

Frequently Asked Questions About Volunteering at the CNSC

What are you looking for in a volunteer?

We prefer to host volunteers of 19 years of age and older. Fluency in English is also required. We are looking for independent, enthusiastic and energetic volunteers with above average social skills.

What are the ages of the other volunteers that come to the Churchill Northern Studies Centre?

Our volunteers are all ages and all walks of life. We have many students as well as many retirees and those looking for a different type of vacation. We have had nurses, a judge, accountants, a building contractor, artists, musicians, computer technicians, librarians, teachers, doctors, housewives, couples, siblings, and seniors volunteer here at the CNSC.

What is the minimum and maximum time I can volunteer at the CNSC?

Volunteers stay for a minimum of three weeks. However, the longer your stay, the more rewarding it will be, as you may participate in other activities around the Centre and in the Town of Churchill. Maximum stay is usually 5-6 weeks.

Do Volunteers get to take part in any of the courses or programs?

Volunteers are welcome to attend lectures by researchers and instructors.

What types of things have volunteers done in the past?

Most of our volunteers will spend their time working in the kitchen washing lots of dishes and at times, helping with meal prep. Volunteers have also had the opportunity to plant trees, participate in bird counts, stock the gift shop, replenish the stock room, clean the CNSC fleet, unload the luggage, stuff envelopes, as well as many more short jobs and projects. Volunteers assist with cleaning and housekeeping. Our volunteers work very hard for us and we could not run the CNSC without them!

Do I really have to wash dishes?

Yes, you do, lots of them.

Where is the Churchill Northern Studies Centre?

The CNSC is located 25 kilometres east of the Town of Churchill. **It is very important to understand that there is no public transportation between the CNSC and Churchill** as we are very isolated. While the Centre owns several vehicles, many are rented out to researchers and groups participating in courses. Transportation is provided solely for picking up/dropping off clients and researchers from the airport and train station. As a result, if you feel you would like to have your own transportation while in Churchill, you should arrange for a vehicle rental prior to your arrival. Otherwise, there are opportunities to carpool with other people staying at the Centre who are travelling to town but the staff are not responsible for arranging your rides. The CNSC also has bikes that can be used for exploring the area.

How do I get to Churchill?

You can arrive by air or rail. Please read the attachment "How to get to Churchill". The railway takes much longer, but also much more affordable than arriving by air.

How much does it cost to get to Churchill?

The return train cost is under \$600.00 CDN from Winnipeg to Churchill. This trip takes about 2 days and sometimes longer in the summer as frost heave on the tracks requires the engineers to slow down. The cost of flights starts from about \$1,200.00 return from Winnipeg, (the flight takes about 2 1/2 hours). These seats go on sale occasionally (sign up for "e-calm" – and you will receive notice of upcoming fare sales from Calm Air)! You can also use your Air Miles or Aeroplan points for travel on Calm Air, (very good value for points). There is also a student rate that you can book by calling Calm Air.

Are there opportunities to get outside and get some exercise?

This is one of the biggest surprises that many of our volunteers face; it can be difficult to get daily outdoor exercise. Due to polar bears in the area both in the fall and the summer it is not safe to go out for a walk the same way one would at home. Often an armed staff member is required and staffing

does not permit daily walks. We do however have an exercise room with an exercise bike, weights, yoga mat and ball, and an elliptical trainer.

What types of facilities and services are provided by the Churchill Northern Studies Centre?

Services and facilities provided by the CNSC are an 84 bed dormitory, science labs, classrooms, administrative offices, cafeteria, library, observation dome, 2nd storey deck (safe vantage point away from bears), audio-visual room, exercise room, rec-room with pool table, computer access, gift shop, quiet sitting areas and WiFi throughout the building.

Where do I stay?

Volunteers stay in our bunk-bed style dormitory facilities at the CNSC. Single rooms are not available. All rooms have 2 bunks and depending on how busy the centre is will determine how many roommates you have (max 4 per room). Linen and towels are provided but personal toiletries are not.

What do I need to bring?

If you are accepted as a volunteer, you will receive a comprehensive package detailing what to pack.

Are there laundry facilities at the CNSC?

Yes, we have laundry facilities that are complimentary to our volunteers.

What can I expect to see in Churchill at various times of the year?

The best time to view polar bears is during the fall migration which occurs in October and November, although the bears come ashore for the summer when the ice breaks up and can be seen occasionally along the coast and around the CNSC. Although Churchill annually experiences over 300 nights of Auroral activity, the Northern Lights can best be viewed on clear evenings between December and March. The only months where viewing is unlikely are late June and early July when we have light skies at night. Beluga Whales can be observed throughout the summer months as they migrate into calving and feeding grounds in the Churchill River estuary. A whale watching tour will also take visitors over to the historic Prince of Wales Fort. There are spectacular views of the ice break-up in June and plenty of birds and wildflowers to see and photograph until the fall. You must be prepared to have some restrictions on your outdoor activities due to polar bear safety precautions.

What are some of the things I can do on my time off?

Our volunteers might spend time on the internet, join in on guided outdoor walks and evening lectures, catch a ride into town on their day off to visit the Itsanitaq Museum and shops or to see a movie. Other activities are bike riding, and if groups are doing some fun activities like looking for wildflowers, whale watching, bird watching/bird counts or bear watching, our volunteers sometimes have the opportunity to join in. We encourage our volunteers to become involved in the on-going activities wherever possible.

How can I arrange to do things on my time off?

You will need to read the bulletin boards, keep your eyes and ears open and talk to the researchers and your assigned staff contact. There are often evening lectures and they may not always be posted so take the initiative and ask.

Do I need any special clothes or gear for work at the CNSC?

You will be on your feet a lot so comfortable, closed-toed shoes are essential. Also bring comfortable clothing to work in, and if you have long hair, something to hold your hair back. Some volunteers like to bring their own rubber gloves to avoid dish-pan-hands, but we can supply these for you.

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