



Sirmilik  
National Park

# 2026 Visitor Information Package



Photo: Jordan Odney



Parks  
Canada

Parcs  
Canada

Canada

# Table of Contents



Photo: ©Scott Forsyth / Adventure Canada

<b>Contact Information</b> .....	1	<b>Wildlife Safety</b> .....	13
<b>Welcome</b> .....	2	<b>Climate &amp; Weather Safety</b> .....	14
<b>Inuit Cultural Activities</b> .....	2	<b>Snow Machine &amp; Qamutik Safety</b> .....	15
<b>Activities</b> .....	3	<b>Boat &amp; Kayak Safety</b> .....	15
<b>When to Visit</b> .....	5	<b>Terrain Safety</b> .....	16
<b>Travel to Sirmilik National Park</b> .....	6	<b>Drinking Water &amp; Human Waste Safety</b> .....	16
<b>Local Outfitters &amp; Tour Companies</b> .....	7	<b>Sea Ice &amp; Floe Edge Safety</b> .....	17
<b>Community Information</b> .....	8	<b>Communications</b> .....	18
<b>Topographic Maps</b> .....	9	<b>Search and Rescue</b> .....	19
<b>Permits &amp; Fees</b> .....	10	<b>Park Regulations</b> .....	20
<b>Registration &amp; De-registration</b> .....	11	<b>Environmental Conservation Practices</b> .....	20
<b>River Safety &amp; River Crossing Tips</b> .....	12	<b>Trip Checklist</b> .....	21



Photo: Markus Siivola

## Contact Information

Contact Sirmilik National Park staff or visit our website:  
[parks.canada.ca/sirmilik](https://parks.canada.ca/sirmilik)

### Pond Inlet Office

**Phone:** (867) 899-8092  
**Fax:** (867) 899-8104  
**Email:** [sirmilik.info@pc.gc.ca](mailto:sirmilik.info@pc.gc.ca)

### Hours of Operation

#### Year Round

Monday to Friday  
 8:30 am – 12:00 pm  
 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm  
 Closed on weekends

### Follow us on social media:

@ParksCanadaNunavut  
 @ParksCanNunavut



## National Parks in Nunavut

There are four other national parks in Nunavut representing various examples of Canada's thirty-nine natural regions – Auyuittuq National Park (Northern Davis), Quttinirpaaq National Park (Eastern High Arctic), Ukkusiksalik National Park (Central Tundra) and Qausuittuq National Park (Western High Arctic).

### Auyuittuq National Park

[parks.canada.ca/ayuittuq](https://parks.canada.ca/ayuittuq)

### Quttinirpaaq National Park

[parks.canada.ca/quttinirpaaq](https://parks.canada.ca/quttinirpaaq)

### Ukkusiksalik National Park

[parks.canada.ca/ukkusiksalik](https://parks.canada.ca/ukkusiksalik)

### Qausuittuq National Park

[parks.canada.ca/qausuittuq](https://parks.canada.ca/qausuittuq)

# Welcome



Photo: Jordan Odney

Sirmilik, Inuktitut for “Place of the Glaciers” is a park in four parts – Bylot Island (jointly managed with the Canadian Wildlife Service as a bird sanctuary), Baillarge Bay Sea Bird Colony, Oliver Sound and the Borden Peninsula. At the northern tip of Baffin Island, Sirmilik is part of the High Arctic experience, located adjacent to the wildlife rich waters of Tallurutiup Imanga National Marine Conservation Area and the legendary Northwest Passage!

Even before leaving Pond Inlet, the massive glaciers of Sirmilik National Park can be seen shining brightly in the arctic light as they spill into Eclipse Sound. On Bylot Island alone, just one of the four sections of the national park, sixteen glaciers wind their way across the landscape. Others carve out the landscape of the Borden Peninsula and calve into the waters of Oliver Sound from Baffin Island.

Climb and cross glaciers by ski and crampon in brilliant high intensity spring light. In March through early June, ski the sea

ice or travel to the floe edge where marine life congregates on the edge of ice and the deep navy blue waters. Travel is not recommended during ice break-up, usually late June through mid-July.

From late July through September, the arctic waters are usually open for marine transport and exploration by kayak, motor boat and cruise ships. Hikers can explore glaciated river valleys alight with arctic wildflowers surrounded by multi-coloured cliffs. The observant hiker may even spot a huddled crowd of hoodoos in the distance.

The open waters, exposed to long hours of daylight, teem with life from all levels of the food chain from microscopic plankton to thick-billed murres and black-legged kittiwakes, bearded seal, Atlantic walrus, narwhal, beluga, and polar bear.

All this and more awaits your visit to Sirmilik National Park!



Photo: Parks Canada

## Inuit Cultural Activities

For hundreds of years, Inuit led a nomadic life, moving from one location to another following animals along their migration routes. You may encounter Inuit while travelling in Sirmilik National Park. Please respect Inuit subsistence hunting, fishing and trapping rights by giving Inuit their privacy and refrain from approaching unless invited.

Nunavut Inuit may travel throughout the national park by motorized vehicle for the purposes of harvesting, but anyone transporting a visitor in the national park for commercial gain requires a business licence.

## Activities



Photo: Jordan Odney

Hiking and skiing opportunities are endless in Sirmilik National Park. While there are no designated travel routes, Sirmilik National Park staff will be able to help you with trip planning.

### Backpacking

Prime national park hiking destinations include the high plateau and broad river valleys of the Borden Peninsula and a variety of terrain on Bylot Island. In the Southwest region of Bylot Island there are extensive opportunities for wildlife viewing, from fox to geese. Most hikes on Bylot Island will bring you close to numerous ancient glaciers whose grandeur can occupy your entire view.

