NEWS LESSON

What Happens When One of the World's Quietest Places Gets Easier to Visit?



BEFORE YOU READ

1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. What is the biggest benefit of tourism for a small community, in your opinion?
2. Have you ever visited a place that felt crowded with tourists? How did it feel?
3. How do you think a remote island changes when it gets a new airport?

2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

1	**runway**	☐	A	the long strip where planes take off and land
2	**melting**	☐	B	a company that is paid to give expert advice
3	**territory**	☐	C	a quiet, peaceful feeling or place
4	**consultancy**	☐	D	to ask someone to come to a place
5	**boom**	☐	E	a time when something grows very fast
6	**calm**	☐	F	changing from ice to water because of heat
7	**attracts**	☐	G	an area of land that belongs to a country
8	**invite**	☐	H	makes people want to come

3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

Greenland now has three new airports and more visitors than ever, but tourism is still a small part of its economy. Some residents worry about what a rush of visitors could do to a quiet place with a fragile environment.

1 Ilulissat is a town of about 5,000 people on Greenland's west coast, known as the city of icebergs. Until recently, travellers arrived by cruise ship, took a small plane from Iceland, or flew to another Greenlandic airport and changed to a smaller aircraft. On 29 October 2026 that changed when the first direct flight from Copenhagen touched down on a new 2,200 metre runway. The prime minister, Jens-Frederik Nielsen, was one of 169 passengers.

2 Ilulissat's airport is the third in a quick series. Nuuk, the capital, opened an international airport in late 2024, and Qaqortoq followed in April 2026. For an island of about 56,000 people where almost 80% of the land is ice and there are no roads between towns, that is a big change. The Guardian reports that Greenland welcomed nearly 180,000 visitors in 2025, its highest figure yet, and that this year looks set to beat it. Counting methods differ between sources, though. The Associated Press put international visitors at almost 150,000 in 2024, so numbers from different reports do not always line up.

3 The government's reasoning is mostly economic. Greenland has depended on fishing for generations, and the Guardian argues that melting polar ice puts that industry under serious threat. The territory also hopes for independence from Denmark, and Mr Nielsen has said that a strong economic base is needed first. Tourism looks like one way to spread the risk, since leaders do not want to put all their eggs in one basket.

4 The numbers show how far there is to go. Greenland's first official tourism accounts, published by Visit Greenland and prepared by a consultancy, say that in 2024 tourism directly produced 4.9% of GDP and about 1,800 jobs, over 6% of all jobs. The Associated Press notes that the expected boom has not fully arrived. An Arctic tourism researcher it quoted, Carina Ren, adds that some American visitors were put off by recent political tension over the island.

5 Tourism is a double-edged sword, though. Local people in parts of Spain, Portugal, Italy and France have protested about mass tourism, and the worry is present in Greenland too. A cruise ship was blocked from entering Ilulissat, where the Guardian says locals feel they see little benefit from foreign operators. A former regional mayor told the Associated Press that the environment, population and infrastructure could be overwhelmed, and asked how many people the town can invite.

6 It is worth knowing who is speaking. The Associated Press reporter flew on a trip organised by Visit Greenland, which the agency stated openly, and Visit Greenland is government owned and wants more visitors. That does not make the facts wrong, but it is a reason to read with care. The real test is whether Greenland can grow without losing the calm that attracts people in the first place. A place can be off the beaten track one year and crowded the next.

Sources: The Guardian, Ibiza on ice: why is Greenland suddenly throwing open its doors to tourists?; The Associated Press (via KSAT), Greenland opens new international airport to lure tourists as it eyes future independence. Picture: AI illustration.

4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. Before the new airport opened, passengers from Copenhagen could not fly straight to Ilulissat. T F NG
2. The Guardian and the Associated Press give exactly the same visitor figures. T F NG
3. A consultancy prepared the tourism accounts that Visit Greenland published. T F NG
4. The text says how many hotel rooms Ilulissat has. T F NG
5. The Associated Press hid the fact that Visit Greenland organised its reporter's trip. T F NG

5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

benefit **differ** **expected** **operators** **payment** **reasoning** **survey** **threat**

1. The airport's supporters explained their _____ step by step: more flights, more visitors, more jobs.
2. Plastic waste is a growing _____ to marine life.
3. Many residents hope their families will _____ from the new jobs.
4. Small tour _____ complain that large companies take most of the customers.
5. Visitor numbers were _____ to rise again this year.
6. Opinions _____ on whether the new airport is a good idea.

6 Verb forms

Write the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. Until recently, travellers _____ by cruise ship. (ARRIVE)
2. Greenland _____ nearly 180,000 visitors in 2025. (WELCOME)
3. Local people in Spain have _____ about mass tourism. (PROTEST)
4. A cruise ship _____ from entering Ilulissat. (BLOCK)
5. Greenland _____ on fishing for generations. (DEPEND)

7 Language focus: linking words

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. Match the link to the idea: contrast (however, although), result (therefore), condition (unless) or concession (despite).

although	despite	however	otherwise	therefore	unless	unlike

1. Tourism is a small part of the economy. _____ , the government wants it to grow.
2. _____ the new airport will bring jobs, some residents worry about crowds.
3. Local people will not support more flights _____ they receive a fair share of the income.
4. There are no roads between towns. _____ , most journeys are by boat or plane.
5. _____ the high cost of flights, many tourists still want to visit.

SPEAK

8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. If you lived in Ilulissat, would you welcome the new airport? Why?
2. Who should benefit most from tourism money: local people, the government or tour companies?
3. Should a town be allowed to limit the number of visitors it receives? How might it do that?

9 Role-play: a new airport for a quiet town

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

Student A · a resident

A new airport has opened near your quiet town. You like the jobs, but you worry about crowds and damage to the land. Ask the tourism manager at least two questions and say what you want.

Student B · the tourism manager

You want more visitors because they bring money and work. Explain the benefits. Listen to the resident's worries and suggest a compromise.

Useful phrases

I'm worried that the town won't cope.

That's a fair point, but we need the jobs.

How many visitors can the town take?

What if we set a limit?

I'd be happy if local people got a share.

We're not against tourists, we just want a say.

Afterwards, tell the class: did you reach an agreement, and who gave up more?

ANSWER KEY

2 Key words

1 A · 2 F · 3 G · 4 B · 5 E · 6 C · 7 H · 8 D

4 True, false or not given

1 T · 2 F · 3 T · 4 NG · 5 F

5 Vocabulary

1 reasoning · 2 threat · 3 benefit · 4 operators · 5 expected · 6 differ

6 Verb forms

1 arrived · 2 welcomed · 3 protested · 4 was blocked · 5 has depended

7 Language focus

1 However · 2 Although · 3 unless · 4 Therefore · 5 Despite

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