

Lumina through the North West Passage

Aasiaat to Ilulissat

Post 8

Aasiaat was a breath of fresh air when it came to finding somewhere to tie up as there was space on the dock for us—most places are so busy there is little or no room for visiting yachts. Initially we were rafted



up to the side of a Polish boat called Lady Dana who we have seen a few times before (still only seen 5 different yachts since Oban and none out at sea!) Then they left and we were able to go against the wall between a 60m long barge with its tug alongside it and a fishing boat. Later it transpired that the fishing boat was not fishing any more but had started a new line in transport, as he then skillfully manouvered three small pontoons laden with dumpy bags of gravel and a small container from further down in the harbour with a small dinghy and outboard so that they were alongside his boat. This was done with a without drama or incident and single handed. Later on I saw the captain of the big tug and barge as they were intending to leave and he was very scathing about the new kid on the block with his small fishing boat and pontoons. I must admit if I was out at sea with the 60m barge and ocean going tug I would prefer that to the small fishing boat with some pontoons the size of shipping containers loaded with bags of stone on top. Anyway, the large barge left to go north to pick up some big tanks, maybe we will see them again sometime.

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The big barge and tug leaving on a still and misty evening

Whilst in Aasiaat we had a good look round the town and went to the builders merchant to see what useful things they had. Despite looking everywhere since we arrived in Greenland this turned out to be the first place I could buy a small socket set. We have had no end of trouble with the heating system on the boat losing water. It seems that at build some of the hoses did not have the jubilee clips done up tight

enough and the position of some of them made it virtually impossible to tighten with a normal screwdriver, however the socket would do the trick. We also got a couple of extra water barrels to make collecting water easier.



All the settlements have these blue huts where you can get water by pressing the button. They are mainly for the winter if the mains water to your house has frozen but come in handy for us

Back in the town we also became gun owners. The flare pistol we had in Svalbard apparently does not impress the Canadian authorities too much so we bit the bullet so to speak and bought a rifle. Here in Greenland you get them at the supermarket, hardware shop, petrol station, in fact almost any shop has them. The Police recommended a 30.06 so that's what we got. Its nothing too fancy, no telescopic sights as by the time we are letting the bear have the rifle he would already have had a few options from the flare pistol and it will be the last resort. The other reason for getting it is that if you did ever get into that situation it would be terrible to wish that you had actually bought one rather than saved a few £. There is, however, no end to that argument, there was a time when we needed to replace the liferaft. I proposed that as we rarely have more than 4 people on board we could buy a 4 man instead of 6 man liferaft, then on the odd occasion we did, the guests could put some money in sealed envelopes.

In the event of catastrophe the envelopes would be opened. My suggestion fell on stony ground...

Aasiaat lies at the entrance to Disko bay, just north of the town the coast curves inland for 30 or 40 miles and here you find the famous glacier that is reputed to have given birth to the iceberg that the Titanic hit. After an afternoon cruising along the coast, we anchored in a lovely secluded little fjord. A walk up the hill in the evening gave us fantastic view out over the bay and the massive icebergs seeming randomly dispersed across the horizon. Whilst impressive we knew that the views would get even better as we got closer to the fjord itself. As we had climbed up the barking of a little fox cub drew our attention. He had obviously not seen a human before and seemingly had been given instructions to guard the lair. He stood there barking at us standing just a few yards below, not knowing if he should be scared or not. Eventually he decided that perhaps he should be the latter and he disappeared into the rocks. It must have been a perfect place in this jumble of rocks as you could hear the muffled bark from various places underground.





The following day we motor sailed across the southern part of the bay, a rare thing as often there has been either no wind or it would be on the nose, so we have mostly been motor-ing recently. Afternoon brought us to Qasigianguit or Christianshab, its old Danish name. Here we found room on the dock to tie up and talkative families out enjoying the warm sun-shine. In fact it was quite hot with children even swimming on the gravelly beach beyond the dock. After an ice cream from the shop we returned to the dock where a local was proudly

blowing up his new inflatable dinghy. He was very interested in where we had come from and where we were going. Even with its Danish or maybe maritime heritage most Greenlanders know where Milford Haven is although Gloucester is pushing it a bit. The other interesting thing is that they are rarely surprised at talk of the North West Passage. There was a fair bit of traffic coming and going, mainly families jumping on boats just as we do our cars and going off to Aasiaait or Ilulissat for shopping trips. In their speed-boats with 300hp engines, they would get to either in little over an hour although one family had called it a day as the waves were too high for them and they had to slow down too much.