With sixteen glaciers to choose from on Bylot Island alone, the hardest part of your trip will be deciding which ones to visit. Your approach to the glaciers will take you through a variety of terrain, providing you with the opportunity to witness how glaciers sculpt, scour and change landscapes.

### Day or Weekend Trips

If you only have a day or two to explore, you can hire a local outfitter to bring you to Bylot Island, visible from Pond Inlet. Depending on the season, you may travel by boat or snow machine to the island to ski, hike or visit the Sermilik Glacier. Contact Sirmilik National Park staff in Pond Inlet or an outfitter to discuss trip options.

### Sea Kayaking

During the open water season, the sea kayaking opportunities abound. The waters of Oliver Sound are part of the national park and can be explored independently or with a guide.



**Please note that the maximum group size for any trip into Sirmilik National Park is 15 people.**



Photo: Karen Petkau

## Activities



Photo: Jordan Odney



**Please contact Sirmilik National Park staff well in advance of your trip to discuss expedition plans and submit applications for any caches or base camps.**

### Skiing, Mountaineering & Glacier Travel

Sirmilik National Park is ‘the place of glaciers’. Spring (late March to early June) is the ideal time for ski touring and mountaineering here, especially on Bylot Island. Groups planning to do glacier travel should be experienced and fully equipped to deal with crevasse rescue and travelling on glaciers.

All guides operating in glaciated and / or technical mountain terrain will require full IFMGA/IVBV/UIAGM/ACMG certification as an alpine, mountain, or ski guide.

### Wildlife Viewing

Bylot Island is a migratory bird sanctuary managed jointly by Parks Canada and the Canadian Wildlife Service. The island is a haven for seabirds, migratory waterfowl, and other wildlife. In fact, the world’s largest greater snow goose colony is found on Bylot Island.

At Baillarge Bay, another area of the national park closer to Arctic Bay, the cliffs, air and water are alive with thousands of thick-billed murre and black-legged kittiwake during the breeding, nesting and fledgling season. This site is best seen by boat such as expedition style cruise ships.

### Floe Edge Tours

The most popular wildlife viewing is guided, spring floe edge tours where visitors may see narwhal, beluga whales, polar bear and many species of birds. During your spring trip to the floe edge, ask your guide to take you past the thousands of migrating birds that nest on the cliffs of Sirmilik National Park. You may also want to inquire about a visit to some of the many cultural sites located in the national park or travel to see our magnificent glaciers.



Photo: Andreeanne Beardsell

**See page 16 for more information about terrain hazards relative to skiing, climbing and mountaineering.**

# When To Visit

Photo: Parks Canada

## Arctic Seasons and Your Trip

The following are approximate seasons and methods for accessing the national park. Please note that area closures are possible any time.



### Spring

Late March to early June

The best time of year for winter activities. Frozen oceans mean it's possible to travel from either Pond Inlet or Arctic Bay to the national park boundary by snowmobile or dog team to start your trip.



### Break Up

Late June to mid-July

During ice break up, travel to the national park is impossible. This is a great time to explore the areas around Pond Inlet and Arctic Bay.



### Summer

Late July to late September

This is the best time for hiking and camping. Boat travel to the national park is possible.



### Freeze Up

October to early November

During freeze up, travel to the national park is impossible.



### Winter

November through February

Travel to the national park is not advisable at this time. Cold temperatures, near-constant darkness and access difficulties in early winter make winter travel unpleasant, dangerous, and often impossible.



Photo: Parks Canada



Photo: Jordan Odney



If your plans include travel to the national park during break up or freeze up, call Sirmilik National Park staff to check ice conditions or visit [ice-glaces.ec.gc.ca](http://ice-glaces.ec.gc.ca).

# Travel to Sirmilik National Park

Photo: Jordan Odney



**If you are shipping supplies from an international location, please add an additional six weeks for items to clear customs in addition to shipping time.**



Photo: Jordan Odney

## Air Access to Nunavut

Canadian North offers scheduled flights to Pond Inlet and Arctic Bay via Iqaluit from Ottawa, Montreal and Yellowknife.

### Canadian North

**Phone:** 1-800-267-1247

**Email:** [contact@canadiannorth.com](mailto:contact@canadiannorth.com)

**Website:** [www.canadiannorth.com](http://www.canadiannorth.com)

**Weather conditions in the North may dictate your travel schedule. Allow for lengthy delays in your plans.**

## Travelling with Dangerous Goods

Transport Canada has several regulations regarding the transport of used stoves and fuel bottles. For details about how to treat your gear in order to transport it on a plane please go to the following link: [tc.canada.ca/en/aviation/transportation-dangerous-goods-aircraft](http://tc.canada.ca/en/aviation/transportation-dangerous-goods-aircraft). If you have any questions about these regulations please contact the inspector from your region. A list of contacts can be found at: [tc.canada.ca/en/dangerous-goods/transportation-dangerous-goods-canada](http://tc.canada.ca/en/dangerous-goods/transportation-dangerous-goods-canada).

We recommend bringing new, unused stoves and new, empty fuel bottles with you to avoid difficulties when travelling. To make your travel easier, we recommend buying your stove fuel in the community where you begin your trip and leaving any unused fuel behind at the end of your trip. White gas is readily available in the communities. Some compressed tanks may be available – contact stores directly for more information. Outfitters in both communities often accept leftover white gas.

Bear deterrents including bear spray and many noisemaking devices are strictly prohibited from travel on scheduled airplanes. Parks Canada has a limited number of bear deterrents that visitors can borrow; check with staff for availability. Visitors can also check with outfitters or stores to see if bear deterrents are available for purchase locally. If nothing is available locally, you may want to discuss the option of shipping them to yourself in the community where you begin your trip with Sirmilik National Park staff.

