

THE ULTIMATE
ALASKA
ROAD MAP BOOK

AN ALASKA.ORG GUIDE



THE ULTIMATE ALASKA ROAD MAP BOOK

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Dear Reader,

Imagine yourself in a coffee shop talking with locals about the best places to visit along Alaska's road system. That's what you'll find in this guide.

We gathered advice from Alaskans who know and love this state, whether they're park rangers, naturalists, innkeepers, or bush pilots, to compile a list of the top highlights along Alaska's major highways. As you plan your vacation to Alaska, please feel free to email us your trip planning questions. If we don't have the answer, we'll connect you with an Alaskan expert who does! Once you're in Alaska, remember that Alaskans like to get to know visitors, too. So please don't hesitate to talk with the locals as you travel. That includes us!

Enjoy your adventure!

Bob

Bob Kaufman
Alaska.org





01 DRIVING TIMES & DISTANCES

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ALASKA DRIVING TIMES & DISTANCES

Alaska is big! This tool will help you plan your driving vacation

	Anchorage	Girdwood	Seward	Homer	Kenai	Talkeetna	Denali	Fairbanks	McCarthy	Valdez	Whittier
Anchorage		38 miles 45 minutes	127 miles 2.5 hours	222 miles 4.5 hours	159 miles 3 hours	113 miles 2.5 hours	239 miles 4.5 hours	358 miles 7 hours	307 miles 7.5 hours	299 miles 6 hours	60 miles 1.5 hours
Girdwood	38 miles 45 minutes		89 miles 2 hours	184 miles 4 hours	120 miles 2.5 hours	149 miles 3 hours	275 miles 5.5 hours	395 miles 7.5 hours	342 miles 8.5 hours	335 miles 7 hours	22.7 miles 30 min
Seward	127 miles 2.5 hours	89 miles 2 hours		169 miles 3.5 hours	104 miles 2 hours	238 miles 5 hours	363 miles 7 hours	483 miles 9 hours	431 miles 10 hours	423 miles 8.5 hours	89 miles 2 hours
Homer	222 miles 4.5 hours	184 miles 4 hours	169 miles 3.5 hours		82 miles 2 hours	333 miles 7 hours	459 miles 9 hours	579 miles 45 min	526 miles 12 hours	519 miles 10 min	184 miles 3.5 min
Kenai	159 miles 3.5 hours	120 miles 2.5 hours	104 miles 2 hours	82 miles 2 hours		270 miles 5 hours	395 miles 7.5 hours	515 miles 10 hours	463 miles 10.5 hours	456 miles 9 hours	121 miles 2.5 hours
Talkeetna	113 miles 2.5 hours	149 miles 3 hours	238 miles 5 hours	333 miles 7 hours	270 miles 5 hours		154 miles 2.5 hours	274 miles 4.5 hours	345 miles 10 hours	338 miles 7 hours	172 miles 3.5 min
Denali	239 miles 4.5 hours	275 miles 5.5 hours	363 miles 7 hours	459 miles 9 hours	395 miles 7.5 hours	154 miles 2.5 hours		123 miles 2 hours	470 miles 12 hours	463 miles 9 hours	297 miles 6 hours
Fairbanks	358 miles 7.5 hours	395 miles 8 hours	483 miles 9 hours	579 miles 11 hours	515 miles 10 hours	274 miles 4.5 hours	123 miles 2 hours		370 miles 9.5 hours	363 miles 7.5 hours	417 miles 8.5 hours
McCarthy	307 miles 7.5 hours	342 miles 8.5 hours	431 miles 10 hours	526 miles 12 hours	463 miles 10.5 hours	345 miles 10 hours	470 miles 11 hours	370 miles 9.5 hours		180 miles 5.5 hours	365 miles 9 hours
Valdez	299 miles 6 hours	335 miles 7.5 hours	423 miles 8.5 hours	519 miles 10 hours	456 miles 9 hours	338 miles 7 hours	463 miles 9 hours	363 miles 7.5 hours	180 miles 5.5 hours		358 miles 7.5 hours
Whittier	60 miles 1.5 hours	22.7 miles 30 minutes	89 miles 2 hours	184 miles 3.5 hours	121 miles 2.5 hours	172 miles 3.5 hours	297 miles 6 hours	417 miles 8.5 hours	365 miles 9 hours	358 miles 7.5 hours	



LESS IS MORE

We have a saying in Alaska, "Less is more." Don't try to cover too much ground in too little time. Even if you saw a million acres a day, it would still take you more than a year to see all of Alaska. Here are some thoughts as you're starting to plan.

PICK ONE OR TWO REGIONS TO VISIT

While every region is distinct, each offers most everything you came to Alaska to do: go flightseeing, bearviewing, fishing, hiking, see glaciers, check out native culture. Getting from region to region can be a time-waster, so unless there's something specific you want to see, stick to one or two regions. For example, if you fly into Anchorage, stay in Southcentral and the Interior; don't feel compelled to fly to Southeast.

DON'T OVERBOOK

Even if your first instinct is to rush around and try to see everything, don't. Many of Alaska's best moments aren't ones you can plan for, so leave time and flexibility in your schedule. You'll want the time to pull over and watch a moose amble along the roadway; the time to ponder Denali and the endless Alaska Range as it peeks through the clouds; the time to chat with locals you meet along the way. Alaska is as much a state of mind as it is a place.

DO SOME HOMEWORK

Alaska's best-known places aren't the only places worth visiting—that's why we've given you honest assessments of the pros and cons of each place, so you can decide which is right for your interests. Places like Denali National Park and Kenai Fjords seldom disappoint, but part of Alaska's charm is its less well known parks, tiny towns, and off-the-beaten-path treasures.

ALASKA DRIVING MAP



Believe it or not, these are all the major highways in Alaska. Alaska is one-fifth the size of the Lower 48 states yet has less than 1/100th as much paved road.

Private vehicles restricted beyond here.

Most rental vehicles are prohibited from traveling on unpaved sections of the Denali Highway, Taylor Highway, Copper River Highway, McCarthy Road, Petersville Road, Elliott Highway, Dalton Highway, and Steese Highway.

DRIVING TIMES	From Anchorage	From Fairbanks
Girdwood	37 mi - 45 min	397 mi - 8 hr
Portage	50 mi - 1 hr	410 mi - 8.5 hr
Whittier	60 mi - 1.5 hr	420 mi - 9.0 hr
Seward	125 mi - 2.5 hr	484 mi - 10 hr
Cooper Landing	97 mi - 1.5 hr	457 mi - 9 hr
Kenai/Soldotna	147 mi - 3 hr	507 mi - 10 hr
Homer	226 mi - 4.5 hr	584 mi - 11 hr
Eagle River	14 mi - 25 min	344 mi - 6.5 hr
Wasilla	44 mi - 55 min	314 mi - 6 hr
Talkeetna	100 mi - 2.5 hr	258 mi - 5.5 hr
Denali Park	237 mi - 5 hr	121 mi - 2 hr
Glennallen	189 mi - 4 hr	247 mi - 5 hr
McCarthy	318 mi - 7.5 hr	376 mi - 8.5 hr
Valdez	304 mi - 6 hr	366 mi - 7.5 hr
Delta Junction	340 mi - 6.5 hr	96 mi - 1.5 hr
Fairbanks	358 mi - 7 hr	0 mi - 0 hr
Tok	327 mi - 6.5 hr	206 mi - 4 hr
Dawson City	514 mi - 10.5 hr	393 mi - 8 hr
Whitehorse	724 mi - 15 hr	602 mi - 12 hr
Haines	775 mi - 15.5 hr	653 mi - 13 hr
Skagway	830 mi - 16.5 hr	710 mi - 14 hr

	SUNRISE - SUNSET TIMES		
	June 15	July 15	August 15
Anchorage	4:21a - 11:40p	4:51a - 11:18p	6:08a - 9:58p
Seward	4:33a - 11:24p	5:01a - 11:05p	6:12a - 9:51p
Talkeetna	4:06a - 11:57p	4:40a - 11:31p	6:03a - 10:05p
Denali Park	3:32a - 12:21a	4:14a - 11:47p	5:49a - 10:09p
Fairbanks	3:02a - 12:42p	3:53a - 11:58p	5:38a - 10:10p

50 miles

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02 DRIVING GUIDES

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© Fider Mark Stevens

24 MCCARTHY ROAD

ROAD HIGHLIGHTS

ANCHORAGE TO MCCARTHY

Get Far Off the Beaten Path: See Small Town Alaska and Access a Huge National Park

Total Driving Time: 7.5 hours
Average Driving Time with Stops: 9+ hours

This 7- to 8-hour drive passes through the historic town of Glenallen, majestic Matanuska Glacier, soaring mountain peaks, and unique agricultural land to the untouched heart of Alaska. At the end of the trip is a 61-mile gravel road along an historic rail route that passes over the soaring Kuskuluna Bridge on its way to the small town of McCarthy, once a rowdy pioneer town that today makes a great basecamp for adventures into America's largest national park, Wrangell-St. Elias.



27 GILAHINA TRESTLE

ROAD HIGHLIGHTS

ANCHORAGE TO MCCARTHY

ANCHORAGE TO MATANUSKA GLACIER



1 TRAIL THUNDERBIRD FALLS TRAIL (MP 25)

25 Miles from Anchorage

This quick, one-mile, in-and-out hike brings you to the picturesque 200-foot Thunderbird Falls. The trail is well trafficked and you'll find lots of lookout platforms along the way. There's a \$5 parking fee (since this is a part of Chugach State Park). **30+ Minutes**



2 SIDE TRIP EKLUTNA VILLAGE (MP 26)

26 Miles from Anchorage

Dating to 1650, the park is this area's oldest continuously inhabited Athabaskan Indian settlement. Exit at mile 26.5 and take Eklutna Lake Road to find the area settled by Russian Orthodox missionaries in the early 1800s. See St. Nicholas Church, the oldest standing building in Greater Anchorage. And snap some pictures of the colorful Spirit Houses, built over the graves of the deceased—a custom that came from the melding of Russian and local cultures. **30+ Minutes**



3 SIDE TRIP OLD GLENN HIGHWAY DETOUR TO PALMER (MP 29.6)

29.6 Miles from Anchorage

Instead of staying on The Glenn Highway to reach Palmer, take a detour on the Old Glenn Highway. This 19-mile country road cuts through the heart of Alaska's farmland. Popular stops include the [Reindeer Farm](#) (907-745-4000) or the quick but steep [Butte Trail](#) (trailhead on Mothershead Lane). **30 minutes driving time, plus time for any stops**



4 PALMER HAY FLATS (MP 31)

31 Miles from Anchorage

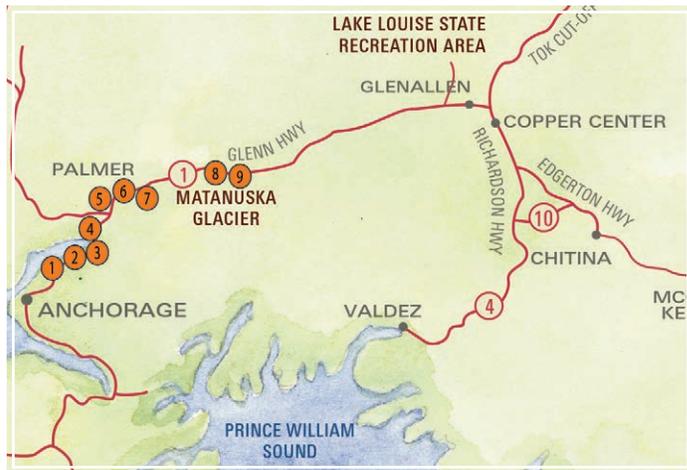
If you choose not to take the Old Glenn Highway and stay on the Glenn Highway, you'll pass by this state wildlife refuge. You'll cross a series of bridges to reach this flat portion of a massive U-shaped valley carved by glaciers. There isn't a good place to pull over along the main road, but scan the flats for moose and migratory birds. The best times to see moose here are early morning and late evening. **Drive by**



5 ALASKA STATE FAIRGROUNDS (MP 39)

39 Miles from Anchorage

You are now passing the Fairgrounds of the annual Alaska State Fair. Each year in late August to early September, hundreds of thousands of fairgoers enjoy nightly concerts featuring headline entertainers, carnival rides and games, as well as hundreds of food and vendor booths featuring uniquely Alaskan items. There are also hundreds of exhibits, ranging from quilts to goats and world-famous giant vegetables, like 2009's world record-breaking 127-pound cabbage. **Drive by (unless it's State Fair season!)**



6 PALMER (MP 42 GLENN HWY)

42 Miles from Anchorage

In 1935, an unusual New Deal program was extended to Alaska that originally settled Palmer and Wasilla in the Matanuska Valley. Two hundred families from economically depressed counties in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan—whose residents, it was thought, could survive Alaskan winters—were offered a chance to create a new agricultural community here. Many returned home, but some stayed, and today you can see their descendants' farms. **Drive through**



7 MATANUSKA RIVER (MP 50 GLENN HWY)

50 Miles from Anchorage

This impressive river flows from the Matanuska Glacier. The rapids range from Class II to Class IV before the river empties, 70 miles later, into the Knik Arm. If you aren't pressed for time, contact [NOVA River Runners](#) (800-746-5753) for a rafting trip and experience the river firsthand. **Drive by or 2.5 – 4 hrs for a rafting trip**



8 MATANUSKA GLACIER STATE RECREATIONAL SITE (MP 101 GLENN HWY)

101 Miles from Anchorage

This well-developed site offers plenty of parking, public restrooms, excellent glacier views and photo opportunities. It's easy to spend at least a half hour here. There are interpretive signs, viewpoints with telescopes, picnic areas, and pathways (some of which are handicap accessible). There is also access to an easy one-mile hiking trail called "The Edge of Nature Trail". (\$5 parking) **30 minutes**



9 MATANUSKA GLACIER PHOTO OVERLOOK (MP 101.5 GLENN HWY)

101.5 Miles from Anchorage

This small pullout on the side of the highway is the closest view you can get of the Matanuska Glacier. For a great photo of the ice, this is the spot to get it. **15 minutes, or until you get the perfect shot**

LET US HELP YOU
PLAN YOUR TRIP

907-277-4321 BKAUFMAN@ALASKA.ORG

ROAD HIGHLIGHTS

ANCHORAGE TO MCCARTHY

MATANUSKA GLACIER TO COPPER CENTER



10 MATANUSKA GLACIER (MP 102)

102 Miles from Anchorage

Some 15,000 years ago, this glacier stretched another 50 miles west to the Palmer area. It now has a four-mile-wide towering face that you can walk right up to and touch. (There's a fee to do this, since the glacier sits on private land.) You can also experience the glacier on an ice-climbing excursion or an exhilarating zip line ride with [Mica Guides](#) (907-351-7587). **Drive by, or 1–4 hours to explore the glacier or take a tour**



11 WATCH FOR DALL SHEEP (MP107)

107 Miles from Anchorage

For the next three miles, you'll have a chance to see Dall sheep if you crane your neck and look straight up to the cliffs on the north side of the road. These animals, as well as mountain goats, are protected from hunting here as part of the Sheep Mountain Game Protection Area. But they do have natural predators, and hang out on these cliffs to avoid them. The sheep live on grasses and sedges; in winter, they survive on lichen. **Drive by**



12 SHEEP MOUNTAIN (MP 113)

113 Miles from Anchorage

Look for the spectacular colors on heavily mineralized Sheep Mountain. The colors are from iron stains on ancient volcanic soils. High in the hills above (miles away), you can find obsidian and thunder eggs. Stop for homemade pie and ice cream at nearby Sheep Mountain Lodge. **Drive by**



13 TAHNETA PASS (MP 122)

122 Miles from Anchorage

Mountain passes such as this were the best routes for early prospectors hiking hundreds of miles to reach gold. East of here, water flows into the Copper River; to the west, it flows into Cook Inlet. **Drive by**



14 EUREKA SUMMIT (MP 129.5)

129.5 Miles from Anchorage

Eureka Summit is the highest point (3,322 feet) along the Glenn Highway, and on a clear day you can enjoy spectacular views of the surrounding mountains. You'll also likely see lots of big-boy toys around

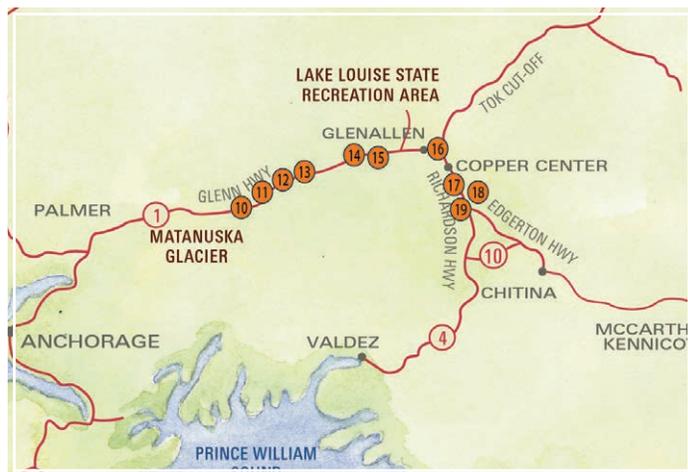
Eureka Summit—RVs and big trucks pulling trailers with ATVs or, in winter, brand new snow machines. **Drive by**



15 BLACK SPRUCE (MP 180)

180 Miles from Anchorage

The shallow roots of these trees spread over permafrost, so they grow slowly. Soil above the permafrost melts and freezes, buckling the ground and making the trees tip. This stand might have sprouted 100 or more years ago. They grow so slowly that a 250-year old tree might be only 3-6 inches in diameter and 15-30 feet tall! **Drive by**



© Richard Heist

16 GLENALLEN (MP 187)

187 Miles from Anchorage

Glennallen, the gateway to Wrangell St. Elias National Park, was named after two early explorers. Henry Allen was a lieutenant who traveled through this area in 1885 on his way to the Yukon River, and Captain Edwin Glenn was part of the U.S. government survey crew for the Richardson Highway in 1898–1899. The town's population boomed in the Copper River Valley area the late 1880's with the Gold Rush and again in the mid-1970s' with the construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System. Today, the year-round population is less than 500. **Drive by**

17 JUNCTION WITH RICHARDSON HIGHWAY (MP 189 GLENN HWY)

189 Miles from Anchorage

At this junction you'll leave the Glenn Highway and turn onto the Richardson Highway heading south towards Valdez. **Turn here**



18 WRANGELL MOUNTAINS AND COPPER RIVER (MP 112.5 RICHARDSON HWY)

191.1 Miles from Anchorage

Just outside Glennallen you'll find some great views of the Copper River and the Wrangell Mountains, as well as the chance to take some photos that don't include any roads or buildings. **15 minutes, or until you get the perfect shot**



19 SIDE TRIP COPPER CENTER (MP 102)

202 Miles from Anchorage

Historic Copper Center is one of the oldest non-native communities in Alaska's Interior. Founded as a government agricultural experimental station, it later served as a transportation center for Gold Rush prospectors who came over from Valdez on their way to the Forty Mile area and Dawson. The two-story log cabin that is now Copper Center Lodge was once a roadhouse, and is still open for meals and lodging. Next to the lodge is the small George I. Ashby Museum (907-822-3916; free admission), operated by the National Historical Society. Inside, you'll find all sorts of relics and mementos from pioneer days. Today, Copper Center is a major access point for activities on the Copper River such as fishing and rafting. For a guided excursion, contact [Alaska River Wrangellers](#). Want to stay in Copper Center overnight? The [Copper River Princess Wilderness Lodge](#) is the place to be. **Drive by, 30 minutes for the museum visit, ½ day for rafting or fishing**

ROAD HIGHLIGHTS

ANCHORAGE TO MCCARTHY

COPPER CENTER TO MCCARTHY

20 JUNCTION OF RICHARDSON HIGHWAY AND EDGERTON HIGHWAY (MP 83 RICHARDSON HWY)

221 Miles from Anchorage

If you're heading to McCarthy, turn here for the Edgerton Highway. If you're departing McCarthy, turn here for the Richardson Highway. [Turn here](#)



21 FARMING AREA & THE YAK FARM (MP 14.9 EDGERTON HWY)

235.9 Miles from Anchorage

Look for yaks grazing in the fields south of the road along here. These Tibetan natives are ideally suited for the Alaskan climate. Stop by the yak farm (907-822-3410) and learn why they're an economical alternative to raising cattle. **30+ minutes**



22 CHITINA (MP 33 EDGERTON HWY)

254 Miles from Anchorage

Chitina (population: 105) came to life with the arrival of the Copper River & Northwestern Railway in 1910, built to haul ore from the Kennicott Copper Mines at McCarthy to Cordova for shipment to Seattle. When the mine closed in 1938, Chitina became a ghost town. In the 1950's and the next two decades, ghosts were painted on some of the old buildings. Walk through town and see how many of the old painted ghosts you can find. **20-30 minutes**



23 Start of McCarthy Road (MP 33.6)

254.6 Miles from Anchorage

Count on a minimum of two hours to travel the 60 miles to McCarthy. You are about to drive into the heart of America's largest national park. **Drive, but take your time**



24 COPPER RIVER BRIDGE (MP 0)

254.6 Miles from Anchorage

The Copper River Bridge is a gateway into Wrangell St. Elias National Park—one more real and symbolic step into the Alaskan wilderness. **Drive over**



25 CHITINA RIVER OVERLOOK (MP 5)

259.6 Miles from Anchorage

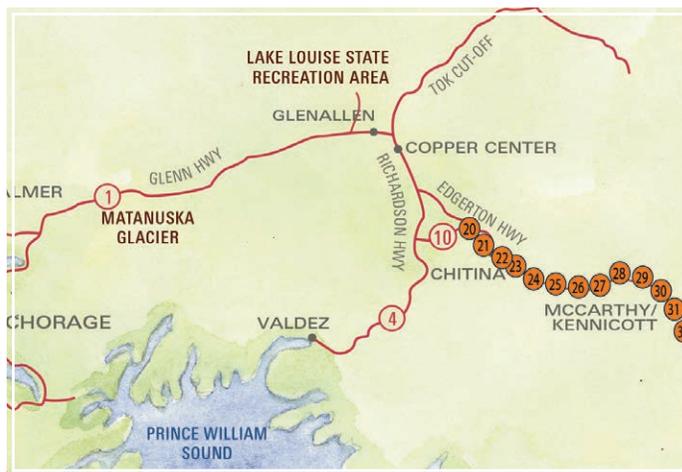
This overlook is a nice place to take a picture of the river, as the McCarthy Road will provide no other glimpses. The headwaters of the Chitina River are some 75 miles to the east. The river is fed from glaciers spilling out of the Bagley Icefield as well as from glaciers deep within the St. Elias and Wrangell mountains. **5+ minutes**



26 KUSKULANA RIVER CANYON AND BRIDGE (MP 17)

271.6 Miles from Anchorage

For many, crossing the Kuskulana Bridge (built in 1910) is the most nerve-racking part of the drive down McCarthy Road. Mentally prepare yourself to drive across this old single-lane railroad bridge, 238 feet above the raging Kuskulana River! **Drive over**



