 10 hours beat walking handily.

After another hour of paddling along the south shore, I rounded the last point and took a break. The beach sand was very steep and readily sunk under my feet, almost sucking me in. It was a quicksand beach, strewn with caribou carcasses around the point. An obvious hunter camp area was on the high point of the spit, making for a good view of the scene.

### **On to Canoe Center**

It took another 45 minutes to cover the last 1.4 miles. This was still slower than walking, but after seeing the approach, I appreciated the ease of travel. On approaching Canoe Center, the wind subtly shifted and began taking me out toward the middle of the lake, well past the cabin. Minor panic ensued. With a burst of adrenaline, I brought the canoe into the wind shadow of the shore and saved myself a huge walk. The warnings written in the cabin journals and tour books about the mountain crossing make me happy I used the canoe. However, I knew that wind can make canoe travel dangerous to lethal in mere moments. But with the wind to my back the whole time, I didn't worry.

Hauling the canoe up the shore and to the cabin took work. The plan was to pay my temporary craft back by protecting it from the winter ice and snow, storing it in the huge garage, upside down on sawhorses. The next person will use this canoe in June 2009.

Along the lake, I counted not less than 3 canoes abandoned on the shore, banging into the rocks. After reading several journal entries, it saddened me to find many travelers found it acceptable to just abandon the crafts when tired, letting the

weather take them. This information was in the logs from 2000 to 2003. It was a shame to see so many treat these free craft with such carelessness. With more time and a partner, I considered a canoe recovery operation. In the end, it was obvious that would be a waste of time, as these trusty craft will be abandoned again in the future.

### **Cabin journal entries**

The Kanoe Center (so spelled) is huge! There are multiple rooms and decks to enjoy a more summer day. There were several entries in the log books describing how to find the Oles Lakseelve bridge, even a few entries with GPS coordinates. Those were speedily clicked into my trusty Garmin. Other log entries described how someone used to stay here and charge for rentals. That was no issue for me today.



Wow, the Estonians of 2 years ago were carrying 42 kilo (90 pound) packs. Haha! It's stunning to be even able to lift and shoulder that load, let alone carry it. They seemed to drop 3kg (6 lbs) of food in every log at every cabin. The subsequent writers thanked the Estonians in absentia. The best quote from the Estonians was, "Our packs are SO heavy." With SO written twice.

Dinner was turkey tetrazzini and a freeze-dried ice cream sandwich, followed by salt tablets and a pre-emptive dose of Advil for the day's paddling. The log entries by GPS junkies indicated the trip along the lake was between 11.3 – 11.9 miles. The candles to read the logs by were a nice touch to round out the evening

The barometer on my GPS read 983mb, a bit low for my tastes. I figured this out after finding that the cabin was at 125 meters elevation. That's near storm pressure – crud. I boiled water, poured it into my Nalgene and slipped into my Western Mountaineering Antelope for the night

### **Day 3 food**

Granola, dried milk, butter	560 cal
Chocolate bar	540 cal
Harry and David mix	600 cal
Rosemary an olive oil Triscuits	190 cal
Freeze-dried turkey tetrazzini	640 cal
Freeze-dried ice cream	150 cal
Total	2680 cal

### **Sunday, September 28, 2008**

I woke up to my arch nemesis – rain. I'd prefer to be it snowing and windy compared to rain. Rain is the second toughest to deal with next to a blasting snowstorm.

It rained when leaving Canoe center, later turning to grapple, then to ice and snow. After an hour of this, it stopped. One matted down reindeer appeared, as well as numerous carcasses. The cartridge laying revealed that hunters here use 30-.06 rifles.

There's light snow on the hills above me, meaning that the rain is falling at a comfortable 32deg F. This is my favorite weather condition – miserable.

### **Looking at a destination for hours**

I wasn't able to find my lotion overnight to prevent my dehydrate fingers from cracking. Drinking much water on a canoe wasn't desirable as it's risky to urinate in the middle of a wind-blown Arctic lake. Having slight cracks in the fingers beat swimming in open water.

In the open, I found that my average walking speed has been 2MPH thus far, paced at 3MPH on hard ground, 1MPH in the swamps and 2MPH on the pillow-soft tundra lettuce.

After marching what seemed like an eternity toward a lake that never seemed to get any closer, the scent of cool water off Lake Taserssuaq struck me. Staring at the lake for hours on end through a slight valley and seemingly getting no closer was a peculiar experience. The lake was simply massive.

On the shore of the 40-km (25 mile) long Lake Taserssuaq was a reindeer hunting camp with an old wall tent and a 4-pole big geo-dome tent. It was 7 miles as the crow flies from Kanoe center to here, so I made good time starting at 1030am and finishing at 530pm. I can't leave that late any more because the days are getting 7 minutes shorter every passing day.



While munching on Harry and David nuts, a female reindeer came within 30 feet of me to see what I was. She didn't look too healthy, though. Just sitting still made it possible for me to get a real close look at her. Reindeer use the trail I'm following as their game path. Too bad I had my camera stowed away for rain protection. Though, moving the camera might have scared her away.

Leaving the Nikon neck strap at Kangerlussuaq to cut down weight made it a pain to get at the camera. Having events like this made me long for it. So, I took a short length of Tripteesse paracord and made a small harness to tie into my backpack shoulder straps.

Flat land trekking in wet, partially frozen, arctic tundra is tough going. I can't imagine what it would be like when it's really wet during the summer at 27 deg C (80 deg F), while being swarmed by the Greenland Royal Airforce, more popularly known as mosquitoes. I did see a small swarm at the Canoe center even when it was in the high 30s. These buggers are tough!

### **Food failure**

I had hoped to make the cabin on the other side of Lakes Taserssuaq. Not a chance today, with this pack load and the cabin being a short 20km+ away.

Blech. The olive oil in my pack went rancid, causing me to ditch 900 calories. As I ingested some to discover this fact, I immediately consumed some charcoal caps to ward off any gastrointestinal issues from the bad oil. It must have been destroyed

while sitting in my parents' black car on the way to the airport. Lesson learned. Also, I discovered I need more salty food. The garlic twists were a welcome treat and I'd wish to have packed more.

### **Night visitor**

This lake is expansive to the point that the mountains lining the far shore did not appear real.

After trundling over one hill to cover more ground with the available daylight, I made the beach, all the while praying for no precipitation. I also thanked Providence for keeping me going.

I set up my tent on the coarse, sandy beach. Who would have thought to come to the arctic to spend the night on a beach?



My right boot was damp inside, proving that wearing 2 pairs of socks was a mistake, as I run warm, causing my feet sweat.

After dinner and exploring around a bit, I warmed up a water bottle and hit the sack. As I fell asleep, two little green eyes appeared at the edge of the lake. They were transfixed on me for several moments and then

disappeared without a sound. I never found what the strange creature was, nor did I find footprints in the morning.

### **Day 4 food**

Granola with Harry & David Mix	570 cal
Clarified butter	200 cal
Chocolate	500 cal
Harry & David nuts	670 cal
6 shortbread cookies	500 cal
Pro-pack freeze dried tetrazzini	500 cal
Pro-pack freeze dried chicken	500 cal
Peanut butter	200 cal
Raman, 1 pack	380 cal
Total	4020 cal

### **Monday, September 29, 2008**

Today I was up at 640am, a more reasonable expedition time.

