

CANADA



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Extreme Marine Experiences

STRETCHING AS FAR AS THE ARCTIC CIRCLE, THE COUNTRY'S ICY WATERS ARE HOME TO SUPREME SPECIES.

1. Baby Harp Seals Between late February and early March, tens of thousands of harp seals give birth in the frozen environs around Quebec's Îles de la Madeleine. Helicopter onto the ice floes to watch countless fuzzy, white pups scooting across snowy expanses. The ultimate way to achieve this seal experience is through a multi-night, all-inclusive package offered by the remote hotel Château Madelinot. tourismeilesdelamadeleine.com

2. Orcas Take a four- to five-day sea kayak excursion through this killer whale's prime habitat, Johnstone Strait in British Columbia, with outfitter Wildcoast's remote Orca Camp. kayakbritishcolumbia.com

3. Narwhals Head way north to 74° latitude to reach Lancaster Sound off northern Baffin Island to witness the migration from mid-May to late June of these elusive, tusked whales—the so-called “unicorns of the sea.” On weeklong excursions with Arctic Kingdom, stay overnight in safari yurts while traveling by day to the edge of surrounding ice floes via snowmobile and *qamutiik* (ice sled). Weather permitting, it's also possible to kayak and snorkel. arctickingdom.com

4. Pilot Whales Nova Scotia's most gregarious residents frequent the northern coast of Cape Breton from mid-June until mid-October. The quirky and personable Captain Zodiac Whale Cruise company carries the only permit to snorkel among them. Prepare to don a wetsuit and swim beside an entire pod. novascotiarwhales.com

5. Humpback Whales Observe these 50-foot, 75,000-pound leviathans from a Zodiac half their size. Ocean Quest Adventures in St. John's, Newfoundland, offers three-hour ocean safaris by boat from May to September. Spot dolphins and sea turtles in between whales surfacing. oceanquestadventures.com

6. STAY: National Geographic Expeditions Ships *National Geographic Sea Bird* and *National Geographic Sea Lion* have special permission to explore British Columbia's Haida Gwaii archipelago, an area referred to as the “Canadian Galápagos.” Nat Geo sails round-trip from Seattle to the region on four departures in 2019 (May, August, and September) as part of its 15-day cruise expeditions. From \$10,900/person; nationalgeographic.com

1. MCLaBlanc; 2. National Geographic Image Collection/Alamy Stock Photo; 3. Elizabeth Mall/Stock; 4. Michael Nolan

5. Douglas Neasloss; Robert Postma

Rare Wildlife Encounters

VAST SWATHS OF WILDERNESS ALLOW FOR A DIFFERENT KIND OF ANIMAL SAFARI THAT RIVALS AFRICA'S BEST.

1. Polar Bears Discover an area where the polar bear population is thriving—the west Hudson Bay coast, home to nearly 1,000 plump polar bears. Outfitter Churchill Wild has exclusive rights to approach these endangered species on foot (yes, you read correctly) under the tutelage of expert guides. All other companies are required to use a tundra buggy. churchillwild.com

2. Gray Wolves More than 40 wolves live within the 200-acre Parc Mahikan, a wildlife observation center in the coniferous forest of Girardville, Québec. On a day trip, interact with habituated individuals or observe their wild counterparts on guided hikes through the boreal forest. Fall asleep to a symphony of wolf howls if overnighting at one of the park's basic yurts or tree houses. aventuraid.qc.ca

3. Grizzly Bears Fifty air miles from Port Hardy, British Columbia, in the heart of grizzly bear territory, Great Bear Lodge offers front-row seats to the annual salmon run. Perfectly positioned viewing blinds (wooden structures camouflaging observers) facilitate prize-worthy photos of salmon-fishing mama bears and their cubs. greatbeartours.com

4. Barren-Ground Caribou Travel with Weber Arctic to witness the spring migration of one of the largest herds of this reindeer subspecies at the outfitter's Arctic Haven Wilderness Lodge, a fly-in outpost off Ennadai Lake in Nunavut. Expect to also spot wolverines, wolves, and bears while following the 300,000-plus caribou herd by snowmobile. Choose from five scheduled dates in April and May. weberarctic.com

5. Spirit Bears Studying and capturing images of this rare and elusive light-colored subspecies of the American black bear is a Holy Grail among Canadian wildlife safaris. From June to mid-October, hedge your bets on seeing them during boat trips and on short hiking tours from Spirit Bear Lodge in BC's Great Bear Rainforest. spiritbear.com

6. STAY: Seal River Heritage Lodge This fly-in lodge sits smack in the center of prime polar bear territory, which also hosts populations of wolves, arctic hares, arctic fox, and beluga whales. Due to its remote nature, the lodge bundles overnight stays into scheduled wildlife safaris (typically one week in length) from July to early November. From \$14,000/person/night; churchillwild.com >

—Paul Rubio