

Q uiet streams, majestic mountains, gorgeous sunrises and sunsets—Alaska is a lovely spot for peace, quiet AND activity. Read and take this Inside Scoop with your travel documents. It's packed with tips to smooth any wild waters.

travel: delighting in the spirit of adventure • a vacation from home to explore places that are not your home • knowing life is different, knowing this is a joy of travel • enjoying the journey, not just the destination • a privilege best used with patience, humour and curiosity • fun • coming home with great tales •

Helpful Words

Outside, (capital "O") means beyond state borders (a lower-case "o" means "outdoors"). **cheechako** is a newcomer (some lose the label after a winter, others never do depending how willingly they accept the lifestyle). **taku** winds can reach 100mph /160km in downtown Juneau.

Your Counsellor

Our knowledge and experience help turn dreams into first-rate cruises. Ask your counsellor about any trip details, including:

- advance seats & upgrades
- local cruises and tours
- connections & stopovers
- attractions & events
- popular don't-miss vistas
- rentals & licenses.

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A Maritime Travel Company

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Inside Scoop: ALASKA

Know before you go: travel isn't just your destination, it's also the journey

Lace up your hiking boots and dust off the binoculars—since Alaska is the largest US state (twice the next largest, Texas) there's so much to explore. Bordering British Columbia and the Yukon, it's a wilderness paradise. Or, enjoy viewing spectacular vistas such as mountain peaks (17 of the 20 highest US peaks) from a balcony of a cruise ship. Helpful tips:

- Although you might want to be spontaneous, particularly for a wilderness adventure, plan ahead for seats and the best tours. We know you want value for money in balancing choices and amenities with your budget. No matter what, aim to relax and enjoy whether camping or at a luxury lodge.
- Everyone must have a valid passport www.cic.gc.ca/english/passport. Keep a copy of its ID page or snap a cell photo.
- Check with your bank on debit card use and withdrawal fees (ATMs are in major areas). Log the dates you'll be away with your credit card company. Take US cash; many towns near the border accept Canadian cash.
- Internet access is available at most hotels.
- Alaska has its own time zone 1hr before Pacific Time: the westernmost is Hawaii-Aleutian Time, 2hrs earlier. Depending where you go, sunlight lasts 19.5hrs (summer solstice) to 5.5hrs (winter solstice). Above the Arctic Circle, twilight lasts months.
- Restaurants, markets and fast food are available in populated areas. Some supplies might be more costly than you're used to.
- We strongly recommend LeGrow's Travel medical and cancellation/interruption insurance. It's peace of mind.

Above all, travel with a positive attitude—patience and a spirit of adventure will carry you through any experience!

Trains, Boats, Planes & Automobiles (kayaks, canoes, rafts...)

Confirm flights prior to your scheduled departures. CATSA can prohibit items as security risks www.catsa.gc.ca/home and note, "Travellers should arrive at the airport earlier than usual, exercise patience and **contact their airline for further information on their flight(s).**" Airline staff are on duty some 2-3hrs prior: check-in closes 1hr before departure. If late, you're not entitled to board (or a refund). Unless booked ahead, seats are first-come first-served. Many airlines have reciprocal "code-shares." Flights and accommodations are usually the biggest part of your budget—your counsellor might recommend a red-eye flight after midnight to cut costs (but a good way to rack up frequent flyer points.) The Alaska Marine Highway System carries passengers and vehicles serving some 30 ports, 3,500 miles between and onto highways connecting with the Alaska Highway.

Pack Strategically

Given the area and activities, dress codes are casual (the perfect place to wear your classic Canadian Kodiak boots). The world is overrun with black bags: put coloured tape or ribbon on your luggage to spot it quickly. Put your name outside and inside and remove old tags. In your carry-on, pack valuables such as jewellery (which you might not need...), over-the-counter and prescription drugs in original containers. If you plan to walk a lot (or hike) a backpack or even a front crossbody bag is handy.

Items to pack in checked bags include knives, corkscrews and fishing/sports equipment. Pack most liquids/lotions/gels in checked bags (inside plastic bags)—due to carry-on restrictions, the maximum size container is 100ml(3.4oz). All must fit in 1 clear/resealable plastic bag of no more than 1 litre (often available at airport screening), then place the bag in the tray. You may take baby formula, food or milk if a child 2 and under (0-24 months) is travelling.

Items regular travellers pack in carry-on: pen/notebook, disinfectant hand wipes, munchies (no fruit, meat or veg over borders). Permitted in carry-on: cell phones, laptops, portable music players, disposable razors, umbrellas, canes and nail clippers. Most hotels provide hair dryers.

Ask your counsellor about any special licenses you may need (e.g. fishing). Always check with your airline in advance for their restrictions transporting specialized equipment (e.g. archery) and any goods coming home with you (you could blame restrictions for the "big fish that got away"). Size/weight restrictions for all baggage and carry-on varies: airlines can restrict anything considered a risk. Depending on the fees, you might want to ship items by cargo.

Get Out!

Alaska's high season is June to Labour Day, but there's lots of action all year. Dip your toes in the Arctic Ocean, see polar bears around **Barrow** or run the 116-mile (it's the US, so is in miles) Klondike Road Relay race. There are 5 main regions—all with their own specialties. The three main cities are **Anchorage**, **Fairbanks** and the capital **Juneau** (where cruise ships dock and transportation in and out is by air or boat). Each place has their own attractions and activities. The climate is milder than many expect: Spring (and rain) arrives in April/May and in Anchorage, summer highs reach the 70s, 60s in Juneau. September brings rain and the first dusting of mountaintop snow around Labour Day before winter beckons.

