

Polar Bear Dreams : In Search of the Great White Bears

A trip for Gay Men, Lesbians & Friends

From only \$4990 per person

October 14th-24th, 2010

Land Tour, Accommodations, and meals for five nights

Experience nature first hand on this unique trek to the edge of Hudson Bay in northern Manitoba, polar bear capital of the world, to see polar bears in the wild. From the comfort of our Tundra Buggy , an all-terrain vehicle equipped like a modern railroad car, we ride over the tundra in search of the great white bears. Other Arctic wildlife will be seen such as fox, hare and many bird species. Dogsledding, sightseeing and lectures about the environment and the native peoples are included.



Explore Winnipeg, the vibrant capital city of Manitoba, but prepare to immerse yourself into the world of the Polar Bear! Your time spent in Churchill will take you out onto the desolate tundra, where the harsh climate and billowing winds are no test to the mighty Nanuk, which in the Inuit language means polar bear.

Trip Highlights

- See Polar Bears in their natural habitat - up close and personal.
- Dogsled across the tundra.
- Learn about the native peoples of the prairie and the tundra.
- Look for arctic fox, arctic hare, snowy owls, and bearded seals.
- Enjoy this unusual environment from the comfort of an uncrowded Tundra Buggy.
- Learn about this ecosphere from local naturalists.
- If conditions are right, gaze at the splendor of the Northern Lights..

Travelling Alone?

So are most of the people who travel with us. You do not need to pay extra to travel by yourself. Prices are per-person, and the single supplement applies only if you'd like a room by yourself. For

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selected trips, especially if the trip includes a cruise, we charge half the single supplement if you request a roommate, but we are not able to match you with someone.

Location: Starts and ends in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

Price includes: Lodging for 2 nights at fine hotel near Winnipeg Airport at start and end of trip; Round-trip flights by chartered plane between Winnipeg and Churchill (with other groups); All transportation within and around Churchill; Two full days in Tundra Buggy to view polar bears (private buggy if minimum of 10 participants in our group); Three nights in Churchill hotel, with private bath (please note that all Churchill hotels are fairly rustic); Two-hour dog sledding program in the boreal forest; Presentations about the life of native northern peoples, including the Inuit (Eskimos); Five breakfasts, four lunches and five dinners; All hotel services charges, government taxes, portorage, and meal gratuities.

Not included: Transportation to and from starting and ending points (Winnipeg); Transfers between Winnipeg Airport and hotel (hotel is adjacent to airport); Personal items including: alcoholic beverages, snacks, laundry, and telephone calls; Gratuities for guides.

Detailed Itinerary

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1: Journey to the Great North

Today our expedition begins as we depart from home and fly to Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, where we will stay at a hotel by the airport. We'll have a reception for our group and dinner at our hotel this evening.

Winnipeg "The Gateway to the North" is nearly equidistant from the Atlantic and Pacific and a fascinating city, so you might want to arrive a day early to explore the city. As Canada's fourth largest city, it has museums, galleries, a lovely French quarter and plenty of nightlife.

You can visit Winnipeg's French Quarter and the beautiful St. Boniface Cathedral, the oldest cathedral in western Canada. There is also the Manitoba Museum of Man & Nature which displays artifacts collected by the Hudson's Bay Company over several centuries.

Canada officially recognizes three Aboriginal peoples: the First Nations (Indians), the Inuit (Eskimo), and the Metis (mixed blood descendants of marriages between aboriginal people and Europeans), and we will hear about each of them during our trip to understand the human relationship with this often harsh landscape.

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2: Introduction to Churchill

In the early morning we will transfer to Winnipeg Airport then take a 2.5 hour flight to Churchill, on the shores of Hudson Bay. We will be on a chartered aircraft, along with some other tour groups and a cold breakfast will be served on the plane.

Upon arrival in Churchill, our luggage will be transferred to our hotel while we embark upon a Town and Area Tour of Churchill. This tour incorporates the history, wildlife and culture of the Churchill area, visiting Cape Merry National Historic site, the Polar Bear compound and many other significant sites. There will be a stop for an included lunch along the way.



After lunch we will visit the Eskimo Museum, home to one of Canada's most extensive collections of Inuit sculpture and artifacts. The tour will end in mid-afternoon, when we can check into our hotel.

After dinner we will walk to a nearby hotel for a presentation of Inuit culture. The presenters will share their knowledge of their oral history and will display their old traditional tools which helped the Inuit people evolve. The performance will consist of Inuit songs and drum dancing, all of which takes place in a large caribou tent while they are dressed in their traditional clothing.

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3: Buggies and tundras and bears, oh my!

Today is our first opportunity to venture beyond the settlement of Churchill to look for polar bears and other wildlife such as arctic fox, ptarmigans, snowy owls, and seals. We will travel by bus for a short distance outside the town, then board our Tundra Buggy (R) for a full-day excursion.

This is a vehicle with huge tires that can bounce through streams and ponds, and cross deep snowdrifts

without a flinch, and there is a restroom on board. It can accommodate up to 26 people, but we anticipate a smaller group on our private buggy so that everyone can get a good view when we are near the bears. Lunch is served inside our Tundra Buggy (R), and we return to town in the late afternoon for dinner and a chance to explore the nightlife (such as it is) on your own.



4: Sled dogs across the tundra!

In the morning, we will spend a couple of hours gliding across the snow through Churchill's Boreal Forest on a dog sled, the traditional winter transportation of the Northland. We'll return to town for lunch.

Weather permitting, this afternoon you can take an *optional* one hour helicopter tour across the tundra and perhaps out over Hudson Bay. (approximate cost: US\$540 per person.)

In the afternoon you can also relax, shop or explore this small but important settlement of only 8 square

blocks. One fascinating stop is the Parks Canada Visitor's Center. This nature facility offers a comprehensive look at the surrounding arctic tundra, vegetation and wildlife that survives in this unique environment. They also show a series of videos about the history, culture and wildlife of the Churchill area.

In the evening we'll have dinner together, then have a chance to observe Northern Lights if the skies are clear.

5: A Second Look at the Bears!

Today we will be treated to another full day tour on the Tundra Buggy (R) including lunch. We will be accompanied by a naturalist who will help to identify the wildlife and vegetation we will see while moving over the tundra in search of the great white bears.

Following our Tundra Buggy tour, we will proceed directly to Churchill Airport for our early evening chartered flight back to Winnipeg. We will again stay at the hotel adjacent to the airport for ease of connections home.

6: Big bear hug good-bye!

Since we will spend the night next to Winnipeg Airport, you can arrange flights at whatever time of day is most convenient for you. Bon voyage as you depart with memories of Canada's polar bears exploring their natural habitat!