## Emergency Medical Travel & Nunavut Visitors

### From the Government of Nunavut Department of Health:

If you are not a resident of Nunavut and you need medical travel during your time in the territory, you will be responsible for all medical travel costs. Visitors needing medevac will be invoiced for the full cost of the flight. No travel assistance is offered to visitors to return home. You will need to make your own travel arrangements if you wish to return to the community you were visiting. The Government of Nunavut Department of Health suggests that you buy travel insurance before visiting Nunavut. Health-care in Nunavut can be very expensive. Be prepared for emergencies.



Photo: Parks Canada

## Local Outfitters

Travel to and from Sirmilik National Park from either Pond Inlet or Arctic Bay can be arranged with licenced outfitters. Outfitters, who typically provide transportation only, will take you to and from the national park by boat or snowmobile, depending on the season and your request.

In Pond Inlet, Sirmilik National Park staff can help you make the necessary arrangements with local outfitters. In Arctic Bay, call the hamlet office at (867) 439-9917.

Outfitters must have a current national park business licence to transport visitors in the national park. Please contact Sirmilik National Park staff for the current list of business licence holders.



Photo: Parks Canada

## Tour Companies

If you prefer to travel in a guided group, contact one of the tour companies below. Before hiring a tour company, check with Sirmilik National Park staff that the company you are planning to travel with is currently licenced to operate in the national park. The list of operators provided here may not be the most current list of operators.



Photo: Jordan Odney

### **Black Feather Wilderness Adventure Company**

Seguin (Ontario)  
Toll Free: 1-888-849-7668  
Phone: (705) 746-1372  
Fax: (705) 746-7048  
Email: [info@blackfeather.com](mailto:info@blackfeather.com)  
[www.blackfeather.com](http://www.blackfeather.com)

### **Arctic Kingdom Polar Expeditions Inc.**

P.O. Box 6117  
923 Federal Road  
Iqaluit (Nunavut) X0A 0H0  
Toll Free: 1-888-737-6818  
Email: [adventures@arctickingdom.com](mailto:adventures@arctickingdom.com)  
[www.arctickingdom.com](http://www.arctickingdom.com)



Photo: Karen Petkau

# Community Information



Photo: Jordan Odney

## Pond Inlet

### Local Stores

#### Northern Store

Phone: (867) 899-8848

#### Tununiq Sauniq Co-op Ltd.

Phone: (867) 899-5100

### Visitor Information

#### Nattinnak Visitors Centre

Phone: (867) 899-8226

Fax: (867) 899-8246

### Accommodations

#### Tununiq Sauniq Hotel

Phone: (867) 899-6500

Fax: (867) 899-8364

Email: sauniq@innsnorth.coop

#### Tamaarvik Territorial Park Campground

Minimal services. Located 5km from  
Pond Inlet.

### Health Care Centre

Phone: (867) 899-7500

### Pond Inlet RCMP

Phone: (867) 899-0123

## Arctic Bay

### Local Stores

#### Northern Store

Phone: (867) 439-9914

#### Taqqu Co-op Association

Phone: (867) 439-9934

### Visitor Information

#### Hamlet Office

Phone: (867) 439-9917

Fax: (867) 439-8767

### Accommodations

#### Taqqu Inn

Phone: (867) 439-8005

Fax: (867) 439-8006

### Health Care Centre

Phone: (867) 439-8816

### Arctic Bay RCMP

Phone: (867) 439-0123

## Additional Resources

### Mirnguiqsirviit – Nunavut

#### Territorial Parks

[www.nunavutparks.com](http://www.nunavutparks.com)

#### Destination Nunavut

[www.destinationnunavut.ca](http://www.destinationnunavut.ca)

#### Travel Nunavut

[www.travelnunavut.ca](http://www.travelnunavut.ca)

#### Transport Canada

[www.tc.canada.ca](http://www.tc.canada.ca)

#### Pond Inlet Tide Charts

[www.waterlevels.gc.ca/eng/station?sid=5800](http://www.waterlevels.gc.ca/eng/station?sid=5800)

#### Arctic Bay Tide Charts

[www.waterlevels.gc.ca/eng/station?sid=5865](http://www.waterlevels.gc.ca/eng/station?sid=5865)

#### Pond Inlet Weather Conditions

[www.weather.gc.ca/city/pages/nu-25\\_metric\\_e.html](http://www.weather.gc.ca/city/pages/nu-25_metric_e.html)

#### Arctic Bay Weather Conditions

[www.weather.gc.ca/city/pages/nu-10\\_metric\\_e.html](http://www.weather.gc.ca/city/pages/nu-10_metric_e.html)

#### Qikiqtani Inuit Association

Phone: 1-800-667-2742

Email: [info@qia.ca](mailto:info@qia.ca)

Website: [www.qia.ca](http://www.qia.ca)

