Discovering Our Planet Together



Churchill Autumn: Polar Bears, Whales & the Aurora

Discover the Tundra & Hudson Bay in the Peace of Early Fall

Table of Contents

Trip Overview 3

Itinerary 4

Accommodations 7

What Makes Nat Hab Different? 9

Dates, Pricing & Info 11



Trip Details:

Days
8 Days / Aug–Sep

Price
From $9795 (+air)

Churchill Autumn: Polar Bears, Whales & the Aurora

Discover the Tundra & Hudson Bay in the Peace of Early Fall

Autumn comes early to the Canadian North, and it's a magical time in Churchill, where seasonal shifts bring a chance to spot polar bears, beluga whales and the northern lights on the same adventure. By late August, the subarctic air turns crisp. The emerald green of high summer on the tundra has become a tapestry of burgundy, russet and gold—and a photogenic backdrop for a creamy white polar bears in the foreground. We may see roaming mothers and cubs, anticipating the freeze-up of Hudson Bay in late fall when they will move onto the sea ice for hunting season. Hundreds of friendly white beluga whales still crowd the Churchill River until mid-September, when they start to migrate north out of the bay and into the Arctic Ocean. And with daylight diminishing and darkness returning, the aurora makes her appearance again, dancing among the stars when night skies are clear.

Trip Highlights

Look for Bears & Belugas amid the Colors of Autumn

As early fall turns the tundra to red and gold, roving polar bears stand out, and white whales are still on view before returning to open waters for the winter

Watch for the Northern Lights from a Remote Lodge

By late August, nights darken, making the aurora visible again when it appears in clear skies—enjoy unimpeded viewing from our lodge outside town

Take a Scenic Helicopter Flight to a Polar Bear Den

Survey tundra, taiga and Hudson Bay from on high as we fly over the subarctic terrain and land at a vacant polar bear den to peek inside

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Churchill Autumn: Polar Bears, Whales & the Aurora Itinerary

Discover the Tundra & Hudson Bay in the Peace of Early Fall

Itinerary at a Glance

Day 1	Winnipeg
Day 2	Winnipeg / Churchill
Days 3–4	Churchill
Days 5–6	Churchill Tundra
Day 7	Churchill / Winnipeg
Day 8	Winnipeg



Day 1

Winnipeg

Arrive in Manitoba's capital and gear up for the tundra

- Settle into the Fort Garry Hotel, a 1913 railway-era landmark in downtown Winnipeg
- Join your Expedition Leader and fellow travelers for a welcome dinner

Our Churchill adventure begins in the vibrant city of Winnipeg on the eastern edge of the vast Canadian prairie. Once an important Hudson's Bay Company fur-trading post where the Assiniboine and Red rivers meet, and later a boomtown for the Canadian Pacific Railway, today Winnipeg is Manitoba's cultural, commercial and provincial capital. Transfer on arrival to the historic Fort Garry Hotel, grande dame of Winnipeg hospitality and one of the city's most prestigious landmarks. The French chateau-style hotel was built in 1913 by the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway to provide luxury accommodations for upper-class train travelers as part of an effort to lure them to the Canadian West. Meet your Expedition Leader at a welcome dinner at our hotel this evening.

Day 2

Winnipeg / Churchill

Explore Churchill's Indigenous heritage and northern life

- Reach Churchill by private charter, crossing into a community accessible only by air or rail
- Explore the Itsanitaq Museum's collection of Indigenous artifacts
- Meet Churchill residents who share stories of northern life and enduring cultures

Fly north this morning by private chartered plane to Churchill, a remote community inaccessible by road and the gateway to Manitoba's Arctic. We transfer to our simple hotel in town to spend the next three nights, our base for exploring this frontier outpost that grew up when the rail line was built to Hudson Bay in 1929, facilitating the transport of grain from the prairies to a new port facility. Striking murals cover many of the town buildings, part of the SeaWalls project to expand education about the world's oceans. The Itsanitaq Museum, showcasing the region's Indigenous cultures with artifacts collected from centuries of habitation, is a highlight of our tour. We also meet with local residents to gain insight into their cultural traditions and northern lifestyles. These captivating storytellers share tales from their personal histories, offering a window into the enduring cultures that have flourished in this daunting environment for thousands of years.

