

## Canada

### CLASSIC POLAR BEARS

- Experience the greatest concentration of wild polar bears found anywhere in the world
- Our tours are led by wildlife experts who work closely with polar bear researchers from the W.W.F.
- Join a small group of only 15 other people in specially adapted tundra vehicles
- Chance to see the Northern Lights in Churchill, staying in small, family-run guesthouses



## Summary

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Heading out over the frozen Tundra's of the Canadian Arctic, this trip allows you the chance to come face to face with the world's largest bear in this rugged frontier wilderness. Our expedition leaders have spent time with researchers from the World Wildlife Fund who have been studying polar bears in the region and their knowledge will give you a privileged insight into one of the most iconic of the Arctic animals. In specially adapted Tundra vehicles you will experience one of the exciting wildlife encounters and gain an insight into the bear's behaviour, but you will also have the chance to look for arctic hare and fox as well as the spectacular light display of Aurora Borealis - "The Dawn of the North." A classic Arctic wildlife trip for photographers and wildlife enthusiasts alike and still the best place in the world to see polar bears.

# Overview

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The mighty polar bear is widely considered the most intriguing and awe-inspiring of all animals. Even the region that he rules takes his name - the Greek word, “arktos” translates as bear. It is because of this amazing animal that we travel to the small grain port of Churchill on the western coast of central Canada’s Hudson Bay, home to a wide variety of Arctic wildlife. However, a warming climate and melting ice sheets are affecting Arctic ecosystems, threatening the future of all polar bears and this tour helps to support the work of the WWF and the research they undertake in this fragile wilderness.



Every Autumn, the tundra at the shores of the Hudson Bay becomes a stopover for more than a thousand polar bears on their annual migration to the pack ice. Whilst the bears mostly live solitary lives, spotting them individually on the ice can be a monumental feat. However, in Churchill at this time of year, you have the incredible opportunity to see large numbers of them in a relatively small wilderness area.

At one time, the unavoidable confrontations that occurred between man and bear almost always resulted in the bear coming off second best, but with increased tourist interest and a new awareness of the importance of conserving the bears, the people of Churchill are committed to helping the great animals migrate safely through their now famous town. This tour will also allow you to meet the people who live in this fascinating North American community and the challenges they face in this isolated area. This flagship polar bear expedition offers wildlife enthusiasts, photographers and adventure travellers alike the rare opportunity to visit one of the world’s most extraordinary creatures, in the wilds of the Canadian Arctic.

# Your experts

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To us, there’s no question that one of the most important aspects of any adventure is the quality of the leaders. As with all of our tours, we use the most experienced guides available, with many having degrees in their chosen field of expertise.



## **Bonnie Chartier**

One of the most experienced of the Churchill guides, (having been born there!) Bonnie’s passion for this beautiful region is infectious. Instrumental in developing wildlife tourism in the region and a Canadian ranger by trade, she has also written a number of wildlife books on the region.



## **Mike Bruscia**

Having pursued a career in the field of guiding and nature education, Mike has taught ecology programmes focusing on Atlantic marine ecosystems and marine mammals, having guided extensively in Churchill for polar bears and belugas.



## **Conrad Hennig**

Having graduated with a batchelors degree in zoology and entomology, specialising in animal behaviour, he is equally known for his enthusiasm, energy and insight and is a consistently popular guide.

Please note that the above are examples only with the exact guide being confirmed nearer the time.

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# Itinerary

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## Day 1

Arrive in Winnipeg in the afternoon, where you will be met by our representative and transferred to your hotel. On arrival here, you have the chance to meet the rest of the group and relax after the flight, before enjoying a hosted dinner.

## Day 2

This morning is an early start as you catch the Calm Air flight to Churchill, (an adventure in itself!) and your base for the next few days adventure. An unassuming place, Churchill is linked to the rest of the country only by the Hudson Bay Railway and by airplane. However, the town itself is significant as it stands at the juncture of three different ecologically and geographically defined areas; the boreal forest to the south, the Arctic tundra to the northwest and the Hudson Bay to the north.



Once settled in, you will have an evening presentation on polar bears and the northern environs by our naturalists and scientists. The guides themselves would have accompanied the WWF researchers before the start of the season to allow them to get the most up-to-date polar bear knowledge about the behaviour and present status of the bears.



## Day 3-4

For the next couple of days, you have early starts as you leave the hotel and head out into the wilderness in specially adapted tundra vehicles, spending time among the polar bears. Although the vehicles traditionally accommodate an average of 35 passengers, we take maximum of just 15, ensuring everyone has a window seat in comfort, which is excellent for photography. Our expedition leader will be on board with you at all times and will know the best places to view bears, which are waiting for the ice to solidify on Hudson Bay to begin the winter seal-hunting season.



This unique way of viewing the bears allow us to spend hours watching them interact, whilst the guides interpret and explain the animal behaviour. After a full days excursion on the tundra, you will return to the lodge in the evenings for dinner, followed by presentations on wildlife and / or local cultures. For those willing to brave the chill, you can head out into some of the local pubs to meet the communities and savour local life!



## Day 5

Today allows you to further explore the historic frontier town of Churchill and the surrounding area, including the chance to see local sled dogs en route to Cape Merry, where we often see Arctic fox and Arctic hare, before heading out again on to the tundra for a fascinating evening bear viewing and dinner aboard the vehicle.



