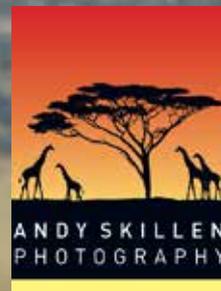


# Walking with Polar bears



Arctic experiences from  
Andy Skillen Photography



*Hi there!*

Everyone loves polar bears, but, photographically, the options are generally limited to viewing from big ships at a distance in the summer (Svalbard) or from the dreaded, over-crowded “tundra buggy” where perhaps 17 of the vehicles will converge one bear, and everyone files out to take the exact-same photo.

## **Churchill Wild...the world's best polar bear experiences**

For me, this is not the way to experience the region, and throughout my career I have sought out encounters with all manner of sub-arctic and high-arctic wildlife...on foot. From arctic foxes to caribou, wolves to polar bears, all are attainable, and I remain the only UK-based photographer to lead tours for Churchill Wild – the owners of the Nanuk and Seal River lodges in northern Manitoba – where from our remote fly-in bases, we track and photograph the megafauna of the arctic...on foot. These safaris are also sold by many other companies that essentially “hide” the name of the operator you will be using, and therefore give the impression that the trip is “theirs”.

This has always frustrated me. Many of these companies have never even visited these lodges, been on these trips or taken one photograph in the region. They simply take a package, convert a currency, add on a commission and then sell you a trip with a glossy brochure and a spiral-bound itinerary. Indeed, I've even seen people turn up who had no idea they were on a tour, and were ultimately ill-equipped as they had not been passed on the correct information. Can you imagine that?

Rest assured, these companies are simply re-selling the trips I guide and which are formulated by Churchill Wild...

## **So why come through me?**

You will deal direct with the company in Canada throughout; As their only UK photo leader, I will be on hand to make the initial introduction and can help you with the “queue”. I'm part of the team... not a third party agent.

I can guarantee that when you book – as long as there is space, and they do fill quickly – that you get to be on one of the tours photo-led by me.

You will benefit from paying in Canadian dollars, and not therefore inflated

UK prices. You will be DEALING DIRECT, and not booking a trip that has been inflated. You will see the price clearly on the Churchill Wild website, and ultimately that is what you will pay. Why let others speculate currencies and conversions for you?

I'll be on hand to answer all your pre-trip questions, provide a webinar on what to expect, and also offer you a discounted tuition day (logistics permitting!). My experience of photographing commercially in the Arctic for many years is the reason I am a photo leader for the company, and as such I will be available to you from the point of booking right up to your departure (and beyond if you're on a trip when I'm present!). No other company can give you that

So the choice is yours really: you can either come through me and deal direct, or book the exact same trip at a converted GBP rate.

## Arctic Kingdom...high arctic newborn cubs...

In addition to expeditions in the autumn, I have also pioneered an incredible experience in the frozen ocean off Baffin Island, and if it's newborn cubs you're after, then this is an amazing opportunity. In 2016, I was commissioned by BBC Wildlife to attempt to capture fresh, new polar bear cubs, just out the den in an entirely unvisited part of the high Arctic. Instead of the usual tundra den-watch, I was dispatched onto the sea ice around Baffin Island, where I ultimately successfully managed to record these beautiful bears for the first time ever. The article, which appeared in December 2016, gives you some idea of that expedition, and, now, you can follow in my footsteps and have an incredible, late-winter Arctic experience; filled with icebergs, northern lights and, hopefully, polar bears and their new cubs. Again, because of my relationship with the company, I can guarantee you a place on one of the departures...and, of course, you will once again DEAL DIRECT. Even though I do not always lead one a trip every year (I now usually do this biennially), it still means I can place you on one of these highly exclusive departures. All are identical...and guess what? You'll pay directly to the company in Canada...so again, no inflated fees or added on commissions.

To get your name down for any of the above, have a read through of the itineraries in this brochure, check out my website or simply drop me an email. By coming to me first, we can get you on the trip you want (some, though, do fill up to 2 years ahead, so please be aware of that) and I will liaise with you throughout.

Anyway...have a read...and come back to me with any q's

See you in the Arctic!

