

# POLAR BEARS

**& the Wildlife of Churchill, Canada**

 COMMONWEALTH CLUB



**November 9 - 16, 2017**

# COMMONWEALTH CLUB

Almost every person who is fortunate enough to see a polar bear does so with the bear in captivity. However, in the remote grain port of Churchill, located on the west coast of Canada's Hudson Bay, a small group of people can experience the excitement of witnessing bears living freely in their own natural habitat!

Every fall, the tundra surrounding Churchill becomes a stopover for more than 1,000 bears on their annual migration to hunt for food on the frozen ice of the Hudson Bay. Large numbers of these usually solitary bears can be found in Churchill at this time of year, making it the "Polar Bear Capital of the World." From the safety of tundra vehicles, we can view these majestic creatures within close range. It is also common to see gyrfalcons, snowy owls, ptarmigans, and Arctic foxes. Our knowledgeable Expedition Leader will be on hand to talk about polar bear behavior, natural history and adaptations to the Arctic way of life.

During the day, young male bears play-fight, mothers cautiously explore with their cubs at their sides, and solitary adult bears lumber across the tundra. On this unique northern adventure, we will take a special evening trip in addition to our daytime excursions to observe nightfall on the pristine and isolated tundra landscape – an unforgettable experience. It is a rare opportunity to view the tundra at night, when the northern environs provide an eerie and remote adventure. If conditions are right, we may also be able to observe the aurora borealis, or northern lights, as radiating colors illuminate the night sky.

An increased awareness of the importance of protecting the bears, along with growing tourist interest in their yearly migration, has brought about a sense of commitment by the people of Churchill to help these mighty animals migrate safely through their now famous town.

Please join us on this unforgettable Arctic journey to view polar bears in the wild!



Kristina Nemeth, Club Travel Director



# POLAR BEARS

## & the Wildlife of Churchill, Canada

### Day 1: Arrive Winnipeg

Fly to Winnipeg, where a shuttle will meet you upon arrival and take you to the Fort Garry Hotel. Dinner is on our own this night.

### Day 2: Winnipeg/Churchill

Enjoy a tour of Winnipeg's historical and cultural points of interest and a guided visit to the acclaimed Human Rights Museum, winner of numerous awards of excellence. Tonight we gather for our welcome dinner. (B,L,D)

### Day 3: Winnipeg/Churchill

Today, a flight takes us north to Churchill, on the western shore of Hudson Bay. After settling into our hotel that will be our base for the next four nights, spend the afternoon strolling around this hospitable town. At this time of year, Churchill is wholly focused on polar bears and the excitement of "bear season" is apparent everywhere! (B,L,D)

### Days 4-6: Churchill

On two of these days, after a hearty breakfast, we will depart for all-day bear-viewing drives aboard our tundra vehicle. These unique vehicles were specially designed for tundra travel; in fact, their invention was the catalyst for the polar bear viewing opportunities that have captured the world's attention and helped to protect the bears. The pace of our drive is dictated by the bear sightings. We may see many bears in a single day, or we may see just a few; the fascination of the experience is not in the quantity, but in the quality of the sightings. Sometimes we may linger for an hour or more to watch a single bear's behavior before heading off in search of more bears. Throughout the day our naturalist guide will provide commentary on what we are observing. Lunch will be provided picnic-style aboard the tundra buggy. Return in the late afternoon to Churchill for dinner and an evening presentation.

On the day that we do not visit the tundra, we will have a tour of historic Churchill and its surrounding environs. This evening we journey to the edge of town where we'll board a tundra vehicle for our evening on the tundra – a night drive that begins at dusk and lasts until well after dark. Our knowledgeable driver and expert naturalist guide will keep a sharp lookout as we head towards an area where the polar bears frequently congregate. As we approach the bears, care is taken not to disturb them with the special lighting, which enables us to see them in the darkness. Watch, too, for the luminescent eyes of nocturnal animals such as the Arctic fox and snowy owl. Dinner will be served on board the vehicle, and there will be ample time to observe the bears before returning to Churchill for the night. (B,L,D)

### Day 7: Churchill/Winnipeg

Our final morning in Churchill leaves us free time to explore town and gather souvenirs of our northern expedition. There will be time to explore the exhibits at the small but excellent Eskimo Museum and to visit the local shops and galleries that feature Inuit carvings and other Arctic arts and crafts. Later today, fly to Winnipeg and check into our hotel. Depending on which flight schedule we have, there will be either a farewell lunch in Churchill or a farewell dinner in Winnipeg. (B, L or D)

### Day 8: Depart Winnipeg

Transfer by shuttle to the airport any time for your homebound flight. Hotel checkout time is noon. (B)

B=Breakfast    L=Lunch    D=Dinner

## November 9 - 16, 2017

**E**very autumn, more than one thousand polar bears congregate on the alpine tundra surrounding Hudson Bay, anticipating the winter freeze. Churchill's unique setting in this environment makes it the only place in the world where travelers can safely and comfortably view large numbers of wild polar bears in their natural habitat.