If the skies are clear, the night time excursion may also provide one of nature's most exhilarating experiences - a chance to view the Aurora Borealis away from the glare of town. Though they are never predictable, sometimes amidst the darkness of the sub-arctic tundra, the lights begin as a white glow in the sky, before they flicker and dance in shimmering curtains of colour.

You then return to your lodge for the night.

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### **Day 6**

Today is your last full day in Churchill and the return flights are scheduled to depart in the mid - late afternoon, to offer as much time as possible to explore Churchill and pick up last-minute souvenirs or, if time permits, take an optional helicopter journey over the tundra or an authentic dog-sledding excursion (paid for locally). After catching the flight back to Winnipeg you will again be met on arrival and taken to your hotel.



### **Day 7**

After breakfast, transfer to the airport for flight home.

Please note that on the 6 day itinerary, we depart Churchill on Day 5 and leave Winnipeg on the morning of Day 6.

# Dates

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## 2012

### 6-Day Tour

Oct 15-20, Oct 17-22, Oct 23-28, Oct 24-29, Oct 26-31, Oct 29-Nov 3,  
Nov 5-10, Nov 8-13, Nov 11-16, Nov 12-17

### 7-Day Tour

Oct 15-21, Oct 18-24, Oct 19-25, Oct 20-26, Oct 22-28, Oct 24-30, Oct 27-Nov 2,  
Oct 28-Nov 3, Oct 29-Nov 4, Oct 31-Nov 6, Nov 2-8, Nov 4-10,  
Nov 6-12, Nov 10-16\*, Nov 14-20, Nov 15-21

2013 Dates available on request

## Main tour

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From £3,195.00 per person excluding international flights - 6 Day Tour

From £3,495.00 per person excluding international flights - 7 Day Tour

### INCLUDES

Return flight from Winnipeg to Churchill (cost shown separately above), accommodation based on a twin share room, all meals (except lunch and dinner on your final day in Churchill) services of expedition leaders, permits and entrance fees, airport transfers, all taxes and service charges, membership to WWF.

### EXCLUDES

International long haul flights to Winnipeg (which we can help arrange), gratuities, visas, items of a personal nature, alcohol, travel insurance.

### TRAVELLING FROM OUTSIDE THE UK

We are happy to quote you either in US dollars or Euros - with or without flights - to the destination city. Because of recent currency fluctuations we will quote you separately for this, but please contact us for more details.

### SINGLE SUPPLEMENT

If you are happy to share accommodation with a fellow traveller of the same sex then you will not be charged a single supplement for your holiday. This is of course dependent on there being another same sex traveller on the trip who is also wanting to share. If we cannot find a partner with whom you can share then unfortunately we will be left with no choice but to pass on the single supplement, imposed by the properties we are using. We will endeavour to keep this supplement to a minimum. Naturally should you wish to have a single room then this is possible by simply opting to pay the single supplement as per the itinerary.

The cost for a guaranteed single room is £635pp.

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# Important

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## **Age Restrictions**

Participants must be aged 18 and upwards for this particular group tour.

## **Weather**

In case of flight or weather delays, we recommend that you arrive a day early. Our small group tour begins with a 7:00 pm welcome dinner on Day 1. You are free to depart at any time on the final day. Please contact us to arrange pre or post-trip accommodation.

## **Essential Items**

We will provide you with a very comprehensive information document with regards to the necessary clothing and equipment required on confirmation of booking.

## **Wildlife viewing**

Please note that whilst we have an excellent chance of seeing polar bears, as with any wildlife viewing, success can never be guaranteed as they are wild animals with no fixed routine. Finding them takes patience skill and a little luck, but you will be guided by some of the most experienced leaders in the region who know how to get the best from your trip.

## **Accommodation and meals in Churchill**

Please note that the accommodation is clean and comfortable in Churchill, with each lodge having its own bathroom, but they are simple lodges and not luxury. Please also note that whilst all diets can be catered for, Churchill is not a destination known for its gourmet food, given its isolation.

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# Our commitment

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An unavoidable consequence of travel is the emission of carbon dioxide into the high atmosphere and while Steppes Discovery takes measures to reduce the carbon footprint of its holidays, regrettably it is not yet possible to make them carbon neutral. If you are able to, we suggest you consider offsetting the carbon emission of your long haul flight by using Rainforest Concern's Forest Credits scheme. Details can be found at [www.forestcredits.org.uk](http://www.forestcredits.org.uk)

Rainforests have a central role to play in the slowing of climate change and yet we are removing forests from the planet at a faster rate than they can grow back. Rainforest Concern supports projects that look to preserve the forests that we have. Rather than replanting new ones, working to safeguard biodiversity and local communities and in so doing mitigate climate change.



World Wide Fund For Nature

The largest independent nature conservation organisation in the world founded in 1961 with over 5 million supporters. In the past ten years they have spent over £211 million on conservation work and currently have more than 1000 international projects. Steppes Discovery has worked closely with the UK organisation in the past and visits a number of project regions within its travel programmes.

Our travel partners, accommodation, service providers and ground agents are all carefully chosen to ensure their commitment to the environment, most being quality, family owned businesses - reflecting the unique character of the places, the abiding hospitality of its people and the remarkable spirit of its wilderness.

**Now come along and see for yourself. With us it won't cost the earth!**

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## Want to discuss this

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Please call **Chris** on **(00 44) 1285 880 936** for more details or drop him an e-mail at [chris@steppesdiscovery.co.uk](mailto:chris@steppesdiscovery.co.uk)