



HOW TO PLAN A TRIP ON THE ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY

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The ferries of the Alaska Marine Highway stop in 33 local communities; they also offer service to and from Prince Rupert, British Columbia, and Bellingham, Washington. Here's what you need to know about this popular way to get around.

WHY TAKE THE ALASKA FERRY?

- It's a cruise but not a "cruise": If you like the idea of a trip by sea — visiting ports, seeing gorgeous scenery, going whale-watching — but don't want a floating-resort experience, the ferries are your answer. They're clean and comfortable, though basic. Still, you're here because you want to focus on what's off the boat, not on it.
- You get off the beaten path: Ferry itineraries mix the big-name ports of call with lesser-known Alaska Native communities. You can explore villages off the tourist grid and travel alongside locals.
- You can connect some serious dots: The ferries offer a great way to link far-flung segments of an Alaska odyssey. Road-trippers, RVers, and backpackers use the ferries to traverse sections of Alaska that are too time-consuming (or even impossible) to see by land.

HOW DOES THE MARINE HIGHWAY WORK?

Just walk on! You can even bring a bicycle or drive your vehicle aboard. Your rate is based on how far you're going, whether you book a cabin, and whether you take a vehicle (as well as the size of that vehicle). When your ferry stops in a port, you can either get off and walk around for a few hours, or drive off and spend a few days. Just be aware that if you want to overnight anywhere, you have to book your stop when you purchase your ticket. Plan ahead!

FINDING A SAILING DATE

To start, search the [Alaska Marine Highway sailing calendar online](#); select the month you expect to travel and the departure port you're interested in. The calendar will display all sailings during that month. The calendar can be tricky to decipher, so use the [available key](#).

Abbreviations include the ship, the port, and whether the ship is arriving or departing. Also know that some stops are a part of a longer sailing. For example, if you're searching for the town of Sitka, the calendar might display the ship's origin and final destination instead of Sitka. (In that case, just click on the sailing, and the calendar will show when the ferry stops in Sitka.)

Once you know which dates are available to travel to your desired port, [switch to this sailing search tool](#) for a quote. Enter the number of travelers, any vehicles, the starting and ending ports, and the dates. You'll then see a list of optional sailings.

Next, you'll see if there are cabins available. Select a cabin if you want a room aboard the boat. This is absolutely recommended for any overnight sailings, but you're not required to book a cabin. ([See cabin and camping info below](#)).

The AMHS's reservation agents can help you map out an itinerary, whether you want to create a contained cruise vacation or make the experience part of a longer trip. For reservations, call 800-642-0066 or e-mail dot.ask.amhs@alaska.gov.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Cabins: For multiple-day ferry rides, you can book a cabin with bunk beds, which sleeps up to four.

Camping: Some travelers set up camp on a deck chair in the solarium, while others pitch a tent on the deck and sleep under the stars. Make sure to bring a foam mat.

Food: Almost all ships offer food and beverage service (both hot and cold meals), as well as vending machines. You can also bring your own cooler. You'll find coin-op ice machines, but not refrigerators.

Restrooms/showers: All vessels have public restrooms, and you can find public showers on all vessels except the MV Litua, FVF Chenega, and FVF Fairweather. Other Onboard Amenities: Many ferries offer observation decks, theaters, an arcade, reading room, and kids' playroom.

Pets: Allowed, though you'll have to keep them in a carrier or vehicle on the car deck during transit. Pet calls are made roughly every 8 hours so owners can go to the car deck and check on their animals.

Schedule: Ferries run year-round, though the prime summer schedule is May 1 to Sept. 30. Departure times vary by day on certain routes.

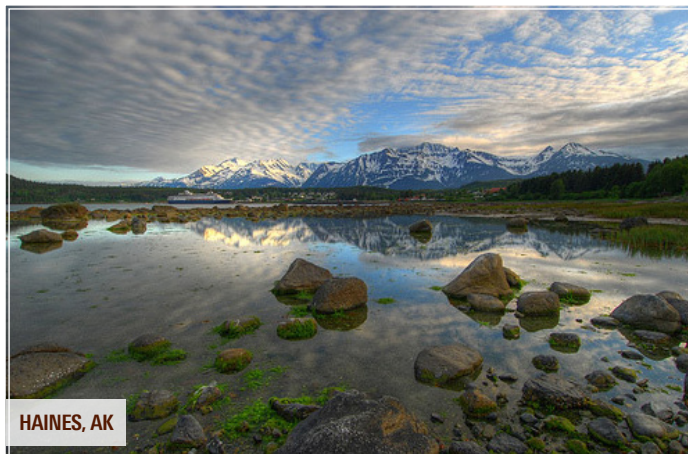
Fares: Prices vary depending on the distance you're traveling, whether you take a vehicle, and whether you book a cabin.

Discounts/Specials: Children ages 6 to 11 ride for half-price; kids under 6 are free.

Other Travel Policies: [See here](#).

ALASKA MARINE HIGHWAY

FERRY REGIONS & COMMUNITIES



HAINES, AK

SOUTHEAST ALASKA: THE INSIDE PASSAGE

WHAT IT'S LIKE

This is the classic Alaska cruise route, but with a down-to-earth twist. You'll start in either Bellingham, Washington or Prince Rupert, British Columbia and head north to popular ports like Ketchikan, Juneau, Sitka, and Skagway. You'll also have the opportunity to explore Native Alaska communities like Hoonah and Kake.

PORTS

Angoon, Bellingham, Gustavus, Haines, Hoonah, Juneau, Kake, Ketchikan, Metlakatla, Pelican, Petersburg, Prince Rupert, Sitka, Skagway, Tenakee, Wrangell, Yakutat



SAILING IN SELDOVIA, AK

SOUTHCENTRAL ALASKA: KACHEMAK BAY & PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND

WHAT IT'S LIKE

If you don't want a long cruise experience, this route may be for you. It offers a variety of good two- and three-day trips. In fact, exploring the ports of Prince William Sound is a popular weekend activity for Alaska locals, as is going to see bears on Kodiak Island—a great trip off the beaten path. At ports on the Kenai Peninsula and Cook Inlet, you also have easy drives to Chugach State Park for day hikes.

PORTS

Chenega Bay, Cordova, Homer, Seldovia, Tatitlek, Valdez, Whittier



ILIULIUK RIVER IN UNALASKA

© Jennifer Shockey

SOUTHWEST ALASKA: KODIAK & THE ALEUTIAN CHAIN

WHAT IT'S LIKE

This route is a big hit with independent travelers, especially repeat Alaska visitors looking for something remote or anyone who wants a rugged, off-the-grid itinerary. The sparsely populated islands are excellent for hiking, cycling, and bird watching. Note: This route has very limited service, so plan well in advance.

PORTS

Akutan, Chignik, Cold Bay, False Pass, King Cove, Kodiak, Old harbor, Ouzinkie, Port Lions, Sand Point, Dutch Harbor/Unalaska