The air mattress deflated slower this evening and I removed an errant feather from the air valve. I knew it would be easy to find the leak if I pushed the mattress into the lake. Since I didn't want to drench it to have it ice over, I continued accepting my careless mistake and suffered through it.

I looked along the beach for tracks of my green-eyed visitor last night and found nothing. None of the food bags were disturbed, either.

After waking up at 640am, I was fed and ready to go by 815am. This is still a luxury time-table. At this rate, it seems like there is time for a massage in the schedule.

## **Staying hydrated with snow. Are you supposed to do that?**

The climb up the cliff the lake was a straight-up shot to the top which was covered in snow. According to the map, there wasn't any reliable water along the way, as it will be all heavily iced over. After passing a few lakes at the top filled with swimming bugs and unknown slime, I reverted to eating snow for hydration. The trick was to let the snow melt in the mouth before swallowing. Otherwise the ice creates a stomach ache.



As long as the snow melts, there is no problem. The theory that eating snow is bad is wrong, at least in part. Moving and generating heat made eating the snow pleasant, as it kept me cool and hydrated at the same time. The temperature was in the high 20's, as the water in my 0.5L bottle began icing over.

The cabin at the top of the pass looks like a little house and is very nice. Sadly, the stench and mess from other travelers leaving their trash at the location detracts from the otherwise pristine scene. Based on the journals, most trekkers are Europeans. These people seem to believe there is a socialized trash service in the middle of the arctic. It was sad. There were several journal entries that even commented on the garbage. The concept of carry in-carry out hasn't made it across the pond.

Again, there was a journal entry by the Estonians about leaving more food for others. I couldn't imagine carrying so much food that I could leave useful caches at several cabins. They must have carried massive packs.

Off in the distance, several ghostly reindeer moved through the gently drifting snow and clouds. More than once, I thought I was seeing things, as the snow deadened the sound and my only environmental sense was distorted from exertion.

One part of the trail had 3 white snow hares playing tag with each other. One of the hares took time to stop and check me out. We stood and stared at each other for a good long time before hopping back into the drifts.

## **Cabin contents**

The sun came out without providing warmth. Thinking back at how many people wrote about forgetting sunscreen to deal with the endless arctic sun, I lathered some on to prevent being burned myself. Many entries talked about trekkers enjoying cracked and bleeding lips, seriously burned skin and scratchy eyes. The temperature was an amazing 27-30 deg C during summer. One person even wrote about using charcoal for sunscreen. Grubby but effective.

The hut at the pass also had two photographs of trekkers laden in massive down jackets escaping the hut ablaze. Sadly, a flame must have been unattended and destroyed the former cabin in April 2008. Nothing like being burned out of a cabin, running into drifting snow for shelter during the middle of winter.

Another writer commented on going from Sisimiut to Kangerlussuaq and how it would have been impossible to make the climb from Oles Lakseelv. As I learned, the

trail is moist dirt all the way down. Steep to the point of being slippery. In the rain, it would have been treacherous if not impossible. My feet slipped out more than once, nearly turning me into a careening mudball.

I stink worse than I think I ever have. If you can smell your own, it's bad. Trekking for days on end without a shower is awful on the nose. If the weather ever turns above freezing for more than 2 hours, I'll need to bathe if I don't rot first.

The view into and through Oles Lakseelv was nothing less than spectacular. It was a mini Grand Canyon with an arctic overlay.

## Humans

Olevs Lakeselve is a swampy, making travel difficult. Walking on the willow bushes makes it easier, but not by much. During the summer months, this place could be hell on earth as a boggy swamp with innumerable insects.

The new river bridge was very nice to cross at 7:15pm. Forging this river would have been very challenging since it was at least neck deep. Finding the coordinates of the bridge at various cabins was well worth the effort. It was a big push today to make it here.



I saw 3 fishermen far away while on the bridge, the first humans I've seen in days. That was a little bummed, as I had hoped to see no other humans on the trip.

After trudging swampland all day, my feet hurt while crossing the wooden bridge. My fingers had cracks in them and will hurt tomorrow.

It was a little rainy, turning the tent into a sauna with me in there. I had to open up the door to vent the humidity; otherwise I would be a wet dog.

## Clear sky

This schedule is brutal. Others claimed 12-30 miles (24-48 km) a day. Maybe in July when everything is dry, but those numbers are tough to believe in rougher conditions. I've crossed the Grand Canyon from the south rim to the north rim and back again to the south in 24 hours, covering 49 miles in 24 hours. However, I was only carrying day hiking gear, a much lighter load.

I saw stars the first time tonight in Greenland on my little patch of grass. This is the first clear night in the lowlands. It's back to the mountains tomorrow, probably going over snow.

## Day 5 food

Granola & powdered milk	300cal
Butter	200 cal
Triscuits	190 cal
Harry & David Mix	600 cal
Harry & Davide chocolate mix	360 cal
Chocolate and nuts bar	510 cal
Raman	380 cal
Chocolate bar	250 cal

Mac and cheese for 2	910 cal
Total	3700 cal

## **Tuesday, September 30, 2008**

It snowed ½" last night. The air mattress deflated around 3am. Dew on the tent was frozen. I could see a little blue sky through the dark, lead-colored clouds. Ravens and brightly colored yellow breasted chirpers flocked around. I was off to find the trail and get back into the mountains. By this point, my boots are caked in frozen mud and ice.

Today was rough. I left at 830 am from Oles Lakeseeelv and got to the small hut at 8pm! In the dark. There was an original big hut that burned down due to carelessness last year.

I skipped filling up my water bottles in a rush to make the cabin before the landscape went completely black and the snow made it impossible to travel. Not filling water bottles up a few miles back meant I now had to melt snow.

On the way in, I seriously hurt my heel by tying my boot incorrectly this morning. I was pointing my toe rather than flexing out my heel, causing the laces to crank down on the top of my foot. This puts tremendous pressure on the heel. It took a while to adjust my boot so I could walk again. Not tying the boots correctly is a huge mistake, especially in the Arctic.



And, to top it off, it was snowing at one inch per hour. I'm hoping for better weather tomorrow.

### **Snowy mountain crossing**

During the day's hike, my loon buddy showed up again. I think he's been keeping me company in the lowlands. A reindeer family with a few male stragglers passed by me around noon. There was some heavy equipment running far off in the distance, on a far lake beyond Oles Lakeseeelve. I wondered what they were doing all the way out here and even how they got here in the first place.

Most of the last few lakes I passed have been frozen, though the shape of the lake suggested the water was deep. It would be real bad to play around on the ice and fall through. No one would find me until next July.

Tomorrow is one of the big river crossing days and it's still three days to Sisimiut. In theory. I'm hoping to make the next hut, 10.5 miles away as the crow flies, by nightfall.

The thick, thigh-deep snow in spots has made travel really tough. This is where the snowshoes were needed. All throughout the mountain pass, there was a foot of snow. The outer layer of boot waterproofing has begun to fail, as the leather is staying moist rather than shedding water. My feet have been getting wet from the exertion needed to plow through this soggy snow. The occasional snowfall during the day added a light dusting to the already white landscape and hid the rocks just a little more. I can always tell when the snow is about to fall because it feels like I've

put on earmuffs. The environmental sounds go completely dead, as though there's something wrong with my ears. It takes a while to get used to this on and off effect.

