



YOU ARE IN POLAR BEAR COUNTRY



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YOU ARE IN POLAR BEAR COUNTRY

Manitoba's Hudson Bay coast has one of the world's largest concentrations of polar bears. Every year bears congregate along the coast waiting for ice to form in anticipation of hunting seals on the frozen expanse of Hudson Bay. In fall, many bears move along the coast to areas where the first ice forms. Although most bear activity takes place in the late fall, (October/November) there is always a possibility that you may encounter a polar bear in the area, particularly on the coast. The community of Churchill, Manitoba, is situated on the shore of the Bay in the path of the bears' seasonal trek. This brochure provides safety messages for the Churchill and National Historic Sites areas only, and is **NOT** intended for extensive travel in the region. Please see Parks Canada's web site for more in-depth safety information.

WHY YOU SHOULD READ THIS

Polar bears are one of the natural perils for people in northern areas. The great white bear can exhibit violent aggression toward people, but a curious bear can also be dangerous. **ANY** encounter with a polar bear could result in serious injury or death for the person(s) involved. Your knowledge of polar bears is important to the safety of yourself, others, and the polar bear.

MANAGING FOR SAFETY



Manitoba Conservation

Parks Canada and Manitoba Conservation staff monitor Manitoba North National Historic Sites, Churchill, and its environs for the presence of polar bears. Polar bears are often removed from these areas when they are found. Ensuring there are no attractants for bears in these areas is critical. Parks Canada's Polar Bear Management Plan and Manitoba Conservation's Polar Bear Alert program have minimized the chance encounters of people and polar bears. Be aware there is always the possibility that you may encounter a polar bear. Patrols may miss a bear or a bear may enter an area

after it has been checked or cleared of bears. **ALWAYS COMPLY WITH SAFETY RULES.** Your co-operation in helping prevent problems is important and may save a life, either of a human, or a polar bear.



Manitoba Conservation

BE BEAR AWARE

For further information on polar bears in Manitoba contact:

Manitoba Conservation

Box 760 · Churchill, Manitoba · ROB 0E0

Or visit their website at: www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/wildlife

Manitoba
Conservation



For further information on polar bears in Wapusk National Park or the Churchill area:

Parks Canada

Tel: (204) 675-8863

Box 127 · Churchill, Manitoba · ROB 0E0

Or visit our website at:

http://parkscanada.gc.ca/pn-np/mb/wapusk/index_e.asp



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SAFETY IN POLAR BEAR COUNTRY

SAFETY ESSENTIALS

Your safety depends on your knowledge of polar bears and your actions and awareness in polar bear country.

- **ALL** polar bears are dangerous
- **NEVER** approach a polar bear
- Polar bears are predators: it is not safe to watch a polar bear unless you are in a vehicle or building
- **ALWAYS** be alert for polar bears
- Be extra alert in areas along the coast
- Be extra alert in areas where a polar bear may be concealed (behind boulders, or vegetation)
- Never startle a bear. Always walk with a companion or group and make noise
- When walking, stay close to safety (your vehicle or a building)
- Do not wander away from your guide, group, or vehicle
- After dark avoid poorly lit areas and areas where smells may attract a polar bear
- Watch for and obey the Polar Bear Alert signs
- **NEVER** go beyond a Polar Bear Alert sign
- **ALWAYS** keep away from bear traps
- All pets must be leashed



Manitoba Conservation

TRAVEL SAFETY

There is always the possibility of a polar bear encounter when traveling in polar bear country. Before starting out on an extended walk or hike, speak with Parks Canada or Manitoba Conservation staff about bear activity in the area. Around the town of Churchill, Manitoba Conservation puts up Polar Bear Alert signs in areas frequented by polar bears.

- Obey the Polar Bear Alert signs
- Speak with others about where polar bears have been seen recently
- Traveling in groups increases your safety
- Tell someone where you are going and when you expect to return
- **NEVER** leave your vehicle if you encounter a bear
- Avoid dark, poorly lit areas and areas where there is a strong smell or odour, such as garbage facilities
- Do not carry foodstuffs on your person

MEETING A POLAR BEAR



Blake Maybank /Parks Canada

Even in a patrolled environment, you may encounter a polar bear. Like humans, polar bears have distinct personalities and it is impossible to predict how a bear will react to an encounter. Polar bears are **wildlife**, regardless of how exotic or docile they may seem. A polar bear may be curious and approach you, or, it may be aggressive and not tolerate your presence. A female bear is protective of her cubs. She may move them to safety or threaten you.

In every encounter, there are actions you must do:

- **DO NOT RUN**
- **DO NOT PLAY DEAD**
- Wave your arms over your head to identify yourself as a human and yell
- Slowly back away from the bear, keeping an eye on the bear
- Go to a secure place (building or vehicle)
- Follow the directions of your tour guide
- Report all polar bear sightings to Parks Canada or Manitoba Conservation

POLAR BEAR FACTS

Polar bears are the largest land carnivore in North America. In the Western Hudson Bay population, an adult male polar bear typically weighs more than 400 kg (850 lb). They are strong, fast, and agile. They have an acute sense of smell, good hearing and keen eyesight. Polar bears are fearless and inquisitive. Their primary prey is the ringed seal, but like other bears they also scavenge. In the heat of the summer, polar bears may appear slow and docile, but they are capable of moving swiftly and with purpose, in the blink of an eye.



Kevin Burke Jr. / Parks Canada

Disturbing a polar bear or family group can be particularly dangerous.

It is unlawful to:

- Touch or disturb a polar bear (chasing or approaching is a disturbance)
- Feed or put out food for a polar bear
- Bait or attract a polar bear

- **All polar bears are dangerous.**
- **Never approach a polar bear.**
- **Watch for and Obey the Polar Bear Alert Signs**