27 GILAHINA TRESTLE (MP 29)

283.6 Miles from Anchorage

This old railroad trestle, 90 feet high and 890 feet across, is a perfect example of the amount of work exerted to create the railroad from Kennicott. Impressively, the construction crew used a half-million board feet of lumber and completed the job in just eight days. **Drive by, or pause for photos**



28 TRAIL CRYSTALLINE HILLS TRAILHEAD (MP 34.7 MCCARTHY ROAD)

289.3 Miles from Anchorage

If you're heading toward McCarthy, you'll see the marked trailhead for this hike on your left. Crystalline Hills Trail is a 2.5-mile loop that will take you through a dense spruce forest, with a beautiful view of the Chitina River Valley. About 15-20 minutes of hiking takes you to a viewpoint worth leaving your car for. **1+ hour**



29 LONG LAKE SALMON VIEWING (MP 45.2)

299.8 Miles from Anchorage

Every year, 18,000 sockeyes swim up the Chitina and Copper Rivers to spawn here, entering the lake as late as September and spawning until April. **10 - 15 minutes**



30 MCCARTHY OVERLOOK (MP 57.7)

312.1 Miles from Anchorage

As you near the end of the McCarthy Road, there will be a pullout to the right hand side This is your first view of the town of McCarthy. **5 - 10 minutes**



31 MCCARTHY ROAD RANGER STATION (MP 59 MCCARTHY ROAD)

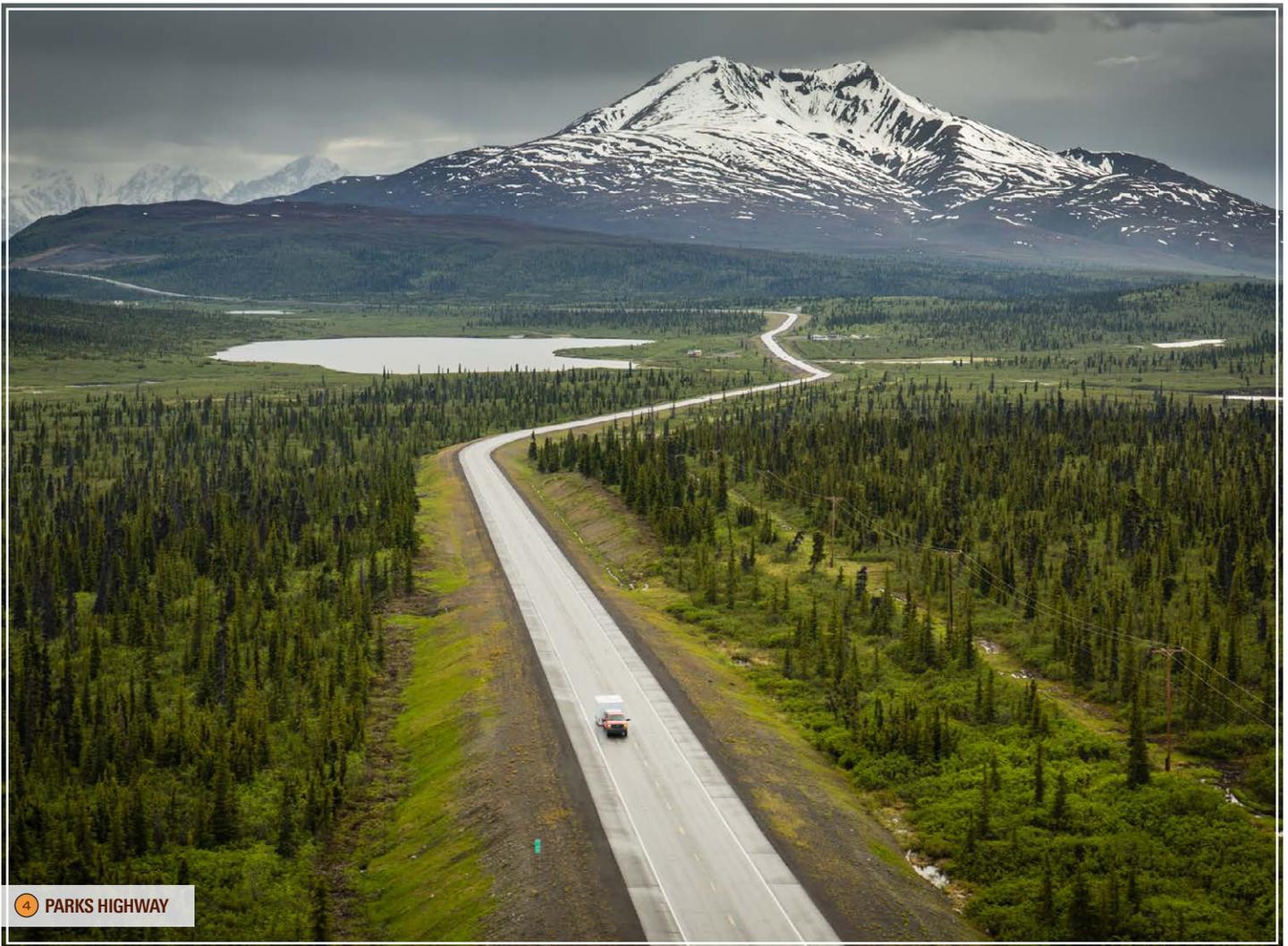
313.6 Miles from Anchorage

Driving into McCarthy, you'll see a sign on your left for the NPS kiosk. Open daily during the summer, you will find volunteers on hand to answer questions, and provide parking and shuttle information. **10 - 15 minutes**

32 END OF MCCARTHY ROAD (MP 60 MCCARTHY ROAD)

314.6 Miles from Anchorage

See [page 50](#) for more information on McCarthy.



4 PARKS HIGHWAY

ROAD HIGHLIGHTS

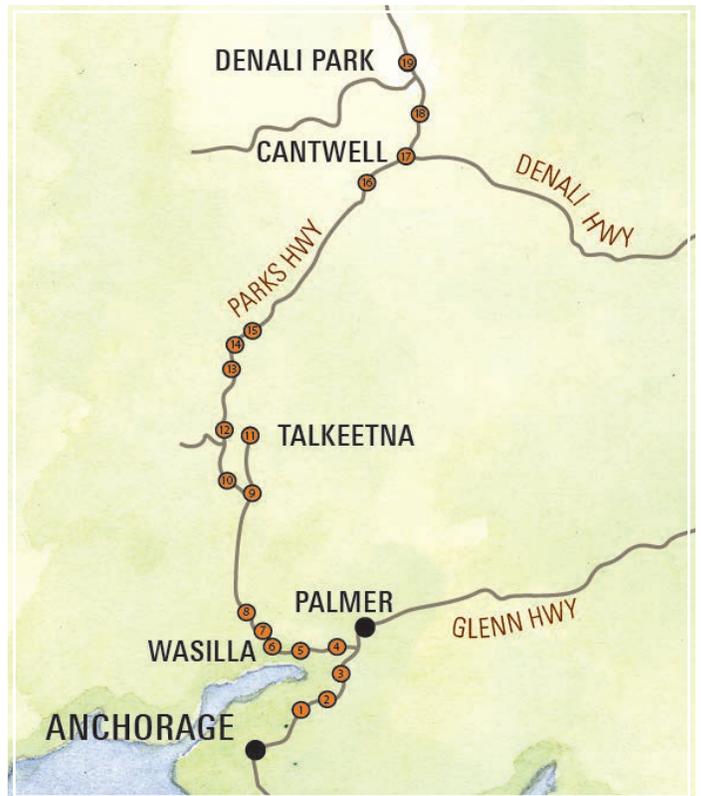
ANCHORAGE TO DENALI

This Classic, Stunning Drive Leads You to Alaska's Most Famous National Park

Total Driving Time: 4.5 hours

Average Driving Time with Stops: 7+ hours

An easy, 4.5-hour drive takes you from Alaska's biggest city to its most-visited national park, passing through broad mountain vistas along the way. You'll see the Matanuska & Knik River valley, pass through Wasilla and some very small towns, and lakes—you can even detour to visit the charming town of Talkeetna. Then drive through wilderness before arriving at Denali and its 6 million acres of wilderness and wildlife.



ROAD HIGHLIGHTS

ANCHORAGE TO DENALI

ANCHORAGE TO TALKEETNA



1 TRAIL THUNDERBIRD FALLS (MP 25)

25 Miles from Anchorage

This quick, one-mile, in-and-out hike brings you to the picturesque 200-foot Thunderbird Falls. The trail is well trafficked and you'll find lots of lookout platforms along the way. There's a \$5 parking fee

(since this is a part of Chugach State Park). **30+ Minutes**



2 SIDE TRIP EKLUTNA VILLAGE (MP 26)

26 Miles from Anchorage

Dating to 1650, the park is this area's oldest continuously inhabited Athabaskan Indian settlement. Exit at mile 26.5 and take Eklutna Lake Road to find the area settled by Russian Orthodox missionaries in the early 1800s. See St. Nicholas Church, the oldest standing building in Greater Anchorage. And snap pictures of the colorful Spirit Houses, built over graves of the deceased—a custom from the melding of Russian and local cultures. **30+ Minutes**



3 PALMER HAY FLATS (MP 30)

30 Miles from Anchorage

Cross a series of bridges to reach this flat portion of a massive U-shaped valley carved by glaciers. There isn't a good place to pull over along the main road, but scan the flats for moose and migratory birds. The best times to see moose here are early morning and late evening. **30+ Minutes**

4 JUNCTION WITH PARKS HIGHWAY (MP 35 GLENN HWY)

35 Miles from Anchorage

Leave the Glenn Highway and continue onto the Parks Highway (Alaska Route 3). **Merge**



5 WASILLA (MP 36 PARKS HWY)

36 Miles from Anchorage

In 1935, an unusual New Deal program was extended to Alaska that originally settled Palmer and Wasilla in the Matanuska Valley. Two hundred families from economically depressed counties in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan—whose residents, it was thought, could survive the Alaskan winters—were offered a chance to create a new agricultural community here. Many returned home, but some stayed, and today you can see their descendants' farms. As you pass through Wasilla, you'll notice that it has come a long way since then; in fact, it's one of the fastest growing areas in the state. Wasilla is also home to the Iditarod Headquarters (907-376-5155). Stop in to learn about the Last Great Race. **Drive through, or 30 minutes if you stop.**



6 BIG LAKE JUNCTION (MP 52 PARKS HWY)

52 Miles from Anchorage

Big Lake is a year-round playground for residents of Anchorage and the MatSu Valley. The population of around 3,000 explodes on weekends, when Alaskans come to enjoy the activities. In the summer you'll find camping, jet boating, swimming, waterskiing, and more. In the winter, the vast frozen surface is great for dog sledding, snow machining, cross-country skiing, and ice fishing. **Drive by**



7 NANCY LAKE STATE RECREATION AREA (MP 66.5 PARKS HWY)

66.5 Miles from Anchorage

Driving North you will see a brown sign for the [Nancy Lake State Recreation Area](#). This area is studded with lakes, making it an ideal spot for a summer canoe trip or winter cross-country or snowmobile expeditions. There are two campgrounds and hiking is limited due to the terrain. Take a slow drive down the Nancy Lake Parkway to check the area out, or keep heading north along the Parks Highway. **Drive by, or take detour on Nancy Lake Parkway**



8 WILLOW (MP 71 PARKS HWY)

71 Miles from Anchorage

Willow is best known as the official starting location for the annual Iditarod Sled Dog Race. On the first Sunday in March, several thousand fans show up to cheer on the 60 or 70 dog teams as they begin their journey to Nome. Willow's other claim to fame: It's the proposed location for moving the state's capital (currently Juneau). However, the measure has been defeated every time it's appeared on the ballot. **Drive by**

9 TALKEETNA SPUR ROAD CUTOFF (MP 98 PARKS HWY)

98 Miles from Anchorage

Exit here if you want to take a side trip to Talkeetna as you head north.



10 SIDE TRIP TALKEETNA (MP 14 TALKEETNA SPUR ROAD)

112 Miles from Anchorage

Experience a pioneer town that has maintained its rustic spirit. Just after the sign for the Talkeetna Alaskan Lodge, you'll see a pullout to the left. This is a great spot to take photos of Denali on a clear day. Another great photo op is downtown by the river (ask any local and they'll tell you exactly where to go). Activities in Talkeetna include jet boat tours, flightseeing, and more. You'll also find great restaurants and a local brewery. **1-2 hours**



11 SUSITNA RIVER (MP 103 PARKS HWY)

103 Miles from Anchorage

Surprise! This bridge over the [Susitna River](#) appears without warning. Alaskans call it the Big Su, and it winds its way over 313 miles of Southcentral, Alaska. We fish it, paddle it, and snow machine its frozen braids. Bush pilots even navigate by this river. **Drive by**

ROAD HIGHLIGHTS

ANCHORAGE TO DENALI

TRAPPER CREEK TO DENALI



© Kristin Marsh

12 TRAPPER CREEK (MP 115 PARKS HWY)

115 Miles from Anchorage

Trapper Creek lies at the intersection of the Parks Highway and Petersville Road, with gas stations, restaurants, and a post office. Known locally as the southern gateway to Denali State Park, this little town only had 423 residents at last count. Yet excellent outdoor recreation opportunities in both summer and winter draw visitors from all over the state. And you can see Denali from numerous locations on the highway and area trails.

Drive by



13 DENALI VIEWPOINT SOUTH (MP 135.2)

135.2 Miles from Anchorage

Traveling north, you'll see a pullout on your left, with plenty of parking (even for RVs) and great photo ops of North America's tallest peak. If it's cloudy and the mountain isn't visible, this is still a

nice place to stretch your legs. **5–10 mins**



14 SOUTHERN BOUNDARY OF DENALI STATE PARK (MP 132 PARKS HWY)

132 Miles from Anchorage

Denali State Park is the locals' favorite for hiking and camping, and it's far less crowded than the national park. You will find several campgrounds and hiking trails -- most of which offer views of Denali in the

Distance. The main hiking attraction in the state park is [Kesugi Ridge](#), a 36.2 mile ridgeline trek with four different access points. The access points are great for those not wanting to do the entire ridge. They include, [Upper Troublesome](#), [Byer's Lake](#), [Ermine Hill](#), & [Little Coal Creek](#). Not interested in a solo trek? Contact [Alaska Nature Guides](#) for a guided hike in Denali State Park. **Drive through, day hikes 2-3 hrs, entire Kesugi Ridge 3 days.**



15 HURRICANE GULCH BRIDGE (MP 174)

174 Miles from Anchorage

This bridge, the connection between Southcentral Alaska and the interior, was an engineering marvel when it was constructed nearly a century ago, and it remains just as strong today. **Drive over**

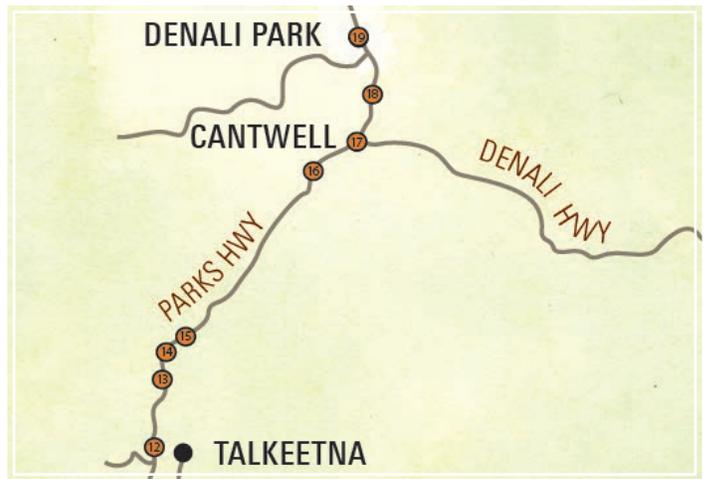


16 BROAD PASS (MP 203 PARKS HIGHWAY)

203 Miles from Anchorage

You don't need to stop, but enjoy the views while you travel along the highest point (2,300 feet) on the Parks Highway. The trees are noticeably shorter here due to the elevation, affording unobstructed views of the Alaska Range to the northwest and the Talkeetna

Range to the southeast. If you do want to pull over for photos, there's a turnout just after Summit Lake. **Drive by or 5–10 minutes**



© Google Maps

17 SIDE TRIP CANTWELL & DENALI HIGHWAY JUNCTION (MP 210)

210 Miles from Anchorage

As you head north, on the right hand side you'll see the turnoff for the Denali Highway. Approximately 135 miles long, it stretches from Cantwell to Paxson and connects the Parks and Richardson highways.

Before the Parks Highway was completed in the early 1970s, the Denali Highway was the only road access to Denali National Park. The road is mostly gravel, so your rental must allow for travel on gravel roads if you want to make the turn.

Drive by or take a detour



18 NENANA RIVER OVERLOOK (MP 216)

216 Miles from Anchorage

Traveling north, take the pullout on your left to enjoy views of surrounding mountains and the Nenana River. **5–10 mins**



19 DENALI NATIONAL PARK (MP 237)

237 Miles from Anchorage

You've arrived! For a great introduction to the park, make a stop at the [Visitor's Center](#) (907-683-9532) before settling into your hotel or campground for the night. **30+ minutes for the Visitor's Center**



11 DENALI FROM TALKEETNA

LET US HELP YOU
PLAN YOUR TRIP

907-277-4321 BKAUFMAN@ALASKA.ORG



GLENN HIGHWAY

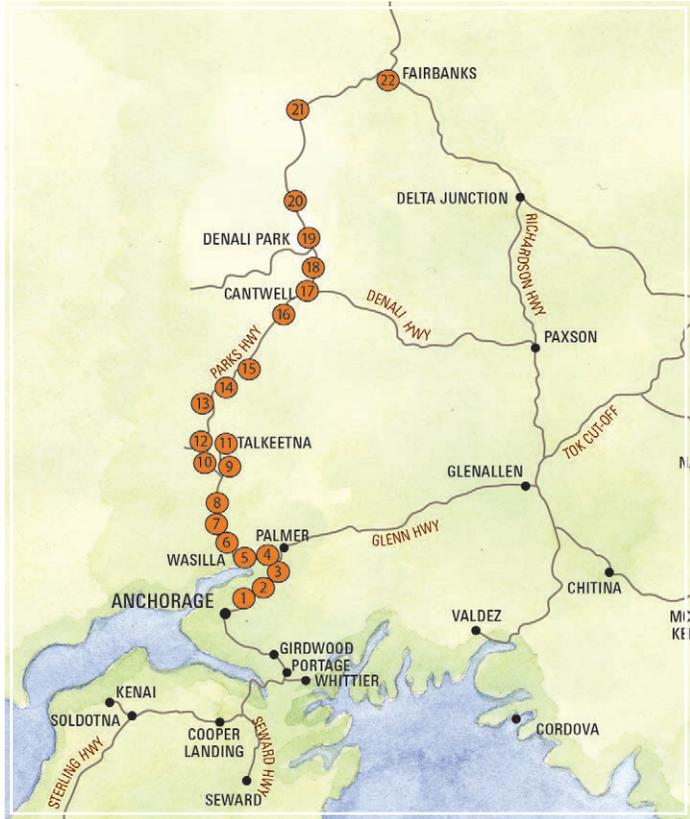
ROAD HIGHLIGHTS

ANCHORAGE TO FAIRBANKS

Check Out Some of Alaska's Greatest Hits on Your Way Into the State's Interior

Total Driving Time: 7.5 hours
Average Driving Time with Stops: 9+ hours

This 7-hour drive offers the chance to witness some of Alaska's most popular highlights. Pass the Matanuska & Knik River valley; the state's most famous national park, Denali; Alaska's coal capital, Healy; miles of stunning mountain peaks, lakes, and rivers; and some cool small towns. Your goal: Alaska's second-largest city, a former Gold Rush town with a cutting-edge university and a fiercely independent spirit.



ROAD HIGHLIGHTS

ANCHORAGE TO FAIRBANKS

ANCHORAGE TO TALKEETNA



1 TRAIL THUNDERBIRD FALLS (MP 25)

25 Miles from Anchorage

This quick, one-mile, in-and-out hike brings you to the picturesque 200-foot Thunderbird Falls. The trail is well trafficked and you'll find lots of lookout platforms along the way. There's a \$5 parking fee

(since this is a part of Chugach State Park). **30+ Minutes**



2 SIDE TRIP EKLUTNA VILLAGE (MP 26)

26 Miles from Anchorage

Dating to 1650, the park is this area's oldest continuously inhabited Athabaskan Indian settlement. Exit at mile 26.5 and take Eklutna Lake Road to find the area settled by Russian Orthodox missionaries in the early 1800s. See St. Nicholas Church, the oldest standing building in Greater Anchorage. And snap pictures of the colorful Spirit Houses, built over graves of the deceased—a custom from the melding of Russian and local cultures. **30+ Minutes**



3 PALMER HAY FLATS (MP 30)

30 Miles from Anchorage

Cross a series of bridges to reach this flat portion of a massive U-shaped valley carved by glaciers. There isn't a good place to pull over along the main road, but scan the flats for moose and migratory birds. The best times to see moose here are early morning and late evening. **30+ Minutes**

4 JUNCTION WITH PARKS HIGHWAY (MP 35 GLENN HWY)

35 Miles from Anchorage

Leave the Glenn Highway and continue onto the Parks Highway (Alaska Route 3). **Merge**



5 WASILLA (MP 36 PARKS HWY)

36 Miles from Anchorage

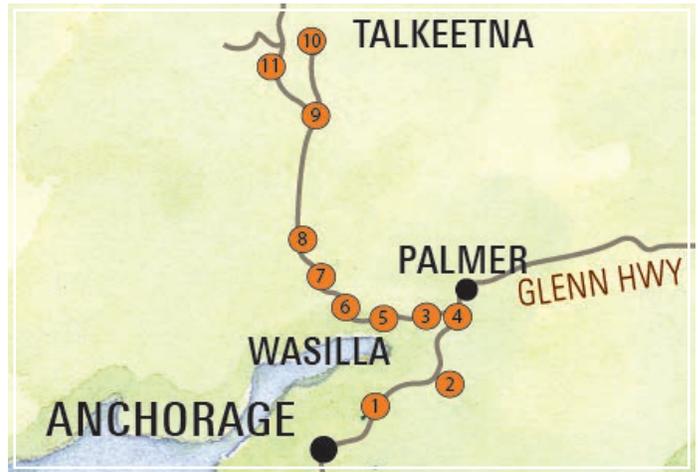
In 1935, an unusual New Deal program was extended to Alaska that originally settled Palmer and Wasilla in the Matanuska Valley. Two hundred families from economically depressed counties in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan—whose residents, it was thought, could survive the Alaskan winters—were offered a chance to create a new agricultural community here. Many returned home, but some stayed, and today you can see their descendants' farms. As you pass through Wasilla, you'll notice that it has come a long way since then; in fact, it's one of the fastest growing areas in the state. Wasilla is also home to the Iditarod Headquarters (907-376-5155). Stop in to learn about the Last Great Race. **Drive through, or 30 minutes if you stop.**



6 BIG LAKE JUNCTION (MP 52 PARKS HWY)

52 Miles from Anchorage

Big Lake is a year-round playground for residents of Anchorage and the MatSu Valley. The population of around 3,000 explodes on weekends, when Alaskans come to enjoy the activities. In the summer you'll find camping, jet boating, swimming, waterskiing, and more. In the winter, the vast frozen surface is great for dog sledding, snow machining, cross-country skiing, and ice fishing. **Drive by**



7 NANCY LAKE STATE RECREATION AREA (MP 66.5 PARKS HWY)

66.5 Miles from Anchorage

Driving North you will see a brown sign for the [Nancy Lake State Recreation Area](#). This area is studded with lakes, making it an ideal spot for a summer canoe trip or winter cross-country or snowmobile expeditions. There are two campgrounds and hiking is limited due to the terrain. Take a slow drive down the Nancy Lake Parkway to check the area out, or keep heading north along the Parks Highway. **Drive by, or take detour on Nancy Lake Parkway**



8 WILLOW (MP 71 PARKS HWY)

71 Miles from Anchorage

Willow is best known as the official starting location for the annual Iditarod Sled Dog Race. On the first Sunday in March, several thousand fans show up to cheer on the 60 or 70 dog teams as they begin their journey to Nome. Willow's other claim to fame: It's the proposed location for moving the state's capital (currently Juneau). However, the measure has been defeated every time it's appeared on the ballot. **Drive by**

9 TALKEETNA SPUR ROAD CUTOFF (MP 98 PARKS HWY)

98 Miles from Anchorage

Exit here if you want to take a side trip to Talkeetna as you head north.