Starting this trip 3 days before would have been much better based on the weather, but that can't be changed now. Hopefully clear skies will prevail tomorrow.

It is still 56km to Sisimiut. I want a rest day but there are two more mountain crossings and with the potential for bad weather, there is no stopping. If the last pass gets deeply snowed it, it's going to be treacherous and potentially impossible to get across. Then I'll be in deep trouble.

Traveling through the snow today was the toughest I've ever done. The last ¼ mile took over 20 minutes of post holing. It's pretty bad when you can see your cabin just on the knoll ahead and yet it takes seemingly forever to reach it.

If the weather says like this, it's going to be really bad. It does make for an emotional and trying experience. There is no turning back and stopping isn't really an option. If there was ever a physical and mental endurance challenge, this ranks at the top.



I'm writing today's entry by the light thrown by two candles stuffed into Carlsburger pilsner bottles. Actually, this trip is starting to get a little scary. If there is a crush of snow tonight, I'm not sure what I'll do. However, thoughts of experiencing everything the Arctic has to offer somehow buoys my spirits. It's a strange dichotomy of fear and exhilaration.

Having cold skin but blazing like a furnace inside my protective layers is like being in a car on a hot day with the AC blasting. It's a peculiar feeling. As the wind whips around the cabin, I sit with the light of two candles warming and illuminating me while an arctic storm swirls around outside, making the cabin shudder and creak. This is exactly the experience I wanted and I've gotten it.

I hope for blue sky tomorrow. Then, I look outside. Another inch of snow has fallen.

#### **Day 6 food**

Granola + milk	360 cal
Butter	200 cal
Peanut butter	380 cal
Chocolate	250 cal
H&D mix	670 cal
Emergen-C	10 cal
Beef stew pro-pack	560 cal
Dry raman	380 cal
Butter	200 cal
Beef bullion cube	Yuck cal
Total	3010 cal

#### **Wednesday, October 1, 2008**

Yes! I'm not dead yet. The snow packed down from the howling wind last night, setting up only a two inch fluffy bed on crunchy shell. The small hut provided shelter

and saved me from the whipping storm. The day is brisk, the light scent of sea water is in the air and, after enjoying a tasty breakfast of granola, whole powdered milk and butter, I am off.

It's one river crossing today, right at the lake by the cabin. After that, it's a straight shot for the Neuremaq cabin. The GPS indicates a 10.7 mile shot. It's going to be another full day.

The Estonians from June 8, 2008, dropped more food here for others, too. One hiker complained of getting the runs from some unknown pathogen. Hopefully the water is good the rest of the way. I've got Aqua Mira with me and was hoping not to need it. All body functions have been normal. I've not been eating the disgusting Cliff and Luna bars as my last resort, as they make me feel like I'm starving. My heel is still providing plenty of pain, though. It's a delicate balance between euphoria and trudging through the pain.

### **Day 1 of pain**

For training, I was running 20-30 miles a week. I learned this takes me to 60 miles of backpacking before pain sets in. My training regimen doesn't get me to 70+ miles. Having more shake down and training hikes would have helped, but a whole different suite of training is needed Arctic travel at this time of year.

My right heel and Achilles hurt all day, cutting my speed and made me walk awkwardly. This in turn made my toes hurt, causing my knee to throb at mile 7 today.

Then, I ran into snow almost a foot deep. I would occasionally fall into knee-deep holes, exposing me to unseen rocks and crevices below. Amazingly, being in the deep snow didn't make me cold at all. The effort of plowing through snow kept me warm enough to ward off any chill.



One reindeer almost ran me over at a corner, not looking where he was going with his magnificent rack. I learned that if the reindeer don't initially see me and I just sit still on the trail, they don't recognize me. Maybe it's the dead air with no breeze and a light smell of moist rocks that masks my scent.

### **The birds**

If I had followed the old game trail rather than the cairn-marked Arctic Circle Trail, I'd have a better shot at seeing an old buck. However, it seemed like a better idea to avoid being lost. For as large as these caribou are, they make virtually no sound when running across the landscape. All I heard was the slightest chuff-chuff-chuff as their hooves struck the soft Arctic mush.

My left heel started hurting the last 2 miles, making me take over an hour to make it to the hut. These last half miles are brutal. This schedule of making huts each night in the Arctic fall is killer in bad weather, especially with deep snow.

There were several white ptarmigans that flew right by me, while others make a strange frog croaking sound on the hills. It took forever for me to figure out what

that strange and startling sound was. How would frogs be awake and active in deep snow with no exposed water around? It was a little disturbing until I connected the sound with the stealthy ptarmigans. As they were white, it was impossible to distinguish them from the landscape.

Ravens here have a metallic ring to their call. It sounds like an old telephone ringing, unlike anything I've ever heard. Maybe ravens here speak Greenlandic?

Finally! I got to see the aurora tonight in the east. It moves much faster than I ever imagined, rippling hundreds of miles across the sky in seconds. It's almost organic and seemingly alive, with thin veils of green ions ripping across the sky. Seeing the aurora was worth the pain to get here. I did get a few photographs, though just watching was more fun.

It's so cold that my tooth brush steamed in the night air. Tonight I used a candle to dry out my boots. The food stock is down to four days. If the pain of my injured heel doesn't take me out, I should be able to make Sisimiut in 2 days.

### **River crossings**

There are 3 freezing cold river crossings tomorrow. From the hut journal descriptions, the last one is supposed to be almost waist deep. There was no description of the first two crossings, as they're usually done in summer and consequently aren't a big deal at that time.

It's only one mile between the second and third crossings. I wish Neremaque cabin had a log so I could learn what I was to expect.

I started out at 8:30am and made the first river crossing by 9:30am. I spent some time looking for a better place to cross, but where the trail meets the river ends up being the best place.

I made sure to stow my boots, socks and gaitors to have free hands for this time. I took a deep breath.

Owch. Owch.

Crossing a river where little ice chunks break away from the rocks to hit your legs in the flowing water is not comfortable. They're like sharp, tumbling floating glass chunks.



I want a rest day, but with a mountain pass crossing, I cannot stop. If the rivers get any deeper, I don't know about success. If it's too bad, maybe I'll hide at the next hut for a day. Probably not, though. I don't want to fail on this one. It's better to perish trying. No, I will not perish and too many movie scenes play through my head as I listen to the rush of the rivers. Following the protocols of having everything contained and loosening the pack straps in case I take a digger are all I can do.

Though clear skies are pretty, they're so much colder. I got no clouds after days of gray and realize I had better be careful what I wish for.

### Day 7 food

Oatmeal, milk, almonds, brown sugar	470 cal
Butter	200 cal
Triscuits	190 cal
Short bread cookies	1090 cal
Almonds with salt	200 cal
Peanut butter	380 cal
Chinese beef pro pack	500 cal
Dry raman	380 cal
Total	3410 cal

### Thursday, October 2, 2008

It's cold and windy outside. There's serious frost inside Neremaque cabin. This little cabin looks like it was dropped off by a helicopter. There are eye bolts on the structure and it's all on a wooden platform. These eyebolts are connected to cables which are then hooked to the ground. Does this portend ferocious weather?



