

AVOIDING Dangerous Encounters

When travelling in the Churchill region you are in polar bear country. Whether you are in Wapusk National Park, or in downtown Churchill, you share the same space with this predator.

Look outside before leaving a building. To avoid a surprise encounter with a polar bear check your surroundings before you leave a building.

Travel in groups and stay together. Do not walk alone. A larger group has a greater chance of spotting a bear. Small groups (three people or less) should use a taxi or designated driver in the fall after 10 p.m. while in Churchill.

Dedicate a group member to be the bear monitor. Be alert and aware of your surroundings by scanning your environment at regular intervals. Watch for and avoid all tracks, dimly lit areas in town, and areas of restricted visibility. Be vigilant!

Avoid areas of limited visibility. Polar bears may be hidden from view and are naturally camouflaged in the winter. If walking is absolutely necessary, stay on the main streets of Churchill – never walk in dimly lit areas.

Restrict your travel. Walking or bicycling out of town is a wonderful means of exploring the region, but not during September, October and November. Bears travel close to the shore. Use extreme caution on the shoreline in the summer and stay off the rock outcrops during the ice free period.

Ask Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship or Parks Canada staff about current bear activity. Some areas may be closed due to bear activity; obey all written and oral warnings. NEVER go beyond a polar bear warning sign. Tell someone where you are going, and when you plan to return.

Eliminate or reduce odours. Avoid using scented soaps and cosmetics and avoid carrying a lunch on a walk or hike. Be aware that scents from cooking or garbage can attract a polar bear to your location. Use sealed bags and dispose of garbage according to the Town of Churchill pick-up schedule.

Never approach a seal or whale carcass; polar bears will defend their food. Adult polar bears will often only eat the fat of beached whales, seals and other kills, but other bears may scavenge from these carcasses.

Never approach a bear for any reason. Polar bears are predators. Like other bears, female polar bears defend their cubs. Intrusion into their space may provoke an attack.

Never feed bears. A bear that finds food from a human source will associate humans with food. This results in a bear losing its natural tendency to avoid people and will become persistent in its search for food near humans. Polar bears that associate food with humans are high risk bears to human safety .

Identify a Safety Zone. Stay close to vehicles and buildings that can be used for shelter. Don't lock your vehicle doors – you may need to get back in quickly.

