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CHURCHILL TO NUUK - 18 DAY CANADA & GREENLAND EXPEDITION CRUISE

Cross the Arctic, discovering the awe-inspiring landscapes of Greenland and Canada's Northern Territories. If we're lucky, we might glimpse Arctic wildlife like caribou and polar bears. Encounter the captivating beauty of Nunavut and meet welcoming Inuit communities, learning of their deep relationship with these icy realms. Finally, it's Greenland, where the scale of colossal glaciers, ice sheets and terraced fjords humbles all comers.



ITINERARY

Day 1 Pre Cruise

Days 2 - 3 Churchill, Manitoba

Archaeological evidence around Churchill indicates the former presence of Pre-Dorset, Dorset and Inuit groups, with the earliest date going back some 4,000 years. On the western shore of Hudson Bay and at the mouth of the Churchill River,

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Churchill became an important base for the Hudson's Bay Company and the fur trade. Two forts were built in the early 18th century, both on the Canadian National Historic Site list. A Parks Canada Visitor Center in the VIA Rail Station shows exhibits of the human and natural history. Today Churchill is a town of about 1,000 inhabitants which can only be reached by rail on land, by air, and in the case of ships only between July and November. The deep-sea port facilitates primarily the transport of Western Canadian grains. Once the ice breaks up in the Churchill River Basin, beluga whales come to feed and rest by the hundreds. With sub-arctic tundra and boreal forests, the area between Churchill and Nelson River to the south is well-known as polar bear country. Churchill even has a Polar Bear Holding Facility, better known as the Polar Bear Jail.

Day 4 Walrus Island & Marble Island, Nunavut

Walrus Island is one of three uninhabited Canadian Arctic islands in the Kivalliq Region of Nunavut, Canada. It is nestled in the west of Hudson Bay. It is home to the Atlantic Walrus who huddle together in groups known as haulouts on the rocks at the foot of the cliffs. These spectacular tusked beasts are enormous – each one roughly weighs as much as a minivan. You'll hear their grunting which is loud and unique and sounds like a chorus of contented hogs.

Day 5 Coral Harbour, Nunavut

Day 6 Digges Island, Nunavut

Located in Digges Sound, an arm of Hudson Bay where the strong currents of the bay meet Hudson Strait, the Digges Islands are two islands of the Arctiv Archipelago of the Nunavut territory. It is place of the first recorder encounter between Europeans and Nunavik Inuit, in 1610, during Henry Hudson's

last expedition. The original name of the island is Saaqqayaaq-Qikirtasiit in the native Inuit language. As he did for Arctic - named after one of the patrons who financed his voyages- , Hudson renamed Saaqqayaaq-Qikirtasiit after his friend, member of the English Parliament, Sir Dudley Digges. The rocky cliffs topography there is perfect for seabirds. Amongst others, thick-billed murre colonies are abundant.

Day 7 Cape Dorset (Dorset Island)

Cape Dorset is a small Inuit hamlet located on Dorset Island off the southern shore of Baffin Island. The traditional name for Cape Dorset is Kinngait (meaning "high mountain") describing the 'Cape' which is actually a 800 foot mountain. This is a nature-lovers paradise with breath-taking landscapes and an amazing abundance of arctic wildlife such as migratory caribou seabirds whales seals and walruses. Ancient native Thule (Dorset Culture) peoples lived in this area for three thousand years and it is here where the first archaeological remains were found. Captain Luke Foxe during his attempt to find the Northwest Passage in 1631 was the first European to land here. He named the Cape in honour of his sponsor Edward Sackville the Earl of Dorset. In 1913 the Hudson's Bay Company started a trading post exchanging furs and skins for supplies like tobacco ammunition flour gas tea and sugar. In 1949 the market for white fox collapsed but the art industry boomed. Since the 1950s Cape Dorset the "Capital of Inuit Art" has become an economic mainstay of the community with more than 20% of it residents employed in the arts.