Our trip is scheduled during the peak season, which begins in early October and lasts until late November or December, when the bay freezes over and the bears migrate onto the pack ice. Daily sightings are impossible to predict and vary in number, but bears are always present. In past years we've seen as many as fifty bears in a day and other times only one.

We search for polar bears aboard a spacious bus-like vehicle mounted on huge all-terrain tires, following established routes as not to damage the fragile tundra. Vehicles travel at a leisurely pace to areas of high bear density, approximately a 45-minute drive. The dirt trails are rough and rocky in places, making for the occasional bumpy ride, but our drivers keep the speed down to minimize bouncing and maximize bear sightings. All vehicles are heated and have bathrooms. Passenger numbers are kept small to ensure optimal visibility from the indoor windows and to provide ample room on the open viewing deck.

In addition to a picnic lunch, hot and cold drinks are provided on board.

Temperatures during peak viewing season vary between 0° and 45° Fahrenheit. Conditions range from sunny and clear to snowy and overcast; windy days are common. Deep snow is unlikely, but Churchill's streets can be icy and slippery. Warm parkas and boots are available upon request; participants will receive details after registration. Our trip to the tundra does not require a high degree of physical fitness.

Hotel accommodations are first class in Winnipeg. Churchill's hotel rooms are less elegant but clean and comfortable with meals that are simple and hearty.

Please recognize that Churchill's resources are stretched to capacity this time of year, and as a result, flight changes, mechanical delays, and other similar issues are not uncommon. Participants are encouraged to be patient, flexible and respectful of the local infrastructure. For those who travel with a spirit of adventure, this tour is the experience of a lifetime!





**Tour Cost  
(Polar Bear Program and Extra Day in  
Winnipeg)**

\$6,960 per person, based on double occupancy. Group size is limited to approximately 15 participants.

The Commonwealth Club has included an “Extra Day in Winnipeg” program that takes place prior to the Polar Bear Program. The cost of this extra day will be noted separately on your invoice but is included in the tour cost above.

**Tour Cost  
Included**

Trips to the tundra on specially designed tundra vehicles; all accommodations; all meals from dinner on Day 2 through breakfast on Day 8 (except either lunch or dinner on your final day in Churchill, depending on your flight schedule); services of Natural Habitat Adventure’s (NHA) professional Expedition Leader and assistants; all ground transportation in Churchill and airport transfers in Winnipeg; roundtrip air transportation between Winnipeg and Churchill; permits and entrance fees; all taxes and service charges including Canada’s GST.

**Tour Cost Does Not Include**

Roundtrip air transportation between your home city and Winnipeg; alcoholic beverages; lunch or dinner on your final day in Churchill; items of a personal nature (telephone calls, laundry, etc.); gratuities; and travel insurance.

**Travel Insurance**

We strongly suggest purchasing travel insurance. Information will be sent to you upon receipt of your reservation.

**Helicopter Flights**

On this trip, travelers also have the opportunity to participate in an optional helicopter journey. From the air, you may observe caribou, arctic fox and polar bears located in areas where our tundra vehicles cannot travel. Participants will receive further information on helicopter flights approximately 60 days prior to departure.

**Dog Sledding Excursion**

A dog sledding excursion may be offered during your trip (weather dependent). If available, you will receive more information approximately 60 days prior to departure.

**Air Transportation**

We urge you to check airline cancellation penalties before purchasing airline tickets because international departure times and flights can change. Tours can also be cancelled because of low enrollment. Neither Commonwealth Club of CA nor NHA accepts liability for cancellation penalties related to domestic or international airline tickets purchased independently in conjunction with a tour.

**Travel Documents**

All U.S. citizens traveling via air or sea will require a valid passport to enter Canada. Please note that birth certificates and other government issued photo identification will no longer be accepted for entry.



# RESERVATION FORM

Please reserve \_\_\_\_\_ place(s) on **Commonwealth Club of California**  
**Polar Bears of Churchill, November 9-16, 2017**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Dietary Preference:  Regular  Vegetarian

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Dietary Preference:  Regular  Vegetarian

\*Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

\*PLEASE NOTE: Travelers not living at the same address must fill out separate reservation forms.

Please call me to arrange air travel from my home city of: \_\_\_\_\_

## Deposit Information:

\$500 per person.

Check enclosed, payable to Natural Habitat Adventures

VISA  MasterCard  Discover Card

Account #: \_\_\_\_\_ CVW # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Cardholder Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE NOTE:** Your final payment will be charged to your credit card at 90 days prior to departure. Should you prefer to pay by check, you must indicate your preference below.

I will pay my final payment by check. Please do not charge my credit card for final payment.

## Accommodations

\_\_\_\_\_ Double (please provide name of accompanying person if not shown above):  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Two beds (if available)

## Commonwealth Club of California Membership

We require membership to The Commonwealth Club to travel with us. Please check one of the following options:

I am a current member of The Commonwealth Club.

Please sign me up or renew my membership with the credit card information provided here.