10 SIDE TRIP TALKEETNA (MP 14 TALKEETNA SPUR ROAD)

112 Miles from Anchorage

Experience a pioneer town that has maintained its rustic spirit. Just after the sign for the Talkeetna Alaskan Lodge, you'll see a pullout to the left. This is a great spot to take photos of Denali on a clear day. Another great photo op is downtown by the river (ask any local and they'll tell you exactly where to go). Activities in Talkeetna include jet boat tours, flightseeing, and more. You'll also find great restaurants and a local brewery. **1-2 hours**



11 SUSITNA RIVER (MP 103 PARKS HWY)

103 Miles from Anchorage

Surprise! This bridge over the [Susitna River](#) appears without warning. Alaskans call it the Big Su, and it winds its way over 313 miles of Southcentral, Alaska. We fish it, paddle it, and snow machine its frozen braids. Bush pilots even navigate by this river. **Drive by**

ROAD HIGHLIGHTS

ANCHORAGE TO FAIRBANKS

TRAPPER CREEK TO FAIRBANKS



© Kevin Marsh

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© Google Maps

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18 NENANA RIVER OVERLOOK (MP 216)

216 Miles from Anchorage

Traveling north, take the pullout on your left to enjoy views of surrounding mountains and the Nenana River. **5–10 mins**



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237 Miles from Anchorage

You've arrived! For a great introduction to the park, make a stop at the **Visitor's Center** (907-683-9532) before settling into your hotel or campground for the night. **30+ minutes for the Visitor's Center**



20 HEALY (MP 249 PARKS HWY)

249 Miles from Anchorage

Healy, home to around 1,000 year-round residents, is best known for the **Usibelli Coal Mine**, which lies just a few miles east of the highway and employs nearly 100 people. (The coal is sent to power plants around Alaska and exported to Pacific Rim countries.) But the town is also an adventure center. It's only about 10 miles north of Denali National Park, and you'll find many of the same activities: **ATV tours**, **carriage rides**, and more. There's even a **golf course!** **Drive by**



© Sunny Cooper

21 NENANA (MP 304 PARKS HWY)

304 Miles from Anchorage

This village on the south bank of the Nenana River was the main port for old paddlewheel riverboats that plied interior rivers for many years. Today it's better known as the home of the lottery-like Nenana Ice Classic. To enter, buy a ticket and pick the date and time (down to the minute) in April or May when you think the winter ice on the Tanana River will break. In Nenana you can also visit the kennel of Iditarod Finisher Bill Cotter and meet his sled dogs, as well as go for a quick ride through the woods. In the winter, you can sign up for a tour or sled dog class where you can learn to mush! **Drive by**

22 FAIRBANKS (MP 356 PARKS HWY)

356 Miles from Anchorage

Welcome to Fairbanks, the Golden Heart City. See **page 52** for more information.



32 VALDEZ

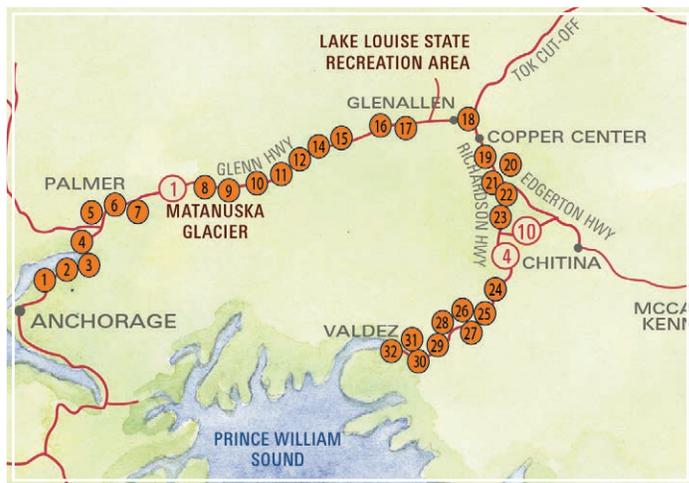
ROAD HIGHLIGHTS

ANCHORAGE TO VALDEZ

Prepare to Gawk at the Huge Glaciers, Towering Mountains, and Historic Sites

Total Driving Time: 6.5 hours
Average Driving Time with Stops: 8+ hours

This may be a 6-7 hour drive without stops, but allot more time--trust us, you're going to want to stop. Why? Because you'll pass massive roadside glaciers, distant views of 16,000-foot mountains, majestic waterfalls, historic roadhouses, wildflower-filled meadows, and miles upon miles of untouched land. And you'll end up in the gorgeous coastal town of Valdez--a destination in its own right, with lots of activities.



23 PUMP STATION #12

ROAD HIGHLIGHTS

ANCHORAGE TO VALDEZ

ANCHORAGE TO MATANUSKA GLACIER



1 TRAIL THUNDERBIRD FALLS (MP 25)

25 Miles from Anchorage

This quick, one-mile, in-and-out hike brings you to the picturesque 200-foot Thunderbird Falls. The trail is well trafficked and you'll find lots of lookout platforms along the way. There's a \$5 parking fee

(since this is a part of Chugach State Park). **30+ Minutes**



2 SIDE TRIP EKLUTNA VILLAGE (MP 26)

26 Miles from Anchorage

Dating to 1650, the park is this area's oldest continuously inhabited Athabaskan Indian settlement. Exit at mile 26.5 and take Eklutna Lake Road to find the area settled by Russian Orthodox missionaries in the early 1800s. See St. Nicholas Church, the oldest standing building in Greater Anchorage. And snap some pictures of the colorful Spirit Houses, built over the graves of the deceased—a custom that came from the melding of Russian and local cultures. **30+ Minutes**

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3 SIDE TRIP OLD GLENN HIGHWAY DETOUR TO PALMER (MP 29.6)

29.6 Miles from Anchorage

Instead of staying on The Glenn Highway to reach Palmer, take a detour on the Old Glenn Highway. This 19-mile country road cuts through the heart of

Alaska's farmland. Popular stops include the [Reindeer Farm](#) (907-745-4000) or the quick but steep [Butte Trail](#) (trailhead on Mothershead Lane). **30 minutes driving time, plus time for any stops**



4 PALMER HAY FLATS (MP 31)

3 Miles from Anchorage

If you choose not to take the Old Glenn Highway and stay on the Glenn Highway, you'll pass by this state wildlife refuge. You'll cross a series of bridges to reach this flat portion of a massive U-shaped valley

carved by glaciers. There isn't a good place to pull over along the main road, but scan the flats for moose and migratory birds. The best times to see moose here are early morning and late evening. **Drive by**



5 ALASKA STATE FAIRGROUNDS (MP 39)

39 Miles from Anchorage

You are now passing the Fairgrounds of the annual Alaska State Fair. Each year in late August to early September, hundreds of thousands of fairgoers enjoy nightly concerts featuring headline entertainers,

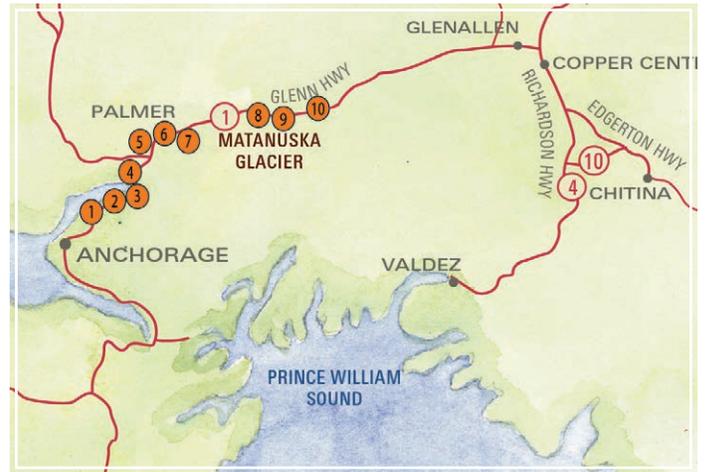
carnival rides and games, as well as hundreds of food and vendor booths featuring uniquely Alaskan items. There are also hundreds of exhibits, ranging from quilts to goats and world-famous giant vegetables, like 2009's world record-breaking 127-pound cabbage. **Drive by (unless it's State Fair season!)**



6 PALMER (MP 42 GLENN HWY)

42 Miles from Anchorage

In 1935, an unusual New Deal program was extended to Alaska that originally settled Palmer and Wasilla in the Matanuska Valley. Two hundred families from



economically depressed counties in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan—whose residents, it was thought, could survive Alaskan winters—were offered a chance to create a new agricultural community here. Many returned home, but some stayed, and today you can see their descendants' farms. **Drive through**



7 MATANUSKA RIVER (MP 50 GLENN HWY)

50 Miles from Anchorage

This impressive river flows from the Matanuska Glacier. The rapids range from Class II to Class IV before the river empties, 70 miles later, into the Knik Arm. If you aren't pressed for time, contact

[NOVA River Runners](#) (800-746-5753) for a rafting trip and experience the river firsthand. **Drive by or 2.5 – 4 hrs for a rafting trip**



8 MATANUSKA GLACIER STATE RECREATIONAL SITE (MP 101 GLENN HWY)

101 Miles from Anchorage

This well-developed site offers plenty of parking, public restrooms, excellent glacier views and photo opportunities. It's easy to spend at least a half hour

here. There are interpretive signs, viewpoints with telescopes, picnic areas, and pathways (some of which are handicap accessible). There is also access to an easy one-mile hiking trail called "The Edge of Nature Trail". (\$5 parking) **30 minutes**



9 MATANUSKA GLACIER PHOTO OVERLOOK (MP 101.5 GLENN HWY)

101.5 Miles from Anchorage

This small pullout on the side of the highway is the closest view you can get of the Matanuska Glacier. For a great photo of the ice, this is the spot to get it.

15 minutes, or until you get the perfect shot



10 MATANUSKA GLACIER (MP 102)

102 Miles from Anchorage

Some 15,000 years ago, this glacier stretched another 50 miles west to the Palmer area. It now has a four-mile-wide towering face that you can walk right up to and touch. (There's a fee to do this, since

the glacier sits on private land.) You can also experience the glacier on an ice-climbing excursion or an exhilarating zip line ride with [Mica Guides](#) (907-351-7587). **Drive by, or 1–4 hours to explore the glacier or take a tour**

ROAD HIGHLIGHTS

ANCHORAGE TO VALDEZ

LION'S HEAD TO COPPER CENTER



© Debbie Hock

11 TRAIL LION'S HEAD (MP 106)

106 Miles from Anchorage

This rock outcropping is the prominent feature beside the Matanuska Glacier, and you can hike it! You've got to be in good shape and ready for a scrambling climb, but you'll be rewarded by great views. Your panorama will include views of the Matanuska River, Caribou Creek with the Talkeetna Mountain Range behind you and the Chugach to the front. To find the trailhead, park on the right at MP 106 by a telecommunications site. Walk up the dirt road and veer right. In a treeline of alders, you'll see a rock cairn that indicates the [trailhead](#). Start climbing! **2 hrs**



12 WATCH FOR DALL SHEEP (MP 107)

107 Miles from Anchorage

For the next three miles, you'll have a chance to see Dall sheep if you crane your neck and look straight up to the cliffs on the north side of the road. These animals, as well as mountain goats, are protected from hunting here as part of the Sheep Mountain Game Protection Area. But they do have natural predators, and hang out on these cliffs to avoid them. The sheep live on grasses and sedges; in winter, they survive on lichen. **Drive by**

13 ART ROCKS (MP 109)

113 Miles from Anchorage

For two miles, you'll see [rocks arranged](#) on the side of the road. Names, designs, painted rocks, assorted stones. It's all the rage in Alaska, as well as the Yukon Territory. We're not really sure of the history, but it has reached critical mass here, and people keep adding to them. **Drive by**



14 SHEEP MOUNTAIN (MP 113)

113 Miles from Anchorage

Look for the spectacular colors on heavily mineralized Sheep Mountain. The colors are from iron stains on ancient volcanic soils. High in the hills above (miles away), you can find obsidian and thunder eggs. Stop for homemade pie and ice cream at nearby Sheep Mountain Lodge. **Drive by**



15 TAHNETA PASS (MP 122)

122 Miles from Anchorage

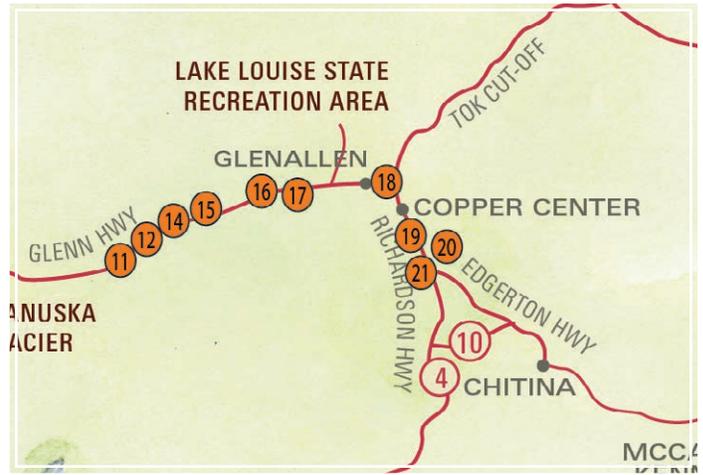
Mountain passes such as this were the best routes for early prospectors hiking hundreds of miles to reach gold. East of here, water flows into the Copper River; to the west, it flows into Cook Inlet. **Drive by**



16 EUREKA SUMMIT (MP 129.5)

129.5 Miles from Anchorage

Eureka Summit is the highest point (3,322 feet) along the Glenn Highway, and on a clear day you can enjoy spectacular views of the surrounding mountains. You'll also likely see lots of big-boy toys around Eureka Summit—RVs and big trucks pulling trailers with ATVs or, in winter, brand new snow machines. **Drive by**



17 BLACK SPRUCE (MP 180)

180 Miles from Anchorage

The shallow roots of these trees spread over permafrost, so they grow slowly. Soil above the permafrost melts and freezes, buckling the ground and making the trees tip. This stand might have sprouted 100 or more years ago. They grow so slowly that a 250-year old tree might be only 3-6 inches in diameter and 15-30 feet tall! **Drive by**



© Richard West

18 GLENALLEN (MP 187)

187 Miles from Anchorage

Glennallen, the gateway to Wrangell St. Elias National Park, was named after two early explorers. Henry Allen was a lieutenant who traveled through this area in 1885 on his way to the Yukon River, and Captain Edwin Glenn was part of the U.S. government survey crew for the Richardson Highway in 1898–1899. The town's population boomed in the Copper River Valley area the late 1880's with the Gold Rush and again in the mid-1970's with the construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System. Today, the year-round population is less than 500. **Drive by**

19 JUNCTION WITH RICHARDSON HIGHWAY (MP 189 GLENN HWY)

189 Miles from Anchorage

At this junction you'll leave the Glenn Highway and turn onto the Richardson Highway heading south towards Valdez. **Turn here**



20 WRANGELL MOUNTAINS AND COPPER RIVER (MP 112.5 RICHARDSON HIGHWAY)

191.5 Miles from Anchorage

Just outside Glennallen you'll find some great views of the Copper River and the Wrangell Mountains, as well as the chance to take some photos that don't include any roads or buildings. **15 minutes, or until you get the perfect shot**



21 SIDE TRIP COPPER CENTER (MP 102)

202 Miles from Anchorage

Historic Copper Center is one of the oldest non-native communities in Alaska's Interior. Founded as a government agricultural experimental station, it later served as a transportation center for Gold Rush prospectors who came over from Valdez on their way to the Forty Mile area and Dawson. The two-story log cabin that is now Copper Center Lodge was once a roadhouse, and is still open for meals and lodging. Next to the lodge is the small George I. Ashby Museum (907-822-3916; free admission), operated by the

ROAD HIGHLIGHTS

ANCHORAGE TO VALDEZ

COPPER CENTER TO VALDEZ

National Historical Society. Inside, you'll find all sorts of relics and mementos from pioneer days. Today, Copper Center is a major access point for activities on the Copper River such as fishing and rafting. For a guided excursion, contact [Alaska River Wranglers](#). Want to stay in Copper Center overnight? The [Copper River Princess Wilderness Lodge](#) is the place to be. **Drive by, 30 minutes for the museum visit, ½ day for rafting or fishing**

22 JUNCTION OF RICHARDSON HIGHWAY AND EDGERTON HIGHWAY (MP 83 RICHARDSON HWY)

221 Miles from Anchorage

If you were driving to McCarthy, this is the road you would take. To go to Valdez, continue on the Richardson Highway. **Drive by**



23 PUMP STATION #12 (MP 65 RICHARDSON)

239 Miles from Anchorage

This is the last of 11 pump stations located along the Trans-Alaska Pipeline (oddly, there is no Pump Station No. 11.), though only six stations are in use today. These pumps move the oil through the

800-mile-long pipeline from Prudhoe Bay to Valdez, and each pump can move 22,000 gallons of oil per minute. That's 754,000 barrels per day! **Drive by**



24 WORTHINGTON GLACIER STATE RECREATION SITE (MP 28.7 RICHARDSON)

275.3 Miles from Anchorage

Worthington Glacier State Recreation Site is made up of 113 acres and includes one of the most-visited spots in the Copper River Basin: Worthington

Glacier. There are trails, picnic sites, and picnic shelters within the roadside park, along with water and restrooms. Worthington is one of the most stunning roadside glaciers in the state, so make sure to stop for viewing, or take a short walk to the glacier and see it up close! **30+ minutes**



25 THOMPSON PASS (MP 26 RICHARDSON)

278 Miles from Anchorage

Whether you hike or enjoy the scenic vistas from numerous pullouts, make time to enjoy Thompson Pass. In summer, it has some of Alaska's most beautiful and accessible alpine tundra. In the winter,

it boasts some of the most-respected ski terrain in the world. Local skiers and snowboarders drive here to access challenging terrain, while helicopters land on dozens of these peaks and drop off high-paying clients for very long—and often very steep—ski runs. **Drive by, or 30+ minutes for the short hike**



26 BRIDAL VEIL FALLS (MP 13.9)

290.5 Miles from Anchorage

Bridal Veil Falls can be seen from the highway; there are pullouts nearby to take photos. **5–10 minutes**

27 TRAIL VALDEZ GOAT TRAIL (MP 13.5)

290.5 Miles from Anchorage

This 2.5-mile hike begins at the bridal veil falls turnout. Military personnel who needed a glacial free route to travel to and from Interior Alaska once used the



trail. However, the trail was not longer needed as a transportation route after the completion of the Richardson Highway in 1945. There's a fantastic overlook about a mile down the trail. **1+ hour**



28 HORSETAIL FALLS (MP 13.4)

291 Miles from Anchorage

This picturesque 330-foot waterfall is fed by snow and ice melt before it empties into the Lowe River. A roadside pullout next to the waterfall provides easy viewing. **5–10 minutes**



29 OLD VALDEZ TOWN SITE (MP 4 R)

300 Miles from Anchorage

This was the original port and city of Valdez, which was moved to its current location four miles down the road after it was devastated by the magnitude 9.2 earthquake in 1964. **Drive by**

30 SIDETRIP JUNCTION WITH VALDEZ AIRPORT ROAD TO ACCESS VALDEZ GLACIER LAKE (MP 3 RICHARDSON HWY)

301 Miles from Anchorage

If you've yet to set eyes on an iceberg, here's your chance. This lake sits at the terminus of the Valdez Glacier and is often home to chunks of ice. It's a nice place to get unimpeded views of the Chugach Mountains and the Valdez Glacier. Turn off the Richardson Highway and onto the Valdez Airport Road. Take this road past the airport and keep going straight. Within a mile of the airport you'll merge right with the Glacier Campground Road and follow it for about a mile to the open sandpits bordering the lake. **30+ minutes**



31 CROOKED CREEK INFORMATION SITE AND SALMON VIEWING PLATFORM (MP 0.5)

303.5 Miles from Anchorage

Pink and chum salmon return to this clear water stream each summer to spawn, with peak numbers seen in mid-August. Occasionally, black or brown

bear can be observed feasting on the returning fish. There's an underwater camera located in the stream, and you can view a live feed from the camera inside the CCIS log cabin while the salmon are present (mid-July through Labor Day). You can also observe them from the viewing platform. **Drive by, or 15+ minutes for salmon viewing**

32 VALDEZ MP 366 (MP 0 RICHARDSON HWY)

304 Miles from Anchorage

See [page 60](#) for more information on Valdez.



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39 HOMER

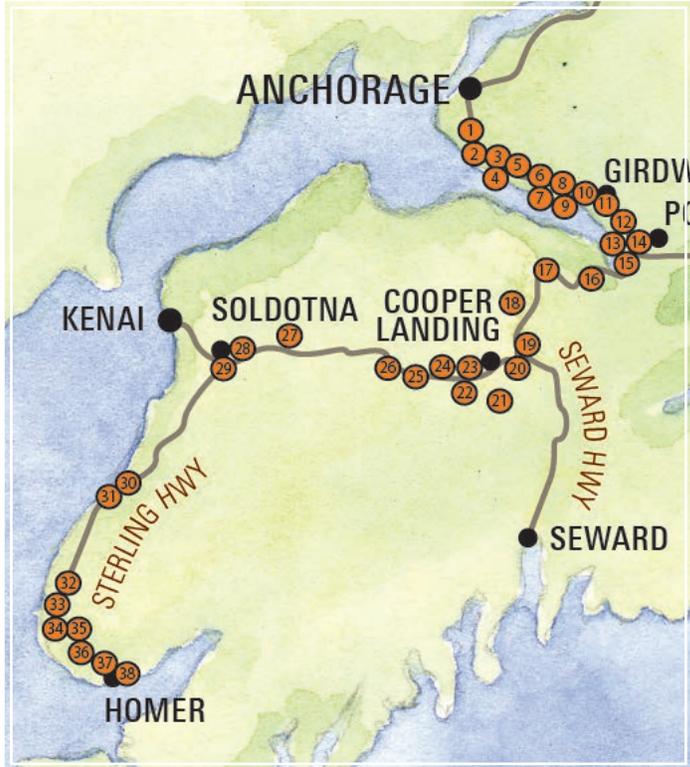
ROAD HIGHLIGHTS

ANCHORAGE TO HOMER

Hug the Scenic Coast as you Drive Over Mountain Passes with Volcanic Views

Total Driving Time: 4.5 hours
Average Driving Time with Stops: 6.5+ hours

This trip, nonstop, takes around 4.5 hours, but you'll find plenty of reasons to pull over on the drive south: whales, waves, volcanoes and moose, just to name a few. You'll pass one of Alaska's most stunning sections of road, Turnagain Arm, drive by turquoise lakes, and motor through the quaint towns of Cooper Landing and Soldotna. And factor in some hiking time, as some of Alaska's best trails lead to fabulous alpine and ocean views.