Day 8 Akpatok Island (Nunavut)

Akpatok Island is a remote spot near the northernmost limits of the Labrador Peninsula. Steep and sheer limestone cliffs jut out of icy waters. Encased in snow and surrounded with sea ice in

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the winter months this uninhabited island lures huge amounts of wildlife most notably the world's largest population of breeding Thick-billed Murres (known as Brünnich's Guillemots in Europe) estimated at well over a million birds. These auks flock to the bare cliffs of the island between June and September and murres incubate their single pear-shaped egg on the cliff ledges. Glaucous Gulls can be seen soaring above looking for unguarded eggs and chicks while Black Guillemots paddle around on the nearby sea. Akpatok Island is also a favorite summer home for polar bears as they wait for the winter ice to form.

Day 9 Lower Savage Islands

The Lower Savage Islands are a small group of islands off of the southeastern tip of Baffin Island, and a common location for polar bears to be found during the summer months. With plenty of land to roam while giving each other a wide berth, plus opportunities to feed, it seems perhaps bears can be found here as the ice vanishes with the summer season's warming temperatures.

Day 10 Monumental Island & Lady Franklin Island

Monumental Island is a splinter of ancient metamorphic rock, hunching in the frigid waters of the Davis Strait, defying the ocean and ice around it. Named to honour the legendary Polar Explorer Sir John Franklin, the island displays at times displays everything Nunavut has to offer, in an ocean studded with vast icebergs drifting across from Greenland. Monumental Island is a well known den site for polar bears, the icon of the Arctic; there is a good chance to see mother bears with cubs on the island, as the bears become trapped by the lack of summer ice, using the island as a base to hunt until the ice returns in the Autumn. Seeing the white silhouette of a polar bear against the ancient

black rock and autumn tundra colours is an experience that will remain long after returning on board. Groups of harp seals are a common sight in the waters around Monumental Island, and can be very curious, often swimming very close to investigate new objects such as boats. There are several sites on the island also used as haul out sites for the charismatic Atlantic Walrus. These vast animals are surprisingly gentle and skittish, and can often be observed caring for their calves on the rock bluffs while keeping a careful watch for polar bears. Almost nowhere else in Nunavut can the charismatic wildlife of the Arctic be observed in such a stunning setting. Named in honour of Sir John Franklin's widow, the lonely and uninhabited Lady Franklin Island lies off of Baffin Island's Hall Peninsula at the entrance to Cumberland Sound. The island is named for the wife of Sir John Franklin, the Arctic explorer who died trying to discover the Northwest Passage. The geology of the island is striking with vertical cliffs of Archean rocks, likely to be some of the oldest stone in Canada. The waters around Lady Franklin Island offer an abundance seabirds, ducks, seals, and walrus. With a bit of luck it is possible to see Atlantic Puffins here and perhaps even a rare Sabine's Gull.

Day 11 Leopold Island, Nunavut

Few islands are as instantly imposing and intriguing as Leopold Island - where vertical drop-offs form a colossal, table-like presence high over the Arctic waves. The island's sheer limestone cliffs tower dramatically, providing sweet relief and shelter for a vast and often rowdy crowd of 400,000 nesting birds. Erosion has sculpted these incredible cliffs into stark, curtain-like folds, offering excellent protection and nooks for nesting. Inhospitable to humans, these mighty natural fortifications rocket up almost 1,000 feet and harbour one of

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the largest colonies of seabirds in the Arctic. Located in Lancaster Sound in Nunavut, near Somerset Island, Leopold Island's rugby ball shape is a remarkable remote wildlife refuge and Arctic seabird research centre. The air teems with huge swells of thick-billed murre, black-legged kittiwakes, and black guillemots. Observing the chaos and scale of Leopold Island from the crisp, cold waves aboard a Zodiac is a mesmerising experience, but make sure you keep a lookout for the belugas and bowhead whales that frequent these rich feeding grounds.

