



Dog carting

## CHURCHILL BELUGA WHALES

August 2, 2021 – 7 Days

*See the annual migration of belugas!*

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. Our Churchill tour operator boasts excellent naturalist guides with extensive knowledge of the natural and cultural heritage of the region. This tour flies to and from Churchill as the train will not have any sleeper cars during summer 2021.

Activity Level: 2



7 Meals Included:

5 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 1 dinner

Fares per person:

\$7,220 double/twin; \$8,145 single

Please add 5% GST.

Experience Points:

Earn 110 points from this tour.

Redeem 110 points if you book by April 29, 2021.

TOUR

15



Tundra Buggy

## ITINERARY

### Day 1: Monday, August 2

Make your own way to Kamloops or Kelowna airport and board your flight to Winnipeg. Meet your fellow travellers during a get-acquainted dinner.

**Meals included:** Dinner

**Accommodation:** Lakeview Signature Hotel

### Day 2: Tuesday, August 3

**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. An evening talk about our upcoming Churchill adventure is arranged.

**Meals included:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** Lakeview Signature Hotel



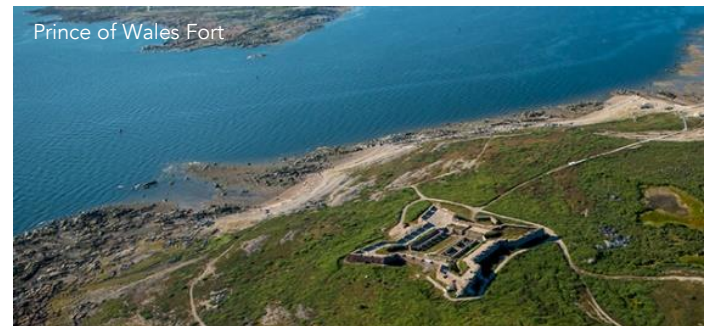
### Day 3: Wednesday, August 4

Our flight on Calm Air leaves Winnipeg at 10 am and takes 3½ hours to **Churchill**. 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. Afterwards, 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 4: Thursday, August 5

We participate in an exhilarating **dog carting** excursion hosted by a local resident and dogsledging 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:** Churchill hotel TBA

### Day 5: Friday, August 6

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, Lunch

**Accommodation:** Churchill hotel TBA

### Day 6: Saturday, August 7

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.

**Meals included:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** Lakeview Signature Hotel

### Day 7: Sunday, August 8

We fly from Winnipeg to Kelowna or Kamloops.

#### 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.

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Flight from Kelowna or Kamloops 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
- Canadian Museum for Human Rights
- Flights from Winnipeg to Churchill and return
- 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
- Professional naturalist guides in Churchill and on Tundra Buggy
- Gratuities for Churchill guides, drivers, boat crew, and docents
- Knowledgeable Wells Gray tour director
- Luggage handling at Winnipeg hotels
- **7 meals:** 5 breakfasts, 1 lunch, 1 dinner



## 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.

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## TOUR NOTES

**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 (next departure October 25, 2021). This 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 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 25, 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.

## TOUR NOTES CONTINUED

**Gratuities** are included for 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 Tundra Buggy. You must be able to get in and out of a Zodiac or a 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 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.

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## TOUR POLICIES

**Payments:** A deposit of \$1,000 per person is requested at the time of booking and the balance is due April 29, 2021. By paying the deposit, you agree to the Terms & Conditions, Activity Level and Cancellation Policy outlined.

**Cancellation Policy:** Up to April 29, 2021, the cancellation charge is \$1,000 per person (your deposit). From April 30 to May 28, 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 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 Credits:** Frontiers North, photo by Zhang Yongpeng (Belugas, 1<sup>st</sup> page); Frontiers North, photo by Eric Lindberg (dog carting, Tundra Buggy); Tourism Winnipeg (Human Rights Museum); Parks Canada (Prince of Wales Fort); Travel Manitoba (Itsanitaq Museum); Wikimedia Commons (Belugas, 4<sup>th</sup> page)

**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 April 29, 2021.

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

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