



ABOUT THE TRAIL

- **DISTANCE** 165 km (103 mi)
- **DURATION** 7 to 9 days
- **TOTAL ELEVATION GAIN** 2,349 m (7,707 ft)
- **LEVEL** Moderate

Approximately 80 percent of Greenland is covered by a vast ice sheet. The remaining 20 percent of this ironically named island is a coastal corridor that is mostly ice-free during the summer months. It is here among the sparsely populated bays, inlets, and fjords, that the Arctic Circle Trail (ACT) can be found, a legendary hiking route that traverses the most extensive strip of terra firma in Western Greenland.

Stretching 165 km (103 mi) between the towns of Kangerlussuaq and Sisimiut, the ACT passes through a starkly beautiful landscape of sweeping tundra, shimmering lakes, rocky mountains, and broad glacial valleys. As its name suggests, the trail lies entirely within the Arctic Circle, and throughout its course, there is little in the way of infrastructure and zero in the form of phone service. Despite its remoteness, the trail is well marked, easy to follow, and within the capabilities of most fit and experienced backpackers. The principal challenges of the ACT lie in the area’s fickle weather, its isolation in case of an emergency, and the fact that you’ll need to carry between seven and nine days’ worth of food.

Although it can be tackled in either direction, most ACT hikers walk from east to west. While some begin their journey immediately after touching down at Kangerlussuaq’s international airport, most commence the following day after taking a not-to-be-missed side trip to the Greenland Ice Sheet (see Bonus Track). From Kangerlussuaq, the initial section of the ACT heads southwest, following the main road out of town for 16 km (10 mi) to the now-defunct scientific research station of Kellyville. A short distance further on, the dirt road gives way to a narrow footpath, marking the official beginning of the Arctic Circle Trail.

Leaving civilization behind, the route is marked by regularly spaced cairns, many of which are painted with a red semicircle (in recognition of the Greenland flag) and adorned with reindeer antlers (a nod to the Arctic’s most beloved four-legged residents). During the trail’s bucolic course, >



↖ Some hikers opt to canoe rather than walk the length of Amitsorsuaq, the Arctic Circle Trail’s longest lake.
↑ The trail’s western terminus, Sisimiut, is located 50 km (31 mi) north of the Arctic Circle.