

A full-page photograph of a person in a red parka carrying a large animal carcass down a steep, grassy slope. The person is in the lower-left foreground, moving away from the viewer. The slope is covered in dense, low-lying green vegetation. In the background, a rocky ridge line is visible under a clear, pale blue sky. The title text is overlaid on the upper half of the image.

# The Beauty and the Bounty of Greenland

BY JOHN WILLIAMS

THESE HARDY PEOPLE WHO CALL  
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WAY TO **BENEFIT FINANCIALLY AND  
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LAND AND SEA HAS TO OFFER.

*Packing the meat and antlers down the steep slope to the boat*





**W**hat if you lived on an island where all you have are natural resources? How would you stay in your homeland and make a living, without factories, small or large businesses or even typical jobs?

When you think of the benefits of hunting tourism revenue for a local economy, Greenland is not usually the first place that comes to mind – Africa is. African hunting, the favorite whipping post of anti-hunters, does indeed produce ample revenue for anti-poaching and conservation efforts.

Remarkably, Greenland has developed an economy as well as hunting and conservation come together perfectly. The sustainable use model works just as well Africa's, under harsher circumstances. The revenue available from its amazing natural resources keeps them from being completely dependent on Denmark. I recently experienced firsthand how the small population of the world's largest island has learned to thrive on the bounty that nature has provided them for generations.

These hardy people who call themselves Greenlanders find a way to benefit financially and renewably from every species the land and sea has to offer. The sea provides a wealth of fish that the export market is hungry for. Seals are hunted responsibly for skins and fur. Muskox and caribou are critically important for subsistence meat as well as an increasingly popular option for hunters from around the world. Eco-tourists fill the limited hotel rooms for tours of glaciers and wildlife viewing.





*All packed up and ready to head back to camp*



*Greenland has two perfectly maintained Sikorsky helicopters that are used to transport goods, supplies and people all over the island.*

Our hosts Malene and Mathias Ingemann are both natives of Greenland who, along with their two sons Minik and Maligiag, own and operate Inuit Outfitting and have had their hunting concession in southwest Greenland for 22 years.

"In the eyes of the rest of the world, all the animals we use to make a living are just too cute," said Malene. She continued, "I suppose if the uneducated anti-hunting world wanted to put up the money that we make from our careful sustainable use, we could do something else."

Every resource must be carefully used and combined to make a living for this incredibly hard-working family. They own two commercial fishing boats; they run both summer and winter hunts; and they also host eco-tours from their self-built camp in the guiding territory. Everything must be planned carefully, some times months in advance, for the hunts to come together as flawlessly as ours did. This is a place where literally everything must be flown in via air freight from Denmark or brought in by shipping container. The fuel and materials for the camp had to be brought overland in the dark winter via ATV and snowmobile while the ground is still frozen.

For this adventure, I brought my good friends from Monterey, Mexico, David Arizpe Garcia and Gonzalo Garcia. Getting to this remote arctic place is a three-day travel itinerary. One must fly to Iceland then Copenhagen, then back west to Greenland on one of the limited number flights Air Greenland has to offer. Boarding the huge jet to Kangerlussuaq, it was obvious that the purpose of the flight was more to supply this remote town with supplies than to transport people. While only about a third of the seats were occupied, we could see dozens of shrink wrapped pallets containing every possible thing needed to supply it.

Our destination, Kangerlussuaq, is a community established around the former Sondstrom Air Base. The U.S. Air Force used it as early warning base during the Cold War and turned it over to the Danish government in 1992. It sits in a somewhat protected valley and jets are able to land year round. The barracks and other base buildings have been turned into a surprisingly nice transit hotel as well as restaurants and a variety of small businesses to complement the locals and tourist economy. Interestingly, this author's own





father was stationed here as a young airman in the 1950s. It was fun to imagine he might have slept in one of the same rooms.

After an overnight in Kangerlassuag, we took a short 15-minute helicopter flight aboard an immaculate 50-year-old Sikorsky S61 helicopter. Greenland has two of these unbelievably reliable aircraft stationed strategically for search and rescue, and they are also used by Air Greenland for commercial service around the island with the understanding that emergencies are priority one. Our host Malene told me that when the people of Greenland hear the sound of the massive aircraft from a long distance, it offers relief to know that if needed, help is on the way.

