Eagle-Eye Tours

Baffin Island Floe Edge Base Camp Itinerary

Link: Baffin Island Floe Edge Base Camp

Tour Overview

Journey to the legendary floe edge of North Baffin Island on Baffin Island Floe Edge Camp, an unforgettable Arctic adventure combining exceptional wildlife viewing, Inuit culture, photography, and exploration.

Beginning in the Inuit community of Pond Inlet (Mittimatalik), travel approximately 70 km across the sea ice by snowmobile and traditional Qamutik to a comfortable wilderness camp near the floe edge—the dynamic boundary between sea ice and open water known as the "line of life." The journey itself is part of the adventure, offering a firsthand look at the remarkable knowledge and skills required to travel safely across the Arctic ice.

Local Inuit hunters work alongside experienced expedition guides throughout the trip, sharing their invaluable knowledge of wildlife, ice, weather, and Arctic travel. Spending time together provides a unique opportunity to learn about Inuit culture, perspectives, and life in this extraordinary northern environment.

From camp, explore the floe edge and shores of Bylot Island in search of narwhals, seals, walruses, seabirds, and possibly bowhead whales and polar bears. Listen for marine mammals beneath the water with a hydrophone, photograph spectacular ice formations and Arctic landscapes, and, when conditions allow, you have the option to venture out on guided cross-country ski excursions across the sea ice and surrounding terrain.

With endless spring daylight and each day shaped by wildlife, weather, and ice conditions, no two expeditions are exactly alike. For photographers, birders, wildlife enthusiasts, and adventurous travellers, the Baffin Island Floe Edge Camp offers an extraordinary opportunity to experience the landscapes, wildlife, culture, and living ice of the Canadian Arctic.

Note that due to high demand for hotel rooms in Pond Inlet related to local infrastructure projects we have designed the tour without any hotel stays in Pond Inlet. We will still have a meal and gear check at the hotel on arrival and a meal and shower when we return from the camp on the departure day. We will use hotel rooms at the start and/or end of the tour if we can get them. Itinerary

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Itinerary

Day 1: Travel to Pond Inlet and onward to camp



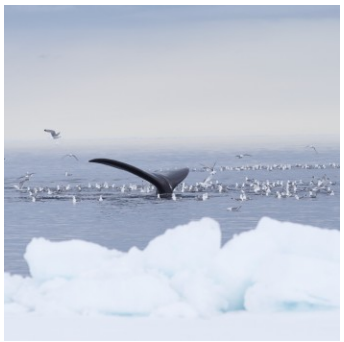
Our Arctic tour at the northern tip of Baffin Island in the Canadian Arctic begins today! If you fly from Ottawa today, you will leave on a morning flight. If you want to reduce the amount of travel today we recommend you spend the night prior in Iqaluit. Flights typically arrive in Pond Inlet in the afternoon. We will collect you from the airport and meet at the hotel for a gear check and introduction to the tour. We will have dinner at the hotel then head to the beach for our departure. We travel by snow machine and qamutik (wooden sled) to our camp. This will be a late arrival but we have 24 hours of daylight. Note that if weather or sea ice conditions prevent us travelling to the camp this evening we will arrange a mix of shared hotel rooms and homestays.

Days 2–7: Floe edge and Bylot Island



Our daily activities will depend on the location of the floe edge and weather conditions, but will include as much time as possible at the floe edge plus other highlights. During our travels we may have the opportunity to get up close and personal with several icebergs that have spent the winter frozen in place. These can be both beautiful and enormous as they await break up of the ice before they continue to drift southward. Nights will be at our base camp with daily excursions from there.

At the Floe Edge



The floe edge is where the winter ice meets the open waters of Baffin Bay and it is where the wildlife is concentrated on their northward migration. We will likely spend most of our time at the floe edge with the hope of seeing some of the more elusive species that will be moving by, including the marine mammals. Waiting patiently at the floe edge should improve our chances of seeing that amazing northern whale, the Narwhal. We will be watching for groups of these bizarre creatures, with their long spiraled tusks – the male's tusk can be up to 7 feet long! This will surely be a highlight! It is also possible to see Bowhead Whales, Walrus, and that creature of legend, Nanook, the Polar Bear, but we will need some luck for these. The floe edge will also give us the chance to see Ringed, and possibly Bearded and Harp Seals. Flocks of northern birds will also be streaming by as we enjoy this incredible place. Hundreds of Northern Fulmars, Common and King eiders, Long-tailed Ducks, and all three species of jaegers will be a treat. We will see hundreds or even thousands of Thick-billed Murres, and many Black Guillemots in their very sharp breeding plumage! We will also see a collection of northern gulls: Glaucous, Iceland, Sabine's, Black-legged Kittiwake, and with much luck, Ivory Gull. Conditions permitting there may be an opportunity for cross-country skiing on the sea ice for those that are keen.

Bylot Island



Part of Bylot Island is a component of Sirmilik National Park and is one of the largest bird refuges in the world. We may have the opportunity to go for a walk near our camp to explore the tundra. It is spectacular being on the tundra surrounded by the rugged snow-covered mountains that rim the eastern Arctic.

Visit to Seabird Colony



From our camp, if ice conditions permit, we will travel to the seabird colony on Bylot Island. North of Cape Graham Moore, these cliffs rise thousands of feet and host over 40,000 Thick-billed Murres and 6,500 Black-legged Kittiwakes. Hundreds of them will be coming and going from their precarious ledges as they head east to feed at the floe edge.