*Andy*



# BIRDS, BEARS AND BELUGAS

- 8 Days; 7 nights (for dates and rates, please refer to the enclosed sheet)
- Price fully inclusive Winnipeg – Winnipeg; international flights not included

## ITINERARY

### Day 1: Arrive Winnipeg

Overnight stay and a chance for a pre-departure group dinner with your fellow adventurers at 7pm.

**Includes: 1 night accommodation; dinner**

### Days 2-6: Seal River Heritage Lodge

You'll arrive in Churchill by air and one of our expert staff will meet you at the airport to provide you with instructions regarding your morning transfers. Your adventure begins with a breathtaking aerial view of the winding Hudson Bay coast en route to Seal River Heritage Lodge. Be prepared to see huge pods of whales, countless birds, as well as caribou and of course, magnificent polar bears. The Seal River Estuary is a summer favourite for these giants and they are regularly seen swimming or basking near the water's edge. After getting settled at the Lodge, a thorough orientation on travel in polar bear country will be provided prior and then following a full-course lunch, you will experience the Hudson Bay coast for the first time. Your first day at the Lodge will be rounded out by the first of many full-course meals followed by a cosy fireplace for the evening wind down.

From your second day onwards, you can take part in a variety of differing activities depending on weather conditions and group interest:

**Includes: breakfast, lunch, dinner**

**Marine Tours:** Tides and weather permitting, we will do at least two expeditions by boat to view beluga whales, seals, seabirds, and polar bears. Marine tours are conducted in large, nine-man inflatable boats, fully equipped with two way radios, safety gear, flotation jackets for each passenger, and a hydrophone so that that you can listen to the whale songs. Each expedition is a half day in order to coordinate with the high tides. Expect to see hundreds of whales per outing! Beluga whales are very curious and social and will investigate our presence with a bold courage expressed by few other creatures. Getting up-close and personal with these awesome creatures has been life-changing for many Churchill Wild guests.

**Trekking/Walking Tours:** These are a daily part of the program and they range from short jaunts to photograph a playful fox, to day trips with a packed lunch. There is no better way to experience the sheer vastness of the Arctic's flora and fauna. Nesting bird life, fox dens, wild flowers, and sik siks are just a few of the sights you may take in. a safe viewing distance... and bears are an ever-present possibility.

**Coastal trips by Tundra Tracker:** See the Hudson Bay coast on our custom made Tundra Tracker. A day trip in one of these vehicles allows us to cover a lot of shoreline while searching out wildlife. Lunch is a picnic en route. We provide ample time for exploration and photography of the trail.

Needless to say, the photographic opportunities are endless, from spotting any one of 150 different bird species to swimming polar bears and belugas. This is a fantastic summer experience in an untouched wilderness. If you are lucky, you may also get the chance to enjoy nature's own "light show" as the Aurora Borealis blazes overhead at night.

### DAY 7 - FAREWELL CHURCHILL

After another hearty Lodge breakfast, we will begin air transfers back to Churchill. Upon arrival, we will store your luggage and leave you the balance of the day free for browsing the local shops and exhibits of Churchill. Your flight south to Winnipeg will take place this evening, and upon arrival, collect your bags, head out of the arrivals doors and look to your right. The Grand Hotel is located across the way only a two minute walk.

**Includes: breakfast lunch dinner**

### DAY 8 - HOMEWARD BOUND!

Today you will fly home on your own travel arrangements, marking the end of your adventure with Churchill Wild and the beginning of a lifetime of savouring the experiences of the Arctic.

# DUAL LODGE ARCTIC SAFARI

- **11 Days; 10 nights (for dates and rates, please refer to the enclosed sheet)**
- **Price fully inclusive Winnipeg – Winnipeg; international flights not included**

This late fall safari takes you to both Seal River Heritage Lodge and Nanuk Polar Bear Lodge to experience two stunning, remote locations uncluttered by any other visitors than our group. The diversity of wildlife and stunning wintry landscapes are stunning, and on this unique trip you'll have access to two populations of polar bears, wolves, moose, and more, as well as opportunities for some spectacular northern lights photography. You'll take scenic flights over Hudson Bay and along the coast, and spend eight nights at two of our luxury eco-lodges, which are located in vastly different landscapes: the open tundra, and the edge of the boreal forest.