# Topographic Maps



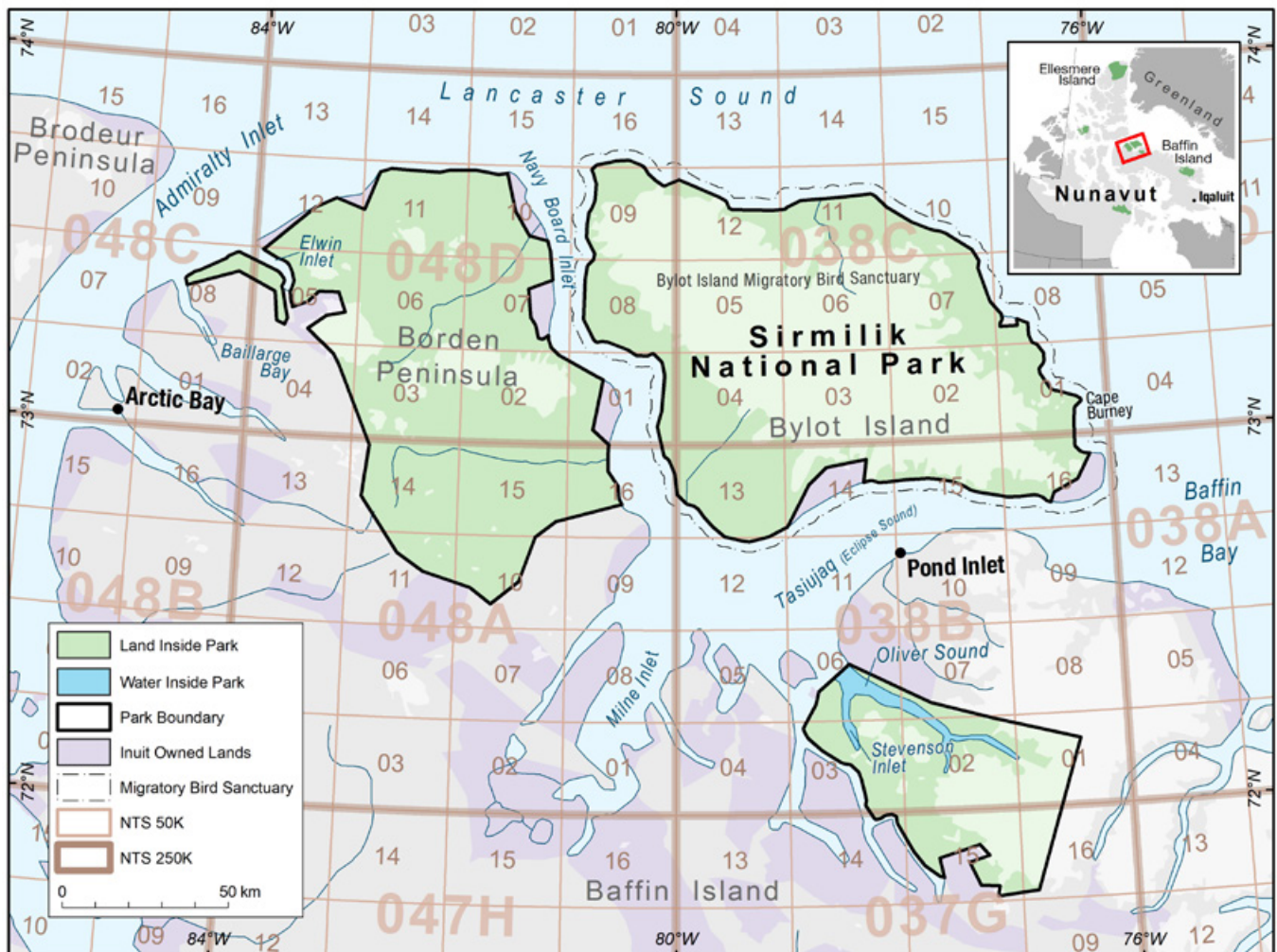
Photo: Brian Koonoo

Route planning is best done with 1:250,000 maps while navigation should be done with the appropriate 1:50,000 maps. A diagram of the corresponding 1:250,000 maps can be found below. Call Sirmilik National Park staff for assistance with your route directions.

Purchase topographic maps of the national park before leaving home. Information on where to purchase maps can

be found on the Natural Resources Canada website: [www.nrcan.gc.ca/maps-tools-and-publications/maps/topographic-maps/10995](http://www.nrcan.gc.ca/maps-tools-and-publications/maps/topographic-maps/10995).

**Maps that you receive are up-to-date only to the year indicated on the map.**



## Permits & Fees

Photo: Parks Canada

### Permits

Permits for operating a business (guiding, outfitting), filming and commercial photography, research, landing an aircraft, establishing a cache or base camp, and for transporting a firearm through the national park must be acquired well in advance of your trip (some permits may take ninety days or more to be issued). Research permits are only issued in winter and spring. For information and applications, contact Sirmilik National Park staff.

### Fees

Park use fees are charged at most national parks. Most of the money raised through park use fees remains in the national park where it is collected. This means that every time you visit a national park you are investing in its future – and in a legacy for future generations.

**Northern Backcountry Camping and Excursion Fees apply at national parks in Nunavut. Fees are paid during the mandatory registration and orientation session:**

<b>\$17.75</b>	for day use/person (no overnight)
<b>\$37.00</b>	per night/person
<b>\$256.50</b>	for an annual backcountry pass/person
<b>FREE</b>	Admission for youth 17 and under

The annual pass is a great option if you plan to stay a total of 6 or more nights in any combination of the following national parks prior to March 31<sup>st</sup>: Aulavik, Auyuittuq, Ivavik, Nahanni, Quttinirpaaq, Sirmilik, Tukturnogait, Vuntut, Qausuittuq and Ukkusiksalik National Parks.

**The Parks Canada Discovery Pass is not applicable in any of the national parks in Nunavut.**

**i** If you plan to travel on Inuit-owned land, contact the Qikiqtani Inuit Association at 1-800-667-2742 or email [info@qia.ca](mailto:info@qia.ca) for permission.



Photo: Lucas Habib

# Registration & De-registration



Photo: Barb Brittain

All national park visitors in Nunavut must participate in a mandatory orientation and registration session and pay their park use fees prior to entering the national park and de-register upon exiting the national park.

During the registration and orientation session you will be briefed on current route conditions, safety considerations, weather, water levels, area closures, park regulations, polar bear sightings, areas of interest, recommended routes and more.