It's 7am and there's no sunrise yet in the canyon. But, with clear skies, it's going to be a cold one. That makes today's 3 river crossings that less pleasant to look forward to.

My right calf and Achilles is sore. Tying a boot incorrectly will do that.

Here are some notes to myself when I get home:

- Better ways to stay injury free on long trips
- Find more protein in a backpacking diet
- Learn about overuse injuries with backpacking
- Look up the sunrise and set times prior to arriving at a location
- Find better water proofing for boots (leather not beading water any more)
- How much training does a particular distance/weight ratio really require?
- I love butter. I need to find a better way to pack it.
- Learn self-massage techniques.
- Take a field first aid course.
- Find a violin & learn to play – time is filled with wild thoughts on such a trek.
- Bring a few tea candles to save wet boots.
- Bring hand lotion – cracked fingers create terrible pain.
- Create an arctic/Antarctic gear list
- Find out what expeditions use for sleeping pads
- Is there a better or less scary stove than the MSR Dragonfly?
- Figure out the boil time vs fuel/weight of the stove vs alcohol. Where's the cross-over?
- Compare Advil vs Aleve for pain and bring max dose per day.
- Add a needle kit for blisters
- I learned that aspirin does nothing for muscle pain
- What is the carbon monoxide output of white gas vs alcohol stoves?
- Get some new cup oil for the stove pump
- Figure out a way to bring a small amount of dish soap
- Find a lighter salt & pepper shaker

- Figure out how to deal with blood blisters created by pinches

No one mentioned the river crossings in the Neuramaq hut journal. When it's 70 degrees outside under a blistering sun, river crossings must be a welcome experience. It's not that easy at -5 deg F. Watching ice form on the river rocks before your eyes and then break away as ice cubes gives an idea of the temperature. The water must've been 32-33 deg F for that to happen.

On my first crossing, I went 2/3 of the way across and then tried to toss my pack to the far shore. What a mistake. The pack almost tumbled back into the swift river, making me jump for it. The whole idea was to have an orderly crossing and now I had to jump through the river. The bottom of the pack got wet. My gear is double bagged and my boots are inside, so nothing got wet this time.

During this stumbling attempt, I gouged a small hole out of my big toe and got my long underwear wet. Crossing arctic rivers in sub-freezing conditions is a trying experience. The wind was so harsh that stripping all clothing off was a hard option that I wasn't ready for. I kept my hat in my jacket so I could put it on immediately after exiting the river.

On getting out of a fast-flowing, freezing river, hypothermic convulsions and shivering took over my half-exposed body. Sub-freezing wind blowing over my exposed skin felt like being rolled in broken glass. It just hurts.

### **The ravine**

The crossing was all done 100 feet upstream of a plunging waterfall into an inaccessible ravine. And it was the only shallow spot to cross for 100's of yards upriver, from what I could see. A mistake here would be injurious if not fatal.



Walking past the ravine, I immediately came to another river crossing. This time, the river was wider and slower. However, that meant I had to be in the water longer. In order to make it into the flowing water, I had to break the ice apart with my bare feet as I waded in, as the ice sheets extended far into the river. There were no rocks to substitute for ice-beakers. The ice was thin but the sheet extended into the river almost a yard on both sides.

As I moved across the river, the slick, large rocks in the bottom almost cost my balance. I oriented my body to face up river to give me better balance against the variable force of the flowing water. Again, the water made it up to mid-thigh. If I moved slower, my balance was better among the jumbled rocks. However, moving slower made me stay in the water even longer, causing my feet and legs to go numb, causing me to lose balance anyway.

### **Getting to the last cabin**

The bottom Cordura of my pack got wet from my splashing in the river. By the time I had crossed and set my pack down, the water had frozen to a thin layer of ice on the pack. In 30 seconds. Again, I mentally thanked the guide in Patagonia for suggesting double lined trash bags surrounding my pack's contents. After a few minutes, the few remaining wet parts of the pack were icy, so I banged my hand

against the Cordura and the ice broke away. When it's this cold, it's a curse and then a blessing all in the span of moments.

I had asked for a clear, sunny day and finally received one. The price was enduring 18 deg F (10 deg C) lower temperatures than on cloudy days. The sunlight buoyed my spirits, making the extra cold worth it.

Leaving Neremaque cabin at 10am put me to the little hut at the ocean fjord at 8pm, in near total darkness. Late starts are a killer.

The small hut was an annoyingly long walk from the top of the mesa - maybe another mile. This entire mile was covered in bogs and nearly a swamp. I spent my energy and time hopping from one clump of grass to another. In between each clump of organic mush was 3 feet deep water. One misstep would have put me waist deep in water. Walking on the clumpy grass was like walking on triple-stacked soggy pillows. I was able to keep my balance but had several close calls. The effort to cross these and the constant concentration required was nearly the same exertion effort as post-holing.



### **An aurora over the fjord**

For some part of the day, I followed someone's footprints. The gait and size boot print size suggested a man taller than I. Someone must have wandered the land next to the fjord earlier today or yesterday. There was no one at the cabin and I was happy for that, as I stumbled like a wretch from the pain in my legs and heels. Again, I employed the tea candle drying technique on my boots in hopes of cutting some of the friction from the wet boots. I took 4 Advil and rubbed down my feet to alleviate the pain. This helped immensely. The mole skin I applied earlier in the day had peeled and then ripped off, exposing a large, dime-sized blood blister on the pad of my big toe. If it breaks, I don't know how I'll walk. I then opted then to use Band-aid tuff series bandages to cover the wound.

I should have used the tough bandages in the first place. The lesson was the instant something doesn't feel right, stop and deal with it.

The aurora is out tonight. It dances amazingly fast for something 60-240 km in the atmosphere. It moves as fast as low lying clouds might on a stormy day. It's better than I imagined. The green and occasional yellow swaths were mesmerizing to watch.

The wind blew so hard off the fjord that it made standing in the threshold of the cabin dangerous. More than once the door got away from me, threatening to crush my hands. The view was great but the danger wasn't worth it. A north facing observation window would have made this much better. The aurora is so bright it's like a near full moonlight on the landscape.

As the wind ripped off the Arctic Ocean fjord, I knew that if the cabin wasn't bolted down to a foundation of rock with  $\frac{3}{4}$ " thick cables, it would have certainly blown away with me in it. The plywood trembled as it was buffeted by the gale-force gusts. Good thing I didn't have to sleep in a tent tonight on this exposed shelf of land. My little MSR Hubba tent would have been a pancake.

## Last night away from civilization

My body desperately wanted a rest day. The log at the fjord cabin had an entry from September 17, 2007 that read, "We were snowed in for 2 days until we could continue." With good weather and a final pass to go over, I was behooved to keep going. My supplies were starting to run low and if a bad storm buried the pass, I would be in for a rough time.

There's already a soft foot of snow on the land below the pass. The beach on the fjord is already frozen. Now I know why no one comes to do the Arctic Circle Trail trek this late in the year. People would rather deal with the bugs and oppressive sun rather than cross ice-choked rivers and risk being buried in snow.

