

The Qooroq Ice Fiord

Our aim is to get so close to the glacier at the end of the fiord. Our skipper scouts concentrate on the surroundings. He slows down the speed, and concentrates his attention completely on the ice-filled sea surface in front of the boat. The amount of ice is considerable right here at the entrance to the fiord. The small pieces of ice are hard to see, because they only rise a few centimetres above the sea level, can be dangerous for our sailing.

The Finnish-built Targa is designed to sail in difficult Arctic waters like the fiords in South Greenland, but it requires quite a lot of experience and caution, when the ice is as compact as here in The Qooroq Ice Fiord near the settlement and airport Narsarsuaq. At the end of the fiord, the large glacier from the Greenlandic Ice Sheet carves large and small ice floes, and the ice spreads by the currents and the tides throughout the fiord.

Here at the entrance to the fiord there is a large arch of larger icebergs. Due to the moraine under the sea surface they are run aground. A thousand years ago the glacier formed the moraine at the time, when the glacier reached its fullest. Now the glacier continuous to withdraw and an ice-filled fiord has been created within the original front of the glacier.

Skipper tells us that a very large iceberg a few days before was collapsed and broken in several parts. This can create unexpected tsunami-like waves, which can cause problems for even bigger boats.

Skipper sails close to one of the great icebergs. The weather is calm and the iceberg seems to be in a stable condition. Behind the run aground icebergs there is an area with only little ice, and skipper again increases the speed of the boat.

The mountains rise steep on both sides of the fiord. The former glacier has pared the turf off, and the rocks are bare.

Two high cracks! The vulnerable fiberglass of the boat collides with two almost invisible pieces of ice. Skipper rises from his seat. Concentrically he stares out of the windscreen. He opens the door and he sticks his head out and keep an eye on the hidden ice. He steers the boat in sharp swings through the chaos of ice floes in all sorts of sizes, shapes and colours.

Now, the ice lies very compact. Skipper must lower the speed further. We can constantly hear the crushing sound, when he lets the boat push a piece of ice away.

We are now able to see the glacier with its folded surface, rising up against the ice sheet. Researchers have calculated that the glacier in the Qooroq Ice Fiord releases

more than 200,000 tonnes of ice a day. It is coloured grey of the gravel it brings along.

The water beside the boat has the colour azure. It must be almost fresh caused by the enormous amounts of melting water in the fiord, and the azure colour occurs, because the water is filled with the finest silt, washed out together with the melting water.

The skipper reduces the speed even more and at last he stops the engine. The only sound is the ice floes colliding to each other close to the boat, and a sound of a distant waterfall that spreads cold melting water into the fiord. Skipper says with a soft voice: It will be irresponsible to go farther in.

It looks like we are quite short from the glacier, but in the clear air the distances are deceptive. The map shows that we are six kilometres from the glacier. Even from here the edge of the glacier seems impressive. It is today sixty meters high. The local people can remember that the glacier itself was about 120 meters higher, when they were young.

The clouds and the sun clashes above the ice sheet. The sun is about to take over and sends its first rays down over the huge glacier. It is a breath-taking view from the small Targa in the Qooroq Ice Fiord.



The Qooroq Ice Fiord, near Narsarsuaq, South Greenland, September 2017