## Be prepared to provide the following information during registration:

- The name, address and phone number of each group member;
- Two emergency contacts for each group member;
- Your de-registration date (the date you plan to exit the national park);
- The name(s) of the outfitter(s) you plan to use;
- Your flight information;
- A list of your large identifiable equipment (e.g. 1 green two-person tent, 2 orange pulks, 1 blue and 1 red backpack). Include brand names if possible.
- The contact information for your communication device(s); and
- Your detailed trip plan including activities and routes.

## Registration

- Contact Sirmilik National Park staff at least 48 hours in advance of your arrival to arrange a time and location for your orientation and registration.
- Plan to spend at least 90 minutes at the Parks Canada office for your orientation, registration and payment of park use fees. Ask your charter company for an estimated time of arrival to ensure you have plenty of time for the mandatory registration process.
- Orientations are conducted during regular business hours (Monday to Friday, 9:00am to 4:30pm). Orientations will not be started after 3:30pm. Ensure you take orientation schedules into consideration when booking your flights.
- If you are beginning your trip from Arctic Bay, schedule your flights to allow time for your orientation and registration to take place in Pond Inlet or Iqaluit.

## De-registration

- Within 24 hours of leaving the national park, visit the Parks Canada office in Pond Inlet to complete de-registration. If you are unable to visit, please de-register over the phone with Sirmilik National Park staff.
- Failing to de-register within 24 hours of this date may initiate an investigation by Parks Canada staff.



Photo: Jordan Odney



Photo: Barb Brittain

# River Safety & River Crossing Tips

River crossings are the most significant hazard facing summer visitors. The national park streams and rivers are mostly glacial fed, so water volume and velocity are constantly changing throughout the day and from day to day. As the day progresses, glacial melt caused by warming temperatures increases the volume of rivers and streams. Rainfall can affect the volume and velocity of rivers and streams at any time of day. These factors make crossings unpredictable and susceptible to rapid change. **Be prepared to wait out high water for hours or even days when temperatures are warm or rainfall is high.**

## Gear Considerations

### Footwear

Neoprene boots in combination with a gripping sole thick enough to walk over rocks for long distances will protect your feet from the cold water and will allow you to keep your boots and socks dry.

### Hiking Poles

Hiking poles are useful for testing water depth and supporting balance during river crossings.

## Deciding to Cross

### Group Abilities

Ensure that all group members are willing to take the risk. Consider the abilities of the weakest group member.

### Timing

Be prepared to wait hours or days until water levels are low enough for your group to make a safe crossing. During warm periods, water levels are generally lowest between 2:00 a.m. and 7:00 a.m. Following heavy rain, water levels may continue to rise for several hours.

### Location

Assess the safest location to cross, remembering that ideal crossing locations change regularly. Consider the following:

**Water Depth:** Braided areas tend to be shallower than single channels.

**Water Speed:** Flatter areas tend to have slower-moving water than steeper areas.

**Hazards:** Riverbanks: May be unstable and could collapse.

Underwater: Cloudy water can obscure rolling rocks and unstable footing.

Downstream: Be aware of waterfalls, deep pools, open sea, etc.

## Safe Crossing Techniques

- Heavy packs make crossings more difficult; you may wish to test cross without a pack or have stronger members shuttle packs.
- When crossing with a pack, unfasten waist and chest straps so you can remove your pack easily if you become pinned underwater.
- Face upstream, move with the current and use hiking poles to maintain balance.
- Consider group crossing techniques, i.e., the leader is upstream with group members in single file behind to take advantage of the leader's downstream eddy and support.



Photo: J. Milton



**All rivers and streams are dangerous. Some streams may be uncrossable for some members of your group. Be prepared to change your route or turn back. To learn more about river safety, consider taking a swift-water safety course before your trip.**



Photo: ©Scott Forsyth / Adventure Canada



**Report polar bear encounters, sightings, tracks and signs to Sirmilik National Park staff as soon as possible by radio or satellite phone.**

### Polar Bears

Polar bears may be encountered at any time of the year and in any area of the national park, including glaciers. The more people in your party, the less likely you will be to encounter a bear. Groups of up to fifteen people are permitted. In Sirmilik National Park, polar bears are most active along the coast of the Borden Peninsula and along the north, west, and east coasts of Bylot Island. Be particularly cautious in March/April when females with cubs are emerging from their dens and July to October when the sea ice is gone and polar bears are forced ashore.

For more information, you can speak with Sirmilik National Park staff, read the *Safety in Polar Bear Country* pamphlet carefully and watch the *Polar Bears: A Guide to Safety* DVD at the Parks Canada office or distributed at [www.kodiakcanada.com/collections/bear-safety-videos/products/polar-bears-a-guide-to-safety-dvd](http://www.kodiakcanada.com/collections/bear-safety-videos/products/polar-bears-a-guide-to-safety-dvd).

If you are nervous about polar bears, or uncertain of your ability to deal with them, consider joining a guided group. Guides are knowledgeable and experienced at travelling in polar bear country. When hiring a guide, ask about their experience, how they will avoid encountering polar bears and their plan of action should the party encounter a polar bear.

### Other Wildlife

Foxes and wolves can carry rabies. Do not allow them to approach you. Be especially suspicious if wildlife appears “friendly” or “tame”. Birds and wildlife are inquisitive and opportunistic. They will scavenge food left out and raid caches that are not securely stashed. Make sure wildlife attractants (e.g. food, toiletries, garbage) are securely stored. Walrus and whales can be aggressive and easily upset a boat. Keep your distance. As any animal can be dangerous, keep a safe distance from all wildlife and remember that it is illegal to touch, feed or entice wildlife in a national park.



