

CHURCHILL POLAR BEARS

November 3, 2019 - 7 Days



a world to experience



Fares Per Person:

\$9,715 double/twin

\$11,050 single

tour
a more intimate travel experience



- > Please add 5% GST.
- > **Early Bookers:** \$200 discount on first 6 seats
- > **Experience Points:** Earn 155 points from this tour.
Redeem **155 points** if you book by **June 25**.

Includes

- Flight from Victoria to Winnipeg and return
- Current air transportation taxes and security fees
- 3 nights accommodation in Winnipeg & taxes
- Mini-coach transportation in Winnipeg
- Locally-guided tour of Winnipeg
- The Forks
- Canadian Museum for Human Rights
- Manitoba Museum
- Flight from Winnipeg to Churchill and return
- 3 nights accommodation in Churchill & taxes
- Local transportation in Churchill
- Locally-guided town tour of Churchill
- Itsanitaq Museum
- Cultural presentation by a local person
- 2 full days in Tundra Buggy watching polar bears
- Parks Canada Interpretive Centre
- Dog sledding excursion
- Professional naturalist guides in Churchill and on Tundra Buggy
- Gratuities for Churchill guides and drivers
- Wells Gray tour director
- Luggage handling at Winnipeg hotels
- **14 meals:** 5 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 5 dinners

102 - 736 Broughton Street
Victoria, BC V8W 1E1
www.wellsgraytours.com

victoria@wellsgraytours.com
Toll Free > 888-595-7889
Phone: > 250-590-7889



More than just Polar Bears...

Experience one of the world's most wonderful natural phenomena — the annual polar bear migration on the Hudson Bay Coast. The world's largest polar bear denning area is 40 km southeast of Churchill and has been protected in Wapusk National Park. The bears occupy this area through the summer and early fall. With October's snow and approaching winter, the polar bears start to migrate north to Churchill and wait for the ice to form on Hudson Bay where they spend the winter hunting seals. Therefore, early November is the prime viewing season and polar bear sightings are at their peak. Since the polar bear season lasts only three weeks, the costs for hotel rooms, Tundra Buggy tours, and the flight to/from Churchill are very expensive. While some tour companies offer only bear viewing, our tour is more diversified so you gain a full perspective of the region, history, and eco-systems. As well as two days of polar bear viewing from a Tundra Buggy, we include museum visits, a town tour, and a dogsled excursion. Our Churchill tour operator has been arranging tours here for three decades and boasts excellent naturalist guides with extensive experience in the natural and cultural heritage of the region. Get ready for the experience of a lifetime!

Tour Notes:

Tundra Buggy: The tour spends two days in a Tundra Buggy, a large six-wheel drive vehicle specially designed and built for off-road travel in a cold climate. Riding on huge low pressure agricultural tires, the Tundra Buggy can move safely over the snow and ice. It has comfortable seats and is equipped with a heater, restroom, and radio communication to Churchill. Sliding glass windows permit an unobstructed view. With the floor at a height of 2.1 metres and the windows opening at 3 metres, passengers are high enough to be safe from curious polar bears. Although our group will likely occupy at least half of the Tundra Buggy, there will be other travellers on board. The vehicle has a capacity of 40 people for public tours, but we have booked the semi-exclusive service where only 22 people are on board. This gives plenty of space to move around, so each person has a window seat and the rear outside deck is not so crowded.

Limited accommodation: Accommodation in Churchill during the bear viewing season is very limited and the demand for rooms is far greater than availability. Only 2 single rooms are permitted. Wells Gray Tours has not offered this tour since 2016, and the tour is limited to 15 people. Churchill lodging is best described as basic and comfortable.

Cancellation policies: The hotel, Tundra Buggy, and Churchill airline all impose strict cancellation policies due to the high demand during polar bear viewing season and the difficulty of re-selling space if a late cancellation occurs. All payments that Wells Gray Tours makes to the Churchill tour operator are non-refundable, starting in April 2019. We must commit to using all contracted services by July 4, therefore early booking on this tour is vital. Cancellation insurance for your deposit and final payment is recommended.



Activity Level: Moderate activity including medium distances to walk and some stairs. You must be able to climb a short steep set of stairs to board the Tundra Buggy. There is no luggage handling service in Churchill. There can be longer walks in the airports; request a cart at airline check-in if this could be an issue for you. This tour is not appropriate for people who depend on canes or walkers. Your Churchill room could be on the second floor with no elevator. The coaches and Tundra Buggy cannot carry a scooter. If you are not able to participate in Activity Level 2, Wells Gray Tours recommends that you bring a companion to assist you. The tour director, local guides, and drivers have many responsibilities, so please do not expect them, or your fellow travellers, to provide ongoing assistance.

Itinerary

Sunday, November 3:

Meals: D

Flights are arranged from Victoria to **Winnipeg**. Our accommodation for one night is at the downtown Delta Hotel. Meet your fellow travellers during a welcome dinner.