ROAD HIGHLIGHTS

ANCHORAGE TO HOMER

ANCHORAGE TO BIRD RIDGE (TURNAGAIN ARM)



1 POTTER'S MARSH (MP 117 SEWARD)

10 Miles from Anchorage

Potter's Marsh, also known as the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge, is a rest area for migratory birds. It's also common to spot beavers, moose, and bald eagles. Don't miss the interpretive signs as you walk along the boardwalk. You'll find restrooms and plenty of parking. **15–30 minutes**



2 POTTER SECTION HOUSE (MP 115)

12 Miles from Anchorage

Interested in railroad history? Stop in to see National Archives photos and model railroads to better understand the lives of railroad crews who worked here long before the road existed. **15 minutes**



3 TRAIL TURNAGAIN ARM TRAIL (MP 115)

12 Miles from Anchorage

In spring, this is one of the first trails near Anchorage available for hiking, and it remains a great hike all summer long. After the initial gain of a few hundred feet, the trail remains generally level for the remainder of the hike, making it perfect for families or groups of varying ability. It follows the highway and features awesome views of Turnagain Arm. There are four access points along the highway; Potter Trailhead, McHugh Creek, Rainbow, and Windy Corner. Parking is best at either Potter or McHugh Creek. Spend an hour and hike part of the trail, or spend a full day to cover the entire 9.3 miles. Parking is \$5. **1+ hour**



4 TRAIL MCHUGH CREEK RECREATION AREA & TRAIL (MP 111 SEWARD HWY)

16 Miles from Anchorage

You'll find a beautiful, 20-foot waterfall just a short walk from the parking area here. The trailhead starts off parallel to Turnagain Arm, and a number of small trails snake off to different lookouts. Take the trail to the left for a short distance and you'll come upon the McHugh Trail, which branches off to the right. This trail zigzags upward through the woods and provides ever better views of Turnagain Arm and the surrounding mountains. It parallels the creek and eventually leads you to its source at McHugh Lake. Be aware and make noise while traveling through the deeper brush areas to avoid unwanted bear contact. There's plenty of parking, as well as restrooms and a picnic area. Parking is \$5. The entire trail is 6.4 miles, but this is also a good stop if you just want to check out the waterfall. **15+ minutes**



5 BELUGA POINT (MP 110.5 SEWARD HWY)

16.5 Miles from Anchorage

This popular stop on the Seward Highway affords you gorgeous, 180-degree views of Turnagain Arm. There's an extensive viewing area with spotting scopes and interpretive signs. It's an excellent spot to watch the **bore tide**, which stretches the entire width of Turnagain Arm and can be six feet high as it rushes in. Be sure to check tide schedules for the best times to view this natural phenomenon. In May and September you can often see Beluga whales. **10–15 minutes**



6 WINDY POINT (MP 106 SEWARD HWY)

21 Miles from Anchorage

Windy point may be Alaska's best place to see Dall sheep, and if you see lots of cars pulled off to the side of the road, it's a good bet that sheep are visible on the cliffs. To join them, safely pull over as far to the side of the road as possible to get your photos. Be cautious as people are usually on both sides of the road with cameras and aren't paying close attention to traffic. Dall sheep look similar to mountain goats but have curved horns instead of pointed ones. **5–10 minutes**



7 INDIAN VALLEY MINE (MP 104)

23 Miles from Anchorage

The buildings here are on the National Register of Historic Places, and the mine played a significant role in the early settling of Turnagain Arm. It was founded in 1910 by a vagabond who ran away from home at the age of 12, joined the circus, and then traveled to Alaska during the Gold Rush. The family that now owns the mine will tell you the rest of this unique tale, and let you try your luck panning for gold. **30+ minutes**



8 TRAIL BIRD RIDGE (MP 101)

26 Miles from Anchorage

Very steep (but with secure footing), this is a popular trail for those seeking an aerobic workout. One of many highlights along the scenic Seward Highway, Bird Ridge Trail climbs 3,000 feet in a little more than a mile, leading to magnificent views of the fjord-like Turnagain Arm. South-facing, it's one of the first trails to dry out in spring, even while surrounding mountains are still shrouded in white. You can hike up just a few hundred vertical feet to look for flowers and enjoy the views. **2+ hours**

ROAD HIGHLIGHTS

ANCHORAGE TO HOMER

BIRD CREEK TO HOPE JUNCTION



9 BIRD CREEK (MP 101.2 SEWARD HWY)

25.8 Miles from Anchorage

Fisherman from all over the world come to Alaska to cast a line here from July through September. And, in their hands will be the day's bounty—a nice big silver salmon. Bring your gear, your fishing

license, and make sure you watch the tide coming in. It moves quickly and can be dangerous if you're not paying attention. **Drive by or 1+ hour to fish**



10 BIRD POINT (MP 96 SEWARD HWY)

31 Miles from Anchorage

This is another great stop to take in the scenic beauty of the mountains and Turnagain Arm. Start at what the locals call the "Bird to Gird" pathway. From here it's a six-mile journey down the trail, which features

stunning views and interpretive signs. Walk or bike to Girdwood for a bite to eat. **5–10 minutes to stop, longer to enjoy the trail**



11 SIDE TRIP GIRDWOOD (MP 90 SEWARD HWY)

37 Miles from Anchorage

You will see the Girdwood turnoff on your left as you head south. Stop in this charming town to grab a late breakfast or lunch. Or ride the tram to the top of Mt. Alyeska for aerial views of Turnagain Arm. You

can take a guided hike with [Ascending Path](#). **20 minutes to drive through, 1–2 hours to dine and take the tram**



12 PORTAGE (MP 80 SEWARD HWY)

47 Miles from Anchorage

The Good Friday Earthquake in 1964 sunk the earth as deep as 10 feet in this area, submerging the former boomtown of Portage. Today, an abandoned horse stable and cabin struggle to stand among the

grassy wetlands. Photograph the old buildings as well as the "ghost forest"—trees killed when saltwater flooded their roots. You can try out rafting with [Chugach Adventures](#). **Drive by**



13 ALASKA WILDLIFE CONSERVATION CENTER (MP 79 SEWARD HWY)

48 Miles from Anchorage

See Alaskan wildlife up close at this 200-acre center (907-783-2025), designed to provide refuge for orphaned, injured, or ill animals—those that can't

survive in the wild. It's a unique place: you may see coyotes peering out from behind the brush while a bald eagle swoops in on salmon remains left by a grizzly bear. And wandering among the center's 65 acres of tidal flat terrain, you may see wood bison—a part of a program that will one day restore the species to the Alaskan wilderness. **30+ Minutes**



14 SIDE TRIP PORTAGE, BEGICH BOGGS VISITORS CTR (MP 78.9 SEWARD HWY)

48.1 Miles from Anchorage

The turnoff to Portage Glacier Road is obvious. You could easily spend a half day just exploring this 6-mile valley. There are [pullouts](#), trails, boardwalks,



[a salmon viewing platform](#), and tremendous photo opportunities in the Portage Valley. As you drive down the Portage Glacier Highway, enjoy views of the river on your left and glaciers tucked into the peaks on your right. The visitor's center is at the end of the road. Watch the film if you have time, and take the cruise that brings you up to the face of the glacier. If you don't have time to do either, just drive down the road and back as a scenic detour. **30 minutes–2 hours**



15 TURNAGAIN PASS (MP 70)

57 Miles from Anchorage

Stop at the pullout and take in the views of this pass through the Kenai Mountains. In summer, the area is known for its concentration of wildflowers; in winter, this area is a popular spot for skiers and

snow machiners. East of the Seward Highway is reserved for non-motorized traffic, and west of it is for motorized traffic. Avalanches are common in the area on both sides of the pass, and are sometimes caused by snow machiners highmarking (powering their machines up a steep slope until they can go no farther). Avalanche reports are given daily in order to reduce the risk of triggering an avalanche. **5–10 minutes**



16 TRAIL JOHNSON PASS TRAIL NORTH ACCESS (MP 64 SEWARD HWY)

63 Miles from Anchorage

Heading south, on the left hand side you will see a sign and parking area for access to the Johnson pass Trail. The 23-mile Johnson Pass Trail originated

in the 1890s as a route for Iditarod miners who raced north from Seward to Nome. Today, this popular hiking trail covers portions of the historic Iditarod Trail between Moose Pass and Granite Creek and features bridged streams, easy grades, and good markings that make it great for families and mountain bikers. Most of the trail lies below treeline, so established camp clearings along the way are nestled into the trees. The trail is meant to be a through-hike, but the southern half tends to get overgrown and can be muddy, so it's usually more fun to stick to the northern 10-mile section (which also saves you from having to shuttle your vehicle). **Full day or overnight**



17 SIDE TRIP HOPE JUNCTION (MP 56)

71 Miles from Anchorage

If you're not in a hurry, turn here for a scenic drive to an off-the-beaten-path town that sits on the edge of Turnagain Arm. Established in the 1890's, Hope was one of the first gold mining towns in Alaska.

Many of the town's original buildings still stand, including the [Seaview Cafe](#)

ROAD HIGHLIGHTS

ANCHORAGE TO HOMER

DEVIL'S CREEK TRAIL TO SKILAK LAKE

and Bar, and there's still a hitching post in front of the mercantile, in case you decide to bring your horse. **Drive past, or 1+ hour to take the detour**



18 TRAIL DEVIL'S CREEK TRAIL (MP 39 SEWARD HWY)

88 Miles from Anchorage

This well-maintained trail makes for a good two-day hike, but it isn't easy: it has a steep incline for the first eight miles, and snow stays on the mountains here until mid-summer. The trail intersects the Resurrection Pass Trail at mile 10, making for a possible through-hike of 27 miles to the Resurrection South Trailhead and 32 miles to the Resurrection North Trailhead. You'll have a good chance of seeing moose, wolves, grouse, caribou, wolverine, marmot, and ptarmigan, and there's good fishing for Dolly Varden. There are tent campsites along the way; if you make a campfire, be aware that the dead trees are spruce bark beetle kill and extremely flammable. **2-day hike**

19 STERLING HIGHWAY CUTOFF/JUNCTION WITH SEWARD HIGHWAY (MP 45 STERLING HWY)

90 Miles from Anchorage

Exit here to get onto the Sterling Highway. **Turn here!**



20 TERN LAKE (MP 37 SEWARD HIGHWAY)

90 Miles from Anchorage

Salmon-filled Tern Lake is located at the intersection of the Seward and Sterling highways, and on a calm day the lake creates a beautiful mirrored reflection of the surrounding scenery. If you have a moment, stop to take in the views and do some wildlife viewing—the area has lots of animals, birds, fish, and unique plants. Common sightings include loons, bald eagles, beavers, river otters, muskrats, arctic terns, and a variety of songbirds and shorebirds. **10 minutes**



21 TRAIL CRESCENT LAKE TRAIL (MP 45)

98 Miles from Anchorage

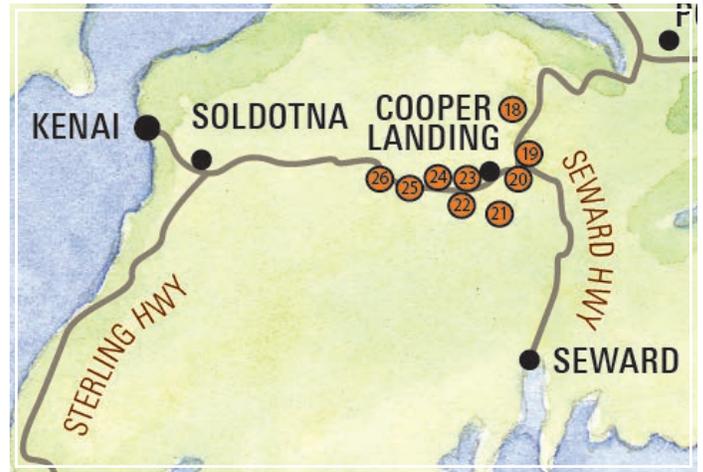
Turn at the junction with Quartz Creek Road (MP 97.9), leading to Quartz Creek Campground, and you'll find the trailhead at the road's end. The trail makes for a good day hike for the whole family, alternating between open meadows and forests filled with moose, goats, and bears. There's good fishing in the lake, and hunting is allowed in the area during the right seasons. You can go tent camping or stay in Crescent Lake Cabin. And you also have options for longer hikes. **Half-day hike**



22 KENAI LAKE/KENAI RIVER (MP 45.1 STERLING HWY)

98.1 Miles from Anchorage

Flowing out of the western edge of the Chugach Mountains, the Kenai River runs turquoise blue from the 22-mile-long Kenai Lake. It flows through canyons and spills out onto the low-elevation woodlands, where it meets the salt water of Cook Inlet near the town of Kenai. Four species of salmon swim here (with the King salmon reported to be the largest of its kind), and fish up to 80 pounds have been pulled from these waters. You'll follow the Kenai River and catch glimpses of it for the next several miles. **View as you pass**



23 COOPER LANDING STATE RECREATION SITE (MP 47.9 STERLING HWY)

100.9 Miles from Anchorage

Take a stroll down the boardwalk, which winds along the river, with several interpretive signs about fishing, Dall sheep, rafting, and boat safety. **10–15 minutes**



24 COOPER LANDING (MP 48 STERLING HWY)

101 Miles from Anchorage

Some would say Cooper Landing is the heart of the Kenai Peninsula, both literally and figuratively. Located in the middle of the peninsula, the small town also sits at the intersection of the Kenai and Russian rivers, which makes it an especially fertile fishing spot. If you have time, schedule a day for fishing on the river or take a float trip with [Alaska Wildland Adventures](#) (800-478-4100). **Drive through, or half-day for fishing and rafting**



25 TRAIL RUSSIAN LAKES TRAIL (MP 52 STERLING HWY)

105 Miles from Anchorage

The most popular trail on the Kenai Peninsula, the Russian Lakes Trail begins off the access road to the Russian River Campground in Cooper Landing, at milepost 52 of the Sterling Highway (MP 105.6 if driving from Anchorage). The wide trail to Russian River Falls is two miles of evenly laid gravel and has only gentle elevation changes. It's a modest hike that resembles more of a leisurely stroll, which makes it perfect for families and hikers of any level. Get off the beaten path, hike two miles to the falls, and enjoy the immediate reward of salmon viewing and bear sightings from a high, overhead platform. For more information on the area, salmon run schedule, and bear activity, contact the Seward Ranger District (907-224-3374). **2 hours for hike to falls and back**



26 SIDE TRIP SKILAK LAKE ROAD EAST ENTRANCE (MP 58 STERLING HWY)

111 Miles from Anchorage

If you have some extra time, this 18-mile-long loop gravel road is the premier wildlife-viewing area on the Kenai Peninsula, and you'll get spectacular views of lakes and glaciers to boot. Don't forget to stop and explore all the nature and wildlife around you! **45+ minutes**

ROAD HIGHLIGHTS

ANCHORAGE TO HOMER

STERLING TO HOMER



27 STERLING (MP 82 STERLING HWY)

135 Miles from Anchorage

The Sterling highway is dotted with small towns like Sterling. This area's claims to fame are its extraordinary canoe trail, the Swan Lake Canoe Route. There's also excellent fishing, as the famous

Kenai and Moose Rivers converge here. **Drive by**

28 SIDE TRIP JUNCTION WITH KENAI SPUR HIGHWAY TO KENAI (MP 94 STERLING HWY)

147 Miles from Anchorage

The city of Kenai offers plenty of natural wonders. Overlooking the mouth of the Kenai River, it features great views of Cook Inlet, miles of sandy beaches, two mountain ranges, and four active volcanoes. In mid-summer, stop by the mouth of the Kenai River to watch locals "dip net" for salmon or to see the fleet of commercial fishing vessels coming back into harbor. **45+ minutes**



29 SOLDOTNA (MP 95 STERLING HWY)

148 Miles from Anchorage

As the sister city of Kenai, Soldotna is in many ways the heart of the Kenai Peninsula. Located 140 miles from Anchorage, the city offers pretty much any activity that fits with the Kenai's "playground"

vibe. Choose any one of a number of tour operators and **fishing, rafting, or flightseeing**. **Drive by**



30 KASILOF (MP 108 STERLING HWY)

108 Miles from Anchorage

The town of Kasilof (pronounced kuh-SEE-loff) has a lot of the same great activities you'll find in other Kenai Peninsula towns, like fishing, camping, and wildlife viewing. There's also a **small museum** (907-

262-0822) where you can learn about the area's economic history and early native residents. **Drive by**



31 KASILOF RIVER STATE RECREATION SITE (MP 109.5 STERLING HWY)

162.5 Miles from Anchorage

This is a popular launch for drift boaters fishing for King salmon. The Kasilof River red salmon dip-net fishery is here, and though only open to Alaska

residents, it's worth a look if you've never seen dip netters in action before. There are 16 campsites, and you'll find toilets and hiking trails. **15+ minutes**



32 CLAM GULCH (MP 117.5 STERLING HWY)

170.5 Miles from Anchorage

In an area that's famous for fishing, this is one spot where you don't need a tackle box to blend in. As the name implies, this is a clamming town, and thousands of razor clams are harvested annually

from the sandy beaches. If you're just passing through, make a stop at the state recreation area on the bluffs of Clam Gulch, which has great views of Cook Inlet as well as the Aleutian Mountain Range and its three tallest peaks: Mount Iliamna, Mount Redoubt, and Mount Spurr. **Drive by**



33 VOLCANO VIEWPOINT (MP 127)

180 Miles from Anchorage

Stop at the Scenic View RV Park for a breathtaking view of four volcanoes: Mt. Iliamna, Mt. Redoubt, Mt. Augustine, and Mt. Spurr. These smoldering mountains are part of the Pacific "Ring of Fire". **5-10 minutes**



34 OLD NINILCHIK VILLAGE (MP 135)

188 Miles from Anchorage

Steeped in the history of early Russian America, this fishing village offers an old-world setting with its Russian Orthodox Church on the hill, quaint fishermen's cottages, and log homes. Information

signs tell the history of Ninilchik, which Russian fur traders colonized in 1820, and walking-tour maps are available at local businesses. **15-30 minutes**



35 DEEP CREEK (MP 137 STERLING HWY)

190 Miles from Anchorage

As you head south, you'll see a steep road to the right that leads to **Deep Creek Campground**. Even if you're not camping, it's worth the drive down to the beach—if it's a clear day, the views are extraordinary.

King salmon enter Deep Creek during late May and early June and continue to spawn into early July. Watch for their dark red bodies in the creek, but be careful not to get in the way of anglers and flying hooks. **Drive by**



36 ANCHOR POINT (MP 157 STERLING HWY)

210 Miles from Anchorage

This tiny town along the Sterling Highway may be known as "North America's Most Westerly Highway Point," but it has another, lesser publicized claim to fame: this is where locals love to fish. **Drive by**



37 PULLOUT OVERLOOKING HOMER SPIT (MP 169.5 STERLING HWY)

222.5 Miles from Anchorage

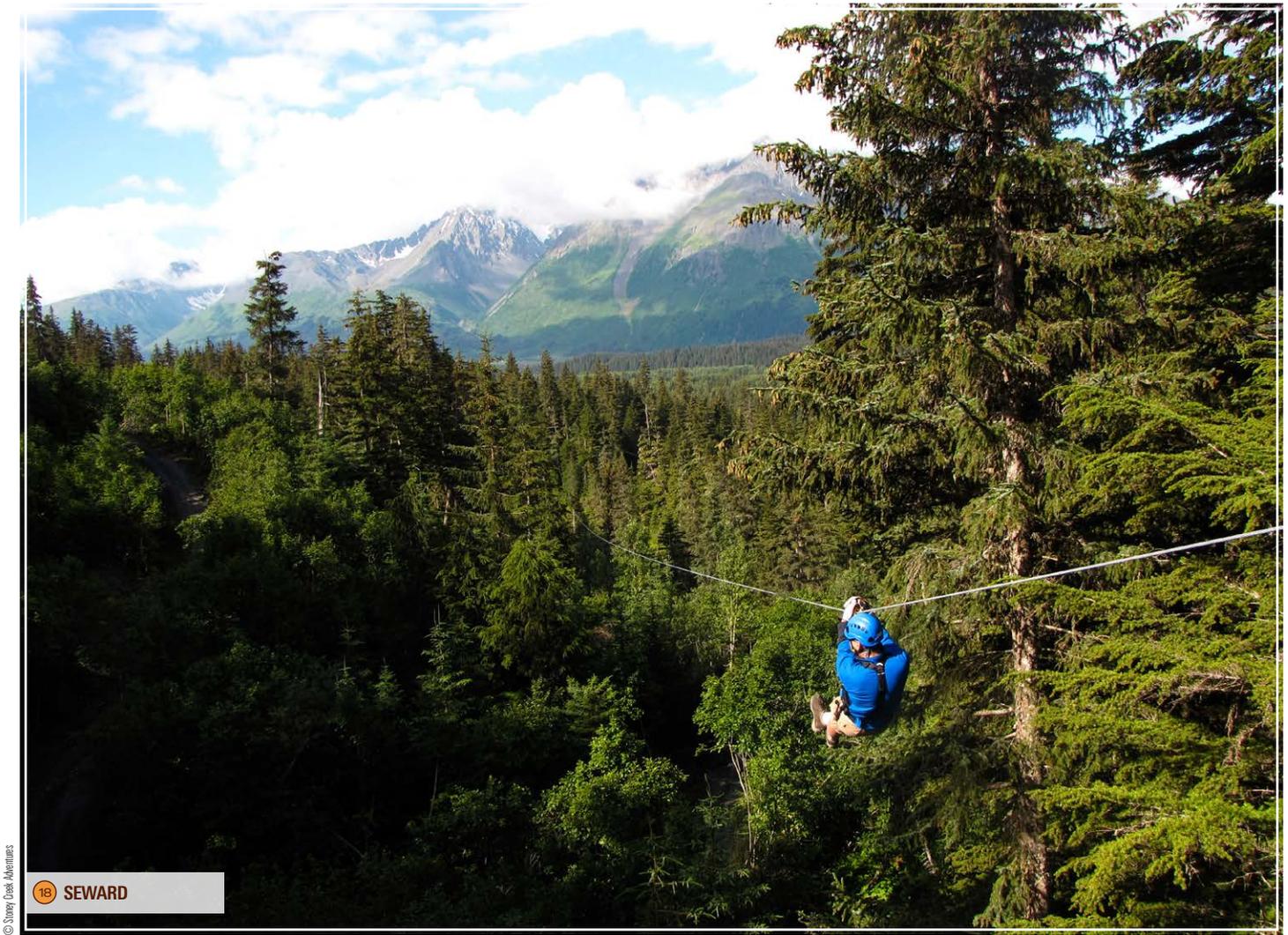
This rest stop on the right side of the highway on the hill above town is the perfect place to get a preview of Homer. The town itself. It's also a great spot to

take a photo next to Homer's "Halibut Fishing Capital of the World" sign. **5-10 minutes for photos**

38 HOMER, END OF THE HOMER SPIT (MP 179 STERLING HWY)

232 Miles from Anchorage

See **page 48** for more information on Homer.