Flying over the mountainous terrain, we could see literally hundreds of muskox dotting the treeless landscape. The flight ended in a smooth landing at the lakeside camp. Waiting to trade seats with us was the outgoing group. Judging by the numerous prepared trophies waiting to be loaded, we were in the right place.

The introductions were made and we were settled into a nicely appointed lodge.

Because the daylight in August lasted until 11:30 p.m. and our arrival at camp was early in the afternoon, we would be able to hunt that same day. My two friends from Mexico would be hunting together, and I was assigned the host's older son Minik. The plan was for us to glass from the boat while cruising the



*Refilling from the glacier melt*





*David Arizpe with caribou*



*David Arizpe with musk ox*

five-mile-long lake that bordered the camp. David and Gonzalo would go with their best native guide and head into the mountains in search for caribou. After spotting a group of muskox early into the outing, we climbed up from the lake for a closer look. Because Minik decided the bull that group contained was too young, we turned and looked into a different valley. Minik and his assistant immediately spotted what we were looking for. The ancient musk ox bull was noticeably larger than the cows and calves and only a few hundred yards distant. In order to assure a perfect shot, my guide and assistant led me to within 70 yards, and the shot was an easy one.

Upon arriving at my trophy, I was in awe of the prehistoric-looking beast. This huge animal lives year round in one of the harshest, coldest environments on earth, thriving and reproducing as it has for thousands of years. Like the people that hunt it for subsistence, it uses what nature offers it.

Minik and his Inuit assistant made impressively fast work of skinning and butchering the animal. In less than an hour, all was loaded in the boat for the short trip back to camp. The huge beast was in the process of shedding the previous winter coat. I was able to gather a quantity of this shedding fur without getting in the way of the experts working on my trophy. The fiber from the muskox's undercoat, qiviut, is highly prized in the knitting and weaving world. So prized is the yarn made from this hair, there was a shop in town that specialized in skeins of spun qiviut as well as handcrafted goods. Tourists pay a premium price for knitwear made from its soft extremely warm yarn. My partner, a knitter, thought this was the best souvenir of the trip.

Just before heading back to camp, Minik pointed to the edge of the glacier miles in the distance where my friends were hunting. In broken English, he explained that when he was a boy, the glacier would have been much closer to us. Like many glaciers in the world, Greenland's too have been shrinking.

We beat the other group back by two hours but their arrival back was joyful as each had taken a trophy caribou. Make no mistake that even though the caribou were introduced to this habitat first in the 1950s for subsistence hunting, they are completely fair chase and wild. Though the muskox are easier to hunt, the caribou live in the mountains and it is more like a high country mule deer hunt in the American West. We actually



*A glacier is a slow moving river of ice and earth, and is an amazing sight to see.*



spotted a very nice trophy from camp a few miles distant. Although we executed a perfectly planned half-day stalk, in the end, the bull detected our smell as we closed the distance and eluded us at the last minute.

Our worries about not having enough time to collect our trophies in the short three-day hunting schedule proved unfounded as David and Gonzalo each tagged two trophy caribou bulls and a musk ox by the end of the second day, leaving time for an all-day hike to explore the distant glacier that was high in the mountains above the camp.

After the blown stalk on the first caribou, Minik got me in position for another chance at a full velvet antlered bull before the time was finished.

Fishing in the lake is also possible, time permitting, and exploring the mountains was most enjoyable. The trophies are expertly prepared in camp for export to the taxidermist in Denmark for tanning and shipment to America. With the number of animals taken, the camp staff were always all hands on deck, working on trophy preparation and meat preservation. Meals in camp are simple but hardy with game meat included.

I have been fortunate to experience many cultures and hunts around the world but because of my hosts, Greenland will stand out as a country whose inhabitants need to be left to manage their own natural resources. They live from these resources and know how much they can share with hunters from around the world to be a self-supporting economy in this still wild land.



*Author with musk ox*