

# Q&A

## LAALI BERTHELSEN, GREENLAND PRODUCT MANAGER, HX HURTIGRUTEN EXPEDITIONS

INTERVIEW BY Alice Barnes-Brown

### Q. What led you to this role with HX Hurtigruten Expeditions?

A. I was born and raised in Greenland, but I studied tourism so I've always been interested in the world. I travelled a lot and then started to work on cruise ships, both in Greenland and abroad. When I was working for Visit Greenland, HX reached out to me to ask if I would be interested to be part of their team.

### Q. What Greenland routes is HX introducing this summer?

A. We have three new itineraries with turnarounds in [Greenlandic capital] Nuuk, all on *Fridtjof Nansen*. Clients will fly into the new international airport in Nuuk, then embark the ship and go north. The itineraries all sail to the Disko Bay area, and two will go all the way up to Thule and the Kane Basin. In this northerly region of Greenland, HX has reintroduced stops in Qaanaaq. One shore excursion will be a kayak tour with an Inuk hunter, Aleqatsiaq Peary, who will be on board for the entire season and will discuss what life is like in such a remote region. The communities there are so isolated, I have a hard time understanding [residents] even when we speak in Greenlandic.

### Q. What do you love about your job?

A. I really enjoy that I can help shape the cruise itineraries for HX. I've seen so many other ships come and go that don't do anything with the locals, but we work closely with suppliers in each stop on an

“One shore excursion is a kayak tour with an Inuk hunter, who will be on board the ship for the entire season



itinerary, and I wanted to be part of developing this relationship between Greenlanders and HX.

### Q. How do these cruises immerse guests in Greenland?

A. It's hard to tell guests about our culture, so we make sure they experience Greenland with all their senses. They're sailing right next to huge icebergs and hiking in massive landscapes, plus we give them local guides who impart their knowledge. This year, we've extended our portfolio with 25 new excursions led by locals – mostly Indigenous Greenlanders. On board, we provide local food and lectures on the region.

### Q. What can guests expect from HX's new culinary programme in Greenland?

A. A lot of what we Greenlanders do is about food. If we eat a

reindeer or a seal, we use everything – skin, fat, meat, bones – so it's sustainable. I've been working with chef

Inunnguaq Hegelund, who I know personally – he and other local chefs are going to be on all our ships travelling in Greenland this summer. It's a great thing to have these chefs giving lectures about our culture, the food, how they grew up, how they learnt to cook and why it's important to them. Then they get to work their magic in the kitchen for passengers to taste.

### Q. What's on the menu?

A. HX is committed to sourcing 30% of food products from local and regional suppliers, so we

### LAALI'S TOP TIP

HX is the first cruise line to partner with Air Greenland, so we can fly clients directly to Greenland from gateways including Reykjavik and Copenhagen. This means clients don't have any sea days sailing from Iceland and can spend more time getting deeper into Greenland.



PICTURE: Andrea Klausner

have partnerships with Greenlandic companies that sell us fish, meat and seafood. We also have microgreens and Qajaq, a locally brewed beer. Guests might enjoy dishes like a bisque made from Greenlandic shellfish or lamb from southern Greenland.

### Q. Favourite spot in Greenland?

A. Ilulissat. This is the place to see some typically Greenlandic things: icebergs; the most active glacier in the northern hemisphere; and the Ilulissat Icefjord, a Unesco World Heritage Site. It's the third-biggest town in Greenland, but it's only made up of 5,000 inhabitants. You can do traditional dog-sledding there; in Greenland, we only have dog-sledding in places north of the Arctic Circle. There's also the midnight sun, the polar nights and the aurora borealis. You get a bit of everything there. **TW**