© Stoney Creek Adventures

18 SEWARD

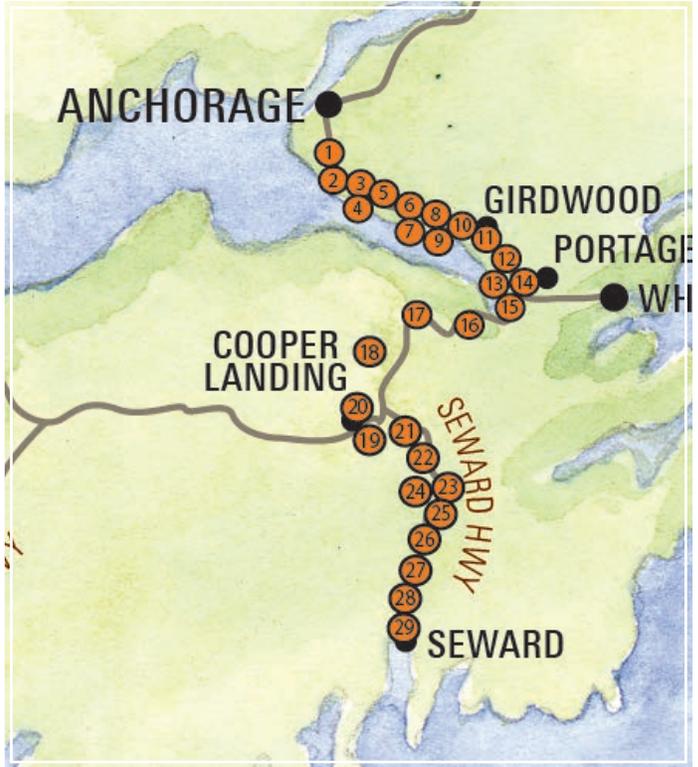
ROAD HIGHLIGHTS

ANCHORAGE TO SEWARD

Hands-down, Alaska's Most Scenic Drive, Featuring Mountains, Lakes, and Glaciers

Total Driving Time: 2.5 hours
Average Driving Time with Stops: 4+ hours

Spectacular views greet you from the very beginning of this drive to the seaside community of Seward. You'll drive between the dramatic shorelines of Turnagain Arm and the jutting peaks of the Chugach Mountains, pass wildflower-filled landscapes and impossibly blue lakes, motor through little towns, and be tempted by trailheads leading to gorgeous hikes. You can even make a stop at Exit Glacier before descending into Seward.



ROAD HIGHLIGHTS

ANCHORAGE TO SEWARD

ANCHORAGE TO BIRD RIDGE (TURNAGAIN ARM)



1 POTTER'S MARSH (MP 117 SEWARD)

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Potter's Marsh, also known as the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge, is a rest area for migratory birds. It's also common to spot beavers, moose, and bald eagles. Don't miss the interpretive signs as you walk along the boardwalk. You'll find restrooms and plenty of parking. **15–30 minutes**



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Interested in railroad history? Stop in to see National Archives photos and model railroads to better understand the lives of railroad crews who worked here long before the road existed. **15 minutes**



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In spring, this is one of the first trails near Anchorage available for hiking, and it remains a great hike all summer long. After the initial gain of a few hundred feet, the trail remains generally level for the remainder of the hike, making it perfect for families or groups of varying ability. It follows the highway and features awesome views of Turnagain Arm. There are four access points along the highway; Potter Trailhead, McHugh Creek, Rainbow, and Windy Corner. Parking is best at either Potter or McHugh Creek. Spend an hour and hike part of the trail, or spend a full day to cover the entire 9.3 miles. Parking is \$5. **1+ hour**

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You'll find a beautiful, 20-foot waterfall just a short walk from the parking area here. The trailhead starts off parallel to Turnagain Arm, and a number of small trails snake off to different lookouts. Take the trail to the left for a short distance and you'll come upon the McHugh Trail, which branches off to the right. This trail zigzags upward through the woods and provides ever better views of Turnagain Arm and the surrounding mountains. It parallels the creek and eventually leads you to its source at McHugh Lake. Be aware and make noise while traveling through the deeper brush areas to avoid unwanted bear contact. There's plenty of parking, as well as restrooms and a picnic area. Parking is \$5. The entire trail is 6.4 miles, but this is also a good stop if you just want to check out the waterfall. **15+ minutes**

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ROAD HIGHLIGHTS

ANCHORAGE TO SEWARD

BIRD CREEK TO HOPE JUNCTION



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You will see the Girdwood turnoff on your left as you head south. Stop in this charming town to grab a late breakfast or lunch. There are guided hike options with [Ascending Path](#). Or ride the [tram](#) to the top of Mt. Alyeska for aerial views of Turnagain Arm. **20 minutes to drive through, 1–2 hours to dine and take the tram**



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13 ALASKA WILDLIFE CONSERVATION CENTER (MP 79 SEWARD HWY)

48 Miles from Anchorage

See Alaskan wildlife up close at this 200-acre center (907-783-2025), designed to provide refuge for orphaned, injured, or ill animals—those that can't survive in the wild. It's a unique place: you may see coyotes peering out from behind the brush while a bald eagle swoops in on salmon remains left by a grizzly bear. And wandering among the center's 65 acres of tidal flat terrain, you may see wood bison—part of a program that will one day restore the species to the Alaskan wilderness. **30+ Minutes**



14 SIDE TRIP PORTAGE, BEGICH BOGGS VISITORS CTR (MP 78.9 SEWARD HWY)

48.1 Miles from Anchorage

The turnoff to Portage Glacier Road is obvious. You could easily spend a half day just exploring this 6-mile valley. There are [pullouts](#), trails, boardwalks, [a salmon viewing platform](#), and tremendous photo opportunities in the Portage



Valley. As you drive down the Portage Glacier Highway, enjoy views of the river on your left and glaciers tucked into the peaks on your right. The visitor's center is at the end of the road. Watch the film if you have time, and take the cruise that brings you up to the face of the glacier. If you don't have time to do either, just drive down the road and back as a scenic detour. **30 minutes–2 hours**



15 TURNAGAIN PASS (MP 70)

57 Miles from Anchorage

Stop at the pullout and take in the views of this pass through the Kenai Mountains. In summer, the area is known for its concentration of wildflowers; in winter, this area is a popular spot for skiers and snow machiners. East of the Seward Highway is reserved for non-motorized traffic, and west of it is for motorized traffic. Avalanches are common in the area on both sides of the pass, and are sometimes caused by snow machiners highmarking (powering their machines up a steep slope until they can go no farther). Avalanche reports are given daily in order to reduce the risk of triggering an avalanche. **5–10 minutes**



16 TRAIL JOHNSON PASS TRAIL NORTH ACCESS (MP 64 SEWARD HWY)

63 Miles from Anchorage

Heading south, on the left hand side you will see a sign and parking area for access to the Johnson pass Trail. The 23-mile Johnson Pass Trail originated in the 1890s as a route for Iditarod miners who raced north from Seward to Nome. Today, this popular hiking trail covers portions of the historic Iditarod Trail between Moose Pass and Granite Creek and features bridged streams, easy grades, and good markings that make it great for families and mountain bikers. Most of the trail lies below treeline, so established camp clearings along the way are nestled into the trees. The trail is meant to be a through-hike, but the southern half tends to get overgrown and can be muddy, so it's usually more fun to stick to the northern 10-mile section (which also saves you from having to shuttle your vehicle). **Full day or overnight**



17 SIDE TRIP HOPE JUNCTION (MP 56)

71 Miles from Anchorage

If you're not in a hurry, turn here for a scenic drive to an off-the-beaten-path town that sits on the edge of Turnagain Arm. Established in the 1890's, Hope was one of the first gold mining towns in Alaska. Many of the town's original buildings still stand, including the [Seaview Cafe and Bar](#), and there's still a hitching post in front of the mercantile, in case you decide to bring your horse. **Drive past, or 1+ hour to take the detour**

ROAD HIGHLIGHTS

ANCHORAGE TO SEWARD

HOPE JUNCTION TO SEWARD



18 TRAIL DEVIL'S CREEK TRAIL (MP 39 SEWARD HWY)

88 Miles from Anchorage

This well-maintained trail makes for a good two-day hike, but it isn't easy: it has a steep incline for the first eight miles, and snow stays on the mountains

here until mid-summer. The trail intersects the Resurrection Pass Trail at mile 10, making for a possible through-hike of 27 miles to the Resurrection South Trailhead and 32 miles to the Resurrection North Trailhead. You'll have a good chance of seeing moose, wolves, grouse, caribou, wolverine, marmot, and ptarmigan, and there's good fishing for Dolly Varden. There are tent campsites along the way; if you make a campfire, be aware that the dead trees are spruce bark beetle kill and extremely flammable. **2-day hike**



19 TERN LAKE (MP 37 SEWARD HIGHWAY)

90 Miles from Anchorage

Salmon-filled Tern Lake is located at the intersection of the Seward and Sterling highways, and on a calm day the lake creates a beautiful mirrored reflection of the surrounding scenery. If you have a moment,

stop to take in the views and do some wildlife viewing—the area has lots of animals, birds, fish, and unique plants. Common sightings include loons, bald eagles, beavers, river otters, muskrats, arctic terns, dall sheep on the mountains above, and a variety of songbirds and shorebirds. **10 minutes**



20 TRAIL CARTER LAKE TRAIL (MP 34 SEWARD HWY)

93 Miles from Anchorage

This 3.4 mile trail is one of the best family hikes on the Kenai Peninsula—it's steep, but short, and rewards you with great views after just a couple of miles. The

trail can be muddy, so come prepared. There is trout fishing in Carter Lake at mile 2.3 and excellent grayling fishing in Crescent Lake at mile 3.4. Be sure to follow regulations; grayling season doesn't open until July 1. **Half-day hike**

21 TRAIL JOHNSON PASS TRAIL SOUTH ACCESS (MP 32.5 SEWARD HWY)

94.5 Miles from Anchorage

South access for the 23-mile Johnson Pass Trail. **Full day or overnight**



22 TRAIL LAKES HATCHERY / UPPER TRAIL LAKE (MP 33 SEWARD HWY)

94 Miles from Anchorage

Both Upper and Lower Trail lakes are fed by the Trail Glacier, several miles away. The Trail Lakes Hatchery (907-283-5761) is located here and open from 8 a.m.–5 p.m.,

with tours daily from 10 a.m.–2 p.m. You can see how fish are bred in tanks and hear why hatcheries play such an important role in keeping our fish population healthy. This is a great stop if you have kids. **Drive by or 30+ mins**



23 MOOSE PASS (MP 28 SEWARD HWY)

99 Miles from Anchorage

This little town got its name in 1903 when a moose got in the way of a mail carrier's dog team. Today, it's known for great hikes into the Chugach National Forest, a floatplane flying school, and fishing. **Drive by or 30+ mins**



24 LAWING (MP 23 SEWARD HWY)

104 Miles from Anchorage

Lawing, once named Roosevelt, used to be a featured stop for Alaska Railroad passengers. "Alaska Nellie" purchased a cabin here in 1923 and later married Billie Lawing of Seattle. Together they ran a lodge and trophy museum; Nellie loved to tell stories, and her guests enjoyed her tales of daring and adventure on the Last Frontier. **Drive by**



25 VIEWS OF KENAI LAKE (MP 23.8)

103.2 Miles from Anchorage

This is a must-stop for photos of beautiful Kenai Lake. The lake, formed from glacier water, is a majestic turquoise tone caused by the light reflecting off the fine glacial silt suspended in the water. You'll find

several parking areas along the lake, and signs that give you a little history about it. **5–10 minutes**



26 TRAIL MERIDIAN LAKE AND GRAYLING LAKE TRAILS (MP 13.2 SEWARD HWY)

113.8 Miles from Anchorage

These popular trails lead to two beautiful, pristine lakes. Even better, they're both easy hikes, which makes them perfect for people of all ages. Bring a

fishing pole and angle for stocked trout in Meridian Lake or grayling in Grayling Lake. No matter which one you're headed to, you'll start out on a single trail, then come to a fork where you'll have to decide which lake to visit. You'll find the off-highway parking lot for the trailhead around mile 14. Distances are 1.5 miles to Grayling Lake and 1.2 miles to Meridian Lake. **1+ hour to hike**



27 TRAIL LOST LAKE TRAIL (MP 5 SEWARD HWY)

122 Miles from Anchorage

This trail is long (7 miles each way), but is a favorite among hikers across the Kenai Peninsula and into Southcentral Alaska. It begins in a lush rainforest and eventually takes you up to clear blue lakes

in high alpine meadows. We consider it the most beautiful trail on the Kenai Peninsula. **Full-day hike**

28 SIDE TRIP EXIT GLACIER ROAD (MP 4 SEWARD HWY)

123 Miles from Anchorage

Turn here for a 10 minute drive to Exit Glacier

29 SEWARD (MP 0 SEWARD HWY)

127 Miles from Anchorage

See **page 56** for more information on Seward.



ROAD HIGHLIGHTS

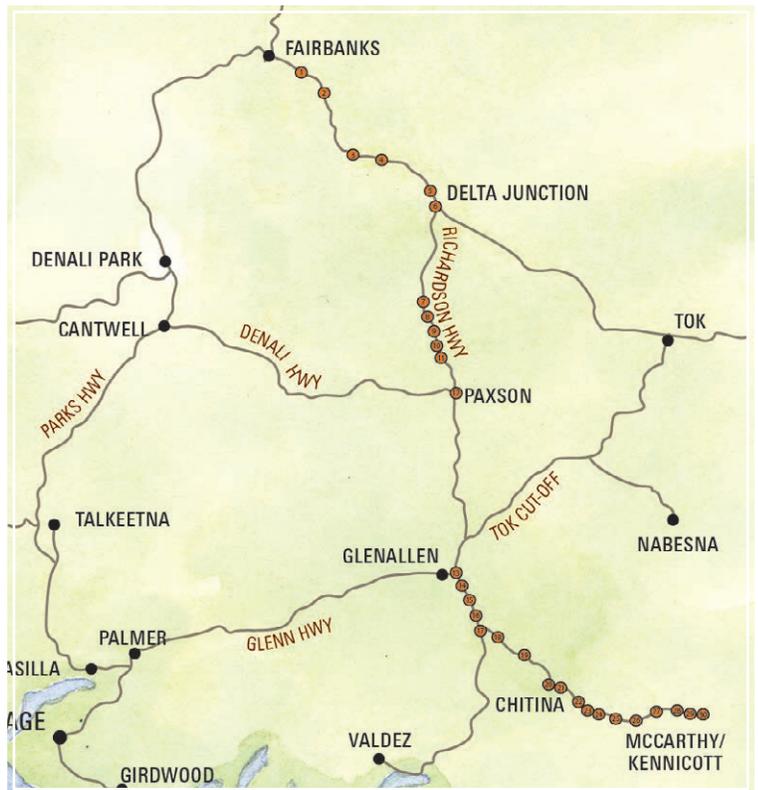
FAIRBANKS TO MCCARTHY

A Long But Dramatic Drive, Featuring Glaciers, Mountains, and Rugged Road

Total Driving Time: 7.5 hours

Average Driving Time with Stops: 10+ hours

This long trip is best broken up over two days if you have the time. You'll drive past sites like the Santa Claus House and Eielson Air Force Base on your way out of Fairbanks, then motor across the tundra and pass through the small towns and old roadhouses that make up the heart of Alaska's Interior. You'll finish on the rugged McCarthy Road, 61 historic, gravel miles that parallel an old railroad route, cross a soaring bridge, and lead you to the remote town of McCarthy.



ROAD HIGHLIGHTS

FAIRBANKS TO MCCARTHY

NORTH POLE TO RICHARDSON MONUMENT



1 NORTH POLE (MP 349 RICHARDSON HWY)

19 Miles from Fairbanks

This little town is North Pole, Alaska—home to the **Santa Claus House**, which keeps the Christmas spirit alive year-round. Every year, the house receives hundreds of thousands of letters from children around the world. And if you want to help spread the joy, you can have a letter sent to your child or grandchild from Santa! **15–30 minutes**



2 SALCHA (MP 322.2 RICHARDSON HWY)

45.8 Miles from Fairbanks

This small town, situated at the mouth of Salcha River, is home to roughly 1,000 year-round residents. The Salcha River is a great fishing spot where you can catch King Salmon, Arctic Grayling, and pike.

Drive by

3 RIKA'S ROADHOUSE AT BIG DELTA STATE HISTORICAL PARK (MP 275 RICHARDSON HWY)

93 Miles from Fairbanks

Home of the Delta Historical Society Museum, Rika's Roadhouse at Big Delta State Historical Park is in a ten-acre state park on the shores of the Tanana River. The Valdez-to-Fairbanks Trail ran through here and continued across the river, aided by a ferry. The roadhouse was built to accommodate the travelers and is a National Historic Site. The museum is a separate building behind the roadhouse and has displays of artifacts from the Alaskan life. Historic pamphlets are available for self tours and guided tours are always available. **5–10 minutes**



4 DELTA RIVER AND ALASKA RANGE OVERLOOK (MP 297)

71 Miles from Fairbanks

This is a great spot to enjoy panoramic views of the Delta River and the Alaska Range. And keep an eye out for wildlife along the riverbed. **5–10 minutes**

5 SULLIVAN ROADHOUSE HISTORICAL MUSEUM (MP 268)

100 Miles from Fairbanks

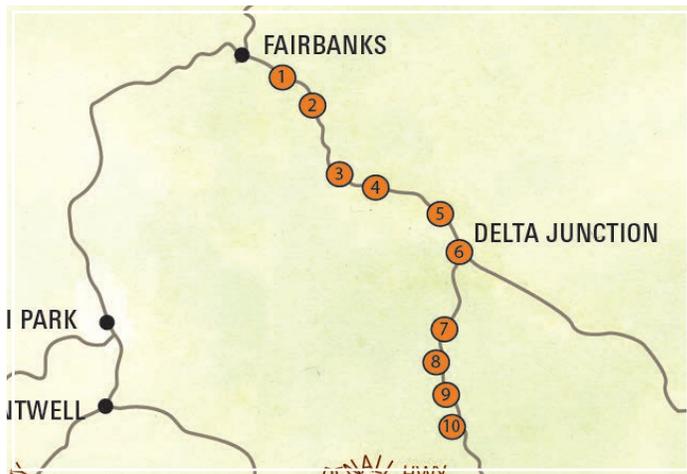
History buffs will love this museum, the oldest roadhouse in the interior, located at the end of the Alaska Highway. Built in 1905 by John and Florence Sullivan, the log lodge is now a museum focused on the Valdez-Fairbanks Trail and the roadhouses that operated along its route. Open 10 a.m.–5 p.m. from May–September. Admission is free (907-895-5068). **30 minutes**



6 DELTA JUNCTION (MP 266)

102 Miles from Fairbanks

Delta Junction sits at the junction of the Richardson and Alaska Highways, marking the end of the 1,387 mile road that begins in Dawson Creek, British Columbia. Even if you are not driving The Alaska Highway, stop in at the visitor center (907-895-5063) located at its terminus. Take a picture by the mile marker monument, and step inside to view the huge mounted Delta Bison. **15 - 20 minutes**



7 TRAIL BLACK RAPIDS TRAIL & GLACIER INFORMATION (MP 225.4)

142.6 Miles from Fairbanks



Look for the historical sign describing the rapid advance of **Black Rapids Glacier**. During the winter of 1936, this mile-wide, 300-foot-high river of ice advanced an average of 115 feet a day, or over 4 miles, to within a half-mile of the highway. It was dubbed the Galloping Glacier and has been receding ever since. Just across the road you will see a marker for Rapids Lake Trail, which leads to a small lake. **15 minutes –1 hour**



8 TRANS-ALASKA PIPELINE VIEW (MP 216 RICHARDSON HWY)

152 Miles from Fairbanks

This is a great spot to see the pipeline. Notice how it's built in a zigzag pattern? This allows it to expand and contract to accommodate extreme temperature changes or earthquakes. The pipeline was built between 1974 and 1977 and took 70,000 construction workers and \$8 billion of investment capital to complete. This famous four-foot silver thread snakes its way through 800 miles of Alaskan wilderness to reach the nation's thirsty refineries, crossing mountain ranges, earthquake zones, permafrost, and rivers. **5–10 minutes**



9 RAINBOW RIDGE SCENIC VIEW (MP 206)

162 Miles from Fairbanks

This ridge is named for its multi-colored slopes. The reds and greens are volcanic rock, while the yellows and pastels are siltstone. The highest point in the ridge is 6,700-foot-tall Rainbow Mountain. **View as**

you drive, or stop for photos



10 RICHARDSON MONUMENT (MP 197)

171 Miles from Fairbanks

This highway is named for the former Alaska road commission director, Captain Wilds P. Richardson. In 1903, Richardson presented the need for Alaska roads. He impressed Congress with his knowledge of Alaska and his abilities as an engineer. The monument here honors Richardson's contribution as the Alaska's first great road builder. This is also a good viewpoint of the Gulkana Glacier. **5–10 minutes**

ROAD HIGHLIGHTS

FAIRBANKS TO MCCARTHY

SUMMIT LAKE TO COPPER RIVER BRIDGE



11 SUMMIT LAKE (MP 195)

173 Miles from Fairbanks

Every April **Summit Lake** (elev. 3,210 feet) hosts the Annual Arctic Man Ski & Sno-Go Classic. Downhill skiers and snowmachine drivers team up for this truly Alaskan event. The skier drops 1,700 feet in less

than 2 miles where they have to catch a towrope from their teammate on the snowmachine. The driver then tows the skier 2.5 miles uphill at speeds reaching 86 mph, at the top they separate and the skier drops 1,200 feet to the finish line.