Days 3–4

Churchill

Search for polar bears and cruise among belugas

- Watch belugas at close range from a Zodiac at the mouth of the Churchill River
- Search the tundra for polar bears, Arctic foxes, caribou and ptarmigans
- View 18th-century Prince of Wales Fort from Cape Merry on Hudson Bay

Our Expedition Leader offers an introduction to the natural history of the region as we explore the tundra, boreal forest and seacoast of Hudson Bay. These three ecosystems merge around Churchill, and the juncture is called an ecotone—the nexus of different ecologically and geographically defined areas. In such a dynamic environment, varied wildlife flourishes, and we go in search of it over the next several days. Polar bears roam the area, waiting patiently for temperatures to drop and the ice to form on the bay, ushering in their winter seal-hunting season—but it won't happen for weeks yet. At this time of year, it is not uncommon to find mothers with cubs roving about. Search for other wildlife, too: Arctic and red fox, ptarmigan and caribou. By late August, the tundra is a vibrant array of rich autumn color—red, burgundy, rust, orange and yellow.

Belugas are arguably as charismatic as polar bears, and several thousand of these small white whales migrate to the mouth of the Churchill River each summer, congregating where the river meets the bay. On multiple Zodiac excursions we observe these gentle cetaceans at thrilling close range, and the inquisitive whales follow in our wakes, seemingly as curious about us as we are about them. Through the use of a hydrophone, we can also listen to their otherworldly songs.

We'll also take a hike in the Churchill area to explore the flora and fauna further and head out to Cape Merry, where we view the exterior of Prince of Wales Fort, an important 18th-century Hudson Bay Company trading bastion. Built in 1717, its ruins occupy an area first scouted by Danish explorer Jens Munk in 1619 on his quest for the Northwest Passage.

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Days 5–6

Churchill Tundra

Search for polar bears by land and air, with a chance for the northern lights

- Look for polar bears by custom Polar Rover, capped at 16 travelers with a window seat for everyone
- Fly by helicopter over the tundra and land to examine an unoccupied polar bear den
- Look for the aurora from Nat Hab's two-story, glass-topped Boreal Lounge

One day during our time in Churchill, we'll board a custom Polar Rover and head onto the tundra on an Arctic wildlife safari. We'll hope to spy polar bears, as well as other tundra animals that may include Arctic fox, Arctic hare and ptarmigan. This specialized vehicle is purpose-built for polar bear viewing, with large plate glass windows and an outdoor rear viewing deck with a grated mesh floor. Though these giant vehicles with oversized tundra tires can accommodate more than 30 passengers, we take a maximum of 16, ensuring that everyone has a window seat and plenty of space to move about and angle for photos. Our Expedition Leader interprets all we observe, explaining wildlife behavior and how these hardy species thrive in such a harsh environment.

Then, we get an entirely different view of the tundra on a thrilling helicopter flight, looking down on the vast expanse of subarctic wilderness below. Surveying the autumn vegetation from the air, we may spot roaming polar bears and caribou as we trace the coast of Hudson Bay, looking as far as the eye can see at the dark boreal forest sprawling off to the horizon. The helicopter descends for a landing, and we disembark to explore the tundra on foot, keeping an eye out for Arctic fox and Arctic hare as we stop to examine an unoccupied polar bear den.

At this transitional time of year, when the sun sets earlier and dark night skies return, there's a possibility we could see the northern lights if conditions are just right. Churchill lies directly beneath the auroral oval, one of the best places on Earth to view the aurora borealis when it is visible. That's why we've included a two-night stay at White Whale Lodge on the tundra outside town, far from any spillover of artificial light. Today we head to this new location where it's possible to view the aurora, when it's visible, all night long. We also make a visit to Nat Hab's Boreal Lounge, a new two-story aurora-viewing site with a heated interior, huge windows and an arched glass top offering a totally uninterrupted view on the night sky.

