



## REENLAND

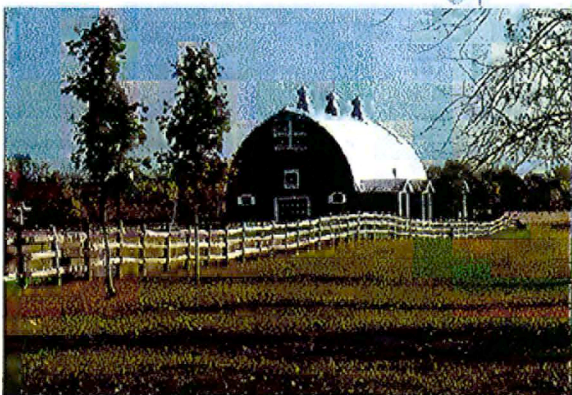
(Greenlandic *Kalaallit Nunaat*; Danish *Grønland*), island which is an internally self-governing part of Denmark, situated between the North Atlantic and Arctic oceans. Greenland lies mostly north of the Arctic Circle and is separated from the Canadian Arctic Archipelago, on the west, primarily by Davis Strait and Baffin Bay, and from Iceland, on the east, by the Denmark Strait. The largest island in the world, Greenland has a maximum extent, from its northernmost point on Cape Morris Jesup to Cape Farewell in the extreme south, of about 2655 km (about 1650 mi). The maximum distance from east to west is about 1290 km (about 800 mi). The entire coast, which is deeply indented with fjords, is roughly estimated at 5800 km (3600 mi). The total area of Greenland is approximately 2,175,600 sq km (approximately 840,004 sq mi), of which some 1,834,000 sq km (about 708,110 sq mi) is ice cap. The capital and largest city is **Nuuk**.

### Land and Resources



Greenland consists of an interior ice-covered plateau surrounded by a mountainous, generally ice-free, rim. The interior ice cap varies in thickness, measuring about 3000 m (about 9800 ft) in

the center of the island. Underneath the ice cover are the ancient rocks of the Greenland Shield, which is geologically related to the Canadian Shield. The greatest heights of land are along the eastern coast, where the extreme elevation is **Mount Gunnbjørn** (3700 m/12,139 ft). Drainage is afforded mainly by the so-called ice fjords, in which glaciers from the ice caps pass through valleys to the sea, where they form thousands of icebergs each year. The climate is extremely cold, but during the short summer in the south the mean temperature is 8.9° C (48° F). The mammals of Greenland are more American than European, and include the musk-ox, wolf, lemming, and reindeer. The varieties of seal and whale, and most of the species of fish and seabirds, are also American rather than European. Circumpolar animals, such as the polar bear, arctic fox, polar hare, and stoat, are also found.



### Population

Greenlanders are a people of mixed ancestry, primarily Inuit and European, especially Danish-Norwegian. The total population of Greenland (1994 estimate) was 55,379. Nearly all the population is located on the narrow southwestern coastal fringe.

The capital, **Nuuk**, formerly known as **Godthåb** (population, 1994 estimate, 12,483), is located on the southwestern coast. **Nuuk** is the largest and oldest Danish settlement on the island, having been founded in 1721. **Sisimiut** (**Holsteinsborg**; population, 4839), on the western coast just north of the Arctic Circle, is the second largest town. Other settlements include **Qaortoq** (**Julianehåb**), **Paamiut** (**Frederikshåb**), and **Narsaq** (**Narsaq**), on the southern coast; **Thule** (**Qaanaaq**), on the northwestern coast; and **Ammassalik** (**Angmagssalik**), on the eastern coast.

Education is free and compulsory for all children between the ages of 7 and 16. About 85 school centers were in operation in 1992, instructing primarily in Greenlandic (an Inuit language with some Danish words). Danish, the other official language of Greenland, is also used in the schools. A university is located at **Nuuk**.

### Economy

Fishing, sealing, and fur trapping are the principal economic activities in Greenland, which must rely on large amounts of financial support from Denmark. The fish catch is primarily cod, shrimp, and salmon; fish processing is the major manufacturing industry. Agriculture is only possible on about one percent of Greenland's total area. Cattle, sheep, and goats are raised in small numbers in some portions of the southwestern coast, and hardy vegetables are grown. Greenland was formerly the world's main source of natural cryolite, a mineral used in the manufacture of aluminum, but by the late 1970s, reserves were exhausted. Lead and zinc were also produced until the mines were exhausted in 1990, and deposits of coal and uranium are known to exist. Denmark is Greenland's largest trading partner, and its main exports are fish, hides and skins, and fish oil.

