



# Bathurst Inlet Lodge

## Sample Itinerary

The following is a typical itinerary for a week at Bathurst Inlet Lodge. We have described “typical” trips for each day, and have outlined a selection of different trips, which are arranged throughout the week, based on prevailing winds, weather and results of scouting reports for the location of wildlife. The decision to take a certain trip on any certain day is based on the safety of our guests and a number of other factors that include the readiness of the group, wind condition and daily weather, and sea and sea ice conditions. We do not take chances with the sea ice, as it is truly a power to be reckoned with.

### **ARRIVAL IN YELLOWKNIFE**

Welcome to Yellowknife. Upon your arrival and check-in to your Yellowknife accommodations you will be provided with the flight information (departure time, location, etc.) for the charter to Bathurst Inlet the next day. You should expect to be dressed and fly to Bathurst Inlet in your “field gear” as opposed to “city clothes” as it is usually much cooler at Bathurst than in Yellowknife.

Based on the timing of your arrival in Yellowknife other activities for this day can be arranged with our help or on your own. We suggest a visit to the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre and a walk on the trail along Frame or Niven Lakes. A city map is provided in your information package provided upon your arrival and check-in. For a lengthier stay in Yellowknife a 3-day package can be arranged for additional costs.

### **Day 1:**

Bathurst staff will pick you up at your hotel or bed & breakfast, and will take you to the float base or airport for your flight to Bathurst Inlet.

The flight by either floatplane or wheeled aircraft will take about 2.5 hours. If the flight occurs over lunch, we send box lunches along.

Weather permitting we route the aircraft to fly over Diavik and Ekati diamond mines, and to follow the last 20 miles of the Burnside River for a spectacular flight experience.

Upon arrival, we do a brief (but very complete) orientation to the lodge and the community, and guests are introduced to those of the staff who are available. Luggage arrives, and guests unpack and settle into their rooms. We take this time to discuss any special diets requested with the individuals requesting them. If there is a group this week, Bathurst staff will meet with the leaders to discuss any special needs or requests for the week.

Time permitting, a wildflower walk along the beach to the east of the lodge is conducted to introduce guests to the local flora. An established wildflower trail, with individual plants identified and marked with little signs and a wall display of plants in bloom that week, is available for guests to become more familiar with our arctic flora.



**Dinner is at 6:30 PM (or approximate) each evening.**

After supper the first night, programming includes a presentation on the history of the community and the people of the Inlet, a lodge tour with opportunities to photograph drying fish and a tour of the Inuit community. Presentation discussion topics typically include the history of the Copper Inuit, the explorers, fur traders, missionaries, and later years of mining exploration and government, as well as the concept and history of the establishment of the Nunavut Territory.

**Day 2:**

Coffee is available from 7:30 AM on.

The lodge is open 24 hrs. Many groups do early morning bird walks; optional of course!

Before breakfast, Bathurst Staff meet to discuss the conditions of the day and decide on an appropriate boat route that is conducive to those conditions. This decision then allows for the identification of the day's activities.

**Breakfast is from 8 – 8:30 AM.** Cereals, including porridge and granola, are set out, and individual breakfast orders (eggs, bacon, ham, etc.) are taken.

During breakfast, guests are briefed on the planned activities for the day based on the current conditions. Appropriate clothing and footwear are identified and the potential photographic opportunities that will be available. If there is a group in camp, the day's activities will be discussed briefly with the leaders prior to making any announcements to the guests.

Each day, ingredients for lunch are set out, and after breakfast, guests have the opportunity to make their own lunches, thus ensuring that they have sandwiches to their own tastes.

**We usually meet at the boat at 9:30 AM.** Occasionally, we leave on the first morning at 10 AM; depending on how much time the group seems to need to get ready.

Just prior to departure Bathurst Staff conduct a safety lecture, emphasizing how we handle the boat while docking, how to get on and off the boat, and safety features of the boat. We always tow an aluminum boat, which we dock separately from the large boat. We also carry an HF radio or a satellite phone on the boat, as well as three separate first aid kits.

