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NUNAVUT PARKS ᐅᓄᓂᓂᓄᓂᓄᓂᓄᓂᓄᓂᓄᓂᓄᓂ PARCS NUNAVUT



Nunavut Parks & Special Places - Trip Planner

March 2007

SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL IN NUNAVUT



Please read the following information from beginning to end. It will help you know more about what to expect in Nunavut Parks. This information is not definitive and cannot replace your own planning. You should also look at other sources of information about Arctic travel and wildlife.

When traveling in remote wilderness, there is always some risk. You must be self-reliant and responsible for your own safety. All costs of a search and rescue are the responsibility of the visitor. Search and rescue may be difficult or impossible under certain conditions. Survival in an emergency will depend on how well prepared you are to deal with the extremes of changeable weather, river crossings and wildlife, including polar bears.

When you arrive in Nunavut, the mandatory parks registration and orientation system will allow you to find out about the area you will be visiting. Ask park staff for specific information regarding your trip plans and be flexible in case you receive information that will cause you to alter your plans.

If you have any doubts about your skill level or experience, consider hiring a local guide or outfitter.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Do you have experience in Arctic wilderness travel?
- Are you prepared to travel in polar bear country and willing to accept the risk?
- Do you have first aid and wilderness survival skills required for self-reliance?
- Will you be traveling with others who have experience and training?
- Do you have the necessary camping gear, maps, safety equipment, first aid and repair kits?
- Are you willing to reassess and possibly change your trip plans if necessary?
- Do you have judgment, patience and respect for changing conditions?
- Do you have time and provisions for unexpected delays such as waiting out bad weather, high water levels, boat shuttles held up by rough water or tides, and delays in flight schedules?
- Do you have alternate plans with things to do in communities if you are unable to make your destination?

Self-planned canoe and kayak trips are popular with northern visitors. You will need specialized gear, knowledge and preparation.

Before embarking on a canoe or kayak trip in Nunavut consider the following:

- Are you comfortable with bracing, maneuvering, surf landing, surf launching and self-rescue techniques?
- Can you interpret marine charts and tide tables and use them to identify marine hazards?
- Can you travel on a bearing and use triangulation to establish your position?
- Can you navigate in fog?
- Are you able to estimate the speed of currents and estimate ferry angles under varying conditions?
- Do you have white water experience, canoe spray decks and wetsuits?
- Do you have the necessary maps and river reports?
- Have you considered ice conditions, tides and water levels that may delay your trip?
- Have you considered the safest size of group in case one of your boats is damaged?

IN AN EMERGENCY

You must carry appropriate gear and take every precaution to keep yourself and those who may be called to rescue you out of danger.

Consider the following:

- Order necessary maps well in advance of your trip. Don't rely on obtaining them when you arrive in the north. Check with the Natural Resources Canada Centre for Topographic Information for a list of map dealers.
- Carry and know how to use emergency communication devices such as satellite phones. Some satellite phones may be available for rent in Nunavut but you are advised to rent one at home to bring on

your trip. Be aware that local topography and weather conditions can limit reception. Carry a Global Positioning System (GPS) unit for navigation as well as for relaying accurate location coordinates in case of emergency.

- Know how to use your equipment before your leave on your trip. Batteries don't last as long in cold weather so keep equipment warm and use them only when necessary.
- There are limited aircraft throughout Nunavut. Planes and helicopters are rarely stationed in smaller communities. Air access can be delayed, sometimes for many days, due to poor visibility, weather conditions, or high winds. Aircraft can only land if the terrain is safe.

WEATHER

The Arctic experiences long, cold winters and short, cool summers. Although summer brings long hours of daylight throughout Nunavut, there are areas where the sun never rises during winter. Because of greatly reduced hours of daylight and extreme cold, it is very uncommon for visitors to travel in winter in most of Nunavut. Only people with specialized skills and equipment should attempt winter travel.

Winds of 15 to 20 kilometers per hour are common year round throughout Nunavut. Winds are stronger from late summer to early winter and can reach extremes of over 100 kilometers per hour very quickly. Beware of blowing sand in summer and white out conditions when there is snow.

Know the signs and symptoms of hypothermia and how to treat it. Know how to prevent hypothermia by staying warm, dry, well fed and hydrated. Carry plenty of water with you year round to avoid dehydration. Freezing temperatures and snow are possible at any time of year. Think carefully about the clothing that you will bring.



Consider the following:

- Windproof gloves, over-mitts, a warm hat, scarf, balaclava or neck gaiter and wool socks are standard gear year round.
- Varying temperatures and vigorous outdoor activity require layered clothing. Start with long underwear bottoms and tops followed by additional upper and lower layers.
- Depending on the weather, cover up with either windproof or breathable waterproof jackets and pants.
- Do not wear cotton. When cotton gets wet from rain, snow or perspiration it cools your body temperature, potentially leading to hypothermia.
- Bring a warm parka with a hood.
- Bring sturdy hiking boots, running shoes for around your camp, and neoprene booties with water sandals if you plan to travel on water, as well as for creek and river crossings.
- Traveling by boat, your feet will be in contact with the hull of the boat where the temperature is usually close to freezing. Bring insulated rubber boots or oversized regular rubber boots with layers of wool or pile socks inside.
- Wear a hat as well as sunscreen with high sun protection factor.
- Protect your eyes with high ultraviolet filter sunglasses.

RIVER CROSSINGS

Stream and river depths can change over the course of a day and from one day to the next. This creates a challenge to assess safe crossings. Rivers in Nunavut are also very cold and must be treated with additional caution when crossing.

Consider the following:

- Cross major rivers and streams early in the day, especially those that are glacier fed. Water levels tend to be lowest early in the morning when the sun is weakest.
- Rainfall can dramatically increase river and stream flow. Changes in water levels and flow rate may be immediate, or delayed by several hours.
- If in doubt about your ability to cross a stream or river, wait until the water level is lower. It may be necessary to wait for a few hours or days until flow diminishes.
- The dynamic nature of rivers and streams means that safe crossing places change. You will have to assess each crossing for yourself, looking up and down stream for the safest place.
- River or stream sections on flat ground with several branches tend to be shallower than single, main channels.
- Undo waist and chest straps when crossing so that your pack can be removed quickly if necessary.

- Cross as a group, linking arms to support one another. Move diagonally across the current, with the strongest member upstream.
- Use a ski pole or hiking stick to test water depth and to help with balance while crossing.
- Neoprene booties with water sandals will protect your feet from cold water, tumbling rocks as well as keep your boots and socks dry.

WILDLIFE SAFETY

As a rule, keep your distance and avoid contact with all wildlife. It is illegal to touch, feed or entice wildlife in Nunavut. Contact the Government of Nunavut, Department of Environment Wildlife Division for information about fishing and hunting in Nunavut.

Grizzly bears are found on mainland Nunavut from the east coast of Hudson Bay across the barrens. You should take the same safety precautions in these parts of Nunavut as you would in any bear country. For general grizzly bear safety information contact the Government of Northwest Territories Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development Department. For Nunavut Parks specific grizzly bear information contact the Nunavut



Department of Environment, Parks and Conservation Areas or Wildlife Division.

Muskoxen, particularly if they are lone bulls, have been known to charge and gore people when threatened. Walrus and whales can be aggressive and can easily capsize a boat. Rabies is present throughout Nunavut, especially in foxes but also in wolves. Birds and wildlife will scavenge food, garbage and caches that are not secure.

ARCTIC INSECTS

In Nunavut, as in many parts of Canada's North, biting insects can be annoying during the summer. Although the problem varies from one area to another, it is best to come prepared. Here are a few tips on how to ward off insects:

- When bugs are bad, head for open areas and high ridges where wind will blow them away.
- Wear light colours. Insects are not as attracted to these as they are to dark clothing.
- Bring long sleeved shirts, long pants, a bug hat or jacket and bug repellent.
- If you are allergic to bees, bring appropriate medication with you. There are very few pharmacies in Nunavut especially in smaller communities.
- Check that the netting and door zippers on your tent are in good shape. Bring a tent repair kit with netting patches for repairs.

MINIMUM IMPACT TRAVEL

Plants and animals in the Arctic are very vulnerable to human disturbance because of the harsh climate and short growing season. Ensure that your impact on the land is minimized.

Practice the following:

- Respect wildlife and wildlife habitat. Do not approach wildlife for any reason, including photographs. Avoid nesting,