Photo: Andreeanne Beardsell

# Climate & Weather Safety



Photo: Parks Canada

The polar marine climate means long, cold winters and short, cool summers. Although summer brings almost endless daylight from May to August, the sun is absent from the sky in December and January. Spring brings strong winds and late summer is often cloudy. In winter, loss of daylight and the presence of sea ice can make for extremely cold weather.

Weather in the Arctic is notoriously changeable. Abrupt weather changes can affect sea and boating conditions, forcing boaters to wait out rough waters, sometimes for several days. **Be prepared for snow and whiteout conditions anytime and anywhere in Sirmilik National Park!**

## Hypothermia & Frostbite

Hypothermia is a life-threatening condition. People with hypothermia can no longer keep themselves warm and cannot re-warm themselves without assistance. Know the signs and symptoms of hypothermia, know how to treat it and take precautions to prevent its onset.

Remember to take the windchill factor into account when evaluating spring and summer temperatures. Cold temperatures become drastically colder with the added effect of wind. Skiers, mountaineers and other winter and spring travellers must guard against frostbite when travelling in Sirmilik National Park. Extreme winds and cold temperatures are common; care should be taken to avoid exposing the skin.

## Winds & Rough Waters

Remember that areas of calm seas and areas of wind and rough waters may be relatively close together. Generally, during the full and new moons you can expect three to four days of strong prevailing winds and rough sea conditions.

Local outfitters know the conditions and weather trends for the area. Please listen to local knowledge and local outfitter advice regarding winds, rough water and points of land that are dangerous during challenging weather conditions.

Wind can blow your tent away or destroy it. We recommend using a 4-season tent and protecting it with a snow or rock wall. Anchor it with rocks, but check that they aren't a part of an archaeological site. Please replace rocks where you found them when you leave. Wind can make travel impossible. Your schedule should be flexible enough to accommodate a few stormy days. Delays of one to five days are typical. Ensure your stove works well in high winds. We recommend at least two stoves per group.



**Your group should have advanced skills in wilderness first aid and be prepared to handle any medical, wildlife or weather related emergency. If someone in your group is uncertain about their skill level, consider travelling with an experienced guide.**



Photo: Parks Canada



Photo: Parks Canada

## Snow Machine & Qamutik Safety

Snow machines can provide quick access to wilderness areas and are a common method of travel to some of the national parks in Nunavut. A qamutik is a sled designed to be pulled over snow or ice. Snow machine and qamutik travel can be dangerous. Injuries may result when the snow machine makes a sudden stop; when the driver or passenger falls from the machine or qamutik due to bouncing over uneven terrain; when the snow machine flips; or when the qamutik is pulled by a rope rather than a rigid hitch and the qamutik overtakes the snow machine pulling it.

### Avoiding Accidents and Injuries

- Check your qamutik frequently to ensure you know how it is riding and where it is in relation to your snow machine.
- If you slow down or stop unexpectedly, check your qamutik's location. Prevent your qamutik from running into others or your own snow machine by slowing your speed gradually.
- Be especially careful when approaching other snow machines, people on foot and other types of vehicles. Plan your stops in advance and slow your machine as you approach the location you intend to stop.
- Use qamutiks with a steel hitch.
- Avoid travelling at high speeds. Adjust your speed to the terrain and conditions.



Photo: Munju Ravindra

## Boat & Kayak Safety

During the summer season, boat and kayak trips are the most popular way to explore Sirmilik National Park. There are several skills you will need in order to be properly prepared to travel safely in this area. We recommend:

- You are comfortable with bracing, maneuvering, self-rescue, surf landing and launching;
- You can interpret marine charts and tide tables and use them to identify marine hazards;
- You can establish your position and follow waypoints using a GPS;
- You can navigate in fog; and
- You are able to estimate the speed of a current and estimate ferry angle under varying conditions.



Photo: Carey Elverum

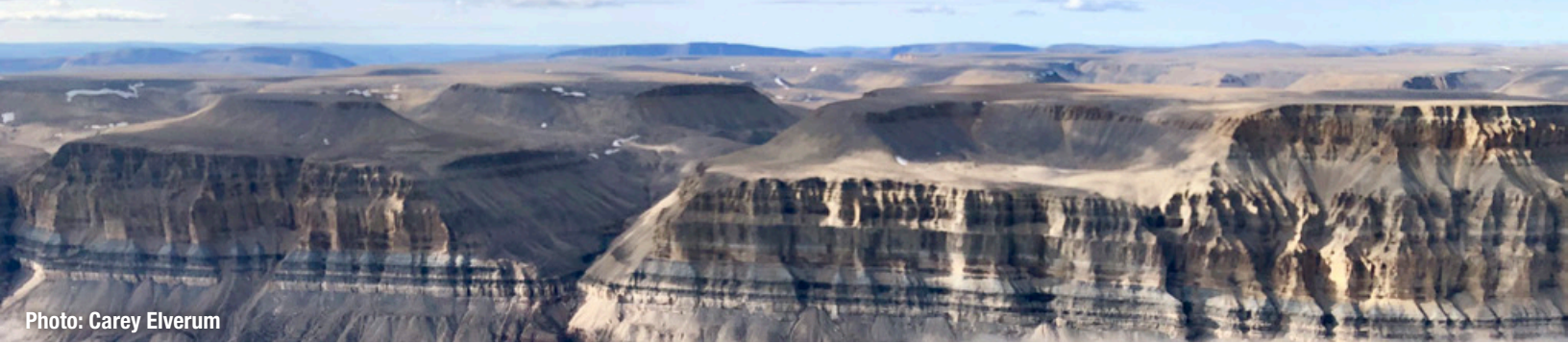


Photo: Carey Elverum

## Terrain Safety



Photo: Parks Canada

### Rockfall

Bare, freshly broken rock is a sign of active rockfall; these areas may extend well out from the rock walls and cliffs. In or around steep terrain, choose routes carefully, watch and listen for falling rock and avoid stopping for long breaks in potentially active or unprotected areas. Be particularly careful when it is raining and during periods of freeze-melt temperatures as these conditions loosen rock and increase rockfall. Choose campsites in protected areas, away from steep terrain.