Monday, November 4:

Meals: B

Winnipeg is one of the most culturally diverse cities in Canada with a fascinating history. A locally-guided sightseeing tour enlightens us on the French-English relationships and includes sights like

Manitoba Legislative Building, Leo Mol Sculpture Garden, Assiniboine Park, and St. Boniface Cathedral. There is free time for lunch at **The Forks** public market with time to browse the many interesting boutiques. This afternoon, we visit the **Canadian Museum for Human Rights**, a spectacular landmark that opened in 2014 and cost \$350 million to build. There are 10 permanent galleries which contain superb exhibits about human rights through the ages. Next, we go to the **Manitoba Museum** which contains seven interpretive galler-

ies that explore the history and environment of Manitoba from the Arctic Coast to the southern grasslands. Tonight, we stay at the Sheraton Four Points Hotel near the airport, so we are conveniently located for the early flight to Churchill tomorrow. A talk about our upcoming polar bear adventure is arranged.

Tuesday, November 5: *Meals: B,L,D*

An early morning flight gets us to Churchill before 10 am. Founded by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1717, **Churchill** is today a remote outpost of 600 year-round residents. A sightseeing tour of the town with a local guide includes the historic gun batteries of Cape Merry, the Port of Churchill (Canada's only Arctic grain terminal), the shipwreck of the *Ithaca*, and a coastal drive along Hudson Bay. Cape Merry provides an excellent vantage point for spotting polar bears. This afternoon, we visit the **Itsanitaq Museum** which houses a superb collection of Inuit carvings and artifacts dating from pre-Dorset, Dorset, Thule, and modern Inuit times. We stay three nights in Churchill (hotel name to be advised later). Tonight, a cultural presentation is arranged with a local speaker.

Wednesday, November 6: *Meals: B,L,D*

We embark on the **Tundra Buggy** for a full day in the Arctic wilderness near the shore of Hudson Bay to watch the polar bears. Often, curious bears approach the vehicle providing wonderful close range encounters and excellent photos. Other animals and birds are frequently spotted as well, including the Caribou, Lemming, Ptarmigan, and White-phase Gyrfalcons.

Thursday, November 7: *Meals: B,L,D*

This is a second full day devoted to viewing the polar bears from the Tundra Buggy.

Friday, November 8: *Meals: B,L,D*

Our morning begins with an exciting **dog sledding excursion**. As well as the actual dog sled ride, we are introduced to a northern way of life where dog teams have historically played a prominent role. There may be sightings of local wildlife such as the Arctic Fox, Arctic Hare, and Snowy Owl. After lunch, we visit the **Parks Canada Interpretive Centre** which presents exhibits and a show about the natural history and human settlement of this region. Our flight back to Winnipeg departs tonight and we stay overnight at the Sheraton Four Points Hotel.

Saturday, November 9:

We fly from Winnipeg to Victoria.

Tour Policies

Payments: A deposit of \$1,500 per person is requested at the time of booking and the balance is due June 25, 2019. By paying the deposit, you agree to the Terms & Conditions, Activity Level and Cancellation Policy outlined.

Discounts: Early bookers receive \$200 discount on first 6 seats for booking early with deposit. The discount is not offered after June 25.

Cancellation Policy: Up to May 25, 2019, your tour payments will be refunded less a cancellation charge of \$500 per person. From May 26 to June 25, the cancellation charge is \$1,500 per person (your deposit). From June 26 to July 25, the cancellation charge is 50% of the tour fare. From July 26 to August 26, the cancellation charge is 70% of the tour fare. After August 26, there is no refund. Wells Gray Tours cannot adjust these penalties or dates as they are imposed by the Churchill package supplier.

Fare Changes: Changes to taxes and surcharges from airlines and other tour suppliers can occur at any time and are beyond the control of Wells Gray Tours, therefore Wells Gray Tours reserves the right to increase fares due to such changes until departure.

Travel Insurance: A Comprehensive Insurance policy is available through Wells Gray Tours and coverage is provided by Travel Guard. Policies purchased at deposit include a waiver of the pre-existing condition clause, otherwise policies can be purchased no later than at final payment. Please contact us for details. If you have travel insurance from another company, please check that the policy provides cancellation insurance adequate for the above penalties.

Photo Credit: Robert Taylor, Frontiers North

Tour 25: This is a Tour 25 departure, meaning capacity of the tour is limited to 25 participants or less, a more intimate travel experience. For this tour, capacity is actually 15 people. There will be other travellers sharing the Tundra Buggy to a maximum of 22 people. Early booking is strongly recommended.

E-points: This tour earns 155 e-points. Each time you travel on a Wells Gray tour, you earn Experience Points, or e-points. One e-point equals \$1. Redeem your points on select tours or accumulate enough points to earn a free tour! Redemptions offered until June 25.

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