The first day's trip involves a medium amount of hiking. We spend time on the sea, perhaps cruising the edge of the sea ice, and try to ensure that people learn how to identify the birds commonly seen on the inlet. Yellow-billed, Pacific, and red-throated loons, oldsquaw ducks, glaucous, herring, and Thayer's gulls, tundra swans, and possibly red-breasted and common mergansers are often seen. When conditions are appropriate we visit a cliff-nesting site of peregrine falcons, rough legged hawks, or golden eagles, sometimes all three. Ringed seals are common on the Inlet, and we discuss their biology. We usually land about twice during the first day, on the mainland or on interesting islands.



The Blue Loo returns to docks at the community of Bathurst Inlet at approximately 5 PM on this first day of adventure. **Supper is normally at 6:30 PM.**

After supper, a **slide show** or educational type program is provided to our guests in the lodge lounge. This program will vary, but typically includes a slide show or discussion on the local geology early in the week, so people have a better understanding to the stories of the land as they pass it or walk over it.

Another evening option is **canoeing** in the sheltered waters of the snye, which extends west of the community. People sign canoes out, and canoeing is either guided or unguided.

### **Day 3:**

Usual morning routine including breakfast, briefing, packing lunches, and depart

**Trips for Day 3 – Day 6 will vary depending on wind and weather.**

Alternative daily activities can include:

**Young Island, FON Island, Hidden Lake Island, and Seal Cache Islands.** This is a cruise and hiking on the western side of the Inlet, in an area with many islands, some of which harbour caribou, and all of which have wonderful displays of wildflowers. Young Island offers superb tundra flowers, golden plovers, nesting rough legged hawks and possible caribou. **FON Island** offers good shorebirds (least sandpipers, semi-palmated plovers, and occasional Baird's sandpipers), possible nesting peregrines and red-throated loons, good basalt intrusions, and numerous meat caches. **Hidden Lake Island** is a red sandstone island with well-defined glacial rebound beaches and an interior freshwater lake with nesting red-throated loons and other waterfowl, including three species of scoters, oldsquaws, and lesser scaup. Wildflowers on these islands are outstanding in any week of the summer. **Seal Cache Island** is so tiny that it is hard to believe there's much there, but it is one of the jewels of the Inlet, offering superb wildflowers, including an uncommon tiny hawkbeard and abundant legumes. It also offers ancient Thule tentrings and meat caches, kayak racks, and huge algal limestone stromatolites.

**Swan Lake and the snye.** This is a trip west up the snye and through an opening in the Bathurst Ridge to cruise a large lake. We usually see waterfowl in the snye, caribou and sometimes foxes on the delta, and golden eagles along the ridge. Musk oxen are frequently present in this area, and if their location permits it, we stalk them. Tundra swans are almost always seen in Swan Lake or on the snye. We sometimes stop at **Flower Island**, where there is a superb display of flowers, and excellent examples of the huge variety of different rocks deposited by the great continental ice sheets.

There are several possible hikes in the Swan Lake area. We can hike up **Musk Ox Creek** to seek and stalk musk oxen, and to see the huge variety of tundra vegetation. Or, we can climb to a stone fox trap high on **Kaotuk Hill**, then circle this striking landform, through a water gap in the Bathurst Ridge.



There's another excellent hike up **Hydro Creek** to see nesting rough-legged hawks and (sometimes) a nesting gyrfalcon. Hydro Creek also offers a superb little waterfall and excellent birding (yellow warblers, blackpoll warblers, yellow-rumped warblers in tall willow riparian habitat and nesting tundra birds like Lapland longspurs, white-crowned sparrows, redpolls, and horned larks on the slopes). Viewing caribou and musk oxen are possible on any of these hikes, and the barren ground grizzly is sometimes seen in this area.