Day 12 Padloping Island

Padloping Island, also known as Paallavik, meaning 'the place where one trips or falls forward,' may be a diminutive and remote Arctic island, but it has grand stories of intrigue and intrusion to tell. Situated towards the eastern extremities of the fragmented islands of the Qikiqtaaluk Region in Merchants Bay, Padloping Island boasts a far-reaching history in both geological and human terms. Occasional wandering polar bears and icy landscapes are reason enough to visit, but the island's dramatic cliffs could contain secrets of the planet's very formation. In recent years, scientists have made significant geological discoveries on Padloping Island, unearthing billion-year-old chunks of the Earth's core. Padloping Island's story is also intertwined with the Inuit community that once lived here, trading and hunting walrus. Controversial decisions were made to encourage the community's relocation, and their connection to the land, nurtured over generations, was severed. WWII brought the outside world closer when a U.S. wartime weather station was established on the island. Eventually, ownership of the weather station was transferred to the Royal Canadian Navy, and it closed after only three years.

Day 13 Auyuittuq National Park

Located at the heart of Nunavut, on Baffin Island's Cumberland Peninsula, Auyuittuq National Park offers you one of the most beautiful and striking landscapes in Canada. Large valleys and steep-walled fjords surrounded by a skyline of irregular peaks and massive glaciers, exactly how you would picture the Arctic. Auyuittuq homes little vegetation, however, you can however spot some arctic wildlife species in these stunning and serene landscapes. Arctic foxes, caribou, lemmings, snow geese, ermines, but also polar bears and many bird species like peregrine falcons can be observed. Several cetaceans species frequent the surrounding waters of the island, narwhals, beluga whales and orcas being the most likely to be seen. The coasts of the island are a haven for many seabirds like the king eider or the little auk. Established a national park in 1972, Auyuittuq holds an extremely important place in Canada's history due to its location. Many civilisations visited Auyuittuq since the first people settled during the Stone Age, noting the ideal conditions for whaling. Among them, Norse and English explorers but also the Inuit, a people that left his mark on the island and all the Nunavut region. Auyuittuq means "The Land That Never Melts" in Inuktitut, the national park's land being covered by the huge Penny Ice Glacier.

Day 14 Day at sea

Days at sea are the perfect opportunity to relax, unwind and catch up with what you've been meaning to do. So whether that is going to the gym, visiting the spa, whale watching, catching up on your reading or simply topping up your tan, these blue sea days are the perfect balance to busy days spent exploring shore side.

Day 15 Sisimiut

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Sisimiut ('The People of the Fox Holes') is Greenland's second city, the largest Arctic City in North America, and a hub between the warmer South and the frozen North of the country. With a young, dynamic population, including students from all over the country, Sisimiut is one of the fastest growing cities in Greenland. Inhabited for more than four and a half thousand years, the Danish Colonial Era saw the rapid development of the city into a trade centre, and the old buildings and artefacts can be seen at Sisimiut Museum, a collection of beautifully restored buildings displaying everything from ancient turf houses to modern Inuit art. The local artisans are considered some of the best in Greenland, and often sell their wares direct from their communal workshop in the harbour, where they barter with hunters for raw materials. Today, modern industry focussed on processing sea food and shipping; KNI, the state-run chain of general stores operating in even the most remote settlements is based in Sisimiut. Most residents still live in the colourful wooden houses Greenland is so well known for. Sisimiut's vast back country offers excellent opportunities for hiking and fishing, and the locals often use sled dogs or snowmobiles to get around their vast mountainous playground during the long winters. In the summer, one can walk as far as Kangerlussuaq International Airport, a trail also used for the gruelling Polar Circle Marathon, one of the toughest endurance events in the world.