Even when sleeping on my expedition air mattress filled with down, my hips still hurt when sleeping on my sides. The Western Mountaineering Antelope sleeping bag is rated for 5 deg F and I'm sweating in it. Yet, the ice on my gaiters never melts inside the cabin. The contrast in temperatures is fascinating. It would have been really rough to be in the tent tonight.

The hut log indicates that I have a tough river crossing tomorrow, a gorge to cross and possible heavy snow to trudge through. In addition, the river crossing is in the higher elevations, 400m. I've found that higher elevations here affecting the weather are in the hundreds of meters, not in the thousands.

### Day 8 food

Oatmeal, milk, brown sugar, hd mix	410 cals
Dry raman	380 cals
HD mix	360 cals
Short bread 3 servings	600 cals
5 servings of peanut butter x 170 cal/ea	850 cals
Turkey tetrazzini	540 cals
Total	3140 cals

### Friday, October 3, 2008

The aurora played across the sky well into the morning, even at 4am. The sky is clear, cold and crisp, smelling slightly of salt water. In terms of mountain crossings, this is the day to go. No clouds on the horizon and no obvious ice crystals in the sky mean no bad weather for at least the next day. I don't want to be snowed in when I only have 2 days of food left and then have a mountain crossing in deep snow, crossing buried marshes and streams.



I drained my blood blister with a flame-sterilized needle. Lots of darks blood poured out. After waiting a few moments for the flow to stop, I welded on a new tough bandage to keep the damage to a minimum.

With the tough travel and bad weather, my throat is now a touch raw. I don't want to get sick. I pour in two packs of Emergen-C in my 0.5L bottle quench my throat in an attempt to stave off illness.

The little hut overlooking the fjord had a view to die for. With the aurora flitting in the sky overhead, lighting up the Arctic Oceanic water, I've finally found a place where I could spend a couple days. Too bad I had to leave.

### **The Sherpas**

The wind on the hilltop was bad, making it cold enough that the ice on my gaiters never thawed. My left boot had gotten soaked marching through the arctic swamps leading down the river. I had not fallen in, but ever step put me in inches of wet grass, causing the same effect. Using the last of the tea candles, I was able to dry out my boots for the last mountain crossing. Those little tea candles are a life-saver.

The trail description said to fill the water bottles now, as there wasn't good water for a long way. I did. And the bottles froze. To keep hydrated, I melted fluffy Greenland snow in my mouth. Directly eating too much snow upsets the stomach.

The cabin journals were a funny read. I'll have to email the Polish couple that call themselves, "The Sherpas". Based on comparing the described amount of gear others brought along, that moniker might be dead accurate. Reading through the journals made it feel like I was backpacking with a group of old friends, looking forward to swapping stories at the end of the day.

From the way it read, the Estonians packed enough gear and food to be gone for a month. I kept laughing at them describing their 42 kg (80+ pound) packs. How they managed to haul that much weight and not do some serious body damage is beyond me.



### **On to hiking**

Going along the fjord, through the canyon and over the pass was one big pain fest. The payoff was the awesome views going over the pass.

The snow was up to knee deep, making slow going while post-holing. Some places were hard-packed, making the travel much simpler, where I only left 4" deep footprints. The glacier-produced rock fissure was duly impressive. Crossing the crevasse was easy, nothing like other peoples' descriptions. The crossing was made much easier by the water being nearly frozen over. Going over this section when the water was running must be treacherous.

### **More river crossings**

Going over the pass was as strenuous as anticipated. Countless times I knew I was on a snow bridge, as I could hear running water under my feet. More than once, I could see where the creek meandered through the glaciated snow, so I did my best to make a running jump across the obvious weakness in the snow in hopes of not plunging through the ice into unknown circumstances.

More than once I accidentally wandered into the middle of a marsh with the sound of running water and thin ice all around me. It seemed impossible to identify until I was in the middle of it, costing me daylight travel time, backtracking to safety. The map showed that some of the marshes were more like shallow ponds. Not wanting

to learn to swim with a pack attached to me in 0 degree temperatures in the Arctic, I took my time meandering around the obstacles.

The first river crossing was scary. The whole river was covered in ice and jutting rocks. However, the ice was translucent and it was easy to see the deep, fast flowing water below me. I made sure to loosen my pack straps and unclip my belt. It would be better to lose my pack than to be swept under the ice with an anchor attached to my back. The clear ice is also slippery, making the crossing more interesting.

The sun was out all day, though cirrus clouds danced around the sky, predicting larger clouds slithering around the mountain edges.

It looked like today was the best choice to cross the last mountain pass, through the ice field. Sunny here means absolutely freezing. Though with calm air, it was livable. My breath kept fogging my glasses, making walking even more challenging. I still relished the whole experience. I also donned my headband across my nose and ears to avoid sunburn, as I could feel the heat. The shining sun and UV reflection off the ice increases the chance of getting a debilitating burn. Although the peak altitude of the crossing is only a few 100 meters above sea-level, the constant sun at this latitude increases the chance of burning.



### **Keep the blisters at bay**

Many journal writers noted that they were badly burned during the summer. One guy even wrote he used charcoal as a sunscreen with good success. He probably looked terrible, but it sure beats being torched to a crisp.

It took longer to make it across the pass than I expected. My severely cramped and weak-side right quadriceps slowed me down, in addition to stabbing pain in both of my big toes. I still walked with a smile, lapping up the experience in the rarified air.

Ultra-tough Band-aids were providing coverage and protection, preventing the blisters from growing. It was worth stopping several times to check and make sure the protection still worked and kept me walking.

I finally see a ski-lift! And human footprints in the snow. There, again, are the dog prints I saw 2 days ago. My thoughts of Balto kept me company as I painfully placed one foot in front of the other. This dog has kept me company over several days. Unfortunately I never saw him. I wonder if he's the ghost of the trail?

The dog prints have been a companion for days, following the Arctic Circle Trail. It's been strange to see the dog prints, since some of the land is frozen and other areas are completely swamped. How did this dog make it along by himself?

I also wondered how the dogs, sleds and people get up the fissure near the last cabin. For me, it was easy to cross the gash. For someone with a sled, that's a bigger question. There was even a sign on the steep slope warning of the danger ahead. The race must use part of the frozen fjord for travel; otherwise it's difficult to see where sleds would even make it.

## Jumping the shark

The final river crossing is just ahead. This river is wandering and swift, though the ice and rock give me a chance to avoid swimming and being sucked under the ice.

I spent half an hour looking for solid ice with no success. Each time I tried stepping on the ice, I heard cracking and creaking. Not something I wanted to try with my full pack on. Watching cracks shoot out from under my feet with deep water under was disconcerting. And yet, I watched ice forming on the water literally before my eyes as the mountain shadow crossed the water. It is going to be a cold night.

Finally, after searching for some time up and down stream, I found what looked like a river fording point other people have used. It seems that trekkers end up in the same circumstance as I.

A large rock in the middle of the river was my salvation for avoiding taking an icy swim. A simple bold hop with my pack on to make it the rock was all that was necessary. The penalty for inaccuracy was cracking my shins and subsequently slipping into swift water. That wouldn't be immediately lethal but both banks were iced in, so getting out of the water channel would be nearly impossible in chest-deep water.

I ran. I jumped.

My boots stuck as I landed on all fours.

