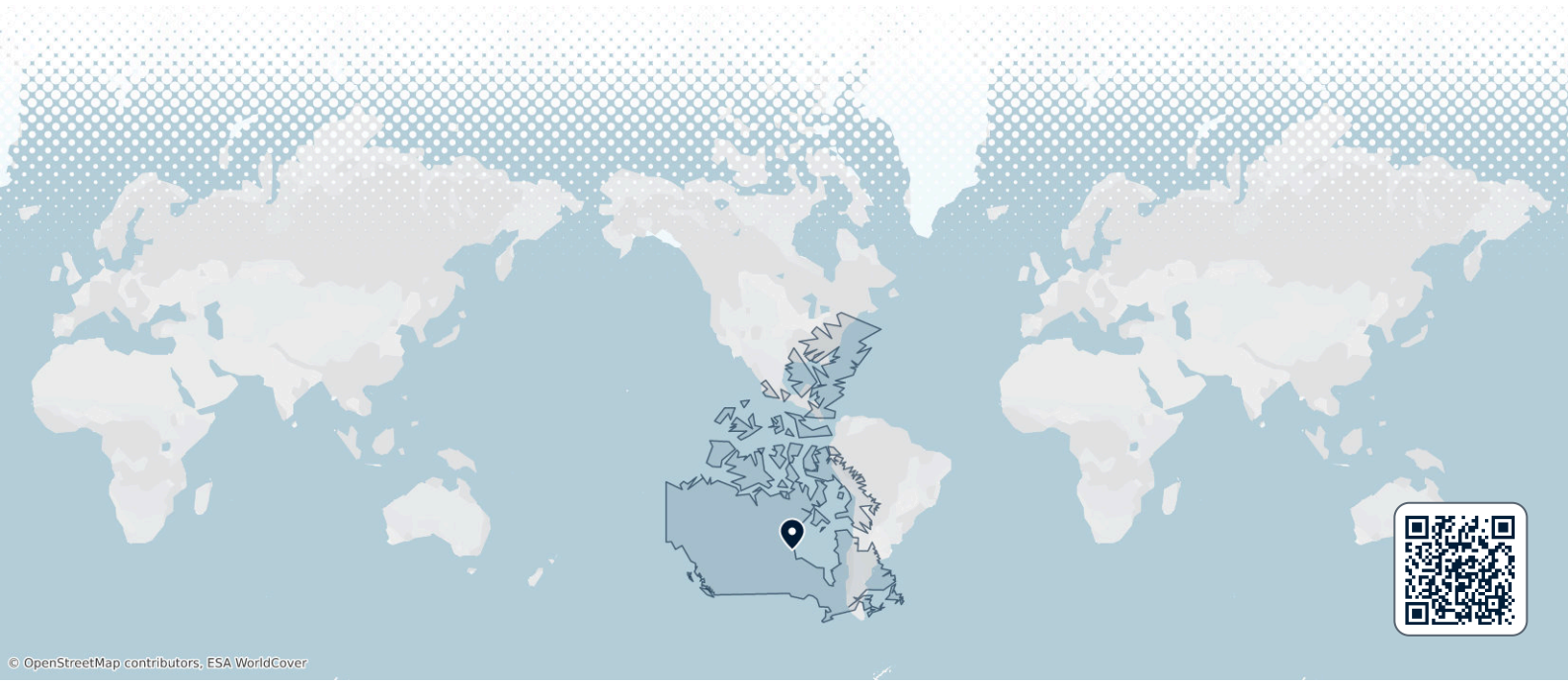


Churchill

Manitoba · Canada

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



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Overview

Churchill is a small town on the west shore of Hudson Bay, in northern Manitoba. It is famous for wildlife. Polar bears gather here each autumn, beluga whales fill the river mouth in summer, and the aurora is strong in the long cold nights.

There are no roads to Churchill. You arrive by plane or by train. Most visitors come on a tour of three to seven days, built around one season. Services are basic and the town has fewer than 1,000 residents, so plan and book well ahead.

When to visit

Each season has one main draw.