12 PAXSON JUNCTION (MP 185)

183 Miles from Fairbanks

This is where the Richardson Highway meets the Denali Highway. If you turn here (the road is gravel), the Denali Highway leads to Cantwell, just a few miles south of Denali National Park. The town of

Paxson, which has a population of 28, got its start when Alvin Paxson opened a roadhouse in 1906. **Drive by**

13 JUNCTION OF GLENN AND RICHARDSON HIGHWAYS (MP 115)

253 Miles from Fairbanks

Continue on Richardson Highway. **Drive by**



14 WRANGELL MOUNTAINS AND COPPER RIVER (MP 112.5 RICHARDSON HWY)

255.5 Miles from Fairbanks

Just outside Glenallen, you'll find some great views of the Copper River and the Wrangell Mountains, as well as the chance to take some photos that don't

include any roads or buildings. **15 minutes, or until you get the perfect shot**



15 SIDE TRIP COPPER CENTER (MP 102)

266 Miles from Fairbanks

Historic Copper Center is one of the oldest non-native communities in Alaska's Interior. Founded as a government agricultural experimental station, it later served as a transportation center for Gold Rush

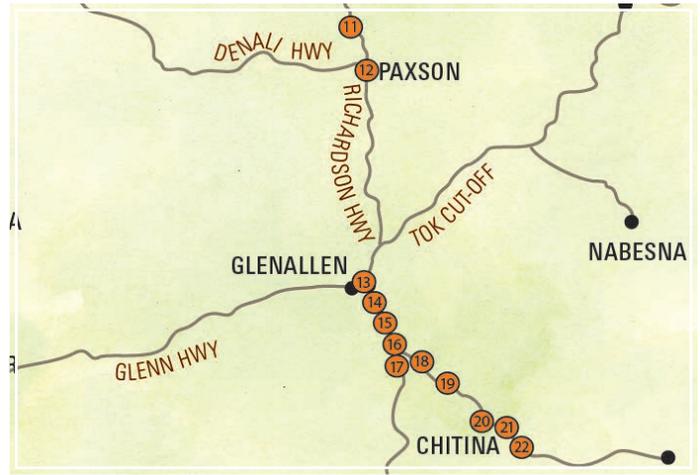
prospectors who came over from Valdez on their way to the Forty Mile area and Dawson. The two-story log cabin that is now Copper Center Lodge was once a roadhouse, and is still open for meals and lodging. Next to the lodge is the small George I. Ashby Museum (907-822-3916; free admission), operated by the National Historical Society. Inside, you'll find all sorts of relics and mementos from pioneer days. Today, Copper Center is a major access point for activities on the Copper River such as fishing and rafting. For a guided excursion, contact **Alaska River Wrangellers**. Want to stay in Copper Center overnight? The **Copper River Princess Wilderness Lodge** is the place to be. **Drive by, 30 minutes for the museum visit, ½ day for rafting or fishing**



16 WRANGELL RANGE VIEWPOINT (MP 88 RICHARDSON HWY)

280 Miles from Fairbanks

This is a great photo opportunity on a clear day; the mountain range, more than 50 miles away, reflects off the lake like a mirror. Mt. Drum (12,010 ft.) is the nearest peak; Mt. Wrangell (14,163 ft.) is a semi-active volcano to the east; Mt.



Sanford (16,237 ft.) is partly hidden; and Mt. Blackburn (16,390 ft.) is the tallest of the four major peaks. The Wrangell Range is over 5,000 square miles, and has 12 peaks above 10,000 ft. **10–15 minutes**

17 JUNCTION, TURN ONTO EDGERTON HIGHWAY (MP 83)

285 Miles from Fairbanks

Turn here for the Edgerton Highway.



18 KENNY LAKE (MP 7.4 EDGERTON HWY)

292 Miles from Fairbanks

Kenny Lake was established in 1910 as an Alaska Road Commission Roadhouse for the Valdez-Fairbanks-Chitina Military Road. Today it is a small farming community where residents lead a self-sufficient lifestyle harvesting fish, game, berries and organic produce. **Drive by**



19 FARMING AREA AND YAK FARM (MP 14.9 EDGERTON HWY)

299.9 Miles from Fairbanks

Look for yaks grazing in the fields south of the road along here. These Tibetan natives are ideally suited for the Alaskan climate. Stop by the yak farm (907-822-3410) and learn why they're an economical alternative to raising cattle. **30+ minutes to view the yaks**

20 CHITINA (MP 33 EDGERTON)

318 Miles from Fairbanks



21 START OF MCCARTHY ROAD (MP 33.6 EDGERTON HWY)

318.6 Miles from Fairbanks

Count on a minimum of two hours to travel the 60 miles to McCarthy. Take your time. You are about to drive into the heart of America's largest national park, with a good chance to see swans, moose, grizzly bears, black bears, owls, eagles, lynx, and other animals that make this area home. **Drive, but take your time**



22 COPPER RIVER BRIDGE (MP 0 MCCARTHY ROAD)

318.6 Miles from Fairbanks

The Copper River Bridge is a gateway into Wrangell St. Elias National Park—one more real and symbolic step into the Alaskan wilderness. **Drive over**

ROAD HIGHLIGHTS

FAIRBANKS TO MCCARTHY

CHITINA RIVER TO END OF MCCARTHY ROAD



23 CHITINA RIVER OVERLOOK (MP 5)

323.6 Miles from Fairbanks

This overlook is a nice place to take a picture of the river, as the McCarthy Road will provide no other glimpses. The headwaters of the Chitina River are some 75 miles to the east. The river is fed from glaciers spilling out of the Bagley Icefield as well as from glaciers deep within the St. Elias and Wrangell mountains. **5+ minutes**



24 KUSKULANA RIVER CANYON AND BRIDGE (MP 17 MCCARTHY ROAD)

335.6 Miles from Fairbanks

For many, crossing the Kuskulana Bridge (built in 1910) is the most nerve-racking part of the drive down McCarthy Road. Mentally prepare yourself to drive across this old single-lane railroad bridge, 238 feet above the raging Kuskulana River! **Drive over**



25 GILAHINA TRESTLE (MP 29)

347.6 Miles from Fairbanks

This old railroad trestle, 90 feet high and 890 feet across, is a perfect example of the amount of work exerted to create the railroad from Kennicott. Impressively, the construction crew used a half-million board feet of lumber and completed the job in just eight days. **Drive by, or pause for photos**



26 TRAIL CRYSTALLINE HILLS TRAILHEAD (MP 34.7 MCCARTHY ROAD)

353.3 Miles from Fairbanks

If you're heading toward McCarthy, you'll see the marked trailhead for this hike on your left. Crystalline Hills Trail is a 2.5-mile loop that will take you through a dense spruce forest, with a beautiful view of the Chitina River Valley. It's relatively easy traveling and gets you some nice views of the mountains looming above, as well as a glimpse south toward the Chugach Mountains. About 15–20 minutes of hiking takes you to a viewpoint worth leaving your car for. This area has long been used by sheep hunters so if you have binoculars you may want to spend some time scanning these hills looking for sheep. **1+ hour**



27 LONG LAKE SALMON VIEWING (MP 45.2)

363.8 Miles from Fairbanks

This is a popular spawning spot for sockeye salmon. Every year, 18,000 sockeyes swim up the Chitina and Copper Rivers to spawn here, entering the lake as late as September and spawning until April.



28 MCCARTHY OVERLOOK (MP 57.5 MCCARTHY ROAD)

376.1 Miles from Fairbanks

As you near the end of the McCarthy Road, there will be a pullout to the right hand side. This is your first view of the town of McCarthy. **5–10 minutes**



29 MCCARTHY ROAD RANGER STATION (MP 59 MCCARTHY ROAD)

377.6 Miles from Fairbanks

Driving into McCarthy, you'll see a sign on your left for the NPS kiosk, which provides a great introduction to McCarthy and Kennicott. The information kiosk is open daily during the summer and has park rangers and volunteers on hand to answer questions as well as provide information about parking and shuttle service. **10–15 minutes**



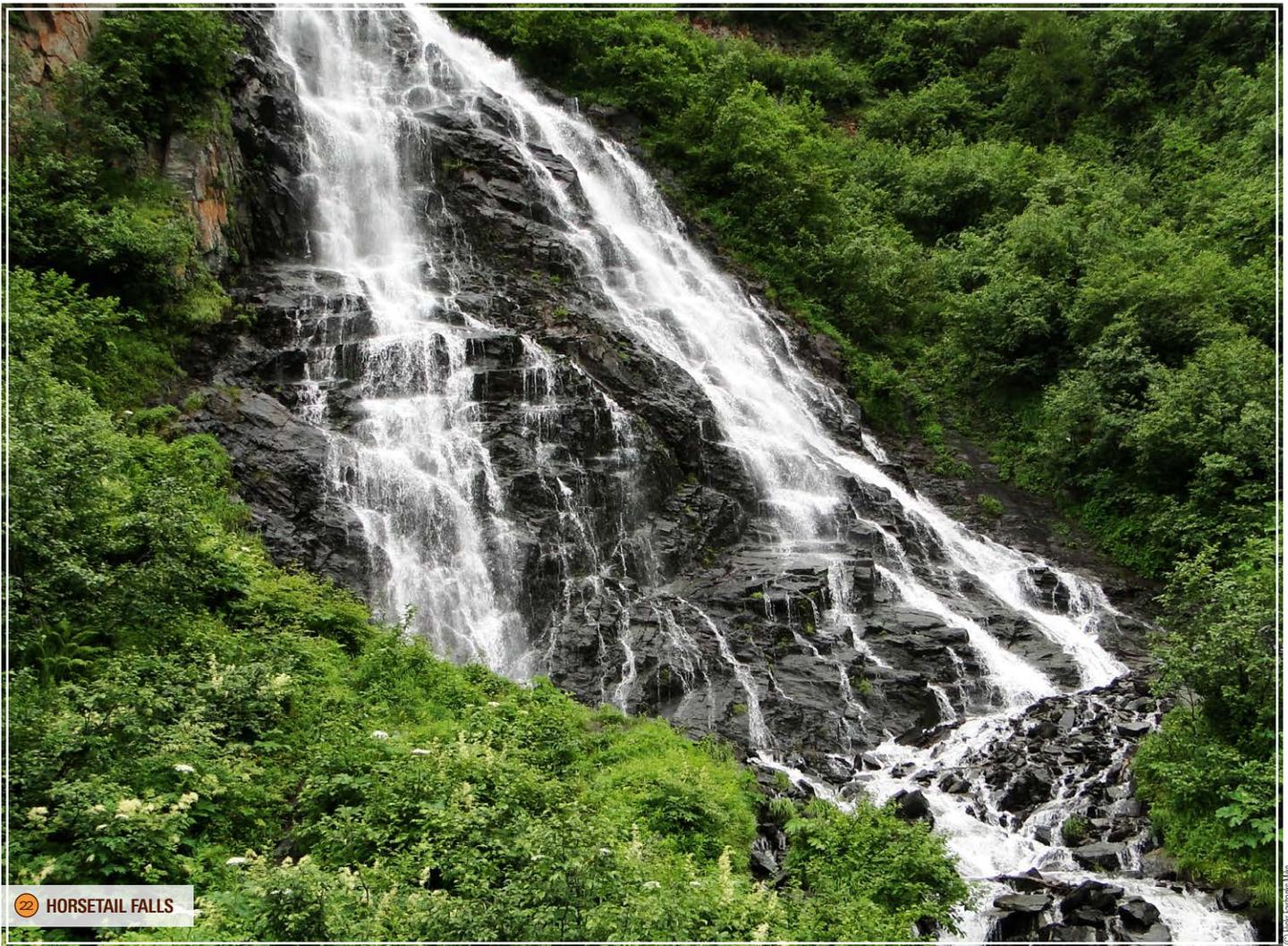
30 END OF MCCARTHY ROAD (MP 60)

378.6 Miles from Fairbanks

Although McCarthy Road comes to an end at milepost 60, your adventure does not. The town of McCarthy lies a half-mile away, and the Kennicott Mines National Historic Landmark is a five-mile drive.



LET US HELP YOU PLAN YOUR TRIP 907-277-4321 BKAUFMAN@ALASKA.ORG



22 HORSETAIL FALLS

© Flickr/Fairbanks Mike

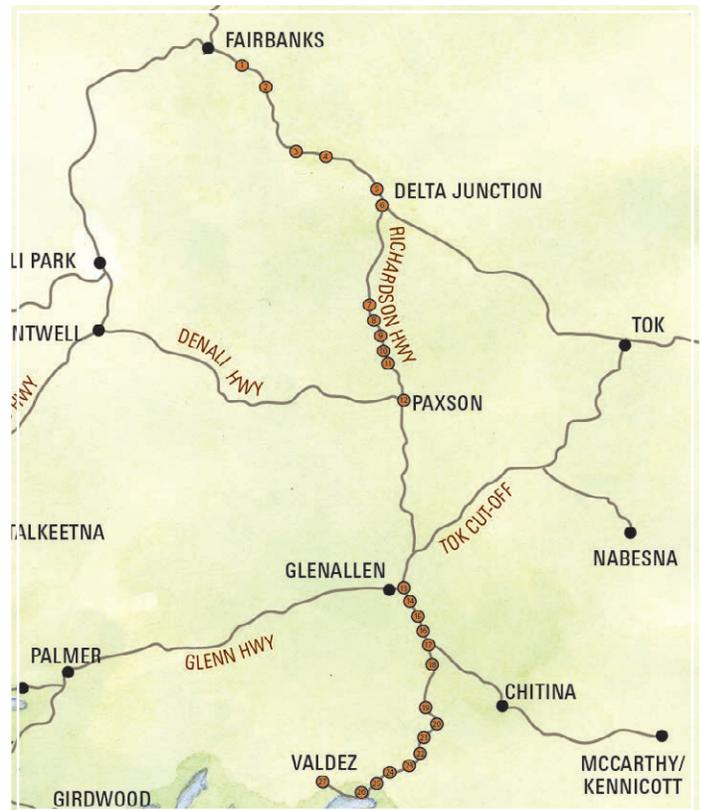
ROAD HIGHLIGHTS

FAIRBANKS TO VALDEZ

Get Never-Ending Views and Historic Perspective along the Richardson Highway

Total Driving Time: 7.5 hours
Average Driving Time with Stops: 9+ hours

Stunning views and fascinating history come together on this 368-mile road from Fairbanks to Valdez. The first major road built in Alaska features two 100-mile Scenic Byway sections; glaciers, jagged peaks, and wilderness fill your view, and you'll cross two mountain passes along the way. The drive is also packed with historic sites. Stop into old roadhouses and get glimpses of the Alyeska Pipeline. Your destination: the coastal town of Valdez.



ROAD HIGHLIGHTS

FAIRBANKS TO VALDEZ

NORTH POLE TO RICHARDSON MONUMENT



1 NORTH POLE (MP 349 RICHARDSON HWY) 19 Miles from Fairbanks

This little town is North Pole, Alaska—home to the **Santa Claus House**, which keeps the Christmas spirit alive year-round. Every year, the house receives hundreds of thousands of letters from children around the world. And if you want to help spread the joy, you can have a letter sent to your child or grandchild from Santa! **15–30 minutes**



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This small town, situated at the mouth of Salcha River, is home to roughly 1,000 year-round residents. The Salcha River is a great fishing spot where you can catch King Salmon, Arctic Grayling, and pike.

Drive by

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71 Miles from Fairbanks

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5 SULLIVAN ROADHOUSE HISTORICAL MUSEUM (MP 268)

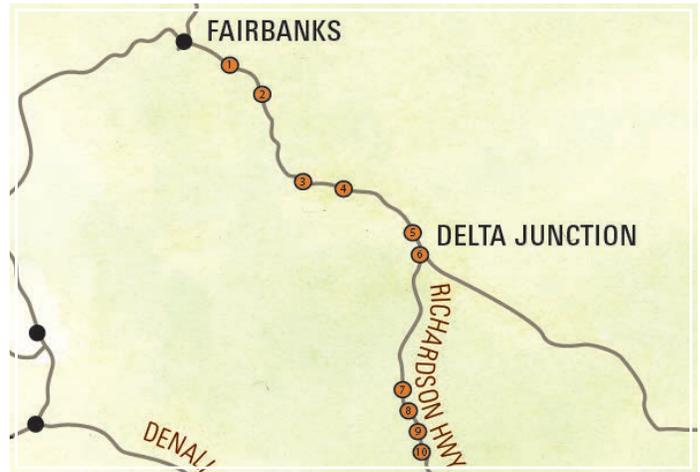
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266 Miles from Fairbanks

Historic Copper Center is one of the oldest non-native communities in Alaska's Interior. Founded as a government agricultural experimental station, it later served as a transportation center for Gold Rush

prospectors who came over from Valdez on their way to the Forty Mile area and Dawson. The two-story log cabin that is now Copper Center Lodge was once a roadhouse, and is still open for meals and lodging. Next to the lodge is the small George I. Ashby Museum (907-822-3916; free admission), operated by the National Historical Society. Inside, you'll find all sorts of relics and mementos from pioneer days. Today, Copper Center is a major access point for activities on the Copper River such as fishing and rafting. For a guided excursion, contact [Alaska River Wrangellers](#). Want to stay in Copper Center overnight? The [Copper River Princess Wilderness Lodge](#) is the place to be. [Drive by, 30 minutes for the museum visit, ½ day for rafting or fishing](#)

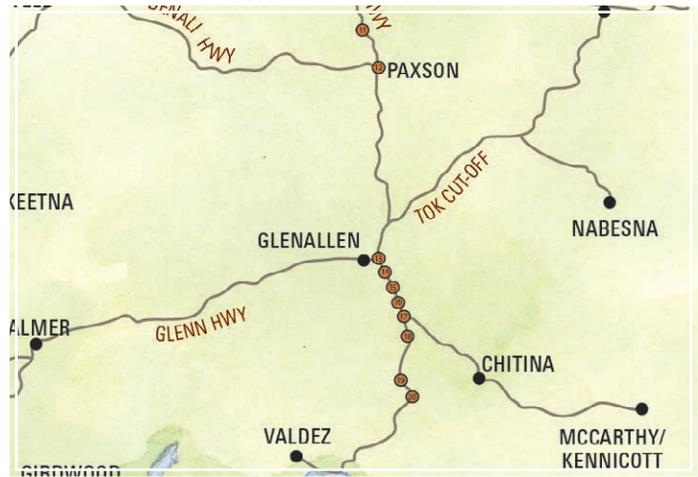


16 WRANGELL RANGE VIEWPOINT (MP 80)

180 Miles from Fairbanks

This is a great photo opportunity on a clear day; the mountain range, more than 50 miles away, reflects off the lake like a mirror. Mt. Drum (12,010 ft.) is the nearest peak; Mt. Wrangell (14,163 ft.) is a semi-

active volcano to the east; Mt. Sanford (16,237 ft.) is partly hidden; and Mt.



Blackburn (16,390 ft.) is the tallest of the four major peaks. The Wrangell Range is over 5,000 square miles, and has 12 peaks above 10,000 ft.



17 JUNCTION WITH EDGERTON HIGHWAY (MP 83 RICHARDSON HWY)

285 Miles from Fairbanks

The Edgerton highway leads to McCarthy. [Drive by](#)



18 PUMP STATION #12 (MP 65)

303 Miles from Fairbanks

This is the last of 11 pump stations located along the Trans-Alaska Pipeline (oddly, there is no Pump Station No. 11.), though only six stations are in use today. These pumps move the oil through the

800-mile-long pipeline from Prudhoe Bay to Valdez, and each pump can move 22,000 gallons of oil per minute. That's 754,000 barrels per day! [Drive by](#)



19 WORTHINGTON GLACIER STATE RECREATION SITE (MP 28.7)

339.3 Miles from Fairbanks

Worthington Glacier State Recreation Site is made up of 113 acres and includes one of the most-visited spots in the Copper River Basin: Worthington

Glacier. There are trails, picnic sites, and picnic shelters within the roadside park, along with water and restrooms. Worthington is one of the most stunning roadside glaciers in the state, so make sure to stop for viewing, or take a short walk to the glacier and see it up close! [30+ minutes](#)



20 THOMPSON PASS (MP 26 RICHARDSON)

342 Miles from Fairbanks

Whether you hike or enjoy the scenic vistas from numerous pullouts, make time to enjoy Thompson Pass. In summer, it has some of Alaska's most beautiful and accessible alpine tundra. In the winter,

it boasts some of the most-respected ski terrain in the world. Local skiers and snowboarders drive here to access challenging terrain, while helicopters land on dozens of these peaks and drop off high-paying clients for very long—and often very steep—ski runs. [Drive by, or 30+ minutes for the short hike](#)

ROAD HIGHLIGHTS

FAIRBANKS TO VALDEZ

OLD VALDEZ TO VALDEZ



21 BRIDAL VEIL FALLS (MP 13.9)

354.5 Miles from Fairbanks

Bridal Veil Falls can be seen from the highway; there are pullouts nearby to take photos. **5–10 minutes**



22 TRAIL VALDEZ GOAT TRAIL (MP 13)

354.5 Miles from Fairbanks

This 2.5-mile hike begins at the bridal veil falls turnout. Military personnel who needed a glacial free route to travel to and from Interior Alaska once used the trail. However, the trail was not longer needed as a transportation route after the completion of the Richardson Highway in 1945. There's a fantastic overlook about a mile down the trail. **1+ hour**



23 HORSETAIL FALLS (MP 13.4)

355 Miles from Fairbanks

This picturesque 330-foot waterfall is fed by snow and ice melt before it empties into the Lowe River. A roadside pullout next to the waterfall provides easy viewing. **5–10 minutes**



24 OLD VALDEZ TOWN SITE (MP 4 RICHARDSON HWY)

264 Miles from Fairbanks

This was the original port and city of Valdez, which was moved to its current location four miles down the road after it was devastated by the magnitude 9.2 earthquake in 1964. **Drive by**



25 SIDETRIP JUNCTION WITH VALDEZ AIRPORT ROAD TO ACCESS VALDEZ GLACIER LAKE (MP 3 RICHARDSON HWY)

365 Miles from Fairbanks

If you've yet to set eyes on an iceberg, here's your chance. This lake sits at the terminus of the Valdez Glacier and is often home to chunks of ice. It's a nice place to get unimpeded views of the Chugach Mountains and the Valdez Glacier. Turn off the Richardson Highway and onto the Valdez Airport Road. Take this road past the airport and keep going straight. Within a mile of the airport you'll merge right with the Glacier Campground Road and follow it for about a mile to the open sandpits bordering the lake. **30+ minutes**



26 CROOKED CREEK INFORMATION SITE AND SALMON VIEWING PLATFORM (MP 0.5)

367.5 Miles from Fairbanks

Pink and chum salmon return to this clear water stream each summer to spawn, with peak numbers seen in mid-August. Occasionally, black or brown bear can be observed feasting on the returning fish. There's an underwater camera located in the stream, and you can view a live feed from the camera inside the CCIS log cabin while the salmon are present (mid-July through Labor Day). You can also observe them from the viewing platform. **Drive by, or 15+ minutes for salmon viewing**



27 VALDEZ MP 366 (MP 0 RICHARDSON HWY)

368 Miles from Fairbanks

Valdez is home to a wide range of wildlife, from sea otters and puffins to humpback whales, with plenty of bald eagles flying overhead. Enjoy your time here by taking a day tour, sea kayaking, or exploring surrounding areas. See [page 60](#) for more information on Valdez.