This is a true once-in-a lifetime arctic adventure.

## ITINERARY

### Day 1: Arrive Winnipeg

Overnight stay and a chance for a pre-departure group dinner with your fellow adventurers at 7pm.

**Includes: 1 night accommodation; dinner**

**Includes: dinner**

### Days 2-5: Seal River Heritage Lodge

After a restful night in Winnipeg you will depart for Churchill. Upon arrival, we will put you onto the charter flights to Seal River Lodge, where, after a scenic flight north up the coast, arrive at Seal River Heritage Lodge where after a delicious lunch, you'll head out for your first wildlife hike!

The remainder of your days at Seal River will start around 8:00 am with a hot breakfast followed by your morning hike around 9:30 am. After a few hours out on the tundra, seeking out polar bears and other Arctic wildlife, you'll head back to the Lodge for lunch. We will then venture out again in the afternoon, but of course, we could be ready to go at any time (or stay out longer) if the sighting permits.

**Includes: breakfast, lunch, dinner**

### Day 6 to 9 - Nanuk Polar Bear Lodge

Time to head to the second stop of your dual-lodge experience! Nanuk Polar Bear Lodge is about 250 km southeast of Churchill and the 75 minute charter flight will include a flyover of York Factory, the hub of the historic fur trade. Your days at Nanuk will be filled with more exciting wildlife encounters. The wildlife at Nanuk is incredibly diverse and includes polar bears, wolves, moose, caribou, Arctic and coloured fox, and Arctic hare. We use custom-designed, open-air "Tundra Rhinos" to get our guests along the coast and, across the many small rivers and creeks that lead to the Bay, and once located, we approach the wildlife on foot.

**Includes: breakfast lunch dinner**

### Day 10 - Return To Winnipeg

After another hearty Lodge breakfast, we will begin transfers back to Churchill. Have your cameras ready for the return flight as it affords excellent opportunities for great aerial shots. Today is your last day in the Churchill area.

Upon your return to Churchill, our representative will store your luggage. The balance of the day is then free for browsing the shops and exhibits of Churchill. Your flight south to Winnipeg will take place this evening, and upon arrival, collect your bags, head out of the arrivals doors and look to your right. The Grand Hotel is located across the way only a two minute walk.

**Includes: breakfast, lunch, dinner**

### Day 11 - Depart Winnipeg

Today you will fly home on your own travel arrangements, marking the end of your adventure with Churchill Wild and the beginning of a lifetime of savouring the experiences of the Arctic.

# POLAR BEAR PHOTO SAFARI:

## NANUK OR SEAL RIVER

- **8 days; 7 nights (for dates and rates, please refer to the enclosed sheet)**
- **Price fully inclusive Winnipeg – Winnipeg; international flights not included**

Your Polar Bear Photo Safari takes place at either Nanuk Polar Bear Lodge or Seal River Heritage Lodge during prime polar bear season in October and November and is considered a “must-do” photography adventure for both professional and aspiring photographers. Why? Simply because these wildly rugged and remote lodges are located on the shoreline of Hudson Bay, far, far away from any civilisation (access is by air only) and provides photographers with the opportunity to experience rare ground-level polar bear photography in a pristine, wilderness environment. We can spend long hours in the field, moving ourselves into unique positions to help you catch that shot of a lifetime.

We will explore daily in search of wildlife, although sometimes we may not have to go far as the local “inhabitants” do venture right up to the Lodge fences enabling us to photograph them from vantage points in the camp itself. The ground-level photo opportunities for polar bears are further enhanced by the possibility of wolf, moose, Arctic fox, red-fox, ptarmigan, gyrfalcon, snowy owl and more. Both lodges offer an 8 day or 7 day option.

### ITINERARY

#### Day 1: Arrive Winnipeg

Overnight stay and a chance for a pre-departure group dinner with your fellow adventurers at 7pm.

**Includes: 1 night accommodation; dinner**

#### Day 2: Time to head north!

Travel with me to Churchill by scheduled airline, and then once we arrive we will prepare for onward charter flight to the lodge (this is done in two batches). This scenic flight takes you along the Hudson Bay coast over historic waterways and landmarks on your way to Canada’s most exclusive polar bear viewing properties. Keep a sharp eye en route for caribou, seals, wolves and of course the bears themselves!

