



Dog carting

CHURCHILL BELUGA WHALES

July 30, 2021 – 9 Days

Includes train from Winnipeg to Churchill

Summer is the perfect time to visit Churchill, Manitoba. During the months of July and August, the Churchill River is teeming with beluga whales who migrate into the warm, shallow waters to give birth and feed on fish. Known as the “canaries of the sea”, these friendly and inquisitive creatures will capture your heart as you enjoy their whale songs. While on land, enjoy the view as the surrounding landscape erupts into colourful summer blooms. Walk through the Hudson’s Bay Company’s massive Prince of Wales Fort, dating from 1717. Experience a dog carting excursion with a professional musher through the boreal forest and explore the Churchill Wildlife Management Area by Tundra Buggy for a chance to see a multitude of northern wildlife. You might even have the opportunity to see the first of the summer polar bears as they begin their migration into the area. With train service now restored, we experience Via Rail from Winnipeg to Churchill for 2 days and 2 nights in Sleeper Plus category with meals in the dining car. Our Churchill tour operator boasts excellent naturalist guides with extensive knowledge of the natural and cultural heritage of the region. Get ready for an amazing experience!

Activity Level: 2



TOUR
15

11 Meals Included:

5 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 3 dinners

Fares per person:

\$8,145 double/twin; \$9,075 single
Please add 5% GST.

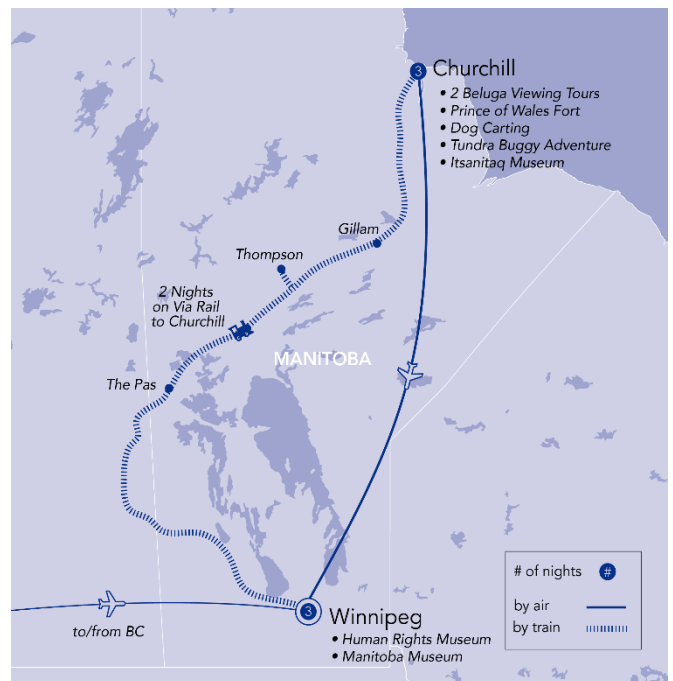
Early Bookers:

\$200 discount on first 4 seats; \$100 on next 2

Experience Points:

Earn 110 points from this tour.

Redeem 110 points if you book by March 23, 2021.



Train route to Churchill

ITINERARY

Day 1: Friday, July 30

A transfer is provided to Victoria airport and we fly to **Winnipeg**. Our accommodation for two nights is at The Forks in the centre of the city where the Assiniboine River meets the Red River. It is a top tourist destination featuring history, culture, and authentic shops. Meet your fellow travellers during a welcome dinner.

Meals included: Dinner

Accommodation: Inn at the Forks

Day 2: Saturday, July 31

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. We explore the impressive landmark of the **Canadian Museum for Human Rights**

which 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 interpretive galleries that explore the history and environment of Manitoba from the Arctic Coast to the southern grasslands. A talk about our upcoming Churchill adventure is arranged.

Accommodation: Inn at the Forks

Day 3: Sunday, August 1

In late morning, we check in at the **VIA Rail** station at The Forks and board our train. Settle into your Sleeper Plus roomette or bedroom, then explore the facilities on the train. It pulls out of Winnipeg at noon for the 45-hour journey north to Churchill. During the afternoon and evening, the

train crosses western Manitoba, enters Saskatchewan for a few hours, then returns to Manitoba.