I will visit [commonwealthclub.org/membership](http://commonwealthclub.org/membership) to sign up for a membership.

**To learn about membership types and to purchase a membership, visit [commonwealthclub.org/membership](http://commonwealthclub.org/membership) or call (415) 597-6720**

## Waiver of Liability

I understand that by signing below I am acting for myself and for everyone in my party in acknowledging that the Refund & Cancellation Policy, Wildlife Viewing, Terms & Conditions and Please Note sections in this brochure have been read and accepted. I also understand that I and everyone in my party will be required to sign a release of liability form prior to and/or during my trip. I give my permission for NHA to charge my final balance on my credit card at 90 days prior to departure, unless otherwise noted on this form. I also give my permission for NHA to use any image taken of me or anyone in my party by NHA or its affiliates for promotional purposes.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE NOTE: Each participant must sign this waiver.

For more information or to make your reservation on Commonwealth Club of California's Polar Bears of Churchill, please contact Club Travel at 415-597-6720 or via email [travel@commonwealthclub.org](mailto:travel@commonwealthclub.org).

Please complete this form and mail or fax it to:

**Our fax number is (415) 597-6729**

**Commonwealth Club Travel**  
**P.O. Box 194210**  
**San Francisco, CA 94119**



**Payment Policy**

A deposit of \$500 is required to confirm your reservation. Final payment is due 90 days prior to departure, approximately August 10, 2017. Your final payment will be charged to your credit card 90 days prior to departure, unless you indicate otherwise on your reservation form. Please submit a check prior to the final payment due date should you prefer to pay by check.

**Refund & Cancellation Policy**

All cancellations must be made in writing. Cancellations processed more than 90 days prior to departure will require a \$100 handling fee. Cancellations made 90 to 45 days prior to departure require a loss of 50% of the entire program fee, including all extensions. Cancellations made within 44 days of departure require a loss of the entire program fee, including all extensions. We reserve the right to cancel this tour, and in such case the entire payment will be refunded without penalty or handling fee or any further obligation on our part.



**Wildlife Viewing**

Because our programs specialize in viewing wildlife, every effort is made to plan programs where wildlife is known to exist. However, the animals we visit live wild and free and we cannot fully predict or control their migratory patterns (nor would we want to). In an attempt to locate wildlife which may have deviated from its normal pattern, or in the interest of traveler comfort or safety, we may be required to make reasonable changes in itineraries. If it is necessary to change hotels or other facilities, comparable accommodations will be substituted wherever possible. If changes or fluctuations in exchange rates occur, additional costs may require the program fee to change with little or no notice. Should Natural Habitat Adventures (NHA) be required to cancel a trip due to unforeseen circumstances, travelers will be refunded for their trip cost, but neither NHA, nor Commonwealth Club of CA will be liable for accompanying expenses (such as gear purchases, airline tickets, etc.).

**Health**

All participants should be in good health and capable of walking over rough terrain. By forwarding the deposit for passage, the passenger certifies that he/she does not have any physical or other condition or disability that would create a hazard for him/herself or other passengers.

**Currency, Fuel & Other Fluctuations**

Significant fluctuations in exchange rates, energy prices and other cost factors may necessitate an increase in trip prices before or after your booking. A price increase would be implemented only if absolutely necessary and would serve only to maintain the highest quality of your adventure.

**Terms & Conditions**


It is Commonwealth Club of CA's, NHA's and our cooperating agents' and representatives' goal to select reliable suppliers and contractors to provide air and other transportation, hotels, guides and other travel-related services; we do not assume responsibility, directly or indirectly, for any loss, damage or injury to property or person in connection with such services. Each traveler agrees not to hold Commonwealth Club of CA, NHA, its owners, employees, agents and representatives liable, in the absence of their own gross negligence, for any loss or injury, expense or damage that results directly or indirectly from any act or omission of any person or firm that is to or does provide goods or services in connection with the trip or with any

available option. You agree that Commonwealth Club of CA, NHA and its cooperating agents and representatives shall not be liable for circumstances arising as a result of acts of God, weather, detention, annoyance, delays and expenses arising from quarantine, strikes, theft, pilferage, force majeure, military, political or terrorist action, civil disturbances, government restrictions, failure of any means of conveyance to arrive or depart as scheduled, and discrepancies or changes in transit over which they have no control. NHA reserves the right to change the program fee, dates or itinerary with little or no notice. If such changes do occur, no refunds will be made beyond those described in our cancellation policy, and NHA will not be liable for expenses incurred as a result of the change (such as air ticket change fees, etc.).

**Please Note**

The information contained in this brochure was prepared well in advance of the departure date. Because of the program provided, dates, pricing, hotels, modes of transportation and in some cases, itineraries, change. If this situation does occur, we will attempt to provide similar alternatives but are not always able to do so. We hope you understand. Please be certain to read Terms & Conditions and Refund & Cancellation Policy prior to signing on to this adventure.

CST: 2096889-40

 COMMONWEALTH CLUB  
Commonwealth Club Travel  
P.O. Box 194210  
San Francisco, CA 94119

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