**The Bathurst Ridge.** Our guests often want to climb to the top of the Bathurst Ridge, a huge diabase sill (1250 ft. elevation) to the south of the community. We can either do this from the lodge, hiking up a ridge to the east of the community, or can take the boat up the snye and land at the midway down the ridge, hiking along the ridge to reach the crest, called Kingaun Hill, or "The Nose". This is a beautiful hike past an old inukshuk game drive system, with diverse displays of flowers. Birds include ptarmigan (either willow or rock), Lapland longspurs, northern pipits, redpolls, golden eagles, peregrine falcons, ravens, and more. Plant communities include typical heath tundra, glacial rebound beaches with lichens webbing the rocks, contongrass meadows in drainage systems, and high lichen-rock communities on the exposed volcanic rocks of the ridge.

**Burnside Delta.** This area between the snye and the main channel of the Burnside is a fascinating mixture of old sand dunes, oxbow lakes, thickets of willow, and level open tundra on the flat sandy deposits of an older delta. It provides excellent nesting habitat for a number of birds, including willow ptarmigan, red-throated loons, yellow and yellow-rumped warblers, white-crowned, Harris' and savannah sparrows, redpolls, lesser yellowlegs, semi-palmated plovers, least and Baird's sandpipers, tundra swans, and more. Caribou wander the low dunes, and red foxes and wolves are frequently seen. Hiking on the delta is a surprise package; one can seldom foretell what will be seen. Marsh harriers and short-eared owls hunt low over the willows, and golden eagles and peregrine falcons also hunt the area. Red-necked phalaropes nest on the tiny tundra ponds.

Early in the season, sea ice may prevent us from travelling far on the sea, but the rich variety of wildflowers and abundance of caribou, often cow-calf herds, makes the shorter trips well worthwhile. Musk oxen are more abundant close to the shore, as they feed selectively on the new leaves of the willows as they emerge.

**Evening programs:** Bathurst Inlet staff offers an interpretive program each evening at the lodge and guests are encouraged to attend those that interest them (most people are interested in ALL programs we do). Examples of these programs and their presenters include:

**Page Burt, Botanist and Senior Naturalist Bathurst Inlet Lodge:** history of the local Inuit and the community, a summary of the geological story of the Inlet, diamond exploration/mining and geology of kimberlites in northern Canada, and the biology of large mammals in the central arctic (caribou, musk ox, wolves, grizzlies), wildflowers and adaptations of arctic plants, life in arctic communities throughout the year, and more.

**Bishop Jack Sperry, Arctic Bishop and Missionary:** slide show on his fifty plus years in the North, the first 20 as a missionary in Coppermine (now Kugluktuk), and often does additional programs on the local dialect (Inuinaktun) and culture.



**Glenn and Trish Warner, Owners and Operators Bathurst Inlet Lodge and Long time Arctic Residents:** slide presentations on Glenn's life as a RCMP officer in the North, and Trish's life as a young bride and mother in the remote arctic communities. Trish's presentation also includes a description of what it was like to be stranded (forced down by weather) for a week on the tundra to the east of the Inlet.

**Quiet Readings:** Bathurst Inlet Lodge maintains a superb northern library, well over 800 books and papers about the North. This library is available to all our guests, and copies of some of the more applicable books are available for purchase.

In addition to the indoor evening programs, there are also a variety of **outdoor options**, such as early morning or evening bird walks, paddling on the snye and along the delta, or opportunities to assist with ongoing research projects, such as plant phenology (blooming sequence) research. In addition, evening hikes in the area of the Lodge are often of interest, including evening hikes on the Bathurst Ridge or even to its summit, called "The Nose". For those interested in fishing, it is sometimes possible to arrange trips with local residents, to Peregrine Point or other local areas where anglers can try their luck for arctic char, lake trout or large tomcod.

On Sunday evening, Bishop Sperry offers an optional ecumenical service for those interested. This short service is tied to the cultures and environments of the North, and is deeply treasured by guests who have experienced it on previous visits to Bathurst Inlet.

