

The battle for Earth's largest island

theday.co.uk/the-battle-for-earths-largest-island-4 12 March 2025



Fateful choice: The Demokraatit party, which favours a gradual approach to independence, looks set to declare victory in Greenland's general election today. Naleraq, the opposition party which wants to start divorce proceedings from Denmark and have closer ties with the US, is a close second.

Could Greenland spark a catastrophe? Yesterday, Greenlanders voted to choose their next leaders. They could just change the future of their country too.

What's happening?

Yesterday, people across **Greenland** went out to vote. This would not normally be worldwide news. But this year the vote matters more than ever.

The American leader **Donald Trump** says he wants to take over Greenland. Nobody knows how far he is willing to go to do that. Greenlanders have many important choices to make.

Find out more

In 982, **Erik the Red** set sail from **Iceland**. He was looking for a new home, and came across a huge island, covered in ice sheets.

Erik gave the place a new name: "Groenland", meaning "Greenland". He wanted to attract other people to join him.

But there was a group of people who already lived there: the **Kalaallit** people, the **indigenous** people of Greenland.

Today, Greenland is governed by **Denmark**, another **Scandinavian** country. However, four in every five Greenlanders want to be able to run the island themselves.

They could be very successful. The country has lots of natural resources which could give it wealth.

But that is one of the reasons why Donald Trump wants to take over. And only 6% of Greenlanders say they want to become part of the US.

However, political leaders think they can use Trump's threats to gain new rights from Denmark.

On the other hand, nobody knows how far Trump is willing to go. Some worry that if Greenland chooses to run themselves, they may soon be taken over by Trump.

It will not take long to count the results of the **election**: only 41,000 people can vote. But its results for the world may not be known for years.

Could Greenland spark a catastrophe?

Some say

Yes! If Trump chose to invade Greenland, there would be nothing Denmark or Europe could do. The eyes of the whole world are on this island.

Others think

No! Trump may speak like no other world leader, but he would not invade Greenland. That would leave the USA standing on its own in the world. Things will stay as they are.

Some people say

“Old systems do not fold willingly, particularly when they control gargantuan amounts of wealth and power. But like empires of old – from the Romans to the Hapsburgs to the colonial British – even the largest do fall.”

Marianne Williamson (1952 –), American writer

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What do you think?

Six steps to discovery

1. Connect

How do you feel about this story? - What do you know about Greenland? Would you like to go there?

2. Wonder

What questions do you have? - For example: Should every group of people have their own country?

3. Investigate

What are the facts? - Pick out one thing we know for certain and one thing we cannot say for sure about this story.

4. Construct

What is your point of view? - If you lived in Greenland, how would you feel? Would you want to stick with Denmark, join the US or run the island yourself?

5. Express

What do others believe? - Would Donald Trump really invade Denmark? Discuss as a class.

6. Reflect

What might happen next? - Imagine you work for the Greenland tourism board. Make a leaflet encouraging people to visit Greenland.

Glossary

Greenland - An island country in North America that is part of the Kingdom of Denmark. It lies between the Arctic and Atlantic oceans, east of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago. Greenland is the world's largest island.

Donald Trump - An American politician, media personality, and businessman serving as the 47th president of the United States since January 2025. A member of the Republican Party, he previously served as the 45th president from 2017 to 2021.

Erik the Red - A Norse explorer who probably had red hair. Sagas suggest he was born in Norway and lived in Iceland before being expelled and exploring Greenland.

Iceland - A volcanic island just south of the Arctic Circle. Its parliament, the "Althing", is thought to be the oldest in the world, dating from 930.

Kalaallit - A Greenlandic Inuit ethnic group. They speak Kalaallisut, also known as Greenlandic.

Indigenous - Ethnic groups who are the original or earliest-known inhabitants of an area or country: for example, Native Americans in the USA.

Denmark - A country in Northern Europe. It is where Lego was first invented.

Scandinavian - Region of northern Europe, the word refers to the people and culture of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. Other countries like Finland and Iceland are sometimes referred to by the same term.

Election - A vote in which someone is chosen to represent a group of people.