



Polar OPPOSITES



Polar Bears are one of the world's iconic wildlife sights and a must see for any visitor to **Canada** and the **Arctic**. James Butler, Audley's Canada & Alaska Manager, explains how and where to see these wonderful animals.

Those who have travelled extensively will, no doubt, have been rewarded with some superb wildlife sightings which for many, are a particular highlight of their travels. Seeing leopards, pandas and tigers in their natural environment is a never to be forgotten experience, but one of the greatest sights of the natural world is to see polar bears in the Arctic's fragile icy eco-system.

In the last few decades the Arctic's immense glaciers and ice-sheets have been rapidly retreating, testament to the phenomenon of global warming. This is having a severe impact on the wildlife of the region and polar bears, at the top of the food chain in these thawing wastes, are under threat of extinction. This uncertain future lends a tangible sense of urgency to those who wish to see these magnificent, iconic animals in their natural environment.

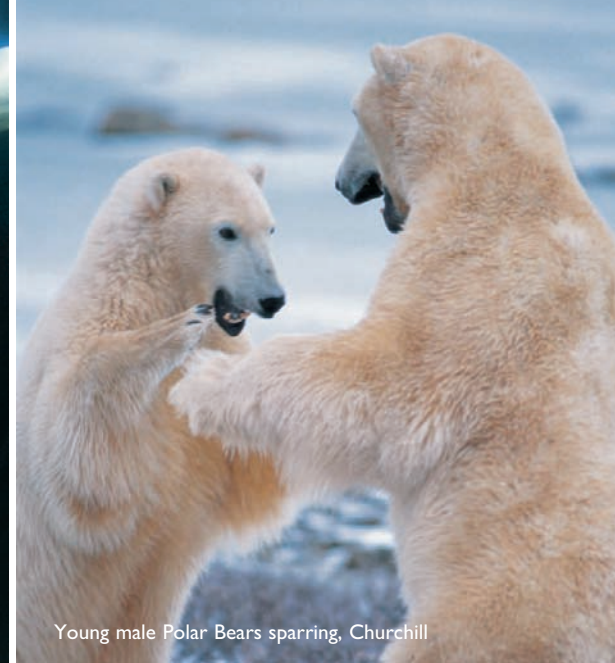
There are several ways and times of the year to see polar bears and we can offer you a variety of

options to choose from. The easiest and most popular way is by flying from Winnipeg to Churchill on the shores of Canada's Hudson Bay. Here, every October and November polar bears gather on the shore waiting for the bay to freeze which then allows them to go hunting for seals. Churchill is a small town with a great Eskimo Museum and a 'polar bear jail' where the town's problem bears are incarcerated whilst awaiting relocation to more remote areas.

The polar bears are seen in Churchill by means of a 'tundra buggy', a specially-adapted vehicle which enables easy travel across the tundra. These comfortable vehicles are well-heated and have plenty of windows and even an open-air viewing platform at the back for superb close-up viewing. We work with several suppliers who provide trips varying in cost and experience. We recommend the premium option which limits the number of passengers in the tundra buggy to just 15, thereby guaranteeing each person a window seat to themselves. In addition these trips are



Beluga whales, Hudson Bay



Young male Polar Bears sparring, Churchill



Polar Bear in Fireweed near Churchill



Spectacular views from on deck

supported by the best naturalist guides. For those with a more limited budget, there are tundra buggies that cater for up to 22 and even more passengers. This does mean the vehicles are more cramped but still enables passengers to get thrilling close-up views of the bears.

An alternative time to view the polar bears is in the north's brief summer, during the months of July and August. At this time Canada's Hudson Bay is the playground for more than 50,000 beluga whales while the tundra comes alive with myriad bird species and carpets of wild flowers. However, the star attractions are polar bears as they roam the region, swimming in the bay and foraging on the tundra. Your home is a small, privately-owned lodge providing simple, rustic accommodation and hearty, nutritious meals, superb naturalist guides and the friendliest of welcomes. The long Arctic summer days bring plenty of opportunities for wildlife viewing, usually by boat, whilst swimming with belugas is a truly awe-inspiring privilege that is possible here.

For a completely different polar bear experience you may wish to consider an Arctic cruise. Small ship expedition cruises explore many remote parts of the Arctic, usually with a great emphasis on wildlife. Led by expert guides and with low passenger numbers, an Arctic cruise is a superb means of exploring the tiny indigenous communities and the magnificent coastal scenery. One of the best destinations for wildlife generally, and polar bears in particular is Svalbard, a remote Norwegian archipelago more often named after its main island, Spitsbergen. These remote islands are renowned for immense glaciers, monumental sea cliffs and a plethora of wildlife that includes vast seabird colonies, herds of reindeer, many whale species, walrus, seals and of course, polar bears. The bears are frequently seen foraging along the shore or swimming amongst ice-floes, providing visitors with one of the world's ultimate wildlife viewings.

James Butler
Canada & Alaska Programme Manager

FACT file

A six night trip to see the polar bears departing in October including two nights in Winnipeg, four nights in Churchill, two full days of polar bear watching and return flights from London costs from **£2,990 per person**. We are also running a group tour: Grizzlies and Polar Bears of the Great North, this 12-day tour costs **£7,450 per person**. For more information, please contact our Canada, Alaska and the Arctic specialists on **01993 838 700**.

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