#### **Day 4:**

After the usual morning activities, we depart again by boat, our direction and destination governed by the weather, wind and sea ice.

Trips on the sea are shorter while there is extensive sea ice, but there is such a diversity of habitats on nearby islands that this is not a problem.

In addition to the trips described above, the following trips are of deep interest to the guests:

**Old Burnside Delta, western Young Island, and Kayak Island.** This trip up the western side of Young Island provides opportunities to land at old Inuit campsites on the mainland, on the old delta to the north of the main channel of the Burnside, to parallel the shore looking for fox dens, musk ox and caribou, often gathered around snowbanks on the shores. Also, nesting rough-legged hawks, possible peregrine falcons, caribou on Young Island, and a multitude of sea birds including oldsquaw ducks, three possible species of scoters, and three species of loons. Kayak Island offers splendid wildflowers and old campsites, including some well-preserved kayak racks.

**Quadjuk Island and Oldsquaw Bay.** Quadjuk Island is a huge slanted diabase sill that bisects the Inlet. Extending some 15 miles north, it offers a multitude of interesting landing spots, including immense sculpted sandstone "heads" (hoodoos) with superb shows of wildflowers, golden eagle nesting cliffs, and small bays and narrows where we can hike to the top of the island in small passes with ancient hunting hides. According to naturalist Walt Anderson of Prescott College in Arizona, Oldsquaw Bay offers some of (in his opinion) the "most incredibly magnificent wilderness hiking in North America".



Fascinating outcrops of algal limestone, jagged vertical outcrops of metasediments, old glacial rebound beaches, steep talus slopes, sheer diabase cliffs, and shallow bays support diverse plant communities, and offer excellent wildlife habitats. Huge flocks of male oldsquaws, common (and sometimes king) eiders, surf, white-winged, and black scoters, red-breasted and common mergansers, Pacific and yellow-billed loons, and ringed (rarely, bearded) seals are seen on the sea. Raptors, caribou, arctic hares, and occasionally, wolves, wolverines, or grizzlies are found. Huge snowbanks provide habitat for short-season plants that can occur only where there is little competition.

**Red sandstone islands and Amethyst Point.** On this trip north up the main body of the Inlet, it is possible to see all the raptors, and all the seabirds, as well as any of the large mammals. We stop at isolated islands with superb wildflowers, and at Amethyst Point, where we never have enough time. This superb geological teaching site is located near the Tinney Hills on the eastern shore of the Inlet. It offers a large hydrothermal intrusion of crystalline quartz with excellent showings of smoky quartz and amethyst. In addition, there are classic textbook examples of breccia, polished quartzite conglomerate, basalt ridges exhibiting glacial grooving, striations, and ice plucking, large glacial erratics, and much more. This area also offers superb glimpses into the Inuit past – tent rings, talus (hunting hides), inuksuit (game drive systems), and even a gravesite, which we visit with careful respect.

Small bays support nesting populations of least and Baird's sandpipers, semipalmated plovers, and occasional less-common shorebirds like white-rumped sandpipers, lesser yellowlegs, and semipalmated sandpipers. Gull-nesting islands offer glaucous, herring, and Thayer's gulls, plus common eiders, and sometimes King eiders. Later in the season, large flocks of Canada geese can be seen. Red-breasted and common mergansers are frequently seen.

In 2003, we discovered an amazing place just north of Amethyst Point, and will now include a stop at this little bay, at a place called **Itivyaak** ("land crossing place") where there are ancient Inuit camps and at least 12 kayak racks. It is an area where people hunted caribou swimming across from Quadjuk Island, and full of interesting structures like qamat (house structures) and taluit (hunting blinds) as well as tent rings and meat caches all made of stone.