### Glacier Travel

Low temperatures combined with low annual snowfall means that glacial movement is very slow. Crevasses and icefalls are reduced compared to glaciers in more southerly regions of North America. However, glaciers must still be treated with respect as they can be dangerous. Only those experienced in glacier travel, crevasse rescue and who are properly equipped should consider travelling on glaciers. **All guides operating in glaciated and/or technical mountain terrain will require full IFMGA/IVBV/UIAGM/ACMG certification as an alpine, mountain, or ski guide.** Contact Sirmilik National Park staff for more information.



Photo: Markus Siivola

### Avalanches

If there is snow and you will be travelling across or near slopes of more than a 25° angle, you need to consider the possibility of avalanches. You should be trained and experienced in assessing avalanche hazards, route-finding skills and self-rescue techniques if you plan to travel in avalanche areas. All members should carry an avalanche transceiver, shovel and probe.

## Drinking Water & Human Waste Safety

We advise you to fine filter (<0.5microns), treat (iodine or chlorine), or boil your drinking water.

To prevent the spread of diseases, solid human waste should be disposed of in a responsible manner. Human waste decomposes slowly in arctic environments. Go at least 100 metres from lakes and streams and 50 metres from travel routes. Leave feces exposed to air to decompose faster. Used toilet paper can be burned or packed out.



Photo: Parks Canada



Photo: Parks Canada



Photo: Parks Canada

## Sea Ice Safety

- Some parts of the sea ice are prone to thinning earlier than the rest of the ice due to strong water currents. Please talk to Sirmilik National Park staff to identify these locations. For current ice conditions please visit [ice-glaces.ec.gc.ca](http://ice-glaces.ec.gc.ca) (go to Eastern Arctic, then Approaches to Resolute).
- If there is deep snow and one area is darker than the surrounding area, the dark area is typically thin ice. Pass by that area giving it a wide berth.
- When deep snow is present with water on top or the snow is soaked through with water, it means that there is open water beneath it. Do not approach these areas.
- Sea ice close to river mouths is generally thin.
- Bays and inlets often have strong currents during spring and are prone to thin ice and open water. Avoid travelling through bays and inlets that have narrow channels.

## Floe Edge Safety

The floe edge is where open water meets the edge of land fast ice. Camping close to the floe edge can be dangerous. Be especially wary when prevailing winds are strong and during large tides (full or new moons) since these conditions increase the following risks:

- Ice breaks up along the floe edge.
- A huge pan of ice may break off from the land fast ice (up to 10 kilometres or more in size) even if there is no wind or extreme tides. Bring a global positioning system (GPS) and regularly check to see if the coordinates change. If you don't have a GPS, visually align a piece of ice some distance from you to the land and periodically check to see if the ice you are on is moving.
- Watch for moving ice that is wedging and piling up into the land fast ice.

Polar bears travel along the floe edge in search of food. They will hunt for fresh prey or will scavenge any carcasses they find. Do not camp near an old kill because polar bears, with their excellent senses of smell, will come to forage from it. Polar bears are very efficient and skilled stalkers (both on ice and in the water). Always keep watch for them and be sure to camp well away from the floe edge.

# Communications



Photo: Doug Stern

Please be aware that all of these recommended modes of communication can be unreliable and at times you will be unable to make contact with anyone. If you are having difficulty receiving a signal, it may be possible to get to higher ground to improve signal strength. This can be very time consuming and in some cases dangerous; please use caution. As always with technology, ensure you know how to use your device and be aware of the weaknesses of your system.

## Satellite Messenger Devices

Satellite messenger devices (e.g. InReach or SPOT) can be used to allow family and friends to track your trip progress as well as to initiate a distress signal (SOS). The SOS signal is non-reversible and is to be used in a life-threatening situation only. Like satellite phones, the Iridium satellite system provides more reliable coverage in Sirmilik National Park. For this reason, InReach devices are currently recommended over SPOT devices. Some models of both InReach and SPOT devices allow for two-way text messaging. Ensure you pre-load your contacts before beginning your trip. Make sure that you have advised your family and friends who may be tracking your “okay” messages that the absence of a message does not necessarily mean you are having problems; it may indicate poor coverage. SOS signals have inadvertently been sent (pocket dialed) without the user knowing it, resulting in unnecessary search and rescues in Nunavut national parks; please ensure you carefully handle and monitor your device. During your registration we will collect information about your device(s) in the event that there is a need to check the activity from it.

## Satellite Phones

Satellite phones are the preferred means of making contact. Your phone can put you in touch with emergency assistance 24 hours a day. We recommend obtaining a satellite phone prior to your trip as they are not available in the North. Phones that operate on the Iridium system currently provide the most reliable coverage over Sirmilik National Park but other options are available. Make sure to bring extra batteries and keep your device dry and warm if possible. Portable solar chargers for batteries are also recommended. Be sure to program the emergency phone numbers into the phone and bring a written copy as back up.

