■ A typical landscape in East Greenland. The photo was taken during a hike around the village.

■ Blue bow, also known as fogbow. Responsible for this effect is the very fine mist in the atmosphere.

A letter from Greenland's beauty

KAMILLA OLIVER

Dear all, *Kumorn* ("good morning" in Greenlandic) from Tinitequilaaq: It will be two months soon since I am in Greenland, living the Inuit way on the east coast, called in Greenlandic Tunu, so I thought it's a good time for a reflection.

The scenery in the region of Ammassalik is stunning. From my window I can see icebergs floating in the Sermilik fjord.

When the visibility is good, I can see as far as to the ice cap, covering Greenland far up to its west coast.

On my walks I observe various shapes and shades of ice and blue, and it truly is an amazing spectacle of nature.

Depending on weather conditions, light, distance and angle of sight, the view is constantly changing and there is a huge spectrum of colours and nuances. As if the icebergs take part in a parade as some heedless creatures or act out in an incomprehensible mistery plot.

The effect is incredible in the morning mist when the cadaver-gray sky and water become indiscernible and the first rays of sun struggle to penetrate it. Slowly but surely, the contours of icebergs become visible and the view which unfolds is literally moulded before my eyes in a matter of minutes.

Indeed, the icebergs appear to have a life of their own. I take photos of them just outside my house. By the way, great photo opportunities are here almost all the time, so I now have a habit of always having my camera with me.

It is a magic place. Everything here is more intense, the colours, the silence, the elements.

On clear nights there is a beautiful display of the Northern Lights. Outside I can hear whales breathing, a raven pounding his wings just metres above my head, I hear sounds of icebergs calving and ice breaking off and water droplets falling from melting ice, which upon catching sunlight transform for a moment into sparkling diamonds.

Of course, I know everything in nature is at its bottom mathematical and the golden ratio can be found all over the show, not only in shells and flowers and spiral galaxies. But with a shift of perspective toward the surroundings, that on its first look is harsh, lonely and could easily become life threatening, one can see many opportunities for awe and imagination.

> ‘ The icebergs appear to have a life of their own ’

I feel fortunate in that the majestic icebergs appear here where I live and it is literally there across the window where polar bears roam (one was spotted only about two weeks ago).

East Greenland has long had a nickname as the real, or the wild, overlooked part of Greenland, and this is also true with respect to the human dimension. *Tunu* means in fact the "back of the land".

On a sad note, the highest rate of suicides is in East Greenland, and Greenland on the whole has one of the highest in the world.

What perhaps is not immediately obvious, especially for tourists who come here mostly in summer for a day or two, is the social issues and problems each local family is facing in one way or another.

Whether it has to do with the isolation, a conflict between the traditional and more modern way of life and other factors, it's difficult to say because it is a very complex problem.

When I am, for example, asked by visitors, and this already happened several times, "do you really live here?" many are surprised and ask "how is life here?". Well, what should I say? It is very difficult to give a concise reply.

Living and working here is definitely not easy from a European point of view, but I am starting to see tiny positive changes and this gives hope and joy or satisfaction. It is not an easy path I decided to take and there are many aspects to it.

Not only the language, yes, I am learning East Greenlandic as I go along and must admit I find it quite difficult. I am going to offer English evening classes for adults, which should help me to learn more East Greenlandic.

And yes, I am missing some fresh foods which cannot be bought here (especially tomatoes and salad) and other things, like for example, reliable internet, but it is not readily to be had here.

It is important to me that I have a friendly contact with the local people and can take part in their activities, including hunting.

My work doesn't take all of my time, so I can carve time for me, listen to my own voice. I can pour passion into self-initiated projects, which hopefully can contribute, albeit in a small way, toward something good and positive... every tiny bit of it here is precious.

■ Greenlandic crowberries, a type of wild berry, common to the Arctic.

■ Dogs in Tiilerilaaq with a view of a fjord in the background.

As one who always like snow and cold, I am feeling very much alive here, surrounded with opportunities which are challenging and helping me grow. And I can actually consider myself privileged to live here, exploring the different and unusual. If this is not a good happy life, then what is?

Regards, *takuss*, Kamilla

● Kamilla Oliver has PhD in physics and is a certified South African tourist guide, based in Somerset West. Currently she is working as a teacher in a tiny, remote, Inuit settlement of Tiilerilaaq which has 80 inhabitants, in East Greenland.

She has written previous travel articles for Bolander readers, and shared this letter from Greenland.

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■ A view from the village to the mountain glacier.