Yes!



Okay, now the next challenge. The leap without a running start to the far bank was too far with a pack on. I learned from almost losing my pack several days ago that throwing my pack more than one yard when fatigued in the cold was a disastrous idea. I came up with the plan of disemboweling my pack and tossing individual items across until the pack was light enough to toss by itself.

Each item was tossed with enough force to put them beyond a second higher bank far from the river. Although my gear would be strewn into the snow, it wouldn't be floating away from me toward the Arctic Ocean.

Once my pack was light enough, I strapped it closed and gave it a mighty heave, leaving it with a yard to spare from the slick river ice. Now just a bold, standing jump and I was out of the river's center. With no run, it was an all-or-nothing shot.

It worked.

I laughed out loud and whooped. The scariest crossing was achieved while being bathed in golden afternoon sunlight as the shadows were rapidly advancing across the valley floor.

While packing, I analyzed the maneuver. Was it dumb to take things apart in the middle of the river? I balanced that risk against being up to my chest in ice cube

filled water, trying to lift myself onto an impossible-to-mount ice shelf. Just the thought of being stuck made the risk of tossing individual items worth it.

As the water was fast, deep and dark, I couldn't see the bottom, meaning the water was dangerously deep. That was far too much risk in the Arctic autumn with a cold night ahead. My feet were so torn up from the tough traveling; the psychological challenge of a river ford on an unknown river surface just wasn't appealing. It is 15 degrees and swimming just isn't on the mind.

After another hour of hard walking, I made it to Sisimiut's water supply pond at 8pm, just when it got dark. Although it would have been nice to get into town, I was wasted, hungry and not ready to re-enter society yet. I enjoyed one more night of camping, while falling asleep listening to the barking of sled dogs in town.

### **Day 9 food**

Granola, milk, brown sugar	380 cal
2 cubes butter	400 cal
Triscuits	190 cal
H/D mix	380 cal
Dry raman	380 cal
Chicken Polynesian (great stuff!)	580 cal
Total	2310 cal

### **Saturday, October 5, 2008**

What a display of the aurora last night! And I enjoyed it from the comfort of my coffin-sized tent.

I always wondered what would happen if my Exped mattress developed a leak. Now I know. I had to re-inflate it at 2am and 4am.



### **Last supplies**

After so many days of hard travel with no wash or cleaning, I smell like a garbage can. Not being able or willing to scrub down without risking hypothermia has brought on an interesting challenge in hygiene.

The sky is gloomy and dark, threatening unknown precipitation. Good thing I took care cross the icy pass yesterday. My boots are inflexible, frozen solid this morning. The 1/2 bottom of my gaitors are also frozen.

Making an expedition across Greenland in the freezing, swampy fall is a great way to have a rough time at incredible expense.

Using the radiated heat from my stove for cooking breakfast, I slowly thawed out the boots and gaitors.

Breakfast was 300 cal granola, 200 cal butter. I only have a few snacks and 1 freeze dried dinner left. That was cut pretty close for supplies. The positive perspective is that I planned everything perfectly with a one day supply for bad weather.

My toes have a repeated sharp stabbing pain. After cleaning up and packing, I'll hobble victoriously into Sisimiut.

Sisimiut is full of dogs, so the cacophony I enjoyed last night was not them sensing me but just 100's of dogs responding to one another.

The walk along the dirt road into Sisimiut was brutal. My pounded feet, numb toes and pained muscles were punishing me for the re-entering the world.

### **"Alone?"**



Sisimiut was nothing like I expected. It reminds me more of a gritty Chilean town but even without sidewalks. This town of 6,000 people is the second only in size to Nuuk, the capital of Greenland

At first, my attitude was bad about the place. The combination of hunger, fatigue and expectations made for a bad combination.

When looking for a place to stay, I stopped a woman on the street to ask directions and her little boy timidly reached out to touch me, as though I had landed from space. To him I was from space. I gave the boy a warm grin and he smiled back. I then squatted to his level, reached out and touched his shoulder with the same gesture. He responded with a huge smile to my alien touch. He got a kick out of the experience and his mom grinned. This brightened my mood considerably as we parted ways.

After some wandering around and asking, I found the police station to report my arrival. The lone female clerk was absorbed with the Greenlandic voices droning from her radio. She suggested I return Monday to report my arrival. I was a bit irritated, as it would take her but 20 seconds to take my name down. So, we compromised. She gave me paper to write down my name so she use it to contact Kangerlussuaq and let the police station there know I made it safely. I am not sure she ever called.

The courteous people waiting in the station looked at me curiously, wondering what I was doing there. They asked where I came from. I shared a short tale of my trek from the ice cap to the ocean.

"Alone?", was the stunned question one woman asked me.

"Yes," I said.

"Wow," she responded with raised eyebrows. "No one does this trek this late in the season."

I missed lunch at the four-star Sisimiut hotel but I did find a room there. It was 995 Dk (\$200). A night. Owch. At the time, I didn't know of any other options and I didn't want to lose the last room at the hotel, so I bought it.

At that price, camping was looking attractive, though continuing to smell of refuse made me think twice. I had been travelling at full output for days on end and the

odor stupendous. Not showering, bath or change clothes for 8 days while burning 3,500 calories per day will make even the freshest ripe. Blech. I took the room.

Greenlandic women have the wildest mix of eye color here, with shades I've never seen against this skin color. Oddly, the men's eye color didn't seem to stand out at all, being a lighter brown than normal. Why was there a marked difference in eye color between the sexes?

The hostel described in the Arctic Circle Trail description was a set of green buildings on a hill. It must be Erik Lumholt-Beck's place, told to me by Holger in Kangerlussuaq.

As I had no cell phone and no one responded at the reception desk, my hope to find some cheaper lodging was dashed and I marched back to Hotel Sisimiut.

### **Wandering Sisimiut**

Lars, the front desk clerk, suggested a small café a few blocks away for lunch. This I needed as my hunger had bitten into my attitude.



After eating a very tasty reindeer (caribou) sandwich (55 Dk / \$11US), I chased it with glass of water. Oddly, the café charged 5Dk / \$1US for the glass of water.

I spoke at length with Miki at the café, a 22 year old guy studying math, physics, chemistry in Sisimiut as well as his strikingly cute coworker. When Greenlandic women are on, they're on. Miki says his coworker was born here but he's from Illullisat. He plans to move on from Sisimiut since "it's boring here". He's been to Copenhagen, so I can see his sentiment.

I was able to ferret out some good information on the town from Miki, including where to go in town to see things and where to stay. The Sea Man's Hotel is supposed to be much cheaper than Hotel Sisimiut. I thanked him and left, only to return in 10 minutes when I realized I had left my all-important hat. I then hoofed it to the Sea Man's hotel to secure a room for the next day. I chose the room without a bath for 555 Dk/\$54US instead of the 890Dk/\$89US for an in-room shower.

With the next day's lodging established, I struck out for food at Gronland supermarket to purchase milk (1L for \$2US), yogurt (\$1), a zip-lock of grapes (\$1.50) and juice (\$2) to snack on in hopes of getting my energy and attitude back up. As my fingers have developed back cracks from the rough travel, I hoped that some of this food will rebuild me. These cracks really hurt.

