

# Lumina through the North West Passage

## Manitsoq to Sisimiut

### Post 6

With time on our side now we have been taking it steady and just made a few hops up the coast to Sisimiut. We continued up the inside passage which became even more tenuous at times to the point where there was one place which was marked on the chart as “drying” we are used to this on chart of the UK but here it hardly appears at all. Usually marked green, it means that at low tide you would find yourself on the beach. As we approached the short section of less than 100m, I made good use of our new forward looking sonar— instead of just looking down this one faces forward at a 45 degree angle so you can see the depth before you get there. Particularly good when looking for sudden changes of depth as in this case. However we had arrived pretty much at high tide and passed over at a snails pace in case any of the marked rocks were higher than shown. Whilst all this had been going on an approaching speed boat had given way and was waiting on the other side. As he passed Carol on the bow he said “

gosh you guys got balls coming through here”, I suspect few sailing boats would venture this way. However with our lifting keel we are pretty safe in shallow areas as it is 1.5m deeper with the keel down, so you can use it as a sounding board as it pivots so should it hit something it just lifts and then goes back down.



*The narrow channels of the inside passage*

You then have the choice as to lift it up a bit and continue or turn around and go back. A fixed keel yacht is a very different animal as does the name suggest it is solid, not only can you easily damage the boat even at low speeds, but once aground you are in a bit of a pickle. On this occasion, we did of course not actually touch the ground.

After our narrow squeeze, we pulled into a completely uncharted bay, off the main route and used another of the features of our tech—that of mapping an area. You just turn on the function on the plotter, drive round the anchorage a few times and it automatically puts in the contours and even



*Safely anchored amongst the islets*

marks the really shallow areas in red. This we did and it found one rock, just outside of the swinging area which was not a problem. We then had a nice walk around the surrounding hills, putting up a reindeer that was a bit surprised to see humans.

After a really quiet night we set off the following morning early so that we could get to Sisimiut before the impending wind arrived. This was the first time we had left the inside passage since making landfall three weeks ago and had a brisk sail across 20 or so miles of fairly open water.

The pilot book warns that Sisimiut is a small crowded harbour and it is right. We made our way to the fuel berth to get some fuel and hopefully find out if we could tie up in the harbour, but despite buying 300l of fuel they didn't want us to wait there as there was only room for one vessel at a time. With every available space being taken

up with fishing boats 3 or 4 abreast it seemed that the best thing would be to go outside and anchor. It was at this moment that the bow thruster had also decided to take the day off so close quarters manoeuvring was difficult and you don't really want to create too much comedy in the harbour if you are asking favours.

The anchorage outside the harbour has the classic anchoring problems we often find here and in Norway. The bottom comes up quite steeply, and the shallow area is short and bounded by rocks. We normally go for a ratio of 5:1 so anchoring in 5m you would let out 25m of chain and in 10m 50m of chain and so on. The only problem is that the more chain you let out, the further the boat drifts backwards before the chain is tight. If the bottom comes up steeply you can get the situation as here in that if you anchor in 5m or 10m by the time you have let out enough chain you end up in the same place in relation to the rocks behind you. So with rocks just a few metres behind

us we awaited the storm. Fortunately it ran through exactly as predicted and although I stayed up throughout with the engine warm, watching our movement on the plotter, ready to start it at a moments notice. Luckily I need not have worried as the storm ran through, the anchor didn't budge and I was in bed by 1am.

With the storm over and a calm morning we went to the town in the dinghy. Unlike Paamiut and to a lesser extent, Nuuk, Sisimiut is built over a number of rocky outcrops, space is at a premium on land and in the harbour. Houses and apartments were perched on every rock and it was a fairly stiff climb up to the shopping area from the harbour. Shops here are very unassuming, very little in the way of window displays and sometimes it is hard to even work out which is the entrance as it is often just a blank door, and



*If you want a skip in Sisimiut it gets delivered by crane*



*Sisimiut harbour is packed with fishing and local boats*

not knowing any Danish to read any typewritten notices you may think you are just entering an office or hallway.

Shopping proved a bit of a disappointment, I looked and failed to find a hosepipe to extend our own so that we could fill the boat from a mountain stream. The same was said for a local hat a bit like a balaclava with a thick flap that goes across your face that you see them wearing on the speedboats out hunting. However fortified with a morning coffee and cake, followed by a burger at the harbour we returned to the boat. The burger bar was a perfect example of the typical business, very little in the way of signage, and we walked right round it before working out that the blank door was the entrance. If you couldn't smell the cooking you might have thought it was closed.



*The head of the fjord, does not look too shallow!*

One purchase we did make, in the museum was a topographic map of the area. Sea charts tell you very little of land features and this was a breath of fresh air. One of the displays in the museum related to the

ancient routes the hunters would take in search of caribou, so we decided to explore one of the fjords close by. Interestingly this fjord starts off being charted then abruptly stops and we were to find out why. As we progressed past the point where the charting stopped the depth abruptly started coming up from about a hundred metres or so. Up it came and the forward scan sonar started picking up the bottom. In the end within a few hundred metres we went to just about 5m depth. The strange thing was that the sea looked exactly the same grey blue. On we went and the depth didn't change so opposite a good stream we anchored with a view to going ashore the following morning.



*Through the willow forest*

A lovely still night followed by a bright morning and we were in the dinghy with the water drum over to the shore. It was immediately obvious that actually collecting the water would be more difficult as it was low tide and the stream fell through a narrow cleft in the rock, and we had to land the dinghy some distance away as there was a low cliff. So we left that for now and proceeded up a valley behind the hill overlooking the boat. The vegetation was very

lush for Greenland standards with low growing willow up to our armpits, however there were a few well used reindeer paths that had been pushed through and we followed these up to a plateau with three reindeer in the distance. They soon saw us and cantered off. The mosquitoes were out in force even as we reached the top but the view up the fjord to the head was worth the effort. Back at the shore we filled the water drum at another arm of the river and returned to the boat to move tools and stores from one aft cabin to the other to try and address the permanent list that we always seem to have and have a tinker with the water maker which seems rather reticent to actually make any water.

It looks like we may be getting some company at last as a few other boats we are in touch with for the North West Passage are now either in Nuuk or heading that way. However we still have yet to see another yacht at sea since Oban



The fjord has many of these small fry, about 4ins long. Anyone know what they are? Salmon maybe??



*No flat ground in Sisimiut for housing estates*

*That's all for now, we will continue pottering our way north. There is no rush as we don't expect to leave Greenland before the end of July, however we will continue to monitor the ice charts and satellite photos. Here are some links you might find interesting:*

[Danish Ice charts of Greenland](#)

[Satellite images of the ice](#)

Best wishes from the good ship Lumina! , Tim and Carol