**Includes: breakfast, lunch, dinner**

#### Day 3,4,5,6 (7):

Tundra trekking (note, for the 8 day trip there is one extra day here) & priceless photography

Both lodges is located in a wildly rugged and remote location catering to the dedicated wildlife photographer willing to spend long hours in the field to get up close and personal with the wildlife. When you’ve pictured a polar bear from ground level, on the same piece of ice as you, then, well, you’ll never be the same again!

We have excellent chances of wolves, moose, caribou, snowy owl, arctic fox, red fox and a whole array of birdlife depending on the lodge you choose. In addition, if the nights are clear, and fortune smiles on us, we have a great opportunity for northern lights, and we will wake you up if the show looks spectacular!

**Includes: breakfast, lunch, dinner**

#### Day 7 (8): Back to reality...

After another hearty breakfast it’s time to pack for the flight back to Churchill, say good-byes and snap a few more pictures. After another exciting aerial tour, you’ll arrive in Churchill, where your bags will be stored for you until your flight back to Winnipeg later in the day. You are then free to explore and wine and dine in this frontier community at your leisure. We can even fix up dogsledding too for those wishing a canine adventure!

We will then get you on the flight back to Winnipeg, where you will overnight again at our preferred airport hotel.

**Includes: night in Winnipeg; breakfast, lunch and dinner**

#### Day 9 (10): Leave for home

Drag yourself up, sigh, and say goodbye to beautiful Manitoba...and onto your next adventure, wherever that may be!

# HIGH ARCTIC POLAR BEAR

## NEW-BORN CUB QUEST

- **10 days, 9 nights (for dates and rates, please refer to the enclosed sheet)**
- **Price fully inclusive Ottawa - Ottawa; international flights not included**
- **Group size 9: (note: this trip in conjunction with Arctic Kingdom)**

Without doubt, the sight of new-born polar bear cubs is one of the most exciting experiences, some would say life-changing, that any photographer or wildlife watcher could wish for.

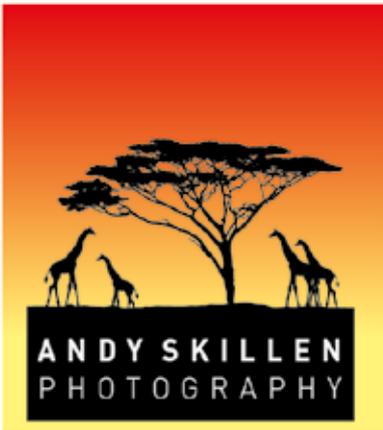
Until I pioneered an expedition for BBC Wildlife in 2016, the only place to really have a chance of seeing these wonders of nature would be in Wapusk National Park, some way south of Churchill, amidst the stick-laden tundra. However, following my ground-breaking trip that year, we are now able to offer an incredible high-arctic experience, located in a temporary, specially constructed camp on the sea ice to the north-east of Canada's Baffin Island.

This is true high arctic travel at the end of winter, and our days will be spent scouring the fjords and sea ice on snowmobiles as we seek out mothers with their cubs who have left the den and ventured out to go hunting. The scenery is breathtaking of course – you are high above the tree line and only rocks, snow, ice and icebergs exist, with polar bears dotted amongst them. This is your real chance to see bears out on unbroken sea ice, in the midst of their hunting period, with newborn cubs in tow. Nights are filled with northern lights and often during the days we will find bears that have scaled icebergs to “chill out” and rest.

This is not a trip for the unadventurous, and it can be physically challenging at times. This is real high arctic travel, at the end of winter, with long days in sometimes extreme conditions. However, if you are lucky enough to spot a bear with cubs, you will be one of literally a handful that has ever seen this in this particular part of the world.

Please contact me to discuss this trip in full. I was the first only UK photographer to have ever been in this part of the world at this time of year, and as such will be able to fully brief you on what to expect and if this trip is really for you. This is the ultimate polar bear adventure.





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F: [andyskillenphotography](https://www.facebook.com/andyskillenphotography)