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03 CLASSIC ALASKA ITINERARIES

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ALASKA'S INTERIOR & PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND

See Wildlife in Denali, History in Fairbanks, and Tidewater Glacier in Valdez

11 Days Visiting Anchorage, Denali, Fairbanks, Glennallen, Chitina, McCarthy/Kennicott, Valdez and Whittier



DAY 1 ANCHORAGE

Your vacation begins with an overnight stay in Anchorage, Alaska's largest city and home to more than half the state's population. If your flight arrives earlier in the day, you'll have time to shop for Alaskan art or gifts, learn about Alaska's fascinating history at the Anchorage Museum at Rasmusen Center, or experience Alaska's ancient cultures through exhibits and the performance art of the intriguing Alaska Native Heritage Center. Looking to stretch your legs? Head down to the Coastal Trail, easily accessed from downtown Anchorage. Overnight at your Anchorage hotel.

DAY 2 DENALI NATIONAL PARK

Begin your trip north to Denali National Park. The drive is approximately 5 hours, but take your time and enjoy the scenery. Popular side trips include visiting Hatcher Pass and Independence Mine near Palmer, or stopping in Talkeetna for lunch. If it's a clear day, keep your eyes out for Mt. McKinley, and make a stop at the Visitor's Center—always a good choice on your first day in the park. Depending upon your arrival time, you'll likely have time to take a late-afternoon or evening rafting, flightseeing, or ATV tour. Take a walk through the main town known as Glitter Gulch and enjoy the Cabin Nite Dinner Theater. Overnight in Denali.

DAY 3 DENALI NATIONAL PARK

Wake up bright and early for a full day tour of Denali National Park. One option: a 12-hour bus tour covering the Park Road's entire 92 miles, all the way to the old gold-mining town of Kantishna, where you'll have lunch and time for activities. You could also opt for a half-day tour lasting approximately seven hours and covering roughly 50 miles. Then stop by Salmon Bake restaurant for a hearty meal and karaoke with the locals. Overnight in Denali.

DAY 4 FAIRBANKS

Drive about 2.5 hours north to Fairbanks, the Golden Heart City within Alaska's

interior. The afternoon is yours to enjoy; take a stroll along the Chena River, stop by the Visitor's Center, or pick up an extra tour in the afternoon. Overnight in Fairbanks.

DAY 5 GLENNALLEN

Enjoy the five-hour drive from Fairbanks to Glennallen. Take a flightseeing tour over the Copper River Valley or enjoy an evening meal with the locals in this friendly town of only 500 residents. Overnight in Glennallen.

DAY 6 CHITINA

Continue your off-the-beaten-path journey with a 6.5-hour drive to Chitina, a rural community on the edge of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park. Overnight in Chitina.

DAY 7 MCCARTHY/KENNICOTT

Park your car at the Chitina airstrip for a scenic flight with Wrangell Mountain Air, out to the old mining village of McCarthy. Upon arrival, take a short ride to the historic ghost town of Kennicott, overlooking the Kennicott/Root Glaciers. Overnight in Kennicott.

DAY 8 MCCARTHY/KENNICOTT

Explore Kennicott on a guided tour and learn about its rich history. You'll even be able to enter the 14-story concentration mill and several other industrial buildings. Take an optional hike this afternoon and enjoy the spectacular glacier and mountain vistas. Overnight in Kennicott.

DAY 9 VALDEZ

Take the morning return flight to Chitina. Pick up your vehicle and take the Edgerton and Richardson highways to Valdez, the southern terminus of the Alaska Pipeline and gateway to Prince William Sound. Overnight in Valdez.

DAY 10 WHITTIER/ANCHORAGE

Board the ferry this morning with your rental car and embark on the Alaska Marine Highway through Prince William Sound to the coastal town of Whittier. Drive through the Anton Anderson Memorial Tunnel, North America's largest tunnel. Watch for Beluga whales in Cook Inlet and Dall sheep along the rocky cliffs on your way back to Anchorage. Overnight in Anchorage.

DAY 11 DEPART ALASKA

Check out of your Anchorage hotel and Depart Alaska.

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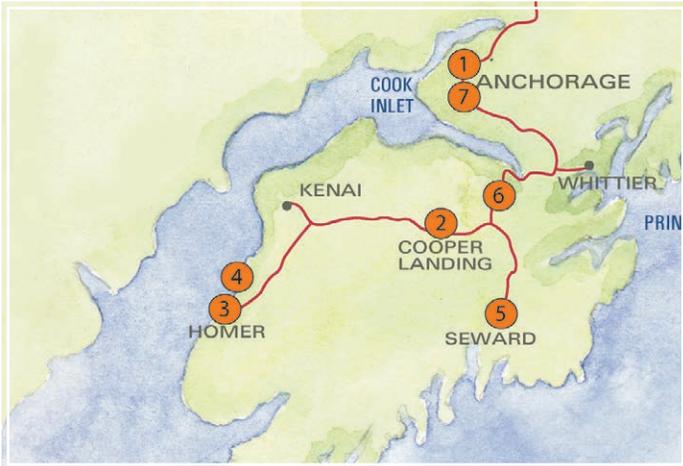
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CLASSIC ITINERARIES

KENAI PENINSULA HIGHLIGHTS

The Best of Seaside Alaska, with Salmon Fishing, and Tidewater Glaciers in Valdez

7 Days Visiting Anchorage, Cooper Landing, Homer and Seward.



DAY 1 ANCHORAGE

Your vacation begins with an overnight stay in Anchorage, Alaska's largest city and home to more than half the state's population. If your flight arrives earlier in the day, you'll have time to shop for Alaskan art or gifts, learn about Alaska's fascinating history at the Anchorage Museum at Rasmusen Center, or experience Alaska's ancient cultures through exhibits and the performance art of the intriguing Alaska Native Heritage Center. Looking to stretch your legs? Head down to the Coastal Trail, easily accessed from downtown Anchorage. Overnight at your Anchorage hotel.

DAY 2 COOPER LANDING

Begin your self-guided itinerary with a scenic drive south along Turnagain Arm and through the Chugach National Forest to the quaint community of Cooper Landing, just two hours from Anchorage. Depending on your arrival times, you may be able to enjoy an afternoon rafting, horseback riding, hiking, or gold-panning tour. The Kenai River here is famous for its salmon, and depending on the time of your visit, you may witness their incredible spawning runs. Or grab a fishing rod and try for a record-breaking catch. Overnight in Cooper Landing.

DAY 3 HOMER

Depart Cooper Landing and drive 2.5 hours to Homer, Alaska's halibut fishing capital and end-of-the-road town. Settle into your overnight accommodations and then choose from an array of activities in the area. Walk the iconic Homer Spit and look for sea life and bald eagles. Browse the local art on "Gallery Row" and take in the dramatic coastal views of the Kenai Mountains and Kachemak Bay. Overnight in Homer.

DAY 4 HOMER

Take advantage of your surroundings and embark on a bear-viewing flight to Katmai National Park. Be awestruck before you're even 100 feet off the ground, checking out the glaciers and snow-capped Kenai Mountains across Kachemak Bay. Keep an eye out for orcas, humpbacks and other whales along the way. When you arrive,

walk along the beach and through meadows with a guide, stopping to watch and photograph brown bears that are feeding and exploring the area with their cubs. Or opt for a fishing charter and you can take some fresh salmon or halibut home with you. Overnight in Homer.

DAY 5 SEWARD

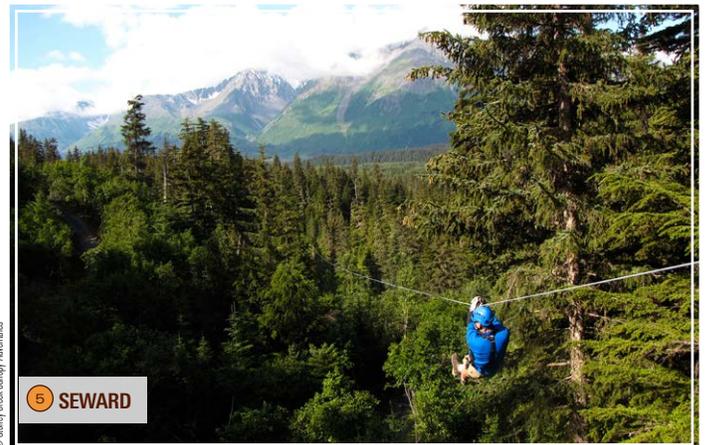
Drive 3.5 hours northeast to the harbor town of Seward, one of Alaska's oldest and most scenic communities, nestled between Resurrection Bay and the Kenai Mountains. Get out on the water to fish for halibut or salmon in such great numbers that they bump into your boat. Or hike steep, spectacular Mt. Marathon, just outside of town, which hosts America's second-oldest footrace every July 4. Visit the renowned Alaska SeaLife Center, a research center that rehabilitates mammals and conducts research. And take a journey out to the amazing fjords and glaciers of nearby Kenai Fjords National Park to see whales, sea otters, harbor seals, and sea lions. Overnight in Seward.

DAY 6 SEWARD TO ANCHORAGE

Take a six-hour day cruise within Resurrection Bay and the Kenai Fjords National Park for a spectacular wildlife and glacier tour. Listen to guided narration from a uniformed park ranger and help spot marine wildlife. Lunch is included on this midday cruise, and you'll explore the world of wildlife up close in the calm waters of Resurrection Bay, drifting close to massive bird rookeries and sea lion colonies. The ship stops along the route for whale, sea otter, or Dall's porpoise sightings. You'll also get great photo ops like the enormous Bear Glacier, the largest glacier in the Kenai Fjords National Park. Back at the harbor, check out the fishing charters' catch of the day before making the 2.5-hour drive back to Anchorage. Upon arrival in Anchorage, check into your hotel and enjoy a final night in Alaska.

DAY 7 DEPART ALASKA

Check out of your Anchorage hotel and Depart Alaska.

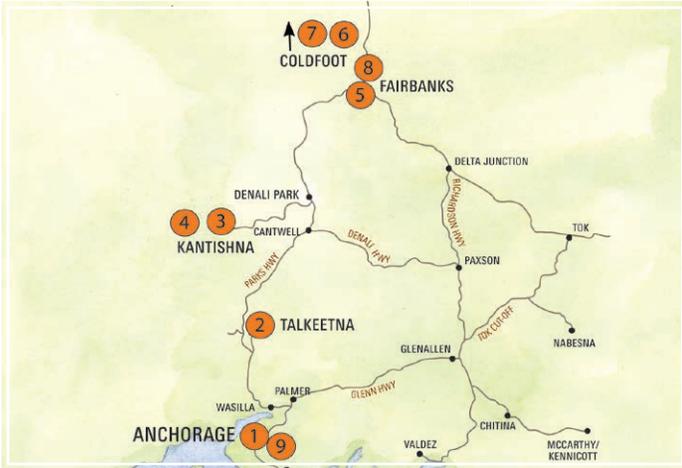


© Doney Creek Cany Adventures

ALASKA'S INTERIOR & ARCTIC CIRCLE

Visit Alaska's Remote Areas in Denali and Travel Above the Arctic Circle

8 or 9 Days Visiting Anchorage, Talkeetna, Kantishna, Fairbanks and the Arctic Circle/Coldfoot.



DAY 1 ANCHORAGE

Your vacation begins with an overnight stay in Anchorage, Alaska's largest city and home to more than half the state's population. If your flight arrives earlier in the day, you'll have time to shop for Alaskan art or gifts, learn about Alaska's fascinating history at the Anchorage Museum at Rasmussen Center, or experience Alaska's ancient cultures through exhibits and the performance art of the intriguing Alaska Native Heritage Center. Looking to stretch your legs? Head down to the Coastal Trail, easily accessed from downtown Anchorage. Overnight at your Anchorage hotel.

DAY 2 TALKEETNA

Depart Anchorage and drive 2.5 hours to Talkeetna, the mountaineering gateway to the Alaska Range. Check into your hotel and enjoy this quaint town with its one-block main street and exceptional views of Mt. McKinley. Choose from a variety of activities like flightseeing, fishing, rafting, jet boat tours, and more. Overnight in Talkeetna.

DAY 3 KANTISHNA

Drive 3 hours to the Denali National Park entrance and leave your car at the Visitor's Center. Hop on a bus that takes you the full 92 miles into the otherwise vehicle-restricted area of the park and stay at your choice of lodges in Kantishna. The drive to Kantishna offers excellent wildlife viewing and photo opportunities. Then settle into your overnight accommodations and enjoy a gourmet dinner far from the bustling crowds and civilization.

DAY 4 KANTISHNA

For your full day within the park, choose from a variety of activities, including guided hikes, fly-fishing in Moose Creek, mountain biking along old mining roads, and panning for gold. At the Kantishna Roadhouse, there's an on-site dog kennel, and you can learn all about dog sledding from Iditarod-trained handlers. After dinner, get comfortable in the lodge's library room and listen to an Alaskan storyteller, geologist, bird specialist, or naturalist. Or ride a shuttle to the Wonder Lake area to view Mt. McKinley. Overnight in Kantishna.

DAY 5 FAIRBANKS

Pack up in Kantishna and take the bus back out of the park to your car at the Visitor's Center. Drive 2.5 hours north to Fairbanks, Alaska's second-largest city that's rich in Gold Rush history. Explore this quirky, independent town and choose from optional gold-panning tours, a relaxing trip aboard a historic sternwheeler, and more. Overnight in Fairbanks.

DAY 6 ARCTIC CIRCLE/ COLDFOOT

Continue your off-the-beaten-path journey with a 6.5-hour drive on the Dalton Highway to the Coldfoot Camp, above the Arctic Circle. Make sure that your vehicle is equipped to drive the rough but scenic road system through Alaska's interior. Overnight in Coldfoot.



DAY 7 (OPTIONAL EXTRA DAY) COLDFOOT

Explore the area on your own or opt for a flightseeing, hiking, rafting, or fishing tour out at the Coldfoot Camp. Overnight in Coldfoot.

DAY 8 FAIRBANKS

Make the drive back to Fairbanks and check into your hotel for the evening. Stretch your legs after a long day of driving and check out some of the local shops at your leisure. Overnight in Fairbanks.

DAY 9 DEPART ALASKA

Drive back to Anchorage or depart Alaska on a flight out of Fairbanks.



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TOWN INFORMATION

ANCHORAGE

Accommodations, Tours, Trails, & Attractions



Anchorage uniquely combines the conveniences of the modern world in its rugged, natural environment. You can watch moose in the morning and ballet in the afternoon. The city is also a great jumping-off point for adventures around the state. Many travelers fly into and out of Anchorage, so you'll likely have some time automatically built into your itinerary to experience the state's largest city.

HOTELS

DOWNTOWN HOTELS

In downtown Anchorage, the luxurious [Hotel Captain Cook](#) (907-276-6000) offers incredible views and amenities. You'll also find trusted brands like, The [Anchorage Marriott Downtown](#) (907-279-8000), The [Westmark Anchorage](#) (907-276-7676), and the [Hilton Anchorage](#) (907-272-7411). For a more boutique experience, try [The Voyager Inn](#) (907-277-9501) or the [Anchorage Grand Hotel](#) (907-929-8888). The [Comfort Inn Ship Creek](#) (907-277-6887) provides convenient access to the Alaska Railroad Depot.

MIDTOWN HOTELS

Midtown hotels are conveniently located between downtown and the airport. The [Holiday Inn Express Anchorage](#) (907-248-8848) and the [Microtel Inn & Suites](#) (907-245-5002) are located nearest the airport. [The Lakefront Anchorage](#) (907-243-2300) is also near the airport and sits on the shores of Lake Hood, a busy floatplane area. A few minutes beyond the airport in Midtown are the [Crown Plaza Anchorage](#) (907-433-4100), the [Fairfield Inn](#) (907-222-9000), The [Hyatt House](#) (907-992-2200),

[Hampton Inn Anchorage](#) (907-550-7000), [Motel 6 Midtown](#) (907-677-8000), [Embassy Suites by Hilton Anchorage](#) (907-332-7000), [Homewood Suites by Hilton Anchorage](#) (907-762-7000) and the [Hilton Garden Inn](#) (907-729-7000).

GIRDWOOD

Just 45 minutes south of Anchorage is the ski resort town of Girdwood and the [Hotel Alyeska](#) (907-754-1111).

TOURS

FLIGHTSEEING TOURS

Several companies operate in or near Anchorage. [Rust's](#) (907-243-1595), [Regal Air](#) (907-243-8535) and [Trail Ridge Air](#) (907 248-2658) offer floatplane flightseeing trips from Lake Hood, and [Alpine Air](#) (907-783-2360) offers helicopter tours from Girdwood, just 45 minutes south of Anchorage.

DAY CRUISES

Day cruises are easily accessible from Anchorage, just a 1- to 2.5-hour drive away. In Whittier you can

join [Phillip's 26 Glacier Cruise](#) (800-544-0529) for a glacier cruise, or [Lazy Otter Charters](#) (907-694-6887) for a custom cruise or kayak trip. In Seward, [Kenai Fjords Tours](#) (877-777-4051) and [Major Marine Tours](#) both offer glacier and wildlife cruises.

BEAR VIEWING



© Barbara du Pont

© Barbara du Pont

[Rust's](#) (907-243-1595), and [Regal Air](#) (907-243-8535), and [Trail Ridge Air](#) (907-248-2658) offer bear-viewing trips from their Anchorage bases at Lake Hood. They'll bring you to the best spots to see bears, which will vary depending on the time of year. [Brooks Lodge](#) (800-544-0551) also offers day tours from Anchorage, starting with a commercial flight from Anchorage to King Salmon and continuing on a floatplane to Brooks Camp.

TOWN INFORMATION

ANCHORAGE

Accommodations, Tours, Trails & Attractions

SIGHTSEEING TOURS



© Salmon Berry Tours

Anchorage Trolley Tours (888-917-8687) is a great way to get the lay of the land in Anchorage, and **Salmon Berry Tours** (888-878-3572) offers both a city tour as well as one that leaves Anchorage and goes down the Turnagain Arm.

HIKING, RAFTING AND BIKING ADVENTURES

Chugach Adventures (907-783-1860) offers several float trips near Anchorage, like the Spencer Lake Iceberg Float, which begins with a ride aboard the Alaska Railroad to a lake only accessible by rail. **Ascending Path** (907-783-0505) offers kayaking and heli-hiking at Spencer. **Alaska Trail Guides** (907-317-5707) runs great bike tours in Anchorage and Girdwood, including a popular bike & brew tour.

ATV ADVENTURES



© Alaska Backcountry Adventure Tours

Alaska Backcountry Adventure Tours (907-745-2505), **49th State Motor Tours** (907-278-0157), and **Alaska Glacier Experience** (888-404-3686) offer tours north of Anchorage near the Knik Glacier. **Riding Alaska ATV Tours** (907-315-9785) takes visitors along the shores of the glacially fed Eklutna Lake.

POINTS OF INTEREST

MUSEUMS

The **Alaska Native Heritage Center** (907-330-8000) offers an in-depth look at Alaskan Native life. Watch dancing, listen to stories, meet carvers, and

explore re-created winter dwellings.



© Alaska Native Heritage Center

Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge

This refuge, at mile 117.4 of the Seward Highway, is one of the most accessible wildlife-viewing areas in Alaska. The marsh is a rest area for migratory birds. Also look for beavers, moose, and bald eagles.

Earthquake Park

This 134-acre park (907-343-7529) is set in the woods where, in 1964, an entire neighborhood slid into the ocean during last century's most powerful earthquake. The earthquake was measured at a 9.2 on the Richter scale and lasted 4 minutes.

TRAILS



Tony Knowles Coastal Trail

Even though the trail spans 11.0 miles each way (from Kincaid Park to just north of where

2nd Avenue ends in the Cook Inlet), you can easily pick it up from several points in the city to enjoy any segment and hike as little or as much of the trail as you desire.



Flattop

This is Alaska's most-visited peak. Ascend the 1.5-mile, 1,350-vertical-foot trail to the rocky, football

field-sized summit in about an hour and take in panoramic views from Mt. McKinley to the Aleutian Islands.

Kincaid Park

Kincaid Park offers the easiest way to explore the woods, as it's right in town. This 1,400-acre



© Kathleen Berth

forest offers one of America's top trail systems as well as Anchorage's largest moose population.



Eagle River Nature Center

Located 40 mins north of downtown Anchorage, this center has several hiking trails of varying lengths. And in the summer there are frequent guided nature walks.



Turnagain Arm Trail

Accessible from multiple points along the Seward highway, this 9.3-mile trail has mild elevation gains and affords

awesome views of Turnagain Arm.

RESTAURANTS

Glacier Brewhouse

Microbrewery with bistro-style cuisine and fresh seafood. 907-274-2739; \$\$

Orso Ristorante

Fresh Alaskan seafood, local pastas, and handcrafted cocktails. 907-222-3232; \$\$\$

Club Paris

Alaskan seafood and gourmet steaks at a classic local bar. 907-277-6332; \$\$\$

Fat Ptarmigan

Wood-fired pizza and a selection of Alaska's best brews. 907-777-7710; \$\$

Ginger

Pacific Rim cuisine with local microbrew beer, select wines, and sakes. 907-929-3680; \$\$

49th State Brewery

Craft beer, locally sourced food, terrific location in the heart of downtown, and a rooftop deck. 907-277-7727; \$

TOWN INFORMATION

DENALI

Accommodations, Tours, Trails, & Attractions



Denali National Park is Alaska's most popular land attraction, and with good reason--you can see some of Alaska's most famous sights, like Denali, wildlife, and vast, unspoiled wilderness. If you're visiting Denali National Park, dedicate at least two nights and one full day. Also, take note: you'll need it to experience the Denali Park Road by tour or shuttle bus.

HOTELS

INSIDE THE PARK

Kantishna Roadhouse

Stay in one of 32 cozy cabin-like rooms, walk along Moose Creek and look for wildlife. Enjoy family-style meals, naturalist tours, gold panning, biking, and evening outings to see Wonder Lake and Mt. Denali. 800-942-7420

Camp Denali

Each rustic cabin has a unique view of Mt. Denali. You'll have a quiet, quality stay (for up to only 38 people) where you decide how you want to see the park—an approach that leaves you feeling connected to the Alaskan experience. You'll also find good food and fascinating learning adventures. 907-683-2290

North Face Lodge

Experience the soul of Denali at this intimate (just 30 guests), remote lodge set inside the park. Join naturalist-guided hikes and field trips, and attend evening programs. Then feast on the lodge's artisan cuisine, featuring antibiotic-free meats and locally grown organic produce. 907-683-2290

Denali Backcountry Lodge

At this former mining outpost near mile 92 of Denali's Park Road, you'll stay in one of 42 private cabins, each of which has running water, electricity, heat, and private bathrooms. Days are spent hiking, exploring the surrounding wilderness by bike, fishing or curled up with a good book. 866-606-6700

NEAR THE PARK ENTRANCE

Denali Princess Wilderness Lodge (800-426-0500), just one mile from the entrance to the park, offers grand touches and expansive views. The luxurious McKinley Chalet (800-544-0970) has 345 rooms but still feels like an intimate wilderness lodge. Get the area's best view of the Alaska Range from the comfortable, rustic Grande Denali Lodge (907-683-5100). Denali Bluffs Hotel (907-683-7000) offers comfortable rooms and great views of the Alaska Range. The Cabins at Denali Park Village (800-276-7234) offers 52 individual cabins nestled among the trees on the banks of the Nenana River. The Lodge at Denali Park Village (907-264-4600) is set among 20 acres of a spruce forest along the Nenana River and offers rooms spread out among seven two-story buildings. Denali Grizzly Bear Resort (1-866-583-2696) overlooks the Nenana River. The main hotel has 119 rooms in the main Cedar Hotel, as well as cabins and RV sites. Carlo

Creek Lodge (907-683-2576) has a variety of hand crafted log cabins set on their original family homestead settled in the late 1950s.