Day 7

Churchill / Winnipeg

An exhilarating dog cart run through the boreal forest

- Travel by wheeled cart behind a local musher's dog team outside Churchill
- Browse Churchill's locally owned shops for leatherwork, beadwork and caribou-hair sculptures
- Fly from Churchill to Winnipeg by private charter before a farewell dinner

Our chartered flight back to Winnipeg leaves this afternoon, allowing plenty of time to do more in Churchill today. Meet a local musher and his lively team of sled dogs, learn about this historic mode of northern transportation, and ride in a wheeled cart pulled by the avid huskies. Pick up some last-minute gifts or souvenirs on the town's main street, where several shops sell locally made handicrafts from leather and beadwork to caribou fur sculptures. Eventually, it's time to head to the airport for our chartered flight back to Winnipeg. Transfer to the Fort Garry Hotel, where we gather for a farewell dinner this evening.

Day 8

Winnipeg

Depart Winnipeg after your Arctic adventure

- Enjoy a final breakfast before your airport transfer
- Connect with homeward flights from Winnipeg

Enjoy breakfast at the Fort Garry Hotel in Winnipeg. Then, transfer to the airport for flights home.

Please Note: *This itinerary is meant to be a sample only. The actual order of accommodations, locations and activities will vary by departure, although all inclusions will be the same.*

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Churchill Autumn: Polar Bears, Whales & the Aurora Accommodations

Discover the Tundra & Hudson Bay in the Peace of Early Fall



White Whale Lodge

Located on Hudson Bay outside the town of Churchill, the lodge—exclusively for our private use—offers a prime spot for northern lights photography well away from the glow of artificial light.



Fort Garry Hotel

The grande dame of Winnipeg hospitality and one of the city's most prestigious landmarks, this historic downtown hotel provides a genteel welcome before and after our northern adventures in Churchill.



Churchill Hotels

In remote Churchill, our simple hotels are clean, comfortable and centrally located, offering a convenient base for exploring this subarctic frontier town.

For detailed descriptions, visit nathab.com/canada-northern-nature-travel/churchill-autumn-adventure/accommodations.

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An All-Encompassing Churchill Adventure

Churchill Autumn: Polar Bears, Whales & the Aurora

This in-depth itinerary takes place at an unusual time of year, when summer visitors have headed home and the fall focus on polar bears hasn't yet ramped up. It's an appealing season for varied activities in and around Churchill, and no one brings them together as fully and seamlessly as we do. Read more about what makes this trip special:

1. **See More When You Straddle the Seasons**

   For a brief time, as late summer gives way to early autumn, it's possible to have the widest variety of experiences available in Churchill at the same time. During this transition, polar bears roam the region, not yet massing on the edge of Hudson Bay by late fall as they await freeze-up. Beluga whales still crowd the Churchill River, not yet heading out on their fall migration to the open ocean. And with the return of dark night skies, it's possible to see the northern lights again when they make their appearance.

2. **Stay in Town and on the Tundra for the Fullest Experience**

   Spend three nights in the town of Churchill, enjoying proximity to local life, plus two nights at White Whale Lodge, located in solitude on the tundra near the edge of Hudson Bay. In this remote spot, we are well away from any artificial light, making for optimal aurora-viewing conditions should the northern lights make an appearance.

3. **Look for the Northern Lights from Two Exclusive Locations**

   At White Whale Lodge, where we spend two nights, we have access to aurora viewing all night long. It's never possible to predict when the lights will show up, but if they do, we'll watch them from an optimal location, far from the glow of town. We also visit Nat Hab's new Boreal Lounge, an exclusive two-story structure with huge windows and a curved glass roof for a 360° view on the heavens in heated comfort.

