

4th June 2024 - Kangarsukk

We wake to find a dull lake district esque morning. Low fog round the base of the mountains and a light drizzle but it doesn't make a dent on dampening our spirits. Finally, a good nights sleep. The boat isn't rocking. We can cook an actual meal!

Indie and Tim's night shifts over the past two weeks have always been overlapping and they had spent a considerable amount of time fantasising over the breakfast they were going to make and subsequently devour when we made landfall so the first cooking fell to the pair. Tim's birthday had also been the previous day so we counted this as his 'birthday breakfast'. Even though we were both late and we had slept in till 1pm...

The full spread of sausages, bacon, beans, tomato, mushrooms, fried eggs, toast and even pancakes (beautifully made by Indie) were on offer. Washed down with some birthday champagne and a chorus of the classic 'when I'm 64'. We then spent a good few hours resting and marvelling in the delights of being able to stand a water glass on the table without it being thrown at the opposite wall.

Once fed and rested boat jobs had to be done before any thought of a shore visit. 2 weeks at sea had incurred some considerable mess and shaking out the rugs, brushing and general sorting out rubbish and washing up were the first jobs. We also had to take all the mattresses off our beds and try to air them as best as possible as it had got incredibly damp with a metal hull at 0 degrees and very little heat in the boat on the passage.



'Birthday Breakfast'

The boat has a diesel burner and after some fettling and bleeding of the diesel going to the carburettor on Tim and Indie's behalf they managed to get it going and soon the boat was nice and cosy. We can also boil water and keep pans warm quite well on the top to save us some diesel.



Kangarsukk, our first landfall

Despite the rain we were all very keen to make land so we all went to shore in the dingy to go kiss the ground.

The landscape was very bleak but also quite beautiful. Lots of Dwarf Willow, Dwarf Birch, Butterwort and Azalea. We found remains of an abandoned settlement which looked to be very old. The Norse settlers tended to be dying out around the 14th/15th century to make way for the Greenlanders as far as I'm aware but there was no way of knowing what date they might have been. There were certainly some very very old graves. The permafrost and incredibly rocky ground makes for a real fun time digging a grave so bodies were buried in stone cairns. The majority overlooking the sea. Many of the bones we could still see intact through gaps in the rocks and in all we found upwards of maybe 40+ burial cairns which suggests quite a long period of occupation.

There was a surprising amount of wildlife too. Very tame Arctic Hares and Ptarmigans were in abundance along with a lot of snow buntings and some of what I think were Purple Sandpipers, although they may have also been Dunlins? Any ornithologists of you out there may be able to disperse some knowledge on the northern distribution of them? We also spotted lots of Reindeer.



Reindeer and Arctic Hare

The next day me and Indie went for an early run to the nearest peak but we soon began to realise that across country in Greenland was not as simple as one might think from the view you get from the ground. Little Fjords and lakes are everywhere and it makes going in a straight line quite a task.

We quickly discovered that like the lakes, following the trods of the animals was very useful to work out the passage of least resistance. Lots of small tracks are made by the reindeer and arctic foxes passing over the landscape. Unfortunately however Reindeer aren't opposed to a bit of swimming and unlike us the small lakes and inlets do not deter them in the slightest.

We decided to ford one of these such inlets that seemed quite shallow but quickly realised we probably wouldn't be repeating much more of them with the water being thigh deep and around 0.5 degrees...

5th June - Kangarsukk - Narssalik

In the late afternoon we set off and managed to sail the 12 or so miles up the coast to Narssalik; An anchorage from what we hoped from some photos may have a small village nearby.

Again we found large icebergs in vast abundance. Much more than we expected, but the wind was blowing offshore and the Anchorage was much more sheltered than the last so we were optimistic that no passing bergs in the night would be clanking against the boat.

The mist cleared and Me, Tim and Indie went ashore to go check out the village. Those of you familiar with John Laurie's portrayal of Fraser in Dad's Army might know the phrase 'a wild and lonely place'. Which was in my opinion about the best description of it. The village was no longer permanently inhabited and was completely deserted at this early in the season. Many of the beautifully painted houses now seemed to be summer residences for local Greenlanders and it seemed like it could be a thriving little place for seal hunting, fishing and reindeer hunting in the summer.

Tim and Indie also made good use of the village seesaw and swings and we even spotted a patch of very hardy rhubarb before we headed back to the boat.