- **Polar bears**: July to November, with October and November the peak. Bears wait near the coast for the bay to freeze.
- **Beluga whales**: late June to August. Whales gather in the Churchill River estuary.
- **Aurora**: January to March, and late August to early September on clear nights.

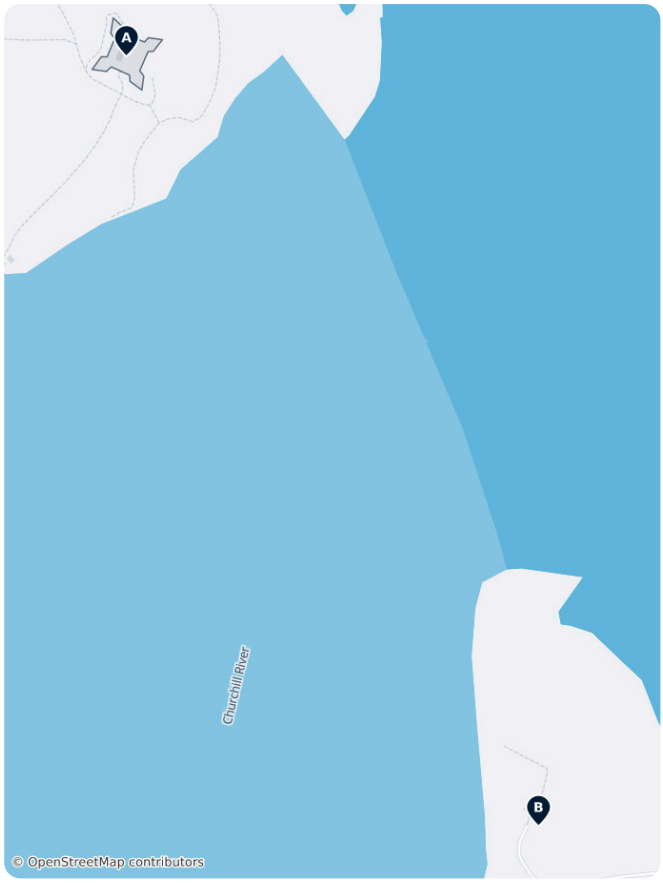
Summer is also the time for birds and tundra flowers. Winter is very cold and the days are short. Book fall tours many months ahead, as places are limited.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Great Great for aurora viewing	-22° / -9° Feels like -30°	-28° / -37°	Dry air
February	Good Good for aurora viewing	-21° / -9° Feels like -29°	-27° / -35°	Dry air
March	Poor Poor for watersports	-15° / -1° Feels like -22°	-21° / -32°	25 sunny days · Dry air
April	Poor Poor for watersports	-5° / 4° Feels like -13°	-12° / -23°	21 sunny days · Dry air
May	Poor Poor for watersports	3° / 15° Feels like -4°	-4° / -11°	Dry air
June	Fair Fair for wildlife watching	11° / 21° Feels like 6°	3° / -2°	Dry air
July	Good Good for wildlife watching	16° / 24° Feels like 12°	8° / 3°	Dry air
August	Good Good for wildlife watching	16° / 24° Feels like 12°	10° / 5°	12 rainy days · Dry air
September	Fair Fair for wildlife watching	11° / 19° Feels like 5°	6° / 0°	12 rainy days · Dry air
October	Poor Poor for aurora viewing	2° / 10° Feels like -5°	-2° / -9°	12 rainy days · Dry air
November	Good Good for aurora viewing	-8° / 1° Feels like -16°	-14° / -25°	Dry air
December	Good Good for aurora viewing	-18° / -4° Feels like -26°	-24° / -35°	Dry air

Climate data: NASA POWER + Copernicus ERA5-Land and ERA5 · 1996–2025

Top sights

- A Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site is a large stone fortress from the 1700s on the river mouth. Visits are by boat from the town, so check with local operators.
- B Cape Merry is a small old gun battery on a rocky point at the harbour. It has wide views of the river, the bay and, in season, whales.
- **Itsanitaq Museum** shows Inuit carvings and artifacts, and items from the region's history. It is small and easy to see in an hour.
- **Miss Piggy** is a plane wreck on the tundra just east of town. It is a popular photo stop on local tours.
- **Hudson Bay shore** runs along the edge of town. Look for belugas in summer and ice in late autumn.



Churchill – Plan Your Trip
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What to experience

- **See polar bears from a tundra vehicle.** Tour companies run large, high-riding vehicles on the tundra in fall. Some tours include lodge stays on the tundra. You see bears from the vehicle, not on foot.
- **Watch belugas in summer.** Join a boat trip on the Churchill River, or kayak or snorkel with a guide. Bring warm layers even in July.
- **Look for the aurora.** Go out on a clear, dark night, away from town lights. Many winter tours include night viewing. A research station east of town also has aurora programs, so ask about stays.
- **Try dog sledding or a helicopter tour.** Local operators run both in the right season.
- **Walk the shore for birds and tundra flowers.** Summer is good for this, but follow local polar bear advice first.

Where to explore

- Winnipeg is the provincial capital and the main gateway. Most flights and the train to Churchill start here.
- Manitoba is the province that contains Churchill. The north is remote, and most of its other destinations are in the south.

Getting there

- **By air**: Churchill Airport (YYQ) has scheduled flights from Winnipeg, about 2 hours. Service runs year-round. Many tour packages start with a flight from Winnipeg.
- **By train**: VIA Rail runs from Winnipeg to Churchill, about 1,700 km and about two days with two nights on board. Trains run twice a week. Check dates and book early on VIA Rail.
- **By road**: There is no road into Churchill. You can drive to Thompson, Manitoba, and then fly or take the train.

Getting around

- **On foot**: The town is small, so many places are walkable. Distances are short, but the wind is cold in most seasons.
- **Tours and shuttles**: Most sights outside town need a tour or a transfer. Fort and whale trips go by boat. Tundra vehicles and buses cover the coast.
- **Taxis and rentals**: Local taxis and rental vehicles exist, but numbers are small. Book ahead in busy fall weeks.
- **Bears**: In bear season, getting around town after dark on foot is not advised. See Safety.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

Moderate

The town is small and flat, but wind, cold and polar bears limit walking.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Low

Few roads and harsh weather make cycling uncommon.

Safety & health

Polar bears can enter town, mostly in autumn. Follow local advice, never approach a bear, and do not walk alone at night in bear season. Report any sighting to the local polar bear alert program.

Dress for wind and cold. Use layers, a windproof outer layer, insulated boots, a hat and mitts. Winter brings extreme cold, and frostbite can happen within minutes. In summer, bring insect repellent, as mosquitoes and black flies are common.

Medical care in town is limited. Serious cases are flown to Winnipeg, so travel insurance with medical evacuation is worth having.

History

Dene and Inuit peoples used this coast long before Europeans arrived. The Hudson's Bay Company built a stone fort here in the 1700s to protect its fur trade. It was captured by the French in 1782 without a

fight.

The town later grew around a railway and a northern port, and it still ships goods across the bay. Today Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site stands as a national historic site beside the river mouth.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Canada at a glance:

CURRENCY
CAD $

EMERGENCY
911

ELECTRICITY

Type A / Type B
120 V · 60 Hz

LANGUAGES
English, French

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Top sights





A Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Site

The Prince of Wales Fort is a historic bastion fort on Hudson Bay across the Churchill River from Churchill, Manitoba, Canada.

(58.79722, -94.21339)

pc.gc.ca/eng/lhn-nhs/mb/prince/index.aspx



B Cape Merry

National historic site at the mouth of the Churchill River, with a stone battery from 1746 and a lone cannon. It gives wide views over the river and Hudson Bay.

Churchill, MB R0B 0E0, Canada (58.78557, -94.20136)

pc.gc.ca/en/lhn-nhs/mb/prince/activ/merry

DATA SOURCES

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IMAGE CREDITS

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- Cape Merry — "Cape Merry approaching dusk" by anonymous donor, pd

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