4. **Find Good Chances to See Both Belugas & Polar Bears**

   At this transitional time of year, both beluga whales and polar bears are present in the Churchill region. Polar bears have been waiting out the summer, eager for cold temperatures to freeze Hudson Bay so they can hunt seals in winter. Belugas are still in the Churchill River where they spend the latter half of the summer feeding before returning to the open ocean later in the fall. Our odds are good for multiple sightings of both.

5. **Fly by Helicopter to Explore a Vacant Polar Bear Den**

   There's nothing like surveying the landscape from the air to get a more vivid understanding of an ecosystem, and on a scenic helicopter flight, we look down on three that converge around Churchill: tundra, taiga (boreal forest) and the marine environment of Hudson Bay. During our excursion, we'll land on the tundra to check out a vacant polar bear denning site—a rare experience few visitors to Churchill get!

6. **Explore the Tundra and Look for Wildlife by Polar Rover**

   One day we'll head onto the tundra in a private Polar Rover, a custom-built vehicle designed for navigating this uneven terrain and maximizing wildlife viewing, with big plate-glass windows and an open observation platform on the back. Keep an eye out for occasional polar bears and other tundra wildlife, including Arctic fox, Arctic hare and ptarmigan.

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7 **Photograph Wildlife Against a Colorful Autumn Backdrop**

Fall comes early to the North, and colder temperatures by mid-August signal plants that a seasonal change is afoot. Wildflowers fade and the once-green tundra becomes a variegated palette of red, rust, burgundy and gold, a gorgeous mix of shades behind wildlife subjects in the foreground.

8 **Enjoy Varied Activities & Exploration Modes**

This is our longest Churchill trip, and we make the most of it, with a mix of activities and conveyances. You'll explore our environs via Polar Rover, helicopter, Zodiac excursions on the Churchill River among the belugas, optional kayaking with whales, and a cart ride with a team of sled dogs. Meet the musher who trains and runs them, and connect with other Churchill locals who share their northern lifestyles with us.

9 **Learn About Churchill's Rich Cultural Heritage**

The Churchill region has been home to varied Indigenous cultures for thousands of years, including Inuit, Cree, Dene and Metis, and we'll meet representatives during our visit who bring their history and contemporary traditions alive. Churchill is also shaped by European influence, starting in the 17th century with the arrival of Danish and British explorers and fur traders who established a fort and trading post for the Hudson Bay Company, the legacy of which remains.

10 **Travel with the Finest Naturalist Guides on the Planet**

Natural Habitat Adventures is known for employing the highest-quality guides in the industry. Our Polar Bear Expedition Leaders—who have been guiding bear tours for an average of more than 10 years each—receive additional training and resources from WWF's top scientists, ensuring a superlative interpretive experience. Expedition Leaders meet you in Winnipeg and travel with the group the entire way, sharing their wealth of knowledge and insight at every turn. Our philosophy is pretty simple: a nature adventure is only as good as the guide, so we simply must provide the best! **See Expedition Leader bios** with traveler comments regarding the quality of our leaders.

11 **Our Quality-Value Guarantee Ensures Your Outstanding Churchill Adventure**

Natural Habitat Adventures offers an exclusive guarantee, clearly stating that we will meet the lofty expectations we set in our promotional materials. To our knowledge, this is the most ambitious guarantee made by any adventure travel company. **Read our important promise.**

12 **Feel Good About Your Carbon-Neutral Journey**

We care deeply about our planet, as we know you do. When you travel with us, the carbon emissions from your trip are 100% offset—including your round-trip flights from home. Natural Habitat Adventures has been the world's first carbon-neutral travel company since 2007.

13 **Natural Habitat Adventures is WWF's Travel Partner**

Because of our commitment to environmentally friendly travel, as well as the exceptional quality of our adventures, World Wildlife Fund, the world's leading environmental conservation organization, has named Natural Habitat Adventures as its worldwide travel partner, a designation that makes us exceedingly proud.

