

CLIMATE CHANGE MAKES GREENLAND A MORE ATTRACTIVE DESTINATION FOR TOURISTS



Climate change is significantly impacting Greenland. Summers on the island, located at the edge of the Arctic, are becoming grayer and rainier, while winters are milder. However, rising temperatures also alter fish behavior, which presents significant challenges for Greenland's fishing industry, which is traditionally its most important economic sector. Currently, 95 percent of Greenland's export revenues come from fishing.

Climate change also presents opportunities for Greenland. The thick ice sheet in the interior is melting, and the receding sea ice may open up new trade and shipping routes along Greenland's coast in the future, particularly along the Northeast Passage. **This development positions Greenland centrally in global shipping routes rather than at the periphery.**

These changes could also benefit tourism in Greenland. Greenlandic politicians are focusing on the fishing and tourism sectors, though they are implementing severe restrictions to manage these developments responsibly.

Tourism, but Sustainable

Significant investments in airport infrastructure are set to benefit tourism in Greenland. The new international airport in Nuuk opened at the end of last year. This year, the renowned Ice fjord inaugurated new airports in Ilulissat. A planned airport in Qaqortoq in the southern part of the island is scheduled to open in 2026.

With these aviation developments, Greenland aims to adopt a strategy similar to that of its neighboring island, Iceland. The goal is to encourage air travelers flying between Europe and North America to make stopovers in Greenland, thereby generating tourism revenue.

Other carriers are expanding their services in addition to the state-owned airline Air Greenland. Starting this summer, United Airlines will begin offering direct flights between New York and Nuuk, and Scandinavian Airlines (SAS) will also include Greenland's capital in its flight schedule.

Moreover, Greenland is positioning itself as an appealing tourist destination, focusing on upscale and exclusive Arctic tourism. The country is keen to avoid the pitfalls of mass tourism, which is often highlighted by the experiences others have had in Iceland.

According to official statistics, Greenland welcomed 92,637 tourists in 2022. In the following year, the number increased to 131,767. Many locals have expressed concern that Nuuk becomes overcrowded, especially when two cruise ships anchor in the fjord simultaneously during the summer. Tourism needs to maintain a respectful balance with the island's small population.

However, it remains uncertain how well Greenland can position itself in the premium tourism segment shortly. Instead of luxury hotels, visitors can find accommodations in the capital that offer a more rustic charm and basic amenities, such as the former Seamen's Mission in the harbor.

Meltwater as a Giant Source of Electricity?

Various ideas have long been floating about how Greenland could leverage climate change to generate revenue for building its state structures. One proposal involves harnessing the vast amounts of meltwater from the gigantic ice sheet to produce significant quantities of clean electricity in the future. This energy, generated through hydropower, could then be used to produce hydrogen or ammonia for export.

Ammonia is crucial in fertilizer production and can also be used as fuel for combustion engines. However, only a tiny fraction of the ammonia needed globally is produced using renewable energy sources.

Additionally, the green electricity generated on the island could enhance the efficiency of mining activities. It could also be utilized by power-intensive data centers, which would benefit from the naturally cooler Arctic environment, reducing the energy needed for server cooling. However, establishing such data centers remains a conceptual idea at this stage.

Drinking Water Reservoir for the World?

Additionally, there has been discussion about whether shipping meltwater as drinking water to other parts of the world is viable. **This potential business model is based on the understanding that access to clean water will likely become a significant issue for humanity in the future;** indeed, conflicts may arise over this precious resource.

Researchers estimate that the meltwater from Greenland's ice sheet, the second largest in the world after the Antarctic ice reserves, could contribute to a sea level rise of approximately seven meters.

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