

Our Glorious AFS Itinerary

Oct 20 – Arrive Winnipeg

You may arrange own air roundtrip to Winnipeg for good rates in fall or if requests demand, we'll present group air later. Welcome to the **Great White North!** Arrive in wonderful Winnipeg, the gateway to our Arctic adventure! The day is yours to explore this beautiful capital of Manitoba. A mixture of historical sites, modern marvels, and stunning wide open spaces, it has a well-earned reputation for being a vibrant and welcoming multicultural city.

When Europeans first showed up here 300 years ago, the history of this region dates back 4,000 years! On this free day, you may want to take in the **Manitoba Museum** which has nine galleries displaying historical artifacts which help retrace the province's storied history. Or just want to hang out and explore? Wander down to **The Forks**, a funky riverside market that has restaurants, shopping, and entertainment - a great place just to sit and people watch before we head further north tomorrow!

In the evening, we all gather to meet our guides and our fellow AFS adventures to get prepared for the fun-filled next four days. We'll overnight in a hotel near the airport to make it convenient for our early morning departure. There is free wifi, coffee, and a 24 hour fitness center.

Overnight: Four Points by Sheraton

Oct 21 – Off to Churchill!

We make our way from Winnipeg to Churchill, touching down in **The Polar Bear Capital of the World!** Arriving late morning, we immediately set out to explore this small, historic town surrounded by splendid subarctic wilderness. Set on the western shore of the **Hudson Bay**, Churchill is still considered a frontier town centuries after its beginnings. You have to remember just how far north you are and Churchill pretty much stands on its own on the shores of the remote Hudson Bay.

This area is Inuit land, home for centuries to the Cree and Chipewyan native tribes who subsisted on the abundant game and fish in the area. The whales and seals they hunted on the bay are still plentiful in this area. While the Inuit influence is still evident in and around Churchill, the town traces its European history to the 1600s. It got its name as the Churchill River Post, the first permanent settlement for the famous Hudson Bay Company in the 1700s.

Our town tour will include the Eskimo Museum which traces the history of this area's indigenous people. We will also visit the impressive stone fortress Prince of Wales Fort which was first built in 1717. During the height of the lucrative fur trade in the region, the French captured the fort from the British, eventually returning it in the late 1700's.

These days, the big draw to Churchill is again its natural resources. Fishing, hunting, photography and of course sightings of those massive, majestic white predators... the polar bear. For a millennia they have come to the edge of the Bay to fatten themselves up before winter hibernation. We will be here at the height of their activity, as they make their way to the feeding grounds around Hudson Bay.

Days are short here in the far northern regions and we will gather in our hotel for a relaxing dinner and prepare ourselves for our polar adventure.

Overnight: Tundra Inn Hotel (B, L, D)

Oct 21 – Full Day Bear Viewing

The Tundra Buggies themselves are especially designed to research and view polar bears. They are huge, spacious and comfortable, sitting high above the arctic tundra to give optimum viewing of the surrounding terrain. Don't be surprised if a curious bear comes right up to the window to check you out. But not to worry, the buggies are secure and that polar bear face pressed against the window makes a great photo op!

Our entire day will be spent out on the tundra searching for bears and other wildlife. Lunch will be served aboard the buggy. We'll return to our hotel in the late afternoon for a quiet evening.

Overnight: Tundra Inn Hotel (B, L, D)

Oct 23 – Dog Sledding

After breakfast, we'll venture to the **Parks Canada Interpretive Center** to get a better perspective about the history, wildlife, and culture of the Churchill area. The center is located in the historic Churchill train station and is the central information center for Wapusk National Park, Prince of Wales Fort and York Factory National Historic Sites. Interactive exhibits and our guide will help us understand both what we have seen and what we are about to see in our Arctic Adventure. Rail continues to be a crucial link for Churchill to other cities. To give perspective as to how far north we are.... a train ride to Winnipeg from Churchill takes two days!

Afterwards, it's time to MUSH! **Dogsledding** is an experience like no other - mushing across frozen tundra at break-neck speed as the dogs bark and race! You can choose to simply ride in the sled or stand in the back and help guide the dogs on your adventure. But know this - these dogs love to run and their enthusiasm is contagious. While getting ready to board your sled, they actually have to be anchored to keep them from dashing off without you! Each dog has a distinctive personality and you'll get to know your team, how they are cared for and their individual histories. Then it's time to take on the wild tundra, mushing your very own team. This is a simply an exhilarating activity and you never know what wildlife you may see as you are dashing through the wilderness!

This afternoon, you return to Churchill and have free time to explore the shops and sights of this charming arctic community. Churchill is a small town and may remind you of something you would see in an old Western movie – only with snow!

Overnight: Tundra Inn Hotel (B, L, D)

Oct 24 – Full Day Bear Viewing & Evening Departure from Churchill

We are back in our Tundra Buggy for another opportunity to see Polar Bears and more. So if you didn't get the perfect photo the first time out, you have a second opportunity.

In the evening, we head to the airport for our flight back to Winnipeg where we spend the night at a hotel near the airport.

Overnight: Four Points by Sheraton (B, L)

Oct 25 – Depart

It's time to bid Adieu to Canada as our short, but sweet polar bear adventure comes to an end. We transfer to our respective flights home.

NOTE: Please understand we had to pay a hefty \$26,000 nonrefundable deposit to secure space for 26 AFSers over a year and a half in advance.

Level Two - I have no trouble walking and if necessary, can walk for 3+ miles. Uneven surfaces are not a problem. I do not need a cane or walking device.