The anchorage was certainly the least rocky area of beach we had seen and on the way back me and Indie noticed there was some huge mussels growing amongst the weed. We spent around 5

minutes gathering quite a haul. A few kilos at least of some of the biggest mussels I've seen with minimal effort. You need to leave mussels out for 24hrs or so in water for them to clean themselves, especially when coming from such a muddy shore so that evening Indie made some incredible homemade meatballs with some mince we had picked up in Oban and some salad from beansprouts we had grown on the passage to Greenland. Ever a grower, Tim has also been growing basil, alfalfa and coriander to supplement our diet with a smidgen of green bits. Probably enough still to keep Rob Sewell going for year! ;)



Narssalik Village



'Fun and games'

The following day we hoped to set sail again for Paamiut; the first real settlement of our trip however we awoke to 30 knots of wind and driving rain so again we decided on another rest day. Indie managed to bake some amazing bread and we went to shore to pick up some more mussels that we intend to cook and freeze to supplement pastas and the like when we begin to run out of supplies.

In the evening the wind completely dropped and the sun even managed to pop its face out for the first time in a few days. We had a terrific feed on homemade chips, mussels in a chorizo white wine cream broth and home-baked bread. A real tough life I tell you. The anchorage was almost idyllic. No wind and No ice to be seen. Me and Indie even went ashore for a quick boulder on some nearby slabs while Tim and Carol burnt up the cardboard and paper rubbish we had accumulated



Bread and Mussels



8th June - Narssalik - Paamiut?

The Morning brought an abrupt halt to our relaxation sadly. The ever creeping ice from Cape Farewell had once again caught us up and in alarming fashion. The entrance to the anchorage was now held a pretty extensive blockade of Brash Ice. Maybe 2-3/10ths. The most ice we had navigated so far.

We made a break for it with visions that if we stayed and the ice pushed in we could easily be trapped in the anchorage for a couple of weeks and thankfully after around an hour of weaving back and forth round the ice in 4 degrees and the pouring rain we managed to reach open sea again. We had been told that Paamiut can be blocked until July by Ice and with no up to date Ice chart or signal it was a bit of an unknown as to whether we might be able to get in. Wind had been forecast for the evening and wind and Ice are not a happy combination so if Paamiut was closed we may have been looking at another few days out at sea avoiding the Ice. Luckily it was all fine. The town harbour is quite easy to find on account of the huge burnt out wreck of a trawler 'The Greenland Star' marooned on the headland.



Paamiut (left) and the 'Brash Ice' we awoke to

The story for the next few days was biblical levels of rain which definitely did not add to the charm of Paamiut.

After a couple of days of hiding in the boat from the weather we finally went for a walk out around the town. We made a short trip to the police station to let them know we had entered Greenland and got a stamp in our passports then went for an explore. Paamiut has around 1600 residents and is reliant on the fishing and hunting industry but the number is falling. Per, an Inuit local who spent around an hour chatting to me and Indie told us that 20 years ago the population was nearly 3000 but the pull of better living and wages in Denmark has left it in rapid decline. Multiple apartment blocks that were built by the Danish to house the people from surrounding settlements were now left empty and were getting demolished soon to make way for some more open space for the townspeople.

It's too isolated for any real tourism and they have quite a problem with alcohol much like other areas of the northern hemisphere that get so little sunlight. Yet he was still hopeful that cruise ships might begin to come there if they managed to spruce up their antler and soapstone carving trade. Him and his cousin showed us his workshop and also the village museum where his great grandfathers boat and kayak was on show. He also claimed that we had got very unlucky and this was the most rain they had received in the course of a week in 3 years... Classic.



Per's friend, an antler and soapstone carver

The first thing you notice is that none of the houses have any gardens or so much as a shrub growing. They are just built straight onto the rock. Per told us that you only have to dig a maximum of 2 feet down until you will hit the permafrost so pretty much nothing that needs to take root can grow.

A few locals have cars but only about 10% of the households as apart from the small town roads there are no outlying tracks or roads on which to get about. All travel is by boat or plane. There was a distinct lack in wildlife here on this peninsular too, almost certainly down to the hunting for food around the town which is very active. All the fishing boats heading out also had guns for seal hunting and there was seal and reindeer processing sheds nearby where we were moored.

That evening the sun finally made an appearance and me and Indie decided to make use of the 24hr daylight by going on a mission across country to the nearest mountain. The huge granite fault lines that dominate the landscape once again made it hard going. What was a 10 mile straight line out and back turned into nearly an 16 mile one even though we were going as direct as possible. A good test for the leg fitness!

The peak was very much alike to the what you might find in Western Scotland. Big slabs that made for some fun scrambling and lots of moss and heather but with the added bonus of an endless sunset and a massive ice-fjord calving off the ice cap in the distance.



Hard beelining terrain



Nice 10 mile walk in for the bouldering, not sure if this one will get repeated

Tomorrow we set off north again with some good weather forecasted. See you next week!