

A white wooden cross in the snow

The winter last a long time in Nuuk. Located just south of the Arctic Circle, we must accept that the spring traditionally begins in late April or in the beginning of May.

In April the sun is high in the sky and the snow begins to melt. In the winter the snow covers everything. But in April and May we again are able to see what the snow has covered. Also the cemeteries appear over winter as a snowfield. Only few of the many wooden crosses rise above the snow. First late in June you can walk around in the cemetery between the graves.

The typical grave in Nuuk is a stone-marked grave field. A white-painted wooden cross is marking the grave. The name of the deceased is either burned into the wood, or a brass plate is placed on the cross with the name and dates of birth and death. The graves are often decorated with flowers. Flowers can be bought in several shops in the town, but they would not last long in the wind and the frost in the cemetery. For that reason it is common to use colourful plastic flowers.

The white cross is also a symbol of the violent upheaval in this country, when Christianity was introduced. The original Inuit population buried their dead in stone cists, but the Christians ordered that Christians had to be buried in the soil.

The cemeteries belong to the municipality, and therefore it is place where anyone can be buried, whatever creed you belong to, and whether or not you are a member of the state church.



The cemetery covered by snow, April 2007