Day 8: Return to Pond Inlet and flight south



Our Baffin Island Floe Edge Base Camp tour ends today. After a final breakfast at the camp, we leave for our return to Pond Inlet. On our journey we view the towering cliffs of Bylot Island plus the spectacular landscape of mountains and massive glaciers. We plan to arrive in Pond Inlet in time for lunch at the hotel. You will also have a chance to shower at the hotel before catching an afternoon flight to Iqaluit. If you continue on to Ottawa today you will arrive about midnight. It will be an incredible journey in one day from sea ice to more southern climes, but we will head home with many fond memories from this amazing Arctic tour in the land of the midnight sun.

What to Expect

Daily Schedule

Each day at the Baffin Island Floe Edge Camp is shaped by wildlife, weather, and ice conditions. After breakfast, the group will typically depart camp by snowmobile and Qamutiq to explore the surrounding sea ice and floe edge. Excursions may take you to wildlife viewing areas, bird cliffs on Bylot Island, icebergs, glaciers, ancient dwelling sites, and historic sites. There may also be opportunities for cross-country skiing when conditions allow.

Flexibility is an important part of the experience. Guides will adjust each day’s plans to make the most of wildlife sightings and changing conditions. All travellers are expected to assist with some

camp duties during the expedition.

Unlike many of our tours, this is not a dedicated birding tour. You will have plenty of opportunity for birding at the floe edge and the expedition staff will be familiar with the birds, but you should not expect to have a dedicated birding guide along on the tour.

Camp

Our camp is comfortable and suitable for travellers with limited previous camping or outdoor experience. Guests sleep on camp-style cots in high-quality expedition tents. Sleeping tents are not heated, so you should be prepared for a winter camping experience and have appropriate clothing and sleeping gear.

A spacious group lounge and dining tent provides a comfortable gathering place where meals and hot drinks are served. This tent is often lightly heated. The camp will also have at least one group privy.

While the facilities make Arctic camping considerably more comfortable, this remains a remote wilderness camp on the sea ice, and that is an important part of the experience.

Walking

This is not a hiking-focused trip, and most exploration is done by snowmobile and Qamutiq. However, you should be comfortable walking short distances over snow, ice, and uneven natural terrain around camp and during excursions.

Conditions underfoot can vary considerably, and some locations may require careful walking across rough or slippery surfaces. Optional cross-country skiing may also be available, with outings tailored to the group’s experience and abilities.

Travel

The expedition begins and ends in Pond Inlet, Nunavut. From Pond Inlet, the journey to camp is approximately 70 km by snowmobile and Qamutiq, travelling over the frozen ocean.

Sea ice is generally relatively smooth at this time of year, but rough sections, pressure ridges, cracks, and other changing ice features may make portions of the journey bumpy. Our Qamutiq sleds used for guest transportation are designed with comfort in mind.

Travelling across the sea ice is an integral part of the expedition. Local Inuit hunters and experienced guides use their extensive knowledge of ice, wildlife, and weather to select appropriate routes. Conditions can change, so routes and travel times will remain flexible throughout the trip.

Climate

Late spring brings continuous daylight to North Baffin Island, with bright conditions throughout the day and night. Temperatures can vary considerably. By June, average daytime highs in Pond Inlet are around 6°C (43°F), with nighttime temperatures around 0°C (32°F), although temperatures during the expedition season can fall well below freezing.

Wind is common and can make conditions feel considerably colder, particularly while travelling by snowmobile or spending extended periods at the floe edge. Snow and rain are also possible. Strong sunlight reflecting from the snow and ice makes sunglasses and sun protection essential.

The floe edge is a highly dynamic environment, and conditions can change quickly. Ice cracks, surface flooding, shifting sea ice, and rapid break-up are all possible. For safety, guides may alter routes, activities, or the itinerary in response to weather and ice conditions.

Insurance

Please note that the deposit for this tour is 25% of the tour price. Due to the remote nature of this tour and the high cost of evacuation, emergency medical insurance is **highly recommended** on this tour. Due to the potential for flight delays and cancellations due to weather, trip interruption insurance is also **highly recommended**. Trip cancellation coverage is also highly recommended.

What's Included

Tour Price Includes

• Expedition Staff, basecamp support staff, Inuit guides and bear monitors.
• Accommodation - up to 7 nights camping, but we will include hotel accommodation in Pond Inlet if it is available or required due to ice conditions.
• Meals - all meals and snacks from Dinner on Day 1 to lunch on Day 8
• Expedition Clothing & Equipment including free standing expedition tents, sleeping bags and sleeping cots, winterized rubber boots & parka, skis/ski boots
• Safety Equipment
• Travel by Qamutik (komatik/sled) to/from the floe edge
• Single tents are available for single travellers

Tour Price Does Not Include

• Round-trip airfare from Ottawa to Pond Inlet, which are approximately $3,300 to $4,100 CAD (~$2,400 to $3,000 USD). Note that booking late typically incurs higher flight costs.
• Taxes (5% GST)
• Emergency medical and trip cancellation & interruption insurance (highly recommended)
• Any additional personal expenses or costs incurred by the company as a result of delays or changes to the trip itinerary caused by factors beyond our control – i.e. unsafe flying and/or landcraft conditions, wind, rain, snow, fog, ice conditions, travel delays, pandemic, etc.
• Items of a personal nature
• Alcoholic beverages, note that alcohol is prohibited on the Floe Edge
• Gratuities - Floe Edge trips are heavily staffed trips. You can expect to have between 5 and 9 guides on your trip, including basecamp staff and cooks, Inuit guides, and bear monitors. Tips are appreciated and we recommend each participant tips $10-$20 per day per guide.
