

Auyuittuq Classic

Hiking in the spectacular Arctic wilderness of Nunavut

Auyuittuq means 'Land that Never Melts', and it is a unique arctic wilderness of ice caps, mountain peaks, deep valleys and spectacular vistas. This special wilderness has been protected as one of Canada's most northerly national parks. At the heart of the park is the massive Penny Ice Cap, whose radiating valley glaciers are still actively shaping the land. The glaciers flow down into the surrounding treeless valleys, where they melt into swift rivers that rush over the rock and tundra valley floors to the ocean. This powerful landscape reflects the Inuit belief that time is infinite and unending.

The Auyuittuq Classic trip begins at the Overlord warden station. Overlord is the majestic peak that stands as a sentinel guarding the southern entrance to the pass. Below, where the Weasel River meets Cumberland Sound, the range between high and low tides can be as much 10 metres. We will see many extensive sandy areas along the trail. This sand was created by ice, as well as wind and water. Moving glaciers grind rock into particles of varying sizes. The sand here was sorted by wind out of the moraines and outwash deposits close by. But finer particles of silt and clay may be carried away by wind into the upper atmosphere and be distributed across entire continents. From there we follow the east bank of the Weasel River towards Windy Lake.

On the west side of the Weasel River, is Crater Lake, a beautiful, circular greenish-blue lake.

It was not formed by a meteor as its name suggests, but is surrounded by an almost circular ridge of gravel and sand.

From the main trail you cannot see over that ridge to view the lake itself. The ridge is the end moraine of the glacier above the lake.

It marks the limit of the glacier's latest advance, which occurred about 100 years ago. Now that the glacier has melted back, this natural dam impounds the



melt water from the glacier. The water is a greenish-blue because of the sediment-laden waters that enter the lake.

In similar fashion, the water of the Weasel River is totally opaque. Glaciers crush rock into extremely fine particles called glacial flour. When these tiny particles are suspended in water, the mixture is called glacial milk. Just before we reach the Windy Lake warden station we cross the Arctic Circle. It is an imaginary line marking the latitude of 66° 33 1/2' North. Across from the Inukshuk - a human shaped cairn of rock, the Inuktitut word for "That which has the likeness of man" - marking the Arctic Circle we will see the Schwartzbach Falls.

Inuit call the falls Qulittassanivvik, "the place to get caribou skins". In the past, Inuit climbed around these falls to hunt caribou in the valleys beyond. Windy Lake is on the west side of the Weasel River. It can be reached by crossing the River on a suspension bridge. You might do a day hike up a moraine by Windy Lake to get right to the base of a glacier.

We will follow the Inukshuks which indicate safe routes across moraines and rivers and routes that minimize damage to delicate environments to the base of Thor peak which soars 1500 metres up out of the valley floor.

This regal mountain is named after the Norse god of thunder as a tribute to its power. It has the longest uninterrupted cliff face in the world, about one kilometer. The turnaround point of our hike is Summit Lake which marks the height of land in Akshayuk Pass. Glacial waters from the lake flow both north and south

in the Owl and Weasel Rivers, dropping 500 metres before reaching the Arctic Ocean. If time and weather allows a day hike from Summit Lake we might see Mount Asgard. At the summit it stands among surrounding glaciers like a scene out of Norse mythology. The flat top of its two cylindrical towers has been the goal of climbing expeditions from around the world. With much lighter packs and lots of experience in stream and river crossings we'll hike back to Overlord to be picked up by our boat shuttle and taken back to Pangnirtung.



Itinerary

Day 1 - First Air flight from Ottawa to Pangnirtung, Nunavut, arriving in the afternoon. Meet guides, equipment check, dinner, camp overnight in Pangnirtung.

Day 2 - Registration and orientation with National Park Staff - pick up free maps and park info. Charter launch to 'trailhead' at Auyuittuq National Park (time dependent on tides). Departure for hike in the Pangnirtung Pass

Day 3 to 12 - Hiking from the trailhead at Overlord, up the Weasel River Valley to Windy and Summit Lakes. The route will involve several river crossings. Side trips and day hikes up side valleys and scree slopes to view waterfalls, glaciers and the astonishing scenery. Along the route there will be ample opportunities for photography.

Day 13 - Return to Overlord. Charter launch from Overlord to Pangnirtung. Check into Auyuittuq Inn - pick up travel clothes, showers ...Free time to explore the village of 'Pang'... the local museum, craft shop and the famous weave shop. Final dinner with Community Elders.

Day 14 - Air travel from Pangnirtung to Ottawa with First Air.

Required Skill Level:

Level 1: Previous experience is not required and the pace is fairly relaxed.

Level 2: A good level of fitness and practice of trekking is necessary as you will carry a 20-30 kg (45-60 lb.) for 10 to 12 kilometers a day on rough terrain.

Dates and Prices 2010

The Classic Auyuittuq Trip

As per itinerary

Skill Level 2

July 4 -17 (14 days)

CAD 3,670 + 5% GST tax

Taste of the Arctic - Auyuittuq

Skill Level 1+

July 18 - 27 (10 days)

CAD 3,505 + 5% GST tax

Auyuittuq Traverse

Skill Level 2+

July 29 - Aug 13 (16 days)

CAD 4,250 + 5% GST tax

Included

- Guides & Group Equipment
- Tents (2 people/tent)
- Tarp and 'kitchen', dishes & utensils, etc
- Excellent food
- First aid & repair kits / Safety equipment
- Traditional dinners with elders
- Boat transfer Pang - Overlord (return)
- Baggage charges & freight for group
- National Park fee of \$ 150.00

Not Included

- Flight to the trip start (**Pangnirtung** for Classic Auyuittuq & Taste of the Arctic, **Qikiqtarjuaq** for Auyuittuq Traverse)
- Any hotel accommodation including last night at the Auyuittuq Inn & Restaurant meals
- Personal clothing and gear
- Souvenirs or items of a personal nature
- Trip Cancellation Insurance / All costs associated with an emergency
- 5 % GST tax



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