

Fridtjof Nansen

Skiing is a popular sport in Greenland. The larger towns have ski slopes and cross-country tracks close to town, and in Nuuk we also have a ski lift up of one of the nearest mountains.

The Norwegian, Fridtjof Nansen, created an exciting story, when he completed what was then a wild trip across the Greenland ice sheet. Nansen achieved with his team to be the first to document the crossing of the Greenland Ice Sheet.

Like most Greenlandic children, the young Nansen already started his career as a skier as four years old. As a 26-year-old man Nansen and his team started the expedition over the ice sheet. The expedition left the east coast of Greenland on skis, 15 August 1888, and arrived in the Ameralik fjord on the west coast near Nuuk on 29 September 1888.

Fridtjof Nansen has in detail in the book *Across Greenland* described the expedition and the preparations. The book begins with a very detailed and interesting analysis and description of the equipment used: Originally he considered to choose sledge dogs. The procedure is that the dogs must pull their own food and a little more. Along the expedition, you can shoot and eat the

dogs one by one as a supplement to the scanty supplies they could bring along. In his account of his expeditions he writes about the eating of dog meat:

"... I can answer from my own experience that hunger is a sufficiently good cook to render dog's flesh anything but unpalatable, The Eskimo indeed reckon it a delicacy, and it is certain that anyone who could not in the circumstances bring himself to eat it would not be a fit person to accompany such an expedition at all."

Fridtjof Nansen completed the expedition on skis without dogs. The expedition used specifically designed skis to be used in that kind of terrain, which Nansen expected to find on the ice sheet. They brought along a total of nine pairs of skis - two made of oak and the rest made of birch. The ski fastenings used, were very simple, and consisted in nothing but a toe-straps of thick stiff leather and a broadish band of softer leather running round behind the heel.

Fridtjof Nansen would in the 1880s hardly by any stretch of the imagination to foresee what technological marvels the current skiers use when forcing the ski tracks around Nuuk.



Cross country track along the fiord , Nuuk, March 2013