Another lovely day dawned and Saturday saw us continuing North towards the entrance of the famous Ilulissat Isfjord. The productivity of this glacier is something to behold and where the fjord opens to the



sea it is like a river of ice, even though the face of the glacier is some 16 miles inland. More used to glaciers in Svalbard where they seem to calve a small iceberg every now and then which gently floats out to sea, here it is like a conveyor belt with bergs a hundred feet high interspersed with piles of loose ice. Outside the entrance it continues out to sea, spreading out into a long tong that heads out for about 7 miles. The big bergs then continue out into the Labrador current which takes them south all the way to Newfoundland with the smaller chunks melting in the bay.

There is an anchorage marked close to the entrance on the southern side but there was too much ice so we anchored a bit further away and took the dinghy to the point. Impressed by the quality of the rock Carol got into full rock climber mode, declared it as a bit "spicy" but continued up from a little bay. Resisting the temptation to name our climb, as I think the grading system that starts with moderate and

goes on to severe, extreme and beyond would also need a new sub grade such as mildly troublesome , we continued up to the summit to look over into the fjord. Photographing ice floes is a bit like waves at sea, it never does justice to what you are seeing but this must be one of the wonders of the world.

With our temporary anchorage being pretty untenable for an overnight stay we headed out down the side of the tongue of ice with a view to rounding the end, however far out it was and heading for Ilulissat

the harbour on the other side of the fjord just 4 miles away. Luckily , ice must have some magnetic attraction as rather than just dispersing into a lower and lower concentration of lumps it seems to keep together so the actual edge of the tongue of bergs and bergy bits is fairly distinct. After a while a



Navigating through the ice coming out of the Icefjord, the most prolific glacier outside of Antarctica

small cargo ship that was heading north and would have crossed in front of us changed course to obviously follow the edge. At least we now had someone who we presumed knew what he was doing in front so every few minutes we marked his position on the chart so that we could follow the same course. After about 7 miles we were able to start heading across the end although this meant entering the ice proper. However, knowing we were following a larger vessel we kept going. We continued in a big arc around the



ice tongue weaving in and out of the bergy bits, at one point having to slow right down as we had to push it apart. Eventually after several hours it started thinning out so that there were only large bergs and it continued this way till we got to the harbour. By now it was 8pm and you might have thought the harbour would be quiet but there were still many speedboats moving in and out with either line caught halibut from fishing trips or families coming back or going home to other settlements. We crept round the corner hoping



Just a bit congested and not really any space for visiting yachts!

for a space but were greeted with possibly the busiest most crowded place I have ever seen. We tied up to the quay next to a couple of yachts that were in turn rafted to the side of the fishing boat. One of the yachts we had seen several times before, Lady Dana and the Polish skipper thought we would be ok there for the night. However, not wanting to annoy the locals too much and as we were obviously in the place reserved for unloading fish as we were directly

beneath a crane, I went over to a couple of lads who were baiting lines with tiny fish. You will be ok there till 8am they said as that's what time the factory opens on a Sunday. I also learnt a bit about halibut fishing and the unlikelihood that we could catch any. Apparently they start with about 1km of line and the end part is baited with several hundred fry on hooks with weights at certain intervals. So true deep sea fishing.

At 0730 we were up to move the boat out to raft beside the Polish Lady Dana which went very easily as luckily there was no wind. Sure enough a little afterwards a large fishing boat came into where we were and the crane sprang into life lifting bins of fish.

Now that we were up, we indulged in a fried breakfast as there is still a little bacon in the freezer. After I bought the freezer this spring I was a bit sceptical as to whether it was actually worth having on board as it does have a certain parasitic load on our batteries but with all the motoring we do up here together with the extra power from the upgraded solar panels we are not short of energy.

Despite Ilulissat being the nearest to the Amble side of Greenland as the main tourist destination due to the glacier, it has more outdoor and souvenir shops than we have seen before. The town didn't seem full but after all it was a Sunday morning when we took our first exploratory walk. However, the harbour soon came to life and with fast ferry and sightseeing boats and Greenlanders off for their day out all crowding the fuel berth just ahead of us. With fuel not taxed as ours is it cannot be an issue filling your boat with its 300hp outboard, and as their only means of personal transport for work and play the whole community would soon fail if either it was more expensive or unavailable. At least here there are not the hypocritical electric powered tourist boats we saw in Svalbard that are charged using diesel or coal fired generation. I



did read something about some research to alternatives to diesel in Arctic Canada but I think the conclusion was that it to be some high density liquid fuel that we don't currently have rather than electric.

So tomorrow we will walk the trail to the northern entrance to the Isfjord and then maybe head north. We have a couple of hundred more miles to get to our jumping off point of Upernavik and a fortnight left before we head West so should work out fine.

The northern side of the Icefjord, looking even more impressive. The face of the glacier is about 16 miles to the left of the picture and these icebergs are impressive to say the least

Greetings to all from the good ship Lumina

If you want to see where the places mentioned are, look at the posts on the tracker page as I have tried to put more on there so you can see where the places actually are.

[Tracker page](#)

[Website with all the old blogs](#)