

St Francis trio brave elements for 15-day kayak and hiking trip round southern Greenland

By Mike Stark



Giant ice floes in the fjords

I flew from UK to Iceland (3 hours) with my daughter Michelle and son in law Francois, landing in Reykjavik in a summer storm (felt like winter) of howling winds and pouring rain.

The next day we flew to Narsarsuaq (3 hours) in Greenland and landed at one of the most dangerous airports in the world as you fly up the fjord and at the end do a 180 degree turn to land at the airport built by America in 1941. We then had a one hour boat ride up a fjord littered with icebergs to Narsarsuaq where we met up with Nevil Hulett and Penny Frost.

This town was our base where we started and ended our 15 day paddling and hiking trip with a group of 14 people. 5 South Africans, six French, a Dutch lady and two guides one from Chile and one from Spain. Next morn we packed

our paddle skis with clothes, food, tent, sleeping bags etc, got into dry suits and set off to cover about 200 km around the southern tip of Greenland. Most days we set up camp at night and decamped the next morning.

The paddling was easy and lasted about 5 to 6 hours and had stops for lunch. Only when we climbed to the glacier (or ice cap) did we have a lot of exercise. On the one day we set off at 10am and paddled to the face of the glacier and saw a small bit of calving from 200 meters away which was the closest we were allowed to go.

After 3.5 hours we stopped for lunch and then changed into hiking gear and 3 hours later got to the top of the glacier which goes for about 2000 kilometers north and the ice is 200 to 400 meters deep. We got back to our paddle skis,

paddled for a further 2 hours and reached camp at nine 9 pm to cook supper and to bed before midnight.

The trip was split into two different weeks with week one having lots of midges and mosquitoes during the day and no northern lights and week two we had the northern lights every night and almost no bugs.

Two things of interest were that no two towns in Greenland are joined by road-you commute by sea or air. The chap who owned the tour company (Ramon)Tasermiut said I was only the second South African he had ever met in Greenland in 15 years.

In the day, as long as the wind didn't blow it was warm (about 12 degrees) but at night when the wind came off the glacier it was freezing and for the two

weeks we were very lucky with the weather as only on two days when paddling did the wind blow at 40/50 kms per hour and we only had one morning of rain. Ramon also advised that we had the best weather for a two week period he had ever experienced.

As a group we got on very well and the trip was well organised and I would like to do something similar again. Greenland is a beautiful country and worth a visit.

Photos of setting out in our paddle skis from Narsaq with icebergs in the fjord
Penny and Nevil and their tent on the tundra

Five South Africans on the glacier
Mike in front of the glacier
The Northern Lights



Paddling on a fjord



Magnificent Northern Lights



Nevil & Penny in their kayak



Mike Stark in his kayak

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