**Bird Island, Long Island, and Tinney Cove.** Another day trip to the eastern shore of the Inlet takes us across the path of the Franklin expedition, and we take time to explain the significance of this expedition to the mapping of the arctic coast. On this trip, we might stop at freshwater ponds on **Long Island**, with their populations of nesting shorebirds, and excellent floral shows. We stop at **Bird Island**, which is an isolated gull-nesting island that also attracts large numbers of common eiders. Glaucous, herring, and Thayer's gulls form a raucous colony, and it is possible to put a scope on sitting gulls to demonstrate the dark eyes of the Thayer's gulls. The skills of our Inuit guides are important here; each week we are able to also focus spotting scopes on common eiders on the nest, a real treat and super photographic opportunity for those with telephoto lenses. We strictly control access to this island to offer optimum opportunity to observe the birds while protecting their nesting areas.

On the sea, we often see any of three species of jaegers, pomarine, parasitic, or long-tailed, as well as ringed seals.



On the eastern side of the inlet, we visit **Tinney Cove**, an anomalous formation attached to the Tinney Hills. This beautiful area also typifies the stunning “wildness” of the arctic coast, with high hills and circling glacial rebound beaches, vertical sandstone pillars, and exquisite displays of arctic flowers. Here, small lakes offer nesting habitat for tundra swans, Pacific and red-throated loons, and oldsquaws. Caribou are seen on virtually every visit, and musk oxen are sometimes seen. Arctic foxes, wolves, or grizzlies are possible.

Tinney Cove also offers an unforgettable geological feature, a huge upturned reef of algal limestone stromatolites. These concentric circles represent some of the oldest known fossils, unicellular bluegreen algae or cyanobacteria that formed colonies in shallow seas, some 2 billion years ago.

**Fishing Creek.** This full day trip south down the western shore of the inlet also offers a superb combination of geology, wildflowers, wildlife, and Inuit culture. There is so much in this area that it is impossible to do it all; people choose by their individual preferences. For those interested in the Inuit **culture**, there’s a trip led by Bathurst staff and Inuit guides in an area extensively used for char fishing and for caribou hunting at a crossing place. There are tents, drying racks, hunting hides, meat caches, fox traps, and a large game drive system. The area is lovely, with wide views and excellent chances of seeing caribou.

Another option at Fishing Creek is excellent lake trout and arctic char catch and release **sport fishing** in a lake at the mouth of a small river. Fly-fishing, spin-casting or trolling, all are possible.

Still a third option at Fishing Creek is a splendid hike to a major waterfall, **Window Falls**. This is approximately a five-mile round trip hike and is not for everyone, but the hiking is easy after the first ¼, which is a stout climb up a steep slope. The Window Falls hike offers the possibility of seeing musk ox, caribou, or even a wolf or grizzly, possible golden eagles, gyrfalcons, peregrines, or ravens. The wildflowers are astounding, with great shows of woolly louseworts, lupines, mountain avens, alpine azalea, alpine milkvetch, and more. The falls and cascade upstream are breathtaking, and the vistas spectacular. Two ancient game drive systems provide more photo opportunities.

Each of the above options is a full day trip. We have done two weeks of trips without repeating a trip, so there are abundant options, each with its own special features and attractions.

### **Day 5:**

Occasionally, we have a “weather day” in which there is too much wind to use our big pontoon boat, or in which we cannot go far beyond Qadjuq Island or Peregrine Point due to ice movement.

Options for these days include shorter boat trips, or hiking from the Lodge.

**Peregrine Point, Canso Bay, and the Bathurst Ridge.** By boat around Peregrine Point, landing at either the spring caribou camp or at Canso Bay, looking for nesting peregrines and rough-legged hawks enroute. Then hiking along Peregrine Point and across a low saddle to Canso Bay, where there is a large snowbank community and one of the best



examples of a place where people caught caribou, dried the meat, and stored it in stone meat caches. On one hillside there are 6 beautifully made caches, plus talus and a stone fox trap. There are a number of hiking options in this area: walking home along an arctic beach, hiking up a wildflower-strewn slope and walking home along a morainal ridge, or climbing up to a saddle on the Bathurst Ridge to see more ancient hunting hides and gorgeous views south down the Inlet, then home along the ridge. This area can also be explored by hiking from the Lodge.

