



CHEESEMANS' ECOLOGY SAFARIS

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Alaska's Arctic ***Polar Bears and Aurora*** August 30 to September 9, 2021



Polar Bear with Cubs
© Hugh Rose

SAFARI OVERVIEW

Spend your days watching polar bears and Alaska's other iconic wildlife and your nights photographing the magical aurora borealis. Cross the Arctic Circle and then travel through the picturesque Alaskan landscape of the Brooks Range, decorated in fall colors, to the stark vastness of the Arctic Coastal Plain. Discover an Inupiat island village where polar bears feed on whale carcasses, while they await the formation of the winter sea ice. Absorb the hypnotic, dancing curtains of color across the night sky as you photograph or simply enjoy the ephemeral phenomenon of the aurora borealis. Explore Arctic Alaska by car, boat, and plane with local photographer and naturalist Hugh Rose where you'll learn wildlife, landscape, and aurora photography techniques and see nature's beauty at its finest.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Photograph polar bears from land and small boat as they swim, play, and forage on whale blubber.
- Experience the colorful dance of the aurora borealis and learn how to capture its brilliance.
- Learn about the culture of a native Inupiat village and potentially see a bowhead whale harvest.
- Search for iconic Alaskan wildlife such as grizzly bear, caribou, muskox, arctic fox, and gray wolf.
- Observe birds of prey as they hunt the Arctic tundra and flocks of migratory birds as they head south.

LEADERS: Hugh Rose assisted by Berni Hicker.

DAYS: 11, including estimated travel time.

GROUP SIZE: 8.

COST: \$11,270 per person, double occupancy, not including airfare (except for round-trip flights between Prudhoe Bay and the Native Village). See the *Costs* section on page 4.

Date	Description	Accommodation	Meals
Aug 30	Arrive in Fairbanks, Alaska for welcome dinner.	River's Edge Resort, Fairbanks	D
Aug 31– Sep 1	Cross the Arctic Circle en route to Wiseman. Explore the Brooks Range and photograph aurora borealis.	Lodge in Wiseman	B, L, D
Sep 2	Search for wildlife driving north on the Dalton Highway through the Arctic Coastal Plains to Prudhoe Bay.	Lodge in Prudhoe Bay	B, L, D
Sep 3–5	Fly to the island village. Photograph polar bear and other Arctic wildlife and experience Inupiat culture.	Lodge in Inupiat village	B, L, D
Sep 6–7	Fly to Prudhoe Bay. Return to Wiseman for aurora photography and to explore the gold-mining town.	Lodge in Wiseman	B, L, D
Sep 8	Drive south to Fairbanks, crossing the Arctic Circle with stops en route for wildlife.	River's Edge Resort, Fairbanks	B, L, D
Sep 9	Depart homeward from Fairbanks, Alaska.		B

LEADERS



Hugh Rose

Hugh has over 20 years of professional guiding experience. The vast landscapes and incredible wildlife of Alaska and the Polar Regions are his subject and passion, evident in his inspired leadership and stunning professional photos. Hugh receives unending praise for his amazing knowledge, delightful and accommodating personality, and attention to every trip detail.

Berni Hicker

After living north of the Arctic Circle in the Brooks Range of Alaska for 30 years, Berni has experienced the true Arctic. Although he was born in Germany, he loved Alaska so much that he made it his home. He is an accomplished naturalist, wildlife spotter, and storyteller, drawing on his experience living off the grid. Berni and his family now run the best bed and breakfast north of the Arctic Circle!

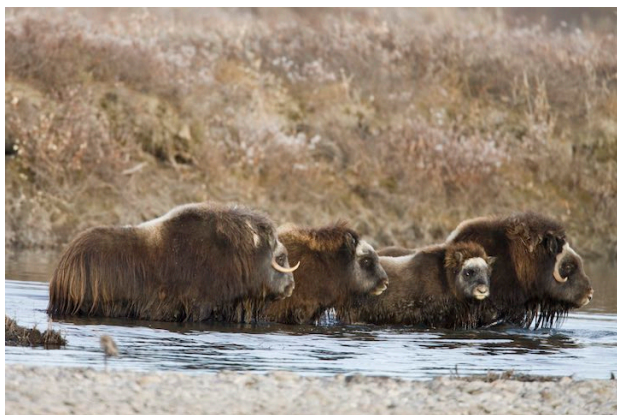
DETAILED ITINERARY

Aug 30 ~ Arrive in Fairbanks, Alaska

Arrive in Fairbanks by this evening for a welcome dinner with Hugh Rose. Transfer will be provided to your lodging at the River's Edge Resort along the banks of the Chena River.

Aug 31–Sep 1 ~ Drive to Wiseman for aurora and wildlife in the Brooks Range

You'll drive north to Wiseman on the scenic Dalton Highway, the only road in the United States that crosses the Arctic Circle. Pass through the White Mountains, crossing the mighty Yukon River, and into the Brooks Range, searching for wildlife along the way and enjoying the hillsides carpeted in fall color. Your destination is Wiseman, a gold mining town offering a glimpse into the recent human history of Alaska. Wiseman is located approximately 60mi north of the Arctic Circle at roughly 67°N latitude, an excellent location for aurora photography and perfect base for exploration of the Brooks Range. Check in at Wiseman's unique and historic bed and breakfast, owned by Berni and Uta Hicker. Berni will assist Hugh for the rest of your Arctic journey, lending his great naturalist, spotting, and storytelling skills. Conditions permitting, spend two nights photographing the aurora and learning techniques to obtain stunning images of this spectacular and ephemeral phenomenon.



Muskoxen
© Hugh Rose

Sep 2 ~ Search for wildlife on the Arctic Coastal Plains

You'll depart early to drive 240mi along the Dalton Highway to Prudhoe Bay at the edge of the Arctic Ocean. As you climb the Brooks Range, scan the boreal forest for gray wolf, moose, grizzly bear, and black bear. You'll go over Atigun Pass, the highest pass in Alaska at 4,800ft, and descend the north side of the Brooks Range into a world devoid of trees and home to many species of Arctic wildlife, such as muskox, red fox, gray wolf, and caribou. Birds of prey, including gyrfalcon, snowy owl, short-eared owl, and rough-legged hawk, hunt the open Arctic tundra while other migratory birds, like tundra swans, greater white-fronted geese, and Pacific

loons, gather in flocks to migrate south ahead of the oncoming winter freeze. The Trans-Alaska Pipeline snakes over the open tundra parallel to the road, adding another component for landscape photography. You'll arrive in Prudhoe Bay in time to enjoy a hearty dinner.

Sep 3–5 ~ Photograph polar bear and other Arctic wildlife in Inupiat village

Before your mid-day flight to the village, you'll search the Prudhoe Bay area for arctic foxes, snowy owls, and other wildlife. The flight takes you over the spectacular Arctic Coastal Plain and coast of the Arctic Ocean and you may see caribou, muskoxen, grizzly bears, and polar bears. Your schedule while in the village will depend on weather and individual interests, but the best photography tends to be early in the morning and later in the evening, so meals will be scheduled around photographic forays. Although bears can sometimes be seen prowling down streets early in the morning, you will drive to the shoreline to photograph in their natural environment. In addition to viewing the bears from land, you will also have the opportunity for small-boat excursions to observe and photograph bears on the islands near the village. Boat rides provide excellent photographic opportunities from a unique perspective because they put you at the bears' level and they allow you better accessibility to the bears, many of which rest on low-lying barrier islands just offshore.

Polar bears are the primary focus of this part of the safari since they are not found anywhere else during the trip, but you hope to see and photograph other wildlife as well, such as grizzly bear, arctic fox, snowy owl, and many species of shore birds and sea ducks. You may also have the privilege of watching the village butcher a Bowhead whale after it is harvested at sea. This age-old Inupiat practice is something that few get to observe.

Sep 6–7 ~ Fly to Prudhoe Bay, return to Wiseman for wildlife and aurora

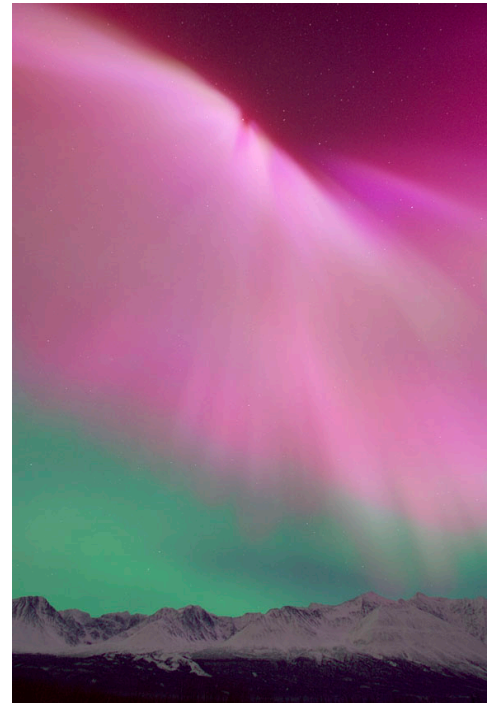
Enjoy one last opportunity to observe polar bears before you fly back to Prudhoe Bay and drive south toward Wiseman. As you drive south across the Arctic Coastal Plain, you'll search for iconic Arctic wildlife such as the prehistoric-looking muskox. With stops for lunch, photography, and simply to enjoy your surroundings, you will reach Wiseman late in the evening, hopefully after stopping to enjoy and photograph Northern Lights along the crest of the Brooks Range. The following morning allows for a relaxed breakfast before setting out to explore the area around Wiseman. Learn some of the mining history of the Koyukuk River Valley and also search the south side of the Brooks Range for wildlife.

Sep 8 ~ Drive south to Fairbanks, crossing the Arctic Circle

You'll bid farewell to Berni and his family before departing south toward Fairbanks. As usual, you will maximize wildlife viewing and photographic opportunities during this day of travel, searching the landscape for one last glimpse of Alaska's wonderful wildlife. Retrace your path south, crossing the Arctic Circle and Yukon River and returning to spectacular fall colors. The journey back to Fairbanks takes you through the historic gold mining community of Fox, Alaska, where you will stop for a farewell dinner together.

Sep 9 ~ Depart homeward from Fairbanks

Transfer to the Fairbanks Airport for your flights home or extend your stay.



Northern Lights
© Hugh Rose

COSTS (ALL COSTS ARE IN US DOLLARS)

Cost

Type	Cost per Person
Trip Cost, double occupancy	\$11,270
Single Supplement	\$950

Costs are per person, double occupancy, not including airfare (except for round-trip flights between Prudhoe Bay and the Native Village), singles extra. See *Included* and *Not Included* sections for more details.

If you are a single traveler, we will find a roommate for you, but if we cannot find you a roommate, we may charge you a single supplement. Single rooms cost extra, are subject to availability, and cannot be guaranteed throughout the trip.

Payment Schedule

Payment	Due Date	Amount per Person
Deposit	Due now to reserve your space	\$500
Second	November 1, 2020	\$2,000
Final	March 15, 2021	Remaining Balance

Payments are due based on the schedule above. All reservations require a deposit to confirm reservation of your space.

Cancellations

Until the Final Payment due date, deposits are refundable except for a cancellation fee of \$150 per person, which can be applied toward another tour if reserved within six months of the cancelled trip's departure date. Cancellations are non-transferrable. No refunds are given after the Final Payment due date.

Included

- All leaders, transport, park entry fees, landing fees, and permits for all activities unless described as optional.
- Round-trip flights between Prudhoe Bay and the Native Village.
- Four boat rides (weather permitting) to see and photograph polar bear on islands near the village.
- Airport transfers to and from the River's Edge Resort in Fairbanks.
- Accommodations for the nights of August 30 through September 8.
- Meals from dinner on August 30 through breakfast on September 9, including premium beer and wine in Wiseman.
- Gratuities to lodge personnel and for meal service.
- Trip Materials – information about flights, packing, entry and departure requirements, airport transfers, gratuities, etc.

Not Included

- All airfare (except flights listed as included), airport and departure taxes, and excess baggage fees.
- Alcoholic beverages, except in Wiseman (not available in Prudhoe Bay or the Native Village).
- Airport transfers if booking extra nights somewhere other than River's Edge in Fairbanks.
- Gratuity for Berni Hicker – tipping is, of course, discretionary, however we suggest budgeting about \$85 to \$105 per participant.
- Emergency medical and evacuation insurance and trip cancellation insurance. For more information see www.cheesemans.com/travel-insurance.
- Items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone calls, medical costs or hospitalization, room service, alcoholic and other beverages, items not on the regular menu, etc. If you have special dietary needs, please indicate them on your Reservation Form.
- *If necessary* due to travel delays, cost of lodging and transportation of about \$500 per person per additional night in the Native Village.

SIGN UP

Please contact us first to check availability, reserve your space, and obtain a Reservation Form. To confirm your reservation, we require a deposit and signed form from each participant.

Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris

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OTHER DETAILS

Climate

Even though it is early September, weather can be winter-like. Keep in mind the Arctic has ever-changing weather with temperatures that can swing drastically from below freezing to warm in a matter of hours. Expect daytime temperatures in the 40s°F (5 to 10°C), though perhaps up into the 60s°F (15 to 20°C), with nights below freezing. Both rain and snow are possible. Dress in layers with a waterproof and windproof outer shell, so you can remove or add layers as the temperature dictates.

Fitness Level

This tour covers a great deal of ground, so photography from or near the vehicle is quite common. Walks are generally under a mile and are at a slow pace with stops for observation and photography. Peak aurora activity is statistically around solar midnight (2:00am, Alaska time); this means staying up late into the night, which may lead to sleep deprivation.

Accommodations

Lodging throughout the safari is very comfortable albeit basic at times. Options are very limited in these remote locations, but we have found the best options to enjoy the rustic Alaskan experience. Excellent food and a personal touch can also be expected, especially in Wiseman where you'll enjoy home-cooked meals with your hosts. Most lodges have shared baths, except in Fairbanks, where every room has its own bathroom. Accommodations in Prudhoe Bay cater primarily to oilfield workers and feel more like dorms but are clean, comfortable, and serve hearty meals. Hugh has built good relationships with these lodges and we're happy to have the opportunity to continue coming here for unique wildlife experiences. Please contact us if you have any questions or concerns about the accommodations during the safari.

Transportation

Distances are large in Alaska and a significant amount of time will be spent in vehicles searching for wildlife and driving to destinations. We will make our journey to the Arctic in Hugh's custom Mercedes Sprinter van, specially modified for these photo safaris. The Sprinter is outfitted with tall, un-tinted, sliding windows for superior viewing and the ability to photograph from the van, while the tall roof allows you to stand inside. These features make wildlife viewing and photography possible from the van, which also acts as a blind for animals and birds we see along the roadway. Additionally, we will travel in two vehicles from Wiseman to Prudhoe Bay to give you more space. The Native Village has limited roads and vehicles, but a vehicle is important for travel and photography of polar bears. We will use a small bus with opening windows to view and photograph the polar bears while on land. While visiting the Native Village you will photograph polar

bears from a small boat. The boats are roughly 26 feet long with an aluminum hull and small cabin for wind protection.

Flights

Unless listed as included, airfare is not included in trip costs. Detailed logistical information and the contact information for our recommended flight-ticketing agent are included in the Trip Materials we will send you. Please let us know if you are arriving earlier or staying later as we are happy to assist you with any extra overnights that you might want to arrange.

Flights you (or a travel agent) book: Arrive in Fairbanks, Alaska (FAI) by 4:30pm on August 30. (Later arrivals on this night are possible but you may miss the welcome dinner.) Depart from Fairbanks, Alaska (FAI) anytime on September 9.

Flights we book for you: The round-trip flights between Prudhoe Bay and the Native Village are included in the trip cost.

Terms and Conditions

Read our current Terms and Conditions at <https://cheesemans.com/terms-and-conditions>.

Conservation

Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris is passionate about conserving the precious regions that we travel to and supports many conservation efforts. By visiting these areas, we contribute to sustainable conservation of these valuable wildlife habitats. We urge you to support conservation organizations that protect and restore natural habitats and write letters to tourism and government agencies to promote work in preserving wildlife.

We aim to make all our trips carbon neutral by splitting the cost of carbon offsetting with our participants. For your convenience, the optional donation amount for your half of the carbon offset will be indicated on your invoice. We source high quality offsets through CarbonTree Conservation Fund, a non-profit we helped found, supporting pioneering forest conservation in the Rio Bravo Reserve in Belize, a Nature Conservancy project (www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/latin-america/belize/rio-bravo-conservation-area/).

FAQS

What is the aurora borealis?

The aurora borealis, or Northern Lights, is an ephemeral phenomenon that occurs at extreme northern latitudes (along with the aurora australis, or Southern Lights, that occurs in southern latitudes). The sky lights up when streams of charged particles emitted from the sun impact atoms of oxygen and nitrogen gas in the earth's atmosphere. The gas then goes into an unbalanced state and stabilizes itself by giving off energy in the form of light. The charged particles impact all over the earth, but the earth's magnetic field attracts the particles into a halo around the magnetic poles. The "Auroral Zone," where aurora is concentrated, is a ring or band centered approximately around the earth's magnetic pole. Auroral displays vary in brightness from barely visible to bright enough to read by and vary in color based on type and altitude of the gas, with green being the most common color.

When is aurora observation best?

Peak aurora activity is statistically around solar midnight (2:00am, Alaska time), so aurora photography means staying up late into the night. Aurorae can occur at any time of year and are often fickle and transitory, but activity tends to peak around the equinox when Alaskan nights are just getting dark long enough to allow viewing, making September an ideal time of year to photograph the Northern Lights.

Why are polar bears near this village?

The Inupiat village is on a small island just off the Arctic coastline. The polar bear domain is not the beaches and tundra of the Arctic coast, but the pack ice that covers the sea surface for nine months of the year. Polar bears feed mainly on seals that live on and under the Arctic ice, hunting them using a number of different techniques. When food is scarce, polar bears are opportunistic and will feed on whatever food sources are available, including vegetation, small rodents, bird eggs, other marine mammals, and carrion. Polar bears come to the area around the village to scavenge on the carcasses of butchered whales. In mid-summer when the Arctic pack ice moves off shore, Beaufort Sea polar bears are often marooned on shore where there is little to eat. These bears enter the fall season hungry and have keyed into the presence of whale carcasses from Inupiat hunts in this area.

Does this safari have a cultural aspect?

The Inupiat village you visit is inhabited by approximately 250 people native to this region of Arctic Alaska. We hope you look forward to experiencing the culture of the Inupiat as much as observing polar bear. You will visit this area during the annual whale hunt and, if you are fortunate, you may witness the community event that surrounds the harvesting of a whale. Keep in mind that you are visitors from a different culture, so please take care to exercise cultural awareness and know you may not be able to photograph all the people involved, but you can ask where photos are permissible. The circumpolar indigenous people of the world, including the Inupiat of Alaska, have been hunting marine mammals for thousands of years. Under tight regulation to sustain resources, Arctic coastal villages are allowed to hunt the bowhead whales that frequent the waters of the adjacent Beaufort Sea/Arctic Ocean.