

Snow

Frost, ice and large amounts of snow are important conditions for human life in Greenland. In the past, the Inuits had only been permanent residents in the winter, but the ice and snow allowed for visits to the surrounding settlements. On the sledge journeys the snow carried the dog sledge, and if the travellers were surprised by snowstorms, they built a snow cave - igloo or illuigaq, as it is named in the Greenlandic language.

In Nuuk, the summer is short. On the north side of the mountains there is snow all the year round, but in early May the snow begins to melt down in the town. The huge amounts of snow are transported by large bulldozers to the port and the snow is dumped into the sea. Often, however, there can be snow showers in late June.

At the beginning of September, we get the first warning of the coming winter. The highest peaks of the mountains surrounding the town are stained white with new snow. In early October the first snow falls down in the town. It feels good. The days are short, and a landscape without snow seems dark and unfriendly. When the first snow has fallen the reflection is so powerful that the sun again seems to have gained momentum.

The season for skiing often starts in early December. But rapid changes in the weather caused by foehn winds can stop the winter sports. Winds of this type are called "snow-eaters" for their ability to make the snow melt rapidly.

Farther north, the summer is even shorter. Here the snow lies stable throughout the winter. The preparedness against the snow is high in the cities. The snow clearing begins as soon as the first snow has fallen. Bulldozers and snow throwers quickly remove the snow, and it is rare that blizzards stop the traffic in the towns.



*A snow thrower in Ilulissat,
March 2012*