TOURS

RAFTING

Experience a float through one of America's great wilderness areas with Rafting from Denali Park Village (907-264-4600) or Denali Raft Adventures (907-683-2234). For some human powered adventure, learn how to packraft with Traverse Alaska (907-903-0979).

BUS TOURS



The Denali Natural History Tour (800-622-7275) is the shortest of the tours into the park (4 hours) and gives an introduction to the area's history, flora, and fauna. The Tundra Wilderness Tour (800-276-7234) clocks in at around 8 hours and takes you up to 60

TOWN INFORMATION

DENALI

Accommodations, Tours, Trails & Attractions

miles deep into the park. [Kantisha Wilderness Trails](#) (800-230-7275) and [Denali Backcountry Adventure](#) (866-606-6700) are the longest of the park tours, traveling the entire 95 miles of the Park Road.

FLIGHTSEEING

[Several companies](#) offer flightseeing tours around Mt. McKinley and the Alaska Range that last between 45 minutes and 2 hours. [Denali Air](#) (907-683-2261), [Denali Summit Flight](#) (800-474-1986), [TEMSCO Helicopters](#) (800-843-1947) offer glacier landings in addition to aerial viewing.

JEEP & ATV TOURS



© Denali Highway Jeep Excursions

Take the wheel of your own Jeep and drive the Denali Highway for 27 spectacular miles of wildlife viewing with [Denali Highway Jeep Excursions](#) (907-683-5337). Drive your own ATV with [Black Diamond ATV Tours](#) (907-683-4653) or [Denali ATV Adventures](#). (907-683-4288)

HIKING



© Denali Park Village

With [Denali Park Village Activities](#) (907-264-4600) join a small-group hiking tour led by a trained naturalist. Or, learn how to navigate the Denali backcountry with [Traverse Alaska](#) (907-903-0979) in preparation for a hike on your own!

OTHER

[Husky Homestead Tour](#)

Each summer, Iditarod champion Jeff King opens up his kennel so visitors can meet some of the world's finest sled dogs and their puppies. 907-683-2905

[Cabin Nite Dinner Theater](#)

(800-276-7234) Performed out of the Denali Park Village, this show is a true-to-life Gold Rush tale of Alaskan adventures in the early 1900s. Enjoy song, dance, humor, and a large family-style meal topped off with berry cobbler. A similar show, the [Music of Denali Dinner Theatre](#) (800-426-0500) is offered out of McKinley Chalet and tells the story of the first ascent of Mt. McKinley!

Zip above the tree line at [Denali Park Zipline](#) (907-683-2947) and take in sweeping, 360-degree views of miles around, including the tundra and the Alaska Range.

POINTS OF INTEREST

[Murie Science Learning Center](#) serves as Denali National Park's winter visitor's center. It's open from 9am to 4pm and provides an array of park exhibits and movies. You can talk with rangers about current trail conditions, borrow a pair of snowshoes, and get backcountry permits for overnight trips.

[Wilderness Access Center](#)

All park shuttle buses depart from this building. This is also the place to reserve a spot in the various park campgrounds. And inside you'll also find a gift shop, coffee stand, and an information desk. 907-683-9532

[Denali Park Visitor Center](#)

The center itself is the main National Park Service welcome and information center; other facilities include a restaurant, bookstore/gift shop, bag check, bus stop, and the Alaska Railroad depot.

TRAILS



[Horseshoe Lake Trail](#)

This 3-mile round-trip trail begins at Mile 0.9 on the Park Road near the railroad tracks. You'll walk on a developed trail down to the lake. After you reach the overlook, the trail drops steeply. Along the way, especially at the overlook bench, you'll have a panoramic view of the Nenana River.

[Mount Healy Overlook Trail](#)

The first mile of this 4.5-mile round-trip trail, which

begins near the new Murie Science and Learning Center, is moderately steep and snakes through the forest. Your reward is sweeping views of the Denali National Park entrance area, the Nenana River Valley, Healy Ridge, and nearby alpine ridges.

[Triple Lakes Trail](#)

You can begin hiking this 2-mile round-trip trail at Mile 231 of the Parks Highway, on the west side of the road, where there is a small pullout for parking. The trail climbs steeply and crosses the Alaska Railroad tracks. It then moderates and emerges from the forest to a grand view of the Nenana River and the Alaska Range, looking south toward Windy Pass. This can be a great hike for a picnic with a view.

[Roadside Trail](#)

If you're headed to the dog demonstration at the kennels, or if you just want to stretch your legs, try walking this wide, comfortable 2-mile trail through the forest.

RESTAURANTS

[Denali Park Salmon Bake](#)

Fresh cedar plank salmon, burgers, steaks, and more than 20 microbrews. 907-683-2733; \$\$

[Grizzly Burger](#)

Located within the Denali Princess Wilderness Lodge. Serves burgers, fish, and chips (made with fresh Alaskan cod dipped in an Alaska Amber beer batter), sandwiches, and soups/salads. 907-683-2282; \$\$

[The Overlook at The Crow's Nest](#)

Great deck overlooking the Nenana River, serving nearly 80 bottled beers and 10 varieties of burgers. 907-683-3463; \$\$

[Prospectors Pizzeria & Alehouse](#)

Serves hand-tossed pizza dough and a brick oven, and featuring Alaskan toppings like king crab, elk, buffalo, halibut, and salmon. Choose from 49 beers on tap. 907-683-7437; \$\$

[49th State Brewing Company](#)

Dine at an authentic Alaskan original, with a menu featuring local ingredients, great beer, and Alaska-sized portions. 907-683-2739 \$\$

TOWN INFORMATION

HOMER

Accommodations, Tours, Trails, & Attractions



While long referred to as the “Halibut Fishing Capital of Alaska,” we also like to consider it the “Ecotourism Capital of Alaska” because this charming, end-of-the-road town is great for non-anglers as well, featuring an eclectic mix of artists, fishermen, and outdoor lovers. You’ll have to go out of your way to get here, but we recommend you do, and try to spend a couple days. Homer is one of the premier places on the planet where humans interact positively with their environment on many levels.

HOTELS & WILDERNESS LODGES

Kachemak Bay Wilderness Lodge

Immerse yourself in the Alaskan backcountry at the intimate, rustically elegant Kachemak Bay Wilderness Lodge, with plenty of guided excursions. 907-235-8910

Ridgewood Wilderness Lodge

Soak up the Alaskan wilderness at the intimate, timber-framed Ridgewood Wilderness Lodge on an island adjoining Kachemak Bay State Park. 907-296-2217

Ocean Shores Hotel

This 38-room Ocean Shores Hotel, perched on a hillside just outside of downtown Homer, boasts a private beach and ocean views from every room. 800-770-7775

Land’s End Resort

The beachfront Lands End Resort sits at the very tip of the Homer Spit, offering incredible views of Kachemak Bay and the Kenai Mountain Range. 800-478-0400

Driftwood Inn

Anchorage’s family-owned Driftwood Inn offers a variety of lodging options, all of which have great views of Bishop’s Beach and Kachemak Bay. 907-235-8019

Otter Beach Lodges

13 luxury units – 7, 1 to 3 bedroom upper lodges and 6 efficiency apartments – offer privacy and feature stunning water and mountain views. 907-299-7450

Kenai Peninsula Suites

Serenity and privacy are paramount at this intimate collection of five romantically rustic vacation rentals. 907-235-1866

Alaskan Suites

A panoramic view of Kachemak Bay greets you no matter where you are at this intimate, five-cabin property in Homer. 907-235-1972

Between Beaches Alaska

Across the Bay in Seldovia, 3 cabins and 2 luxury glamping tents in an idyllic spot that offers the chance to watch whales, and kayak directly from the beach. 907-290-6785

Otter Cove Resort

Beautiful, remote and rustic. Located a short water taxi trip from Homer, explore Alaska by kayaking, hiking, wandering a beach, taking photos or just relaxing. 907-235-6212

TOURS

BEAR VIEWING

Enjoy a once-in-a-lifetime experience of remote access to bears and other wildlife with [Alaska Bear Adventures](#) (877-522-9247), [Ultimate Safaris Helicopter Tours](#) (907-299-2716), [Smokey Bay Air](#) (907-235-1511), and [Scenic Bear Viewing](#) (907-884-2655)

FISHING CHARTERS



© Beth Mountain Air

See why Homer is considered the halibut capital of Alaska on a guided charter with [Homer Ocean](#)

TOWN INFORMATION

HOMER

Accommodations, Tours, Trails & Attractions

Charters (800-426-6212), or **O'Fish'ial Charters** of Alaska (907-299-6991).

DAY CRUISES

Sightsee Kachemak Bay with **Coldwater Alaska** (907-299-2346) or **Homer Ocean Charters** (800-426-6212).

KAYAK & HIKE

Guided tours and rentals for experienced paddlers. **Just Add Water Adventures** (907-299-8183), **Three Moose Kayak & Guided Glacier Guides** (907-299-1075), and **Homer Ocean Charters** (800-426-6212).

POINTS OF INTEREST

The Homer Spit

This long, narrow finger of land, jutting 4.5 miles into Kachemak Bay is dotted with businesses and numerous recreation opportunities, including fishing, beachcombing, shopping, and boating.

Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies

Take a wildlife cruise with this center to Peterson Bay, on the far side of Kachemak Bay, where you can spend the day with a naturalist, exploring and learning about marine life, geology, climate zones and prehistoric Natives. 907-235-6667



© Salty Dawg Saloon

Salty Dawg Saloon

Originally one of the first cabins built here in 1897, the "Dawg" has regular music performances and also serves light food. 907-235-6718

Pratt Museum

Homer's Pratt Museum is dedicated to showcasing and conserving the art, science, and culture of the Kachemak Bay region. 907-235-8635

TRAILS

HIKES IN TOWN

The 2-mile-long **Diamond Creek Trail** is one of the top trails on the Homer side of Kachemak Bay.



© Diamond Creek Trail

Or head to the **Alaska Islands** and Ocean Visitor Center and hike the 2-mile trail to Beluga Slough. **The Homestead Trail at Rogers Loop** is a 7-mile hike that's excellent for birding and catching a glimpse at the occasional moose. It also offers panoramic views of Cook Inlet and Kachemak Bay.

HIKES IN KACHEMAK BAY STATE PARK (water taxi necessary for access)



The 3.2-mile-long **Grewingk Glacier Trail** is one of the most popular hikes in Kachemak Bay State Park. It's also one of the easiest, as the trail is well maintained. And you can't beat the view of the glacier at the lake.



China Poot Lake Trail

(2.8 miles) Likely the second-most traveled trail in the park, this 2.8-mile trail offers a great day hike for those

spending time in the lagoon. You can start hiking the trail from the ranger station or the trailhead in Halibut Cove Lagoon. The trail traverses up numerous switchbacks to a place called First Lake. On a hot summer day, a soak in this lake can't be beat.

RESTAURANTS



Two Sisters Bakery

Enjoy coffee and fresh-baked goods, views of Bishop's Beach, and the glaciers and mountains across

Kachemak Bay. 907-235-2280; \$\$

Chartroom Restaurant

This hot spot occupies one of the most spectacular waterfront locations in Alaska and features local seafood and individually prepared meals in a full-service, fine-dining, yet family-oriented atmosphere. 907-235-0406; \$\$\$

Cosmic Kitchen

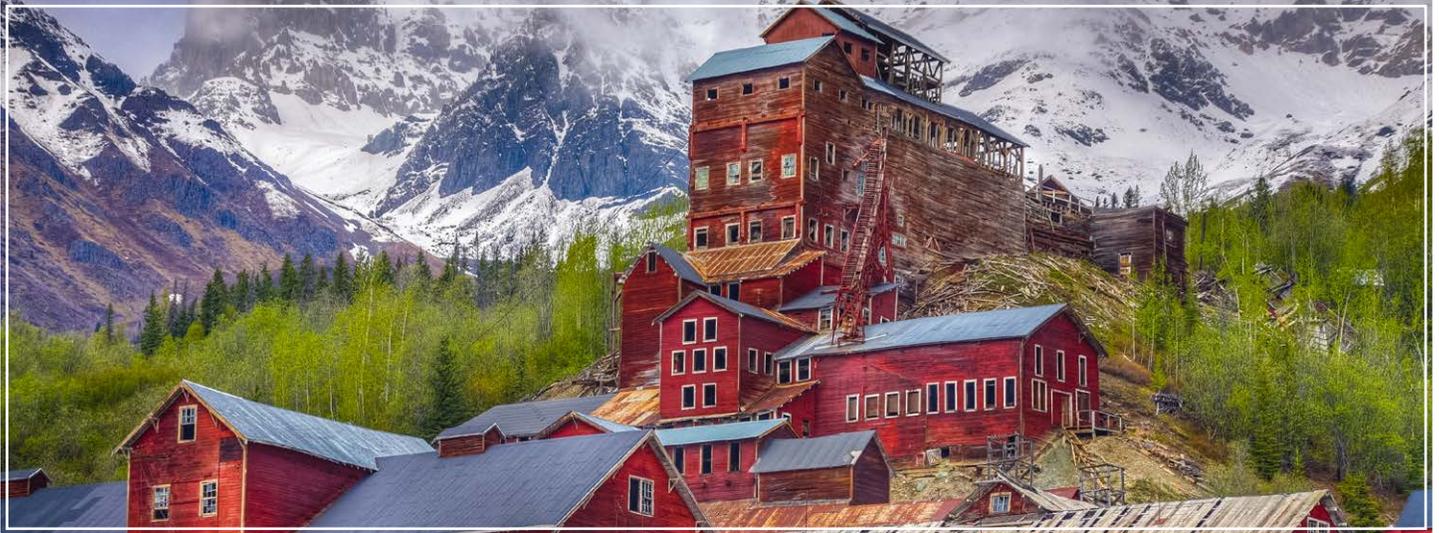
This breakfast and lunch place has a great deck that's tailor made for a sunny day. Also serves espresso. 907-235-6355; \$\$

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907-277-4321 BKAUFMAN@ALASKA.ORG

TOWN INFORMATION
MCCARTHY

Accommodations, Tours, Trails, & Attractions



Ghost town lovers should head to the heart of America's largest national park, Wrangell St. Elias, to visit Kennicott, an old mining village that retains Gold Rush relics, and McCarthy, a sister village 5 miles away. You can see massive old mining buildings that look out over a glacier-carved valley, go for guided hikes on a glacier, and have opportunities for spectacular flightseeing.

HOTELS

Kennicott Glacier Lodge

Alaska's only lodge to overlook a glacier is also a replica of one of Kennicott's famous copper-mining buildings. In other words, it's the perfect place to immerse yourself in history and nature. Set in the heart of a ghost town, the inn is surrounded by the spruce trees and mountains of America's largest national park—Wrangell-St. Elias. Relax out on the deck, which nearly juts out over the Kennicott Glacier, and take in the amazing view. Then enjoy a home-cooked meal and curl up by the fireplace. But don't miss exploring the area around this authentic throwback to Alaska's mining days; tour the historic mill or go on a glacier trek. 907-258-2350

McCarthy Lodge & Ma Johnson's Hotel

Experience authentic Alaska at this hotel in the small town of McCarthy, where history, nature, and local flavor come together. McCarthy may be off the beaten path, but you won't be trading any luxury when you stay here; the 20-room inn features the area's only accommodation and restaurant recommended by Michelin Guide. Rooms showcase real artifacts from this historic area, and the restaurant features local ingredients and an extensive wine list, along with a saloon

that's a favorite of the locals. All this, with the wilds of remote Alaska right outside your door. 907-554-4402

Currant Ridge Cabins

This deluxe, family-run lodge in the remote town of McCarthy is perfect for eco-conscious adventurers who value sustainable living without giving up the comforts of home. In fact, this is the greenest lodge in McCarthy, featuring solar power and fresh-grown vegetables from the garden. Stay in one of six custom-built log cabins and immerse yourself in the Alaskan wilderness—you won't find TVs or wi-fi, but you will enjoy spacious accommodations and private decks from which you can enjoy spectacular views. 907-554-4424

TOURS



© Wrangell Mountain Air

Kennicott Wilderness Guides

Half-, full-, and multi-day hikes in Wrangell St. Elias National Park, along with packrafting tours. 907-554-1070

Wrangell Mountain Air

Transportation to and from McCarthy, plus flightseeing tours. 800-478-1160

McCarthy River Tours

Spend a few hours on a relaxing kayak trip, or try your luck with a class 2 and 3 rapid rafting trip 907-554-1077

Kennicott Mine & Ghost Town Walking Tour

This abandoned copper mining camp is a National Historic Landmark District. Take a self-guided tour ([free on the Alaska app](#)) and see the top sights.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Wrangell Mountains Center

Housed in the old hardware store; stop by and see if any events are being held during your visit. There's a kiosk out front with a schedule that often includes free lectures by visiting biologists, artists, naturalists, and students. 907-554-4464

TOWN INFORMATION

MCCARTHY

Accommodations, Tours, Trails, & Attractions



© Kennicott Museum

McCarthy/Kennicott Museum

Get the inside scoop on McCarthy-Kennicott, including the copper rush that happened between 1900 and 1938. The museum building itself is a piece of history, having once been the railway depot. 907-259-4550

TRAILS



Root Glacier Trail

The main street in Kennicott turns into a well-maintained, 4-mile-long hiking trail just outside of town. This trail winds alongside the Kennicott and Root Glaciers. Hiking it is a great opportunity to experience the grandeur of the Wrangell Mountains.



Wagon Road Trail

This historic trail through the woods between McCarthy and Kennicott was the wagon road when the railroad was still running. You can find the trail by walking up the main road to Kennicott about 10 minutes past the museum. There will be a sign on the left side of the road indicating the start of the wagon road.



Liberty Creek Trail

This 2.5-mile, moderate out-and-back trail is accessible via Liberty Creek Campground, which surrounds a clear creek at the bottom of a beautiful waterfall.

RESTAURANTS

McCarthy Lodge Bistro

The 100-year-old McCarthy Lodge specializes in fresh, local menu selections, including the famed Wild Copper River Red salmon. 907-554-4402

Roadside Potatohead

A local favorite spot serving breakfast, lunch, dinner, and espresso. Grab a filling burrito, wrap, or burger. 907-555-11100

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MAIN STREET MCCARTHY

TOWN INFORMATION
FAIRBANKS

Accommodations, Tours, Trails, & Attractions



The gateway to Alaska's Interior and Arctic regions, Fairbanks is a great base for exploring northern Alaska. You can take day trips by air to exotic towns like Barrow and Nome, or go for a guided drive up the Dalton Highway. The city is also a great spot to experience Alaska's Gold Rush heritage firsthand. And in the summer you'll enjoy endless daylight hours, while in the winter, you'll see vivid displays of the northern lights.

HOTELS

DOWNTOWN HOTELS

In downtown Fairbanks, the relaxing [Taste of Alaska Lodge](#) (907-488-7855) offers scenic comfort and accessibility. [The Wedgewood Resort](#) (907-456-3642) is a beautifully landscaped property in a naturally wooded environment. You'll also find trusted brands like the [Westmark Fairbanks Hotel](#) (907-456-7722) and the [Holiday Inn Express Fairbanks](#) (888-465-4329). Consider the [Bridgewater Hotel](#) (907-452-6661) for an intimate, European inn atmosphere with amenities, or [Sophie Station Suites](#) (907-479-3650) for a modern, family-friendly option.

RIVERFRONT HOTELS

Fairbanks offers several accommodations that offer incredible riverside views.

[Pike's Waterfront Lodge](#) has comfortable accommodations, a view of the Chena River, gardens, and an inviting lobby. 907-456-4500. On the banks of the Chena River, the luxurious 325-room [Fairbanks Princess Riverside Lodge](#) (800-426-0500) feels like a wilderness lodge but is close to downtown. [River's Edge Resort](#) (907-474-0286)

is a collection of private cottages set along the scenic Chena River. [SpringHill Suites by Marriott Fairbanks](#) (907-451-6552) offers views of the river from Downtown Fairbanks.

TOURS



Riverboat Discovery

Climb aboard an authentic Alaskan sternwheeler and take a journey back in time along the Chena and Tanana rivers. 866-479-6673

GOLD PANNING

Hop aboard a narrow-gauge train at [Gold Dredge 8](#) (907-479-6673) stake your claim to gold on this two-hour tour of Gold Dredge 8, outside Fairbanks. At [Gold Daughters](#) (907-374-4749) Your entrance fee provides you with a poke of paydirt with guaranteed gold and lets you pan all day.

DOG SLEDDING

[Black Spruce Dog Sledding](#) (907-371-3467) offers dog sled rides year-round. [Rod's Alaskan Guide Service](#) (907-378-1851) focuses on winter mushing, plus a special aurora dog sledding experience.

ARCTIC TOURS



[Northern Alaska Tour Company](#) (800-474-1986) you can travel above the Arctic Circle to explore this vast area's unique wilderness, culture, and wildlife. [Dalton Highway Car Rentals](#) (907-474-3530) allows independent travelers to take a self-guided drive into the northern reaches of Alaska. Rent vehicles outfitted for the rugged roads north of Fairbanks.

WILDLIFE

At [Fountainhead Wedgewood Wildlife Sanctuary](#)

TOWN INFORMATION

FAIRBANKS

Accommodations, Tours, Trails & Attractions

(907-452-1442) you might see up to 15 different kinds of mammals—beavers, red foxes, flying squirrels, snowshoe hares, moose, and several species of birds. Or get close to Reindeer and take them for a walk at family-owned **Running Reindeer Ranch** (907-455-4998). From mid-August to late September, you can partake in one of Alaska's most exclusive wildlife viewing trips, the Polar Bear Expedition (800-474-1986).



© Fountainhead Wedgwood Wildlife Sanctuary

NORTHERN LIGHTS

Fairbanks is famous for its northern lights viewing experiences. Travel north beyond the Arctic Circle with **Northern Alaska Tour Company** (800-474-1986) on a day or overnight adventure. Or, stay close to town and view the lights from the **Aurora Pointe Activity Center** (907-880-3314).

MUSEUMS

UA Museum of the North

From Alaska native art to polar dinosaurs, everyone will find something interesting on exhibit here. Head to the centerpiece of this museum, the **Rose Berry Alaska Art Gallery**, to see the full spectrum of Alaskan art, from ancient Eskimo ivory carvings to contemporary paintings and sculptures. 907-474-7505



© Fountