

**T H U L E**

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**Battelle Arctic Research Operations**  
<https://battlearcticgateway.org/>

Updated April 2022

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# Thule Guide

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This document is for researchers planning fieldwork at or based from Thule Air Base, Greenland. Please contact the science project manager (PM) for further information on any topic.

Established in 1951, Thule is the US Air Force's (USAF) northernmost base at almost 77° N. Through cooperative agreements between the USAF and NSF, researchers are allowed access to Thule. Battelle Arctic Research Operations (Battelle ARO) serves as the NSF liaison in Thule to support science using Thule's infrastructure as well as coordinating external elements.

The Thule population includes representatives from government agencies and private contractors working to support Thule's military mission. The population can be over 700.

- USAF personnel in administrative and security forces roles
- Arctic Command (Danish Defense) personnel in the Danish Liaison Office
- Danish Police Inspector (DPI)
- Base Maintenance Contractor (Vectrus), all base support operations
- Air Greenland, Greenlandic air carrier by U.S. Embassy charter
- US contractors working at the Ballistic Missile Early Warning System site and other secured facilities around Thule
- Researchers funded by international agencies

## COVID-19 update

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**Since March 2020, travel to Greenland for research and operations has been hindered by the COVID-19 pandemic. Significant requirements have been introduced by NSF and Greenland that impact fieldwork. The Battelle Arctic Research Operations (Battelle ARO / B-ARO) science project manager will provide current information regarding travel to Greenland, which may supersede information within this guide**

Current information on Greenland travel restrictions:

<https://visitgreenland.com/articles/corona-virus-status/>

The NSF has published information regarding COVID-19 and research:

[https://www.nsf.gov/news/special\\_reports/coronavirus/](https://www.nsf.gov/news/special_reports/coronavirus/)

Additional questions can be answered by Battelle ARO contacts within this guide.

## Battelle ARO Services in Thule

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Battelle ARO services in Thule include:

- ✦ Logistics support (transportation, air support, cargo movement, and facilities management)
- ✦ Military travel, base, and area clearances
- ✦ Lodging arrangements
- ✦ Support coordination with appropriate agencies and contractors in Greenland

There is not a Battelle ARO permanent or seasonal representative on base – Battelle ARO arranges personnel onsite as needed. Researchers are expected to be self-sufficient, and work with the Project Manager for support requests.

While at Thule Air Base, participants are guests of the USAF, the Government of Greenland, and Arctic Command while working under the auspices of the NSF. The arrangement is facilitated by a cooperative relationship between NSF and pertinent agencies. In the event of issues, notify Battelle ARO to maintain clear communication with our hosts.

## Planning Process

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Begin planning by contacting the Project Manager (PM). Battelle ARO will work closely with the research team to keep logistics and support within scope. Planning is an ongoing process that will be finalized a few weeks before the project deploys for the field.

After initial contact with Battelle ARO, the PI must ensure the project meets the Government of Greenland permitting requirements. Visit [www.nanog.gl/expeditions](http://www.nanog.gl/expeditions) to view requirements and download forms from the Ministry of Nature and Environment Section of Industry, Energy, and Research for conducting scientific research in Greenland. Almost all projects require government approval; the webpage provides detailed guidelines and criteria. In addition, local science at Thule AB may require USAF permissions. The Project Manager (PM) will assist with coordination with USAF personnel.

## Travel to Thule

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Visit Battelle ARO's website at <https://battlearcticgateway.org/> and review the *Greenland Guide* prior to your trip. Non-US citizens must consult the US Customs and Border Protection website at <http://www.cbp.gov> for information on visas.

Contact the PM if there are questions prior to departure or enroute.

## Military Clearances

Battelle ARO processes military and country clearances for the USAF and the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which are required at least 30 days prior to travel. Battelle ARO will prepare a Letter of Authorization (LOA) from the NSF. The LOA states that you are an NSF researcher and allows access to AMC flights to and from Greenland. Military personnel refer to the LOA as “travel orders.”

Battelle ARO requires all participants to submit name, passport number, passport expiration date, citizenship with place of birth, and date of birth at least four weeks before deployment. The PM will work directly with the research team to gather this information. **It is the responsibility of the participant to notify the PM of any changes prior to deployment, including travel with a new or different passport.**

## Harassment

NSF-supported Arctic Research field sites, camps and stations are managed by Battelle ARO using the following guidelines. Professional conduct and acceptable behavior are mandatory for participants during work and non-work hours. Participants are expected and required to work cooperatively, to treat others with dignity and respect, to follow the site-specific policies and procedures, and to contribute to a safe work and living space at all times.

The Battelle ARO site manager has the responsibility and authority to address behavior issues and may remove from a field location any participant exhibiting unacceptable behavior. This includes but is not limited to harassment, alcohol misuse, unsafe work behavior, and not following the site-specific policies and procedures. Please review NSF’s harassment policy: <https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/issuances/in144.jsp?org=NSF>

## Cargo to Thule

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Several methods exist to send cargo to and from Thule Air Base. Availability, timeframes, and priorities vary greatly. Researchers must work with the project manager in advance to determine the most cost-effective, efficient and feasible option for the project.

## Air National Guard (ANG)

The preferred mode of cargo movement is via 109<sup>th</sup> New York Air National Guard flights from Scotia, NY. Researchers will be asked to conform to the 109<sup>th</sup>’s schedule. Communicate all requirements as early as possible to the Project Manager, as space is often very limited. **Please refer to the Greenland Guide and/or <https://battlearcticgateway.org/> for details on how to prepare cargo for transport on the New York Air National Guard 109<sup>th</sup> flights.**

## Air Mobility Command (AMC)

Cargo can be sent via AMC cargo flights to Thule from McGuire AFB, which incur a freight and handling charge. Cargo via AMC is typically much more expensive than ANG and is on a space available basis, subject to non-program priorities.

## Embassy Flights

Extremely limited space *may* be available on flights between Kangerlussuaq and Thule. This option is an emergency back-up for a field failure only and not a primary cargo plan.

## Vessel

An annual resupply ship travels between the US and Thule every summer. This is the most cost-effective means to move cargo.

## Post

USPS/APO can be used to send cargo or personal items:

- Packages may not exceed 70 lbs.
- Packages may not exceed 108" in combined length and girth. (L+W+H total inches)
- Packages must be hand-delivered to the post office. (USPS requirement) Many merchants won't ship to APO/FPO addresses.
- Other local, state, and country restrictions may apply.
- Allow at least 3 weeks for delivery depending on size and cube of your package.

### Thule APO address:

Battelle ARO/NSF, Addressee Name  
PSC 1501, Unit 82501  
APO, AE 09704

## Travel to Thule

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Researchers can travel to and from Thule via AMC (Air Mobility Command) flights, NSF-chartered Air National Guard flights, or limited international and intra-Greenland flights. Travel is coordinated with the Project Manager. Contact Kyli Cosper at [Kyli@Polarfield.com](mailto:Kyli@Polarfield.com) for schedules.

## Arrival in Thule

Upon arrival in Thule, the USAF TSgt. Logistics Technician or a USAF representative will provide an arrival briefing. Passport and clearance information must be carried on each person, not in checked bags. A temporary visitor credential is provided before travelers may leave the airport. A free taxi service is available for transport to lodging; directions on the service are included in the briefing and posted in most buildings.

Arrivals during Storm Season (15 September until midnight 15 May) that are not greeted by Battelle ARO staff **must** contact the Housing Department upon arrival at Bldg. 345 to provide the names, length of stay, and room numbers for each person in the group.

## Thule General Contacts:

Name	Description	Contact Info
Thule Air Base Operator	Operator	719.474.3840
USAF Logistics Technician	NSF Support Agreement	X2389
Vectrus Housing	Storm Season updates	X2256
Air Greenland Office	Flight coordination	X3440
Tracy Sheeley, B-ARO	B345 lodging or other issues	720.347.5313 <a href="mailto:sheeley@polarfield.com">sheeley@polarfield.com</a>
HILLTOP	Emergency/Comms Hub	X2719 / Bldg. 287
Bldg. 345	NSF lodging	X7345

## Stay in Thule

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Battelle ARO does not have a permanent personnel presence in Thule. The Project Manager will provide specific details to supplement the basic information in this guide.

## Support Services

Battelle ARO provides or coordinates a variety of services at Thule, including:

- Accommodations:
  - Bldg. 345 – NSF supplied berthing and office space
  - Transient lodging (formerly North Star Inn)
- Truck allocation
- Airfield support
- Air Greenland helicopter
- Warehouse space, limited (contact the PM to communicate requirements)
- Lab space in Hangar 4 (H4) Lab
- Cargo movement (outlined in Cargo Section above)
- Base Exchange (grocery store with fresh/frozen/dry food, sundries, alcohol)
- Emergency facilities (hospital, 24 hr. radio monitor)
- B-ARO allocations: camping gear, survival bags, satellite phones, etc. This inventory is not maintained at Thule, so needs must be identified well in advance to ensure on-time delivery for the project.

Note: Base Supply is only available to Vectrus (Base contractor) personnel: safety gear, tools, parts, etc. are not readily available in Thule.

All requirements must be identified to the PM during the planning process and will be documented in the Season Plan.

## Accommodations

### Bldg. 345

Bldg. 345 is offered by the USAF to support and promote Arctic research. It is not an NSF owned facility. Battelle ARO coordinates scheduling for the building which is used by a variety of international science agencies.

Bldg. 345 is configured with ten bedrooms, an office (with multiple desks), dry lab, cargo/dry storage room, a common room with dining area and tv/lounge, four bathrooms, four showers, and laundry facilities. Beds are two to a room. **Guests are expected to share rooms at times of high population.**

Researchers are responsible to develop day to day working agreements with other researchers sharing the facility and leave the facility in good shape for the next arrivals. Materials and equipment may not be stored for the following year as accumulation impacts space for other researchers use. The facility is not for storage - any unapproved and unlabeled gear remaining at the end of each season will be disposed of. Contact the PM regarding long-term storage requirements.

Bldg. 345 receives limited janitorial services. **Researchers using the facility are responsible for upkeep and cleaning of the offices, kitchen and bathroom facilities.** A list of suggested housekeeping tasks is posted at various locations. **Please launder bed linens and empty trash prior to departure.** Notify the PM if you find appliances requiring service, equipment needing repair, or resupply needs (cleaning supplies, new linens, or utensils.)

Bldg. 345 may contain asbestos products and lead based paints - locations are clearly labeled. Do not disturb any labeled area or elsewhere in the facility. Avoid making dust or debris and do not physically alter the building or structure.

Standing water in pipes may contain lead. Run the cold-water faucet until the water at a consistently cold temperature. Use of the filter on the kitchen faucet for any cooking, drinking or tea/coffee-making is recommended. A filter is installed in the berthing hallway bathroom for drinking water.

### Transient Housing (formerly the North Star Inn)

The North Star Inn transitioned to Transient Quarters in October 2021 and is managed by Vectrus. Rooms are private with shared bathrooms and reduced services are offered: cleaning prior to check-in, linens and towels staged and swapped every 7 days. There are common areas for cooking and lounging and a small business center.

Reservations are requested via TCR (Travel Coordination Request). Payment is required at check-in. Credit cards with PIN are accepted. Wi-Fi is not included – guests can purchase GB for internet at Bldg. 274 Vectrus Headquarters.

**Front Desk Hours:** Monday – Thursday 0800–1000      Friday 0600-0800  
Opening hours will adjust according to flight times.

## Food

### Dundas Buffet Dining Hall (Bldg. 107)

Meal cards are the only payment method accepted at the Dundas Dining Hall. Battelle ARO will allocate a meal card for those staying in Bldg. 345. Transient housing guests will receive a meal card at check-in.

Meal cards can be “charged” with cash or credit/debit cards (with pin) at the Dining Hall, in the Base Exchange and in Transient Quarters. Various rates of purchase are available to allow an amount that can be used based on the length of stay. The meal card works as a declining balance card.

### Dundas Buffet Hours

Monday – Friday: Breakfast 0500-0800 / Lunch 1100-1300 / Dinner 1700-1900  
Saturday: Breakfast 0700-1000 / Lunch 1100-1300 / Dinner 1700-1900  
Sunday: Breakfast 0700-1000 / Brunch 1000-1300 / Dinner 1700-1900

### Communal Kitchens and Food Procurement

Bldg. 345 and Transient Quarters are equipped with basic communal kitchens. The Base Exchange and a small Danish deli adjacent to the Dundas Buffet offer limited food shopping options.

## Phone and Tetra

Thule Air Base is on a US exchange. Mobile phone service works in Thule periodically but may carry extremely expensive costs.

### Phone calls:

Outgoing calls require a phone card, which are available for purchase at the Base Exchange or prior to travel to Thule.

- Dial 0 to call the base operator and ask them to dial the toll-free number. (If you purchased an ‘AT&T One’ card, ask for “speed dial 4”.)

### Incoming phone calls:

- Caller dials 719.474.3840 to reach the base operator and requests to be connected to your extension.
- Housing Extensions:
  - Bldg. 345: x 7345
  - Transient Quarters Front desk: x 3276
- The caller may also provide the guest room extension to the Base Operator to be connected directly.

### Tetra trunked radios:

These units enable radio to phone communications and are widely used on the base. Battelle ARO keeps a pool of Tetras for allocation as required.

## Computers and Internet

*Internet connectivity is provided at Thule Air Base to support everyday operational and science communications related activities. The internet communications connection is limited and relies on legacy commercial ISP infrastructure. Be prepared for slower speeds and lowered overall performance.*

Bldg. 345 is equipped with a wireless internet connection. Bldg. 345 also has a shared DSL connection. The router has an administrative password, available upon arrival. The following guidelines are in place for network usage:

- Refrain from using online streaming websites and services (YouTube, Spotify, Netflix).
- Avoid use of video on teleconferencing and collaboration apps (Zoom, Teams, Webex).
- Prepare the following configuration changes before connecting personal devices to the network:
  - Disable auto-updates to phone apps and network storage services.
- Place devices on 'airplane mode' when not in use to reduce background usage.
- Perform backups and operating system updates prior to arrival to Thule.
  - Updates for laptop/computer operating systems and anti-virus software are approved for network security.

If overtaxed, the system becomes unusable for all parties and science functions may be impacted. If this occurs, Battelle ARO can institute strict policies to regulate usage.

Transient Quarters: Wi-Fi is not included but GB can be purchased at Vectrus HQ.

**Bring back-up storage devices to Thule to avoid the need for transferring large amounts of data and files while in Greenland. Avoid large downloads unless critical.**

Bldg. 345 offers basic office technology (printer/scan/fax). The Community Center can provide large or elaborate print jobs (may incur a fee). Specific printing capabilities (color printing), a dedicated printer/scanner, or extended IT usage, must be arranged in advance– there is no “consumer” IT support.

## Money

US dollars, credit cards, debit cards, and personal checks are accepted on the Thule Air Base. Some venues only accept cash. The Base Exchange accepts credit cards, and debit cards with pin, and can give small amounts of cash back on your check/cash card when you make a purchase. The Danish Kroner currency is used in Greenland and Thule's Greenlandic post office offers currency exchange.

## Medical

A hospital is located on the base with emergency and non-emergency care. HILLTOP is the Thule Emergency and Communications hub. Emergency information is posted around base.

## Weather, Safety, Check-outs

Weather at Thule can be unpredictable. As with field work anywhere in the Arctic, researchers must be prepared and stay flexible. Temperatures range from 50F in the summer to -50F in the winter. Long nights start in autumn; long days and mosquitoes arrive in June. Thule is famous for its winds. Summer weather features that impact research operations include fog and rain. Fog can ground flight operations for days, preventing the helicopter flights and interrupting AMC service.

All researchers are encouraged to visit HILLTOP (Bldg. 287, ext. 2719) upon arrival to review Tetra radio features and base travel policies.

“Off-base” travel:

- Researchers should carry a tetra and a satellite phone (provided by Battelle ARO) for emergency use.
- Researchers are encouraged to share trip details and a check-in/out time w/ fellow researchers and HILLTOP, the communication hub on base.
- In Storm Season (Sept 15 – May 15), a travel form is required. Pick up, fill out, and file at HILLTOP immediately prior to leaving base.

## Shopping and Recreation

Thule offers comfortable living spaces, a wide selection of foods, friendly people, and a variety of social and recreational opportunities:

- The Community Center offers a theater, craft room, and coffee bar.
- The gymnasium and sports facility are excellent. Separate pairs of shoes for indoor and outdoor use (sneakers for the gym) are required - entry is not allowed in outdoor shoes.

## Base Exchange

The Base Exchange (BX) is a store selling a little bit of everything: groceries and toiletries, electronics, tobacco, souvenirs, etc. A Barber Shop - appointments required – is also here. ***Souvenirs made from certain animal products cannot be taken into the US; consult the US Customs and Border Protection’s website at <http://www.cbp.gov/>.***

**Base Exchange Hours** Monday - Friday 0800-2000 / Saturday 1000-1900 / Sunday closed

## Base Supply

Base Supply is not accessible to users outside of Vectrus. Plan accordingly to bring tools and field supplies.

## Transportation

Walking is a great mode of local transportation in Thule. NSF bicycles are available at Bldg. 345 for use. A free taxi service is also available at Thule for movement within the main base.

## Truck Rentals

Trucks are available for rent from Vectrus or through allocation of the NSF-owned (Battelle ARO-maintained and issued) fleet. Details are published in the Season Plan and provided by the Project Manager.

### Vectrus Rentals:

- The rental contract must be signed at the Administrative offices located in building 274. They will provide the vehicle pick-up location (usually the Vehicle Maintenance Facility Building 580).
  - A radio may be reserved at no charge with Vectrus truck rental and will be available for pick up from Hilltop Comms Center.

### Battelle ARO fleet:

- The Project Manager will specify the vehicle pick-up location, usually at Building 345.

### For all vehicles:

- It is the user's responsibility to stay informed of road and weather conditions. Driving is only allowed on marked and open roads. Off-road driving is not authorized. Seatbelts are mandatory for driver and passengers.
- It is the user's responsibility to keep the vehicle clean and tidy, including taking the vehicle through the wash bay at Vehicle Maintenance. A preventative maintenance plan can be established for long term rentals.
- The user must always carry a form of communication (tetra or satellite phone) while operating on the roads. (Both are required for off-base travel.)

### For NSF owned vehicles:

- It is the user's responsibility to perform regular vehicle inspections and fill out the fuel logs and inspection check sheets provided in the truck.
- Any damage to the vehicle must immediately be reported to the Project Manager and any on-site Battelle ARO staff or NSF representative.

### For Vectrus rented vehicles:

- Any damage to the vehicle during the lease period must immediately be reported to Vehicle Management (ext. 2401). The Vehicle Maintenance Shop Supervisor will estimate repair of the damage. If the damage is caused by abuse of the vehicle, the individual who signed the leasing agreement will be responsible to pay for the repair of the damage upon return of the vehicle. It must be reported to the Project Manager and any on-site Battelle ARO/NSF representative immediately following.
- The Vectrus leasing agreement includes all lubricants and one tank of diesel in the contract. Payment for any additional fuel is dependent upon the agreement between the lessee's organization, the USAF, and Battelle ARO.

- Liability insurance (damage to the vehicle or to other vehicles or persons) is included; however, personal insurance for the driver is not included in the leasing agreement.

### **Air Greenland Helicopter Charter / Other Flight Charters**

Researchers that have a helicopter charter arranged by Battelle ARO must organize the flight times with the Air Greenland Office, with the help of the Project Manager. Air Greenland has a regular flight schedule that moves people, mail and supplies to Greenlandic communities surrounding Thule. The science charter will be worked into the existing schedule. Weather is a significant and real-time schedule impact, necessitating the on-the-ground coordination between the researcher and Air Greenland. Air Greenland is located in Hangar 4.

Be prepared with cargo and weights prior to the scheduled flight date. Notify the Project Manager and Air Greenland of any oversized or hazardous cargo. If assistance is needed to confirm hazardous status or any questions, contact the Project Manager or Air Greenland.

If air charters with other vendors are a component of the season plan, the Project Manager will provide specific details on arrangements and required permissions.

### **About This Guide**

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This guide is intended to offer an overview of what to expect in Thule and the steps needed to initiate the planning process. It is not exhaustive and cannot provide all the information necessary for a safe and productive deployment to Thule Air Base. It does not substitute for a Battelle ARO-developed Season Plan.

This guide is updated annually, and suggestions and comments are welcome.

Contact Lead Greenland Science Project Manager Kyli Cosper at [Kyli@Polarfield.com](mailto:Kyli@Polarfield.com) or Greenland Operations Manager Tracy Sheeley at [sheeley@polarfield.com](mailto:sheeley@polarfield.com) with any questions.