



Whale of a welcome: Belugas at Seal River Heritage Lodge come right up and say hello.

TRIPS

Be one with the whales

No, not the big guys or the killer variety. The little ones

WHEN YOU THINK OF CHURCHILL, Manitoba, you probably think of polar bears, not whales. But the truth is that the waters of Hudson Bay are home to thousands of belugas. In summer, the tiny white whales spend most of their days near the surface, which makes it the perfect time to get up close and personal with *Delphinapterus leucas*. And Churchill Wild presents the perfect opportunity.

Churchill Wild operates the Seal River Heritage Lodge, located on the Hudson Bay coast, about 65 kilometres (by floatplane or helicopter) north of Churchill. The lodge sits a short boat ride away from one of the belugas' prime feeding grounds, which is why the company recently started

offering summer tours to see the whales.

Belugas are naturally curious, so they'll usually come right up to a visiting Zodiac. (Care is taken to make sure that propellers are only used when the whales are a safe distance away.) Visitors who really want to immerse themselves in the experience are invited to put on a drysuit and take a dip with the social cetaceans.

WHEN: Seven-day trips run mid-July to mid-August

PRICE: \$4,350 (includes return air flight to lodge from Churchill)

CONTACT: Churchill Wild, 1-888-326-7325, www.churchillwild.com

In addition to belugas, visitors to the lodge can also see caribou, seals and yes, even a few polar bears.

The lodge offers day trips along the coast via a custom tundra buggy. Or, if you're a little more adventurous, you can take out a sea kayak or canoe and explore by paddle power.

CAMP

Kick your paddling up a notch (or three)



MADAWASKA KANU CENTRE

Ever wondered what it would be like to attend an Olympic paddling camp?

Well, now's your chance to find out. Starting this year, Madawaska Kanu Centre near Barry's Bay, Ontario, is offering a special high-performance training camp for experienced kayakers and canoeists.

Claudia Van Wijk, who runs the 35-year-old whitewater school with her husband Dirk, came up with the idea of a comprehensive training course for intermediate to advanced paddlers after attending a similar camp for cross-country skiers. "It was a fantastic experience," says Van Wijk. "I wanted to do something like that for paddlers."

The five-day Madawaska course will feature instruction in a variety of paddling techniques, including those used for creeking, river running, playboating and slalom. Expert instructors—including kayaker Billy Harris (who placed second in the 2005 world freestyle championships) and canoeist Andrew Westwood—will teach participants according to their

DATE: June 6 to 10

PRICE: \$850 (includes food and accommodation)

CONTACT: (613) 756-3620; www.owl-mkc.ca

individual skill levels. Training tools will include video footage and split-image technology.

In addition to the technical instruction, the camp will also offer tips on fitness and strength from a physiotherapist who works with the Canadian Olympic whitewater team. And a certified sports nutritionist will provide advice on the healthiest way to feed your river rat.

—Kate Barker