

Narwhals & Polar Bears: Pond Inlet Itinerary

[Link: Narwhals & Polar Bears: Pond Inlet](#)

Tour Overview

Rugged mountains, stunning glaciers, flocks of northern seabirds, the wonderful Narwhal, and traditional Inuit culture - this is what awaits us on a truly amazing Arctic tour to the wilderness of northern Baffin Island.

We experience this dramatic Arctic landscape at a time of year when the sun never sets and wildlife is returning to this very rich area of the Arctic. There are northern birds in abundance, including Thick-billed Murre, Black-legged Kittiwake, and King and Common Eiders. Other highlights include Sabine's and Thayer's gulls, Red-throated Loon and with much luck, we may see the all white Ivory Gull! In addition, the mixing of ocean currents from Baffin Bay and Lancaster Sound makes the marine life very rich! At this time of year, the sea ice is melting back and marine mammals are traveling north along the ice floe edge where food is concentrated. We hope to see several species of seals and the amazing spiral-tusked Narwhal. With luck we will also see polar bear or the endangered bowhead whale. Remote wilderness, striking Arctic landscapes, rich northern wildlife, and fascinating culture - this promises to be the experience of a lifetime!

Itinerary

Day 0: Arrival in Ottawa



Participants will need to be in Ottawa the night prior to our flight to Pond Inlet. We are happy to help arrange this night in Ottawa. If schedules allow, we can meet for an evening meal in Ottawa to discuss our upcoming **polar bear and narwhal tour**. Those arriving early may enjoy a visit the Canadian Museum of Nature before dinner. Night in Ottawa.

Day 1: Travel to Pond Inlet



Our Arctic tour begins in earnest today! We meet for breakfast and head for the Ottawa airport in the morning for our flights to Pond Inlet at the northern tip of Baffin Island in the Canadian Arctic. After a plane change in Iqaluit, the capital of Nunavut, we should arrive in Pond Inlet in the afternoon. After dinner we have a chance to visit a couple of local stores and walk around town. Hotel night in Pond Inlet.

Day 2: Travel to the floe edge



In the morning we will explore the shoreline, tundra and ponds close to Pond Inlet. We will encounter some of the more common species such as Lapland Longspur, Horned Lark and Snow Bunting, and we will be looking for Common Ringed Plover here and elsewhere. This mostly Palearctic species has a very small breeding range in North America, restricted to the eastern Arctic of Canada. After lunch, we will depart for the floe edge. We travel by komatik, which is a wooden sled lashed together and pulled behind a snowmobile. This is the traditional means of travel for the Inuit, the only difference is that snowmobiles have replaced dog teams. Enroute 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. 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 should have wonderful opportunities to photograph and enjoy the wildlife. The birding at the floe edge should be superb! Hundreds of Northern Fulmars, Common and King eiders, and all three species of jaegers will be a treat. We will see hundreds or even thousands of Thick-billed Murres, many Black Guillemots, and with luck, several Dovekie 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. You have to travel very far north to find this beautiful all white arctic gull, but here we will be in the heart of its range. Unfortunately, they have become quite scarce in the last several years and are now an endangered species. We will have the opportunity to watch as these and possibly other species move northward along the floe edge.

Days 3-6: Floe edge and Bylot Island



Our daily activities will depend on the location of the floe edge and weather conditions, but will likely include these highlights. We will use a camp near the floe edge for these nights.

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 plan to go for a walk near our camp to see the remains of several traditional sod and whalebone houses, used until recently by the Inuit. On the tundra, we look for many of the common northern species that are returning from the south at this time of year. Shorebirds are sparsely distributed, but we hope to find several species nesting including American Golden-Plover, Baird's Sandpiper and White-rumped Sandpiper. On the cliffs, we will look closely for Gyrfalcon, including white-morph individuals, and Peregrine Falcon. In the ponds on Bylot Island and around Pond Inlet, we will search for Red-throated Loon, Greater Snow Goose, and Long-tailed Duck. It should be a spectacular setting 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.

At the Floe Edge



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.

Day 7: Return to Pond Inlet



After a final morning at the floe edge, we leave our camp 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 arrive in Pond Inlet in the afternoon in time for dinner and a possible final walk around town in the evening. Night in Pond Inlet.

Day 8: Travel to Ottawa and onward

We have breakfast then catch our flight to Iqaluit where we change planes and continue to Ottawa, arriving in the evening. We highly recommend you spend this night in Ottawa rather than trying to connect to a flight home. We will head home with many fond memories from this amazing Arctic tour in the land of the midnight sun.

What to Expect

Worldwide, we feel this is one of the best places to see narwhal on a tour. There is a large population in the area and they can swim close to the edge of the ice where we are. They are generally wary of boats and ships so being on the ice allows closer views.

Late May and early June is still cold in the Arctic. Temperatures may not be much above freezing and it could snow, but warm layered clothing along with the waterproof boots should keep you warm. It is usually sunny though and the sun is up 24 hours, so bring sunscreen. We will provide all of the necessary camping equipment including a thick mattress and a warm sleeping bag for the nights camping. We sleep in 3 person expedition dome tents, but never put more than 1 or 2 people in a tent. Single travelers get their own tent. You can sit up in these tents but not stand up in them. We have larger tents at the camp that we use for dining and cooking. Our toilet is set up inside a tent near the camp and we bring a toilet and tent when we are out for the day on the ice. There is a generator for charging electronics in the evening when we are back at the camp.

Our daily activities on our **polar bear and narwhal tour** will be focused on looking for and watching narwhals & polar bears. We will also be happy to enjoy watching birds and other wildlife at the floe edge or on the tundra, but we won't hesitate to enjoy other aspects of the natural and cultural history of this area on this incredible Arctic tour.

Walking on this tour is generally easy, but we will be walking on ice in our camp, plus we walk up small hills and on uneven tundra. We spend most of our time traveling in the komatiks (sleds) and set up at the floe edge wildlife viewing, but typically do one or two optional hikes on the tundra for a couple of hours as well.

Travel from the community to the camp will take several hours and travel from the camp to the floe edge will generally take half an hour to an hour or more depending on where the floe edge forms and the ice conditions.

While we have outlined the detailed itinerary, this schedule and our daily activities will be very dependent on the daily weather and ice conditions as well as possible schedule changes from the airline. In addition, we cannot guarantee single occupancy in our hotel in Pond Inlet.

Please note that the deposit for this tour is \$1000 CAD/USD. Due to the remote nature of this tour and the high cost of evacuation, emergency medical insurance is required on this tour. Due to the potential for flight delays and cancellations due to weather, trip interruption insurance is also mandatory. Trip cancellation coverage is highly recommended.

What's Included

Tour Price Includes

- 2 nights in hotels, 5 nights comfortable camping near floe edge (equipment provided)
- Ground transportation
- Travel by komatik (sled) to/from the floe edge
- Includes all meals from dinner on Day 1 to lunch on Day 8
- Eagle-Eye Tours guide plus local Inuit guides with 5 - 11 participants

Tour Price Does Not Include

- Round-trip airfare from Ottawa to Pond Inlet (2023 price is \$3,595 CAD + 13% tax | \$2,895 USD + 13% tax).
 - Mandatory emergency medical and trip interruption insurance
 - Items of a personal nature
 - Taxes (5% GST)
 - Additional expenses in the event of flight delays
 - Hotel nights in Ottawa before and after the tour
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