Day 16 Evighedsfjord & Kangaamiut (Qeqqata)

Evighedsfjord (Eternity Fjord) is a large fjord northeast of Kangaamiut in southwest Greenland. The fjord has a length of 75 kilometers and several branches with numerous glaciers coming down from the Maniitsoq Ice Cap to the north can be seen. The Evighedsfjord has several bends and whenever the

ship reaches the supposed end the fjord continues in another direction and seems to go on forever. Qingua Kujatdleq Glacier is at its southeastern end. At the northwestern end a U-shaped valley has seven glaciers coming down from the mountains but not reaching the water. The glaciers had their maximum extent around the year 1870 and have gone through several cycles of advance and retreat. The mountains on either side of the fjord can reach in excess of 2,000 meters and the fjord has a depth of up to 700 meters. Evighedsfjord's snowline is at 1,100 meters and the Evighedsfjord region is famous as one of Greenland's best heli-skiing areas. Kangaamiut (the People of the Fjords) is a settlement which clings to the shoreline of Greenland's Arctic Circle region, backed by some of the country's most spectacular fjordlands. The nearby pinnacle-shaped mountains gave the Danish-Norwegian colonial settlement its original name of Sukkertoppen (Sugarloaf) and the town recently celebrated its 250th anniversary. Here, one can experience small-town Greenlandic culture at its most authentic. The town is scattered across a small hill, displaying all the colourful buildings of the town at once; it is impossible to take a bad photo here. A system of staircases and boardwalks leads to the top of the hill, an area used to helicopter transport which offers jaw-dropping vistas of the wilderness around the settlement. The locals are proud of their Inuit history and culture, and the people of Kangaamiut are friendly and welcoming to visitors. Depending on the day, one could see local men selling fresh fish or reindeer meat from the surrounding fjords or flensing their catch on the rocks of the harbour, local women selling intricate homemade beaded necklaces and carvings, or even be invited into a local home to share a pot of coffee with some of the friendly residents, who are always happy to have visitors. Although the scenery is world-class, as in many

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towns in Greenland, wonderful memories of the welcoming residents are the most treasured.

Day 17 Nuuk (Godthab)

In the bustling capital city of Greenland, you could be forgiven for forgetting you are in such a vast and isolated country. Nuuk is Greenland's economic and social hub, home to more than a third of Greenland's population, and although it feels like a world capital, scratch the surface, and a uniquely Greenlandic character can be found underneath. Nuuk Cathedral overlooks the gorgeous old Colonial Harbour district and the Greenland National Museum, resting place of the legendary Qilakitsoq mummies, the true highlight of the museum's archaeological collection. Above the Colonial Harbour sits downtown Nuuk, with lines of Scandistyle apartments, a bustling shopping district, the Greenlandic Parliament, Nuuk City Hall (which welcomes visitors to see its artwork) and even outdoor cafes selling locally produced food and beer. These nods to modernity compete for space with local artisan boutiques, the meat market selling the catch from Nuuk's vast fjord-lands, and the stunning Katuaq Cultural Centre, where blockbuster movies, as well as local and foreign performers entertain the people of Nuuk. Although Nuuk has long been a melting pot of Danish and Greenlandic ideas, this is a city where Greenland displays its sophistication, with the Country's only traffic lights, roundabouts and University. Most of all, expect to find a multitude of friendly people who are proud of who they are, and equally proud of the city they call home.

Day 18 Post Cruise

Please Note:

Itineraries are subject to change.

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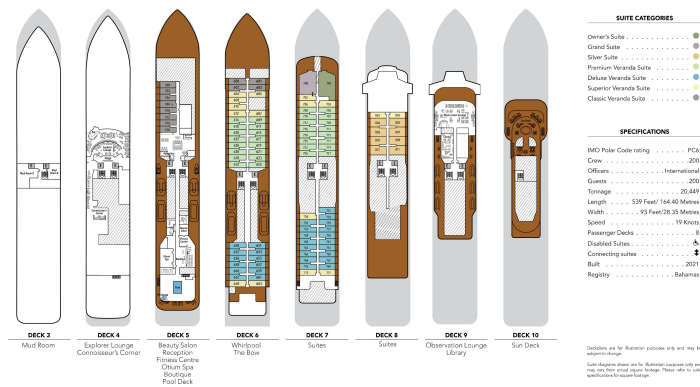
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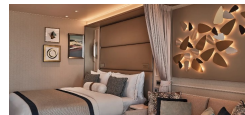
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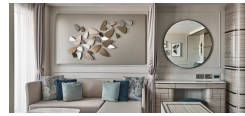
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