## Personal Locator Beacons

Personal Locator Beacons (PLB) can also be carried into remote areas. When activated, they send a distress signal to the Canadian Forces in Trenton, Ontario who will initiate a rescue from there. Once activated, the signal is non-reversible; these are to be used in a life-threatening situation only. Make sure your PLB is properly registered by calling the Canadian Beacon Registry, CFB Trenton at **1-877-406-7671**, online at **[www.cbr-rcb.ca/cbr](http://www.cbr-rcb.ca/cbr)** or by email at **[cbr@sarnet.dnd.ca](mailto:cbr@sarnet.dnd.ca)**. Only PLB's that transmit a distress signal at 406 MHz are permitted in Canada.

# Search and Rescue



Photo: Carey Elverum

Sirmilik National Park is one of the most remote parks in North America, and rescue services and facilities are very limited. Our public safety staff are trained in swift-water recovery, first aid, patient stabilization and evacuation in non-technical terrain. Parks Canada search and rescue operations may be delayed by poor weather conditions, geography, aircraft or staff availability. For high-angle technical evacuations, assistance from outside of Nunavut is required.

## When will a search be initiated?

A search and rescue response will be initiated when a distress signal is reported or, if a group fails to de-register, on the date indicated on their registration forms or shortly thereafter. In the case of an overdue group, a physical search may not occur until at least 48 hours after the de-registration date has passed.

## Remember to de-register!

If you fail to de-register, you place an unnecessary burden on our limited search and rescue capabilities. You can place rescue staff in danger and make the rescue team unavailable for a real emergency. Please remember to visit or call Sirmilik National Park staff upon your safe return from the national park.

## Air Support

- There are only commercial aircraft in Pond Inlet and Arctic Bay.
- Air access may be delayed, sometimes for many days, due to poor visibility, weather conditions or high winds.
- Aircraft cannot land in the backcountry if the terrain is unsuitable for a safe landing.

## To help us and yourself, please:

- Be self-reliant and responsible for your own safety;
- Have the required equipment, knowledge, skills and physical fitness;
- Consider the public safety information and advice provided by Parks Canada;
- Seek out additional advice from Sirmilik National Park staff if you are uncertain about what you may encounter;
- Register and de-register; and
- Be prepared for emergencies (medical, wildlife or weather related).



**In case of emergency, call the emergency dispatch line at (780) 852-3100. This number is monitored 24 hours a day.**



Photo: Jordan Odney



Photo: Jordan Odney

## Park Regulations

The *Canada National Parks Act* and associated regulations, as well as other federal legislation, are in place to preserve and protect the natural and cultural resources of the national park. The following information provides a brief summary of some regulations. For a complete listing of park regulations, please contact Sirmilik National Park staff.

- Registration and de-registration: You must register and attend the mandatory orientation before entering the national park and de-register upon exiting.
- Firearms: No person shall be in possession of a firearm in the national park without the Superintendent's written authorization (this does not apply to Inuit beneficiaries carrying out traditional harvesting activities).
- Pets and sled dogs: Must be kept under physical control at all times.
- Fishing is not permitted anywhere in Sirmilik National Park.
- Campfires are not permitted in the national park.
- In the national park, no person shall:
  - remove, deface, damage or destroy any flora, fauna or other natural objects;
  - hunt, disturb, hold in captivity or destroy any wildlife;
  - disturb or destroy a nest, lair or den;
  - touch, feed or entice wildlife; or
  - wilfully remove, deface, damage or destroy any cultural objects, features or artifacts.

## Conservation Practices

- Do not move any rocks from features that look even remotely like an archaeological site (e.g. tent rings, fox traps and food caches, Inuksuk or cairns).
- Do not build Inuksuk, cairns etc. Replace all rocks used at your camp to exactly where you found them before leaving the site.
- Where possible, choose routes on durable terrain such as gravel, rock outcrops or snow.
- Select campsites in durable locations where signs of your occupation will be minimized. This is especially important for base camps and large group camps.
- Dish and excess cooking water should be strained for food particles and poured into a shallow sump hole away from your campsite and 50 metres away from water sources.
- All garbage must be packed out. This includes, strained food particles, food waste, packaging, unwanted food, clothing, unused toilet paper etc.
- Use biodegradable soap when needed and minimize the use of soap when possible.

# Trip Checklist



Photo: Karen Petkau

## Before Booking Your Travel

- Read the Sirmilik National Park Visitor Information Package (this publication).
- Read the *Safety in Polar Bear Country* brochure.
- Contact Sirmilik National Park staff to:
  - Ask trip planning questions that you were not able to answer from your readings;
  - Discuss your planned route; and
  - Schedule your mandatory orientation and registration session. This process takes approximately two hours, so allow sufficient time before leaving the community for the national park for your orientation. Remember that flight and weather delays are common in the Arctic.
- Apply for any additional permits your party may require such as: air craft landing permits, cache or base camp permits, commercial film or photography permits, use of a DRONE permit, or for transporting a locked and unloaded fire arm permit.
- Contact local outfitters to ensure transport between the national park and community is available.
- Contact the Qikiqtani Inuit Association for permission if your route takes you on Inuit Owned Land.
- Ensure your skills, experience, knowledge and equipment are equal to the trip.
- Ensure your party follows all **Government of Nunavut Department of Health guidelines** while in the territory.

## Contact Information

Contact Sirmilik National Park staff or visit our website:

[parks.canada.ca/sirmilik](https://parks.canada.ca/sirmilik)

## Pond Inlet Office

**Phone:** (867) 899-8092

**Email:** [sirmilik.info@pc.gc.ca](mailto:sirmilik.info@pc.gc.ca)

## The Parks Canada registration and orientation time that I have booked is:

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location:** \_\_\_\_\_



**Remember to de-register! Within 24 hours of leaving the national park, visit or phone the Parks Canada office in Pond Inlet to complete de-registration.**