Kodiak Island is home to world-famous brown bears. Take the state ferry to catch a scheduled jet or hop on a bear-view tour or watch moose, caribou or lynx. Alaska's shorelines have an abundance of marine life with sea lions and walrus. The world's largest colony of seals, some 1 million, breed undisturbed on the **Pribilof Islands**. Whale-watching is popular, with 16 types of whales identified. Sea otters are entertaining (and calming) to watch, with some 3,000 eagles in the **Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve** in Haines. Spot magpies and ptarmigan and migratory species such as snow and Canada Geese, arctic terns and ducks. Why not pan for gold? You can buy a pan along **The Steese Highway**.

Escorted tours offer excellent value: full or half day tours have specialized narration from experts. Try a **Katmai National Park and Preserve** tour to see bears.

For more suggestions, ask your counsellor or see weather reports and special events for the time you'll be there at www.travelalaska.com.

Delays are part of travel now: enjoy the down time. All areas have customs and although you're paying, you are a guest. Tourism staff work long hours—a smile, patience, tips and a kind word are always welcome.

 **Websites and emails in blue are hyperlinked; just click!**

Canadian citizens: Emergency? See <https://travel.gc.ca/assistance/emergency-assistance>. Contact Global Affairs 1-800-387-3124 in Canada/US or 1-613-996-8885 (collect if needed), sos@international.gc.ca.

Don't Miss the Lights

In waves and slashes of red, green and purple, the spectacular **Northern Lights** (aurora borealis) are visible late August to early April (once seen, never forgotten). Electromagnetic activity creates the aurora all year, visible only at night. While not every night, winter in the state's northern part is best. While lights can be seen over Anchorage, since winter nights are longer, they're considered brighter, more reliable over the Fairbanks area, above Eagle River and the Alaska Range foothills. All are closer to the highly active area over the arctic; many hotels and lodges offer comprehensive packages. **Tip:** Dress warmly as you'll want to stay out as long as possible!

Sled dog racing season runs January to mid-March, ending with the most famous, the **Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race**. It begins ceremonially in Anchorage and ends some 10 days later. Billed as "The Last Great Race," it runs over more than 1,100 miles. Under 18s compete in the 2-day **Junior Iditarod**. Others include the difficult **Yukon Quest** between Fairbanks and Whitehorse, **Fur Rendezvous** World Championships and the **Limited and Open** sprint **North American Championships**.

Indoor Pursuits

Alaska has more than 50 museums, one in almost every town on the road or ferry route. Some are traditional and in cultural centres: old gold mines offer special experiences. **The Alaska Experience Theatre & Earthquake Exhibit** is a wrap-around 40-minute film highlighting wildlife and scenery. A 1964 earthquake destroyed much of Anchorage: this exhibit describes the Richter Scale and Tsunami Warning Center. **Anchorage Museum of History and Art:** features art. The **Imaginarium Science Discovery Center** includes a planetarium, space exhibits, arctic ecology, bubbles lab, physics of toys, reptile displays and marine touch tanks. The **Discovery Theatre** has more than 300 slides of the aurora borealis set to classical music in a gorgeous 38-minute show. In **4th Avenue Theatre** (Anchorage's only art deco building), there's a photo display and show on history—with a dinner buffet. The **4th Avenue Trolley** tour departs from in front of the theatre taking you a on city tour.

MUST Know for Tours

- No matter what your activities, take sturdy footwear with good traction and dress in layers (long underwear, waterproof shell). Bring a hat, sunscreen and water bottle.
- Specialized gear is usually provided by the tour company. You can rent pretty much anything; bikes, fishing and hunting gear, vehicles, RVs, kayaks (for the 3 million lakes, 3000 rivers). If fishing, buy ice at a grocery store for your cooler.
- Alaska's trails are full of berries but only eat what you can identify as some are poisonous. Water streams are inviting; purify before you drink by boiling it for five minutes or using a pump with a fine filter. You don't want to get a "beaver fever" (the local term for intestinal bugs).
- Ask your counsellor about tours. Anyone can operate a tour, saying that it's up to tourists to gauge danger and be personally responsible, "Six-packs" (boats for no more than 6 passengers) are not rated, inspected or monitored. We'd rather you stay safe: discuss tours with your counsellor before you go.



Get Packing Checklist and General Planning & Packing Tips

at www.legrowstravel.ca/inside-scoops

- ☐ Your sense of adventure & humour!

Food to Try

Seafood is prominent... "sled dogs" are reindeer hotdogs baked with cheese... Try traditional native food such as Eskimo ice cream *akutaq* (pronounced "a-goo-duck," meaning "mix together") of fish, oil/lard and berries. Depending where you are, you'll find the comforts of home if needed...think burgers.

Bring Home Cool (very...) Things

Unique Alaskan products and crafts include gold nugget jewellery, hand-made clothing and toys, native seal oil candles, beaded mittens and baskets of beach grass, bark or baleen. Salmon delicacies are prized (canned, smoked, jerky, cured and yes, candy). Processed wild berry products can be brought in. Before bringing anything back, check with border services as some products can't be transported without special permits. Know your limits and exemptions, www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca/travel-voyage/bgb-rmf-eng.html such as on duty free alcohol.

Our 24/7 Emergency Service

We constantly survey airlines, local tour companies and hotels to ensure they meet our customer service standards, so don't let a problem ruin your holiday. Nearly all issues can be handled quickly on site—first seek help from the venue's local staff. Otherwise, call our Emergency Travel Service at **1-888-551-1181**. Deposits are non-refundable and non-transferrable. Schedule changes can occur and airlines and tour operators have the right to change flight and/or times, alter, combine services or substitute accommodations. Your counsellor will work with you to ensure you receive information as soon as possible and ensure satisfaction. See your brochure and ticket terms and conditions.

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