### **Musk ox tail for dinner**

As I had a place to stay and was finally enjoying real food in my belly, not carrying my pack around dramatically improved my view of Sisimiut.

The town took on a whole new look. All of the sudden it was a bright, a less dusty seaport on the edge of Greenland's west coast. Many roads had more dirt than exposed asphalt and had no



sidewalks. I now didn't care. It's amazing how perceptions can change with hunger.

I showered three times to get the grime and stench off of me. This was the longest I'd ever gone without showering. This fact never bothered me during the trekking, though I wondered what I looked like coming into the fancy hotel. Then I saw myself in the mirror. Wow.

As I have no spare clothing, I wasn't going to wash my garments only to have them freeze solid to me outside. With the very cold air, the stench is livable compared to developing frostbite.

I rested, at the snacks, then left for Misigisaq, a Thai-Greenlandic fusion restaurant. I had hoped to try out reported seal meat there. As the ownership had changed from Chinese to Thai, seal was no longer available. Instead, I tried the musk ox curry. The meat is tough and fairly stringy with a medium strong flavor all its own. It's not beef, chicken or reindeer. The flavor is unique.

I spoke with Jia, a woman from Singapore, living and working in Sisimiut. She disliked her marketing career in Singapore and wanted to get away from it all. She succeeded in getting half way around the planet. She wanted to work in Iceland but landed in Sisimiut instead. Crazy!

As I found out, she had broken the family expectation, left home and had her mom thinking she was crazy. After a year of living here, Jia is ready to move back to the city. I've known people who broke out of their world. But, this is something else entirely.

Greenland craft brewed Iced Flower beer ([www.brewhouse.gl](http://www.brewhouse.gl)) is a smooth tasting, excellent celebratory beer for the completion of the expedition.

### **Dirty clothes**



So far, 4 people I have talked with about the trek have said, "Wow, that was brave." Obviously it's a big deal to go this late in the year around the Arctic. I'm debating the brave part.

Greenlanders have a quick and honest smile. I seem to get a lot of grins, perhaps as I don't look Greenlandic, Danish or European. No one seems to know what to make of me.

The warm smile is good enough for me.

### **Sunday, October 5, 2008**

Today is the bum around and be a slacker day. After several showers, I began to feel cleaner. Being cleaner only made my clothes feel more grimy.

Hotel Sisimiut provides endless self-serve breakfast, so I gorge myself on cereal, yogurt, tasty breads, cheeses, meat and juices for a good hour. Since I don't know where my next meal might come from, I've to make the most of my expensive room. This helped take the edge off the exorbitant room cost.

I blew it by not getting a receipt for my room payment last night, so Lars at the front desk didn't believe I had already paid for the room. I told him that I had paid in cash after my credit card failed. I forgot the lesson of China – always get the receipt for a transaction and keep it handy. I don't think Lars completely believed that I had paid after the discussion, but as he couldn't produce a letter with my signature indicating that I had even stayed in the room in the first place, he was at a loss. He had no proof I was here other than me having a key in my hand. Since nearly everything is electronic in the States, it's easy to forget the rules about a cash lifestyle.

### **Impromptu Couchsurfing**

My previously warm conversation with Lars turned cool due to the misunderstanding, so I decided it was time to get going. Leaving at this point was a good idea before any more questions arose. I had paid, so it didn't bother me to grab my pack and get going.

On the way to the Sea Man's hotel, I ran into Jia and her chef doing the day's shopping. She asked if I already had paid for the room and, since I hadn't, she offered to have me stay with her and her boyfriend for the night. It turns out that Jia is actually a Couchsurfer, so this was not a completely foreign experience. She wanted some information on the States, so I was more than happy to trade. If nothing else, it will save me \$110US.

After shuffling through my papers, I realized that my flight is at noon tomorrow, so I don't have much more time in the town. I did a little bit of shopping in the few places that were open.

I ended up back at the Thai place to make sure to meet up with Jia after her shift. After dropping my backpack at her flat, she took me on a short tour of the town. We ended up at a music store of all places. She introduced me to several of her friends and they helped me pick out some traditional Greenlandic music. They also gave some good ideas on other excellent artists to look up once I got home.

As it was getting late, Jia found a friend with a car and he gave us a ride back to her place. I met her boyfriend and we chatted for a while.

It's strange how people refer to time here. Instead of 1pm, people say "thirteen o'clock", referring to the 24 hour clock. That's important to note when asking about times for flights, travel and such.

I had the entire 10x12 living room to myself to camp in. It was nice to take a shower.

### **Monday, October 6, 2008**

I had a fairly good night's sleep on my air mattress on a wood floor. At least the mattress didn't totally flatten out. As I rolled the pad up in the morning, a feather popped out of the valve, so that might be why it's leaking. I'll have to look at that when I get home.

After cleaning up and packing, I was ready to roll for my 12pm flight to Kangerlussuaq. However, I was famished.



As a test of foreign perception of Americans, I asked Jia what the quintessential American food was. After a moment's pause, she responded with "burger". I got a good laugh, as that's the answer I've heard around the world.

### **Maintaining your skin**

Jia said that people in Singapore speak Sing-lish, a blend of English and Singaporean. She also said that the country is having an identity crisis. 4 million people want to be someone else. Currently the trend is to be like Koreans. Some people are even driven to have plastic surgery to adopt their new identity. Crazy! Jia also warned that Singaporeans have the Chinese approach of plowing to the front of the line if you aren't ready to order food. The loud bird eats first.

She explained about eating whale fat. It sounded really tasty. The fat melts in the mouth, then the skin is chewed but the in-between tissue is very tough, almost inedible. I hope to try it prior to leaving, but none of the grocery stores have it in stock right now. Oh well.

Keeping skin conditioned and moist here is also a problem with the dry air, even on the coast. I'm staying hydrated but it's still a problem for me. It likely takes a while to acclimatize.

Jia shared pictures of the deep snows in September 2007. Those pictures matched the descriptions of the trekker entries I read about in the Arctic Circle hut journals. I would have had a very bad time traveling this last year. Wading in thigh-deep snow is very difficult. Any deeper than I had would have been nearly impassible. The experience might have been similar to one of my failed Mt. Whitney winter attempts where the snow was powdery and chest deep. It takes hours to plow through a few hundred yards.

I was able to finally get my ATM card to work in Sisimiut. Jia mentioned Visa tends to work better here than Mastercard for credit card purchases.

I took my leave of Jia and caught an expensive (\$20US) 2-mile cab ride to the airport. After a short wait, we were on the flight. I watched the lands roll under me, undoing the 8 days of travel in 30 minutes.

### **Expedition hostel**

I met Mads and Trine on the flight over. They love living in Sisimiut after moving out of Copenhagen. Trine is the head English teacher and Mads works machinery. We shared a 3 hour meal before their conference.



They toured the US Midwest several years ago. I asked why there compared to everywhere else. They said the openness was a great experience. They also explored Utah and Nevada, trying to see how big the United States is, all the while couch surfing. I've just met the only two couch surfing households on central west coast Greenland. What's the chance?

I missed the bus to the hostel at Kangerlussuaq airport coming and going. So, I had the pleasure of walking to and from the airport to the hostel in -14 deg C (0 deg F) weather. The headwind and blowing snow was an extra penalty for being sloppy with my time.

