



WORLD DISCOVERY
— HISTORY CULTURE WILDLIFE —

Arctic Watch



Beluga Whales near the Arctic Watch Wilderness Lodge

DAY 1 – Arrival in Yellowknife.

On arrival in Yellowknife, capital of the Northwest Territories, take a taxi (not included) to your centrally-located hotel.

DAY 2 – Flight to Somerset Island.

Take a private flight (duration: 4 hours 30 minutes, including a stop for refuelling at Cambridge Bay) to Somerset Island, Nunavut. In late afternoon, you will land on the private airstrip next to Arctic Watch. Everyone receives a tour of the facilities, puts their luggage in their cabin, and then meets in the Great Room for a welcome and to meet the staff. Dinner is served in the cosy dining room.

Meals included: Full breakfast, dinner.

DAY 3 – Whale-watching. Triple Waterfalls.

This morning there is a hands-on introduction to driving All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs). These practical vehicles are easy and fun to drive. You will then hike a short distance to the Cunningham River estuary for **whale-watching**. Beluga whales frolic in the shallow water only a few yards off shore amongst the ice floes. In the afternoon hike to **Triple Waterfalls**, a five-storey torrent of free-falling water. There you will see nesting peregrine falcons and other birds such as loons, snow buntings, sandpipers, and rough-legged hawks. Explore the canyon and see wild arctic flowers. Encounters with musk oxen are common.

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, dinner.

DAY 4 – Muskox Ridge. Fishing at Inukshuk Lake. Talk by Richard Weber.

Travel by ATV, crossing the Cunningham River delta, then along the **Muskox Ridge trail**. This affords a scenic overview of the whole area. To date, every excursion has encountered muskox. We pass an impressive arctic fox den, frequently watching fox cubs at play. A picnic lunch at a private shelter at **Inukshuk Lake** is followed by the opportunity to fish for arctic char. Fishing gear is supplied. Returning on ATVs you take an alternate route via the River Trail, viewing hoodoos (sculptured sand pillars), and local coal deposits. In the evening **Richard Weber**, internationally recognized polar explorer, offers an informal lecture on his North Pole adventures. His historic 1995 unassisted journey to the North Pole and back, a feat that has never been repeated, will be highlighted.

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, dinner.

DAY 5 – Cunningham Inlet. Beluga Whales.

Today's focus is on **sea kayaking in Cunningham Inlet**. All equipment and basic instruction are provided. Paddle amongst icebergs, ring seals and bearded seals, watching for beluga whales. Frequent sightings of sea birds, including arctic terns and eider ducks, can be expected. This afternoon return to the Cunningham River estuary to watch the **beluga whales**. This site is unique in the world because of the density of the whale population and their proximity to the guests. Frequently we are within a couple of yards of the animals. We can clearly hear their communication calls. To appreciate the underwater calls, we use a hydrophone (underwater microphone).

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, dinner.

DAY 6 – Flatrock Falls. Gull Canyon.

Following breakfast depart, crossing the Cunningham River delta, with the ultimate goal of **Flatrock Falls**. Guests have the option of hiking, or travelling by Mercedes Unimog truck, mountain bike, or ATV. Somerset Island canyons are as yet un-named. They were formed as the result of a shifting fault lines and their walls, mostly vertical, vary from 200 to 1,000 feet. Millions of fossils of prehistoric plants and animals litter the ground. Today's trip also offers opportunities to observe nesting sites of local birds including terns, plovers, and snow geese. A picnic lunch is served directly on the flat rocks that surround this canyon. After lunch, everyone hikes to **Gull Canyon**, named by us for the striking biological contrasts between barren canyon and lush gull rookery. This spot was recently visited by the Canadian Wildlife Service, not only to view the gull rookery but also to see the presence of peregrine falcons; their comments were that this spot is a unique and special micro-ecosystem. This evening, guests have the opportunity to watch, or for the more adventurous, participate in, demonstrations of traditional Inuit games and **throat singing**. Throat singing is unique to the indigenous peoples of the polar regions of the world and is unlike any other vocal music in western culture.

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, dinner.

DAY 7 – Cape Anne. Red Valley. Talk by Richard Weber.

Today's excursion is by ATV to **Cape Anne**. Visit five Thule sites along coast. The ride includes scenic vistas, icebergs, ancient Inuit campsites and prehistoric giant whalebones. The Thule culture was a bowhead whale-hunting culture, ancestors of today's modern Inuit. The Cape Anne Thule site is the largest in the area and includes the remains of 15 stone and bone houses. Return trip is overland via the Red Valley and guests can expect to be inspired by the magnitude of the landscape. This evening guests can relax with a lecture by **Richard Weber**. His presentation includes stunning images and fascinating stories of Arctic expeditions to Baffin, Ellesmere and other High Arctic islands.

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, dinner.

DAY 8 – Cunningham River. Kayak or raft trip.

The first leg of today's journey is covered by Mercedes Unimog truck. The goal is to reach the raft and kayak put-in on the Cunningham River, 20 kilometres from Arctic Watch. Typically, you will hike the final six kilometres through badlands, passing the skeletal remains of two bowhead whales dated at four to five thousand years old. Not uncommonly you encounter muskox, snow geese, jaegers, arctic foxes, sand pipers, and rough-legged hawks. Picnic lunch is eaten on the beach beside the river, while the staff prepares the rafts and kayaks. On the return to Arctic Watch, guests have the choice of paddling their own kayaks, or travelling by raft. The river is swift flowing crystal clear water with no difficult sections or rapids. The views are amazing and include steep canyon walls and at one point, a 180 degree turn. Guests can expect to be on the water for two to three hours. Tonight enjoy your final dinner and evening at Arctic Watch.

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, dinner.

DAY 9 – Activities. Return to Yellowknife.

Today is your last day in the High Arctic. By now you are familiar with this corner of Somerset Island. There may be an activity that you missed during the week (bad weather) or an activity that you particularly enjoyed and want to repeat, such as a final visit to the whales, or see the muskox head for the final time. Today, you do the activity that you want. In the late afternoon the plane will arrive to take you back to Yellowknife.

Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch.

DAY 10 – Depart for home.

Take a taxi (not included) to the airport for your homeward journey.

Meals included: Full breakfast.

DAY 11 - Arrive home.

Arrive London Heathrow in the morning.

Please note that this is a SAMPLE itinerary. The day-to-day activities at Arctic Watch and the order in which they are followed are subject to weather conditions and other considerations such as the location of wildlife.