Meals included: Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: On the train

Day 4: Monday, August 2

For most of the day, we cross miles of muskeg, pass hundreds of lakes, and get fleeting glimpses of many villages where the train stops if requested. **Thompson** is the largest city in northern Manitoba and the train stops here for up to five hours in the afternoon, so you may want to get off for a walk. Founded as a mining town in the 1950s, Thompson is the end of the road north and from here on the train provides a vital land connection.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: On the train



Day 5: Tuesday, August 3

Our scheduled arrival time in **Churchill** is 9 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), Manitoba Conservation's Polar Bear Holding Facility, and the Inukshuk at the beach. This afternoon, we take a boat excursion for the **first viewing of the beluga whales** that migrate into the mouth of the Churchill River. This is the largest beluga whale

population in the world and we can see them at surface level very close to our boat. On the other side of the river, we tour the **Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site**, the oldest and most northerly fort in Canada. It began as a log fort built in 1717 by the Hudson's Bay Company to protect its fur trading interests. Starting in 1731, it was replaced by a massive stone fort in a star shape with sides 90 metres long and walls 6 metres tall and 9 metres thick at the base. There were 42 cannons mounted on the walls. Construction continued for 40 years, but it was never fully completed. During free time this evening, you may want to explore Churchill's authentic shops or view the **SeaWalls murals** around town.

Meals included: Breakfast

Accommodation: Churchill hotel TBA



Day 6: Wednesday, August 4

We participate in an exhilarating **dog carting** excursion hosted by a local resident and dogsleding expert. Meet the team of friendly dogs, hear stories, and enjoy a ride for 2 km on a custom-made dog cart through the northern boreal forest. Later, we visit the **Parks Canada Interpretive Centre** which presents exhibits and a show about the natural history and human settlement of this region. We also visit the **Itsanitaq Museum** which houses a superb collection of Inuit carvings and artifacts dating from pre-Dorset, Dorset, Thule, and modern Inuit times.

Meals included: Breakfast

Accommodation: TBA

Day 7: Thursday, August 5

Today is another opportunity to view the **beluga whales** while riding in a zodiac and we have a guided excursion of the estuary of the Churchill River.

Meals included: Breakfast

Accommodation: TBA

Day 8: Friday, August 6

We embark on the **Tundra Buggy** for a day in the sub-Arctic wilderness of the Churchill Wildlife Management Area near the shore of Hudson Bay. At this time of year, it is full of flowers, migrating birds, and wildlife such as Caribou and Arctic Fox. This evening, we fly from Churchill to Winnipeg and stay overnight near the airport.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodation: Lakeview Signature Hotel



Day 9: Saturday, August 7

We fly from Winnipeg to Victoria, then a transfer is provided to your pickup point.

Option:

A guided kayaking excursion among the beluga whales on the Churchill River is available. It lasts for 3 hours and all equipment is provided. Cost is \$225 per person plus GST. Please book for this option by final payment date.

BELUGA WHALES

Experience one of the world's most wonderful natural phenomena — the annual migration of beluga whales into the warm, shallow waters of the Churchill River to give birth and feed on fish. Known as the “canaries of the sea”, these friendly and inquisitive creatures will capture your heart as you enjoy their whale song. The beluga whale is an Arctic and sub-Arctic cetacean, one of two members of the family *Monodontidae*, along with the narwhal.

The beluga is adapted to life in the Arctic, so it has characteristics that differentiate it from other cetaceans, such as its all-white colour and the absence of a dorsal fin which allows it to swim under ice. It has a distinctive protuberance at the front of its head which houses an echolocation organ called the melon. The beluga's body size is between that of a dolphin and a true whale, with males growing up to 5.5 metres long and weighing up to 1,600 kilograms. Like many cetaceans, a large percentage of its weight is blubber. Its sense of hearing is highly developed and its echolocation allows it to move about and find breathing holes under sheet ice.

Belugas are gregarious and form groups of 10 animals on average although, during the summer, they can gather in the hundreds in shallow coastal areas. They are slow swimmers, but can dive to 700 metres below the surface. They are opportunistic feeders and their diets vary according to their locations and the season. Belugas are migratory and the majority of groups spend the winter around the Arctic ice cap; when the sea ice melts in summer, they move to warmer river estuaries to breed.

Although this tour features beluga whales, it is quite diversified, so you gain a full perspective of the region, history, and eco-systems. As well as two boat excursions to see the belugas up close, we include a Tundra Buggy ride to experience the Arctic environment, a tour of Prince of Wales Fort, museum visits, a town tour, and a dog carting excursion. Our Churchill tour operator has been arranging tours here for three decades and boasts excellent naturalist guides with extensive knowledge in the natural and cultural heritage of the region.



WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Transfers to Victoria airport and return
- Flight from Victoria to Winnipeg and return
- Current air transport taxes and security fees
- 3 nights accommodation in Winnipeg & taxes
- Transportation in Winnipeg
- Locally-guided tour of Winnipeg
- The Forks
- Canadian Museum for Human Rights
- Manitoba Museum
- VIA Rail train from Winnipeg to Churchill with accommodation in Sleeper Plus Class
- 3 nights accommodation in Churchill & taxes
- Local transportation in Churchill
- Locally-guided town tour of Churchill
- Churchill River boat tour to view beluga whales
- Walking tour of Prince of Wales Fort
- Dog carting excursion
- Parks Canada Interpretive Centre
- Itsanitaq Museum
- Zodiac excursion to view beluga whales
- Tundra Buggy trip in Churchill Wildlife Management area
- Flight from Churchill to Winnipeg
- Transfers between airport and Winnipeg hotel
- Professional naturalist guides in Churchill and on Tundra Buggy
- Gratuities for Churchill guides, drivers, boat crew, docents, and train dining car stewards
- Knowledgeable Wells Gray tour director
- Luggage handling at Winnipeg hotels
- **11 meals:** 5 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 3 dinners

TOUR NOTES

Winnipeg to Churchill train: You are reserved in Sleeper Plus Class on the train for 2 days and 2 nights. Sleeping accommodation is in private bedrooms, either double with upper and lower berths or single with lower berth only. Amenities include couch-style seats that convert to beds at night, electrical outlet, toilet, sink, and mirror. Shower facilities are located nearby. Enjoy exclusive access to the dome car with excellent views. All meals are included in the elegant dining car which offers exclusive service for first-class travellers. There is no wi-fi available on the train, but you may be able to connect with cell service.

Tundra Buggy: The tour spends most of a day in a Tundra Buggy, a large six-wheel drive vehicle specially designed and built for off-road travel. Riding on huge low-pressure agricultural tires, the Tundra Buggy can move safely over the ground. It has comfortable seats and is equipped with a heater (if needed), 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 animals. There will be other travellers on board.

Limited accommodation: Accommodation in Churchill is very limited and the demand for rooms is far greater than availability. Only 4 single rooms are permitted. Wells Gray Tours has never offered a summer Churchill tour before, although we do offer the Churchill Polar Bears tour regularly in November. This tour is limited to 15 people. Churchill lodging is best described as basic and comfortable.

Cancellation policies: The hotel, Tundra Buggy, VIA Rail, and Churchill airline all impose strict cancellation policies due to the high demand 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 November 2020. We must commit to using all contracted services by March 30, 2021, therefore early booking on this tour is vital. Cancellation insurance for your deposit and final payment is recommended. Penalties for cancellation are detailed on the next page.

Luggage: While on the train, your suitcase is stored in the baggage car. You may bring your suitcase to your private room for overnight stays, but it is highly recommended that you bring a more compact bag with just your needs for those 2 days while on board.

Gratuities: The customary gratuities for train room attendants are not included in your tour fare due to the challenges of distribution on board, so please budget \$10 per person total. Gratuities are included for the dining car train staff, and for all included meals off the train, local guides, museum docents, boat crew, and coach drivers. The customary gratuity to the Wells Gray tour director is not included and left to your discretion.

TOUR 15 This is a Tour 15 departure, meaning capacity of the tour is limited to 15 participants or less, a more intimate travel experience. Early booking is strongly recommended.



Activity Level 2: 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 VIA Rail train and the Tundra Buggy. You must be able to get in and out of a Zodiac or boat without difficulty, and sit on board for several hours while viewing the belugas. There is no luggage handling service in Churchill. There can be longer walks in the airports; request a cart in advance or 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 (ground floor rooms cannot be requested). The coaches, train, 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.

TOUR POLICIES

Payments: A deposit of \$1,000 per person is requested at the time of booking and the balance is due March 23, 2021. By paying the deposit, you agree to the Terms & Conditions, Activity Level and Cancellation Policy outlined.

Discounts: Early bookers receive \$200 discount on first 4 seats and \$100 on next 2 seats for booking early with deposit. The discount is not offered after March 23, 2021.

Cancellation Policy: Up to February 21, 2021, your tour payments will be refunded less a cancellation charge of \$500 per person. From February 22 to March 23, the cancellation charge is \$1,000 per person (your deposit). From March 24 to April 23, the cancellation charge is 50% of the tour fare. From April 24 to May 22, the cancellation charge is 70% of the tour fare. After May 22, 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, VIA Rail, 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.

Home pickups may be offered in Greater Victoria, depending on the number of people booked and coach size. Decision is made about 2 weeks before departure and you will be contacted about your pickup point and time.

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Experience Points: This tour earns 110 Experience Points or e-points. Each time you travel on a Wells Gray tour, you earn 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 March 23, 2021.

Consumer Protection BC Licences: Kamloops 178, Vernon 655, Kelowna 588, Penticton 924, Victoria 65842

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