**Hiking** options from the Lodge:

**Phalarope Pond and the crosses.** A lovely early AM or evening hike along the shore to the west of the lodge, on a path that meanders through dense willows along the snye to a series of small tundra ponds below the ridge. Grey-cheeked thrush, Harris' sparrow, many redpolls, white-crowned sparrows, horned lark, willow ptarmigan, short-eared owl, red-throated loon, and more, including possible nesting northern pintails, green-winged teal, and red-necked phalarope. This hike can be extended to include part of the Bathurst Ridge, or a circle around by the community cemetery with its picturesque white crosses.

**“Nose” hike.** This can be a full day hike, or an evening hike. Hikers leave the Lodge via the trail to the airstrip and hike up the moraine ridge to the south of the strip, bearing right along the old glacial rebound beaches on the Bathurst Ridge, where Iceland moss lichen, reindeer moss lichen, and a grey cushion moss web the stones together.. Once on the gravel above the tundra, we bear left until we find a fault zone extending to the top of the ridge. This fault zone offers tiny tundra meadows with dense arctic heather, rhododendron, swales full of arctic cotton and bulblet saxifrage, and dryer ridges with mountain avens. The views are incredible, and we often see caribou, peregrines, golden eagles, and tundra swans. It is a real achievement to reach the top of the Nose, with its elevation of 1250 ft.

### **Day 6:**

The week continues with boat trips on the sea or inland to Swan Lake.

On Wed. night, we offer a **cultural program** that includes interpretation of the display of tools and artifacts collected from the general area over the past 40 years. Sam Kapolak discusses these and their importance to his ancestors. We also demonstrate and discuss the traditional clothing from the central arctic, modelled by the local families, and one of the local women demonstrates the lighting of the soapstone lamp. After the program, there is an opportunity to see, handle, and try on the clothing. This is a very full evening, with enthusiastic participation from the community and all guests.

### **Day 7:**

On Thursday, we continue with our selection of trips as described above, and a shorter evening program, perhaps a casual slide show of some of the winter activities in which we participate, or a review of the wildflower bloom for the week.

Throughout the week at Bathurst Inlet, we weave together stories of the land, and the geological forces affecting it, of the development of the diverse plant communities that occupy this rich arctic oasis, and the wildlife populations that utilize the land. On top of this is laid the human history of the area, from the coming of the Paleo-Eskimos to the



development of the modern Copper Inuit from their Thule ancestors, from the explorers to the traders and the missionaries, to the development of small communities, and the development of these communities with the coming of the government, settling of the land claims, and the recent birth of the new Nunavut Territory. We may weave part of the fabric of knowledge out on the land, in a slide lecture, in casual conversation, or over dinner. Depending on the interests of our guests, practically every minute can be a learning opportunity.

Time permitting, we will schedule a boat trip to the nearer islands, to ensure that our guests do not feel that anything has been left out. We visit a superb Thule tenting site on the south tip of **South Qadjuj**, where people likely camped during the 1500s to 1700s, while hunting seal and caribou in the spring. South Qadjuj also offers incredible shows of wildflowers, including dense stands of alpine arnica, and moss campion and several ferns growing on the cliffs. We discuss an additional historical story and then boat across to **Bear Island** if we have not already stopped there. This small island is quite lovely, and was also a Thule campsite. We'll visit their tentings and an unusual rock monolith where people stored bags of seal blubber, fuel for the coming winter.

Then, its home to the Lodge and final packing for the arrival of the aircraft that will convey the group back to Yellowknife.

Depending on departure time, you will usually arrive back in Yellowknife by 5 – 6 PM, ample time to check into your hotel. Most groups leaving Bathurst are reluctant to part and often organize their own farewell dinners in Yellowknife.

