

# Our Family Trip To THE CANADIAN ARCTIC



At almost 13-feet tall, an adult polar bear is the largest land carnivore, it can look down through a basketball hoop



The Davenport family (left to right: Karin, Skye, Jad and Annika). Jad is a Nat Geo photographer and bear guide



Polar bears are playful and enjoy yoga

## travel tales

Submitted by West Highland resident **Jad Davenport**, National Geographic Creative Writer, Photographer and Filmmaker

### Tell us a little about your family.

Jad and Karin Davenport and daughters Annika (11) and Skye (nine) live on Meade Street in West Highland. The girls attend Edison Elementary School and Karin is a school psychologist for Cherry Creek Schools.

### Where did you go on your trip?

Our entire family went to Churchill Wild's Seal River Heritage Lodge in the Canadian Arctic. It sits in the heart of the Hudson Bay polar bear migration route. We flew from Denver to Winnipeg on United and then up to Churchill on First Air. From Churchill, the lodge was a 20-minute flight by bush plane.

### Is there a special reason why you chose this destination?

Jad is a National Geographic writer photographer (and a licensed bear guide) and has been documenting the Arctic and Antarctic for the last two decades. He wanted his daughters and wife to experience this remote area.

### When did you go and how long was the trip?

Two weeks in August 2017

### What activities did you do while on vacation?

We went on daily hikes from Seal River Lodge along the coastal tundra to explore the arctic ecosystem. We often approached polar bears on foot to watch their behavior and photograph them. The area is home to wolves (Jad enjoys 'howling them up'), herds of caribou and snowy owls. We also went out in Zodiacs on the offshore waters of Nunavut (Canada's largest and newest territory) to snorkel with large pods of migrating beluga whales.

### What was the local culture like?

The lodge is a 20-minute flight from Churchill, a small frontier town. The people in Churchill are a friendly mix between Cree First Nations, Inuit and locals of European descent. We recommend swinging by the Arctic Trading Post for handmade moose-hide moccasins.

### Did you try any special cuisine?

Blueberries we picked ourselves, Northern pike, moose meatballs and caribou stew.

### What was the most unexpected thing that happened?

The weather was hot – almost 90F on some days. There was no snow or ice anywhere.

### What was your favorite part about the vacation?

The girls loved learning about the polar bears and seeing them up close (sometimes the bears approached within 40 feet). Karin really loved snorkeling with the belugas. Mother belugas would nudge their curious babies up to within inches of our masks. Jad enjoyed having his family in the field – and showing them the Northern Lights.

### Would you go back?

Yes!

### What recommendations do you have for someone going to this area?

Churchill Wild has several luxury lodges in the Arctic. Seal River Lodge is a favorite for those who want to both see both polar bears and snorkel with beluga whales. Nanuk Lodge has polar bears and wolves and the Tundra Camp (a tented camp) has grizzly bears and caribou. Late summer is the best time to see the Arctic, the bugs are usually gone, the animals are active and the skies are dark enough to see the Northern Lights. We recommend booking a year in advance, the lodges usually sell out quickly. Also, ask the airlines about family rates on the flights between Winnipeg and Churchill (families can fly together on steeply discounted fares). The Churchill area has one of the densest populations of polar bears in the world, so never wander on your own without a professional guide.

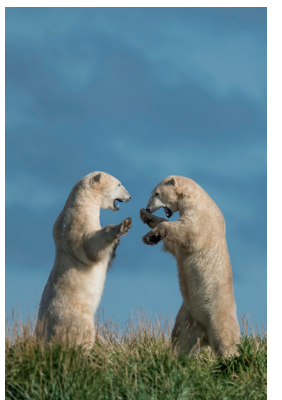
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Zodiacs bring guests out to snorkel with curious beluga whales



The cozy lounge at Churchill Wild's Seal River Heritage Lodge



Male polar bears spar for fun, the bigger ones let the little ones win



A yearling cub sleeps with his mother after a long swim in the ocean



Travel in the Arctic is by bush plane



If you have been on a fun trip and want to share your experiences with your neighbors, please email [barbara.gart@n2pub.com](mailto:barbara.gart@n2pub.com)