I ended up staying in the Ulo lodge where other trekkers are housed. The place is fascinating because it's loaded with expedition memorabilia, mostly from East to West ice cap crossings.

Here I sit, writing in my journal, listening to Greenland Mix 93.0 MHz FM dance in an otherwise empty building. I wandered around the other hostels and they're undecorated and boring. Ulo lodge is THE place to stay. A light snow is falling in the darkness while deicing trucks wander the runway in the distance to keep the land strip clear. I shower and hit the bed.

### **Tuesday, October 7, 2008**

It's the last day in Greenland. The hostel breakfast is a classic cereal, milk, orange juice, bread, jam and butter. It's perfect for me.

I did some tourist shopping at the hostel and caught a ride with a nice old Danish gentleman to the airport.

### **Return to Denmark**

The other person who was supposed to stay at the hostel last night was delayed due to weather. I wondered who that might be at this time of year.

I picked up my 15kg secondary backpack from the locker. I stealthily dropped the lock at the counter, saving myself 240Dk (\$25US) for 12 days of storage. No one seemed to care.

After making it through simpler security, we boarded the bright red Greenland Air Airbus 330. Walking out to the jet on the arctic blasted tarmac was a nice departure from Greenland.

The 5 hour flight back to Copenhagen was generic, though the Greenlanders know how to treat you right on a flight with the endless alcohol.

I had a vodka-cranberry for an aperitif, wine for dinner and a cognac for desert. All built into the price. I love the European attitude toward alcohol, as it's much more mature than the American approach.

In the airport, it's crazy to see the signs of Europe – cigarette boxes have labels covering half the front with print that reads, "Smoking kills" in hard black and white. "Smoking makes you impotent." "Smoking harms you and those around you." "Smoking clogs your arteries." "You'll die prematurely."

And yet the product flies right off the shelf. This must prove warning labels are meaningless.

I got to the Zleep hotel without trouble. Not feeling excited and just worn out, I ate at the Copenhagen Hard



Rock. Unoriginal but it was late and the place was busy. I just didn't feel like eating alone in a quiet café. The Hard Rock afforded more interesting people watching opportunities.

### **Wednesday, October 8, 2008**

I caught the train over to Malmo, Sweden for the morning for a few hours before my 3:30pm flight home.



#### **Swedish fish**

The little jaunt through Malmo was pleasant enough. I walked through one of the many city parks, looked at the old castle parading as a museum, found a windmill while watching the city wake up. I tried out Swedish hot chocolate and pastries and enjoyed both.

Then, using a tourist map I picked up in Copenhagen, I found the ice cream shop and tried the specialty salt-licorice ice cream. It was actually better than it sounds. I also gave saffron ice cream a try. That stuff was strong! After watching people in suits and dresses riding their bikes to work, I began making my way back to the train station. On the way there, I saw three people dressed in suits with cardboard computer monitors on their heads walking across the city square. Sweden is a strange place.

I rode the train back, using up my 153Dk (\$30US) round trip ticket. The train across the strait passes by a massive wind farm situated in the middle of the water.

After changing \$1000US to Danish Krone, I ended up changing back only \$365. This was in addition to pulling out 1000Dkk (\$200US) in Sisimiut and an additional 300 Swedish crowns (\$45US). After arriving in Europe and going over to Greenland, I spent \$880. Good thing I changed a pile of cash in Copenhagen, otherwise I would have had nothing in Greenland to survive off of since my credit cards didn't work.

After going through copious Copenhagen security, I was off to Chicago and then San Diego on uneventful flights.



### **END OF TRIP REPORT**

#### **EPILOGUE**

As I sit here making minor edits to make the travelogue more readable, I think back on all I learned in Greenland and want to return to cross the icecap. It wasn't too expensive to get to the massive island and the wildness of the landscape was amazingly attractive. The people are incredibly nice and I can still reminisce on how courteous they were, even when I was unable to utter anything intelligible in Greenlandic or Danish.

Trekking across Greenland was my first major international expedition and this just gave me a desire to do more. In December 2009-January 2010, I crossed

Yellowstone man-hauling a sled and had a grand time. It didn't work out exactly as I had hoped but I succeeded in the end. I think Greenland and Yellowstone were just the beginning.

## NOTES

Bridge on Oles Lakeseelv coordinates

N 66° 59' 16.9"  
W 52° 20' 09.7"

Last tourist hut

N 66° 58' 49.4"  
W 53° 15' 04.6"

Nerumaq cabin

N 67° 00' 17.3"  
W 52° 57' 45.0"

Unmarked cabin past bridge Oles Lakseelv

N 66° 59' 44.6"  
W 52° 21' 25.9"

Camp 2

N 66° 57' 46.3"  
W 51° 58' 37.0"

Kanoe center

N 66° 55' 17.8"  
W 51° 44' 53.4"

Kattiffik

N 66° 55' 12.9"  
W 51° 21' 37.3"

Camp 1 (first night)

N 66° 57' 51.8"  
W 51° 08' 20.4"

Small Hut

N 67° 03' 14.3"  
W 52° 36' 53.1"

Sisimiut Airport

N 66° 57' 04.0"  
W 53° 43' 45.0"

Last pass to Sisimiut coordinate

N 66° 57' 15.0"  
W 53° 25' 59.9"

First river crossing (disaster during blizzard)

N 66° 56' 06.9"  
W 53° 15' 04.8"

Kangerlussuaq Airport (Sondrestrom Air Base)

N 67° 01' 09.7"



W 50° 41' 37.2"

### **Other notes**

Expedition notes found in Ulo Cabin at Kangerlussuaq

First Argentine team across ice sheet this year (2008)

May/June 2005 crossing in 7 days:

[www.greenspeed.tv](http://www.greenspeed.tv)

Travel Bertoq to Kangerlussuaq, North to South

[www.notice-expedition.nl](http://www.notice-expedition.nl)

They experienced 3 broken ski bindings

Arctic Foxes 2006 – All British female team, new record, first one across the ice sheet. Round trip reported to be in 31 days.

<http://www.arcticfoxes.co.uk/>

Earth photos:

[www.yannarthusbertrand.org](http://www.yannarthusbertrand.org)

Bjork – Wanderlust video: 3D for work

[www.polar-fish.com](http://www.polar-fish.com) (.net?)

Kangerlussuaq tourism

[www.kangertour.gl](http://www.kangertour.gl)

The strongest material: graphenete ? graphene?

It's a diamond needle in a silicon wafer

Books:

Greenland today, ISBN 9979-9708-6-3

Sisimiut Kommune

Sisimiut 250, 1756-2006

ISBN 87-991449-0-5

Greenland beer:

[www.brewhouse.gl](http://www.brewhouse.gl)

Tourist airport office manager: Keeta

Cost of held bags: 20Dk/day. 380Dk/day for the youth hostel

Mr. Holger – White gas for stoves, 20Dk/liter

Holger's comments: "10 days is luxury hiking speed during summer. Normally people use 1 liter/person on this trip. I should have no problem following the trail, as it is well pounded out."

Greenlandic Music:

Zikaza, Kimmernaq, Angu, Roussic, Chilly Friday, Maasi, Ole Kristinnson, Rasmus, Lyberth