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Dates & Pricing Summary:

Price
From $9795 (+air)

Group Size
Limited to 14 Travelers

Churchill Autumn: Polar Bears, Whales & the Aurora Dates, Pricing & Info

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2027 Departures

Departure – Return	Pricing	Notes
Aug 29 - Sep 5, 2027	**$10095** +internal air	
Sep 3 - Sep 10, 2027	**$10095** +internal air	
Sep 8 - Sep 15, 2027	**$10095** +internal air	
Sep 13 - Sep 20, 2027	**$9795** +internal air	

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2028 Departures

Departure – Return	Pricing	Notes
Prices and dates not confirmed for 2028		
Aug 31 - Sep 7, 2028	**From $9795** +internal air	
Sep 5 - Sep 12, 2028	**From $10095** +internal air	
Sep 10 - Sep 17, 2028	**From $10095** +internal air	
Sep 15 - Sep 22, 2028	**From $9795** +internal air	

See https://www.nathab.com/canada-northern-nature-travel/churchill-autumn-adventure/dates-fees for the latest pricing details.

Included

Trip price includes: Accommodations, services of Nat Hab's professional Expedition Leader(s) and operations staff, Zodiac and Polar Rover excursions, helicopter excursion to denning area, dog sledding activity, evening wildlife and cultural presentations, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through breakfast on final day, some gratuities, airport transfers on Day 1 and final day, all activities and entrance fees, all taxes, permits and service fees.

Not Included

Travel to and from the start and end point of your trip, alcoholic beverages, some gratuities, passport and visa fees (if any), optional activities, items of a personal nature (phone calls, laundry, etc.), airline baggage fees, airport and departure taxes (if any), optional travel protection and medical evacuation insurance.

Internal air: a chartered round-trip flight from Winnipeg and Churchill (this will be listed separately on our invoicing).

Important Information About This Trip

In autumn, the tundra around Churchill takes on soft shades of gold and amber, with grasses and fading wildflowers giving the landscape a warm, muted glow. Animals, including caribou, are on the move, and birdlife is abundant. The most impressive phenomenon is the migration of some 3,000 beluga whales into the Seal and Churchill rivers, where we observe these ghost-like creatures at close range, often at arm's length. We may also have opportunities to view mother polar bears with cubs, as they remain in the area all summer long. Be aware that at times black flies or mosquitoes may be present—if you're sensitive to bites, take precautions and wear repellent.

Meals

Meals in the far north are hearty and delicious, but they also require special planning and preparation far in advance. With ample notice, we can meet dietary requirements that accommodate serious medical conditions or strict personal restrictions; however this restricted meal plan must continue to be adhered to while on the adventure. If you have a highly restricted diet, we recommend you bring along some of your preferred snacks and an appreciation that certain foods are limited in this part of the world.

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A note regarding northern lights: In Churchill, you're located directly under the auroral oval at one of the world's best places to see northern lights. Chances of spotting aurora borealis increase later in the fall season if conditions are right, meaning there is no cloud cover while the complete darkness of late August and September's "magnetic midnight" appears. Fall sightings are fleeting, but always magical.

Mandatory Insurance

Since the areas we travel to are remote and wild (that's why we go there!), we require that all guests have, at minimum, medical evacuation insurance for this program. This is for the safety of all guests. We require that your chosen independent insurance plan includes at least $250,000 in medical evacuation coverage.

To protect your investment and to provide peace of mind while you travel, we also strongly recommend purchasing comprehensive travel insurance. Plans may cover everything from medical treatment to trip cancellations and delays and lost luggage. Please contact our office if you would like more information about the medical evacuation and comprehensive travel insurance policies we offer by calling 800-543-8917.

Getting There & Getting Home

This trip begins and ends in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Because weather delays are possible, **we recommend that you arrive at least one night prior to Day 1** to rest from your travels and begin the trip refreshed. For guests who come in early, our recommended hotel will be included in your pre-departure materials. If you plan to arrive on Day 1, you must arrive in Winnipeg by 5 pm in order to attend the 7 pm orientation dinner.

You are free to depart Winnipeg at any time on the final day.

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Natural Habitat & WWF: Discovering Our Planet Together

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