



CHURCHILL POLAR BEARS

October 26, 2023 – 7 Days

3 nights in Churchill with 2 expeditions in the Tundra Buggy to watch polar bears

Experience one of the world's most wonderful natural phenomena — the annual polar bear migration on the coast of Hudson Bay. 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, late October and early November are the prime viewing weeks and polar bear sightings are at their peak.

Activity Level: 2



TOUR
15

13 Meals Included:

4 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 5 dinners

Fares per person:

\$9,785 double/twin; \$11,340 single
Please add 5% GST.

Early Bookers:

\$200 discount on first 6 seats; \$100 on next 4

Experience Points:

Earn 155 points on this tour.

Redeem 155 points if you book by June 22, 2023.

Departures from: Victoria, Nanaimo & Comox



ITINERARY

Day 1: Thursday, October 26

Flights are arranged from Victoria to **Winnipeg** and can be requested from Nanaimo or Comox. Tonight, we stay at the Lakeview Signature Hotel near the airport, so we are conveniently located for the early flight to Churchill on Saturday. Meet your fellow travellers during a welcome dinner.

Meals included: Dinner

Accommodation: Lakeview Signature Hotel

Day 2: Friday, October 27

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 the 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. An orientation talk about our upcoming polar bear adventure is arranged this evening.

Accommodation: Lakeview Signature Hotel

Day 3: Saturday, October 28

An early morning flight gets us to Churchill by 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. We also stop at the Polar Bear Holding Facility and listen to a talk by an ambassador at the Polar Bears International House. In the afternoon, we visit the **Parks Canada Interpretive Centre** which has exhibits and a show about the natural history and

human settlement of this region. We stay three nights in Churchill (hotel name to be advised later).

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: TBA in Churchill

Day 4: Sunday, October 29

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. Tonight, a cultural presentation is arranged with a local speaker.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: TBA in Churchill

Day 5: Monday, October 30

First, we take a thrilling **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. 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.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: TBA in Churchill

Day 6: Tuesday, October 31

This is a second full day devoted to viewing the polar bears from the Tundra Buggy. Our flight back to Winnipeg departs tonight.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Lakeview Signature Hotel

Day 7: Wednesday, November 1

Transportation is provided to Winnipeg Airport, then we fly to Victoria, Nanaimo or Comox.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Flights from Victoria, Nanaimo or Comox 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
- Flights from Winnipeg to Churchill and return
- 3 nights accommodation in Churchill & taxes
- Local transportation in Churchill
- Locally-guided town tour of Churchill
- Polar Bear Holding Facility
- Talk at Polar Bears International House
- Parks Canada Interpretive Centre
- 2 days in Tundra Buggy viewing polar bears
- Cultural presentation
- Dog sledding excursion
- Itsanitaq Museum
- Professional naturalist guides in Churchill and on Tundra Buggy
- Gratuities for guides, drivers and docents in Winnipeg and Churchill
- Knowledgeable Wells Gray tour director with you until your flight to Churchill
- Luggage handling at Winnipeg hotel
- **13 meals:** 4 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 5 dinners

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. 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 offers this tour about every 3 years and it is limited to 15 people. Churchill lodging is basic and comfortable.

Wells Gray Tour Director is with you on October 26 and 27 and sees you onto your Churchill flight on October 28. A Churchill guide looks after all your activities on October 28 through 31.

Clothing: Dress warmly, no matter what weather forecast you see for Churchill. You will be outside a lot and it is easy to get chilled, even in late October. Bring a winter coat, winter pants, warm sweatshirt, heavy sweater, warm underwear, toque, and warm gloves. You could also purchase the winter gear rental option (see below).

Comprehensive travel insurance is required by the Churchill tour company including without limitation medical, emergency evacuation, trip cancellation, and interruption insurance. If you do not buy insurance through Wells Gray Tours, it is essential that you check your policy carefully. Insurance with your credit card or employee benefits may not cover what you need.




Wells Gray tour in 2016



TOUR NOTES CONTINUED

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. We must commit to using all contracted services by July 4, therefore early booking on this tour is vital. Churchill rooms may be recalled from our block if unsold, and it is very unlikely that we can get a room for a late booking.

 **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. There is no luggage handling service in Churchill. There can be longer walks in the airports. 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 Activity Level 2 could be challenging, you must bring a companion who is able 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 assistance.

OPTIONS:

Winter gear rental: If you don't want to pack your own cold weather clothing, you can take advantage of this convenient service for parka, pants, and boots for 4 days. Pricing available in spring 2023.

Helicopter ride: Take a 1-hour helicopter ride over Churchill and Hudson Bay. The date is flexible depending on weather. \$655 per person plus tax.

TOUR POLICIES

Payments: A deposit of \$1,000 per person is requested at the time of booking and balance is due June 22, 2023. By paying the deposit, you agree to the Terms & Conditions, Activity Level and Cancellation Policy outlined. Payments can be made by online banking, cheque, Visa or Mastercard (\$5,000 limit per person per booking on credit cards).

Cancellation Policy: Up to May 23, 2023, the cancellation charge is \$750 per person. From May 24 to June 22, the cancellation charge is \$1,000 per person. From June 23 to July 21, the cancellation charge is 50% of the tour fare. After July 21, there is no refund.

Fare Changes: Changes to taxes and surcharges from 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.

Food Allergies: You must notify us no later than at final payment if you have a food allergy. Restaurants in Churchill may not be able to satisfy all food allergies. As restaurants recover from two years of pandemic restrictions, many facing severe labour shortages, we have been informed that food allergies should be honoured, but it is impossible to handle everybody's requests for food preferences. (An allergy causes medical distress, a preference does not.) For some allergies, please consider bringing your own snacks or food items so you are not dependent on what restaurants are able to serve.

Photo Credits: Frontiers North (page 1 bears and Tundra Buggies), Marion Wienhold (dog sledding), Frontiers North, Robert Taylor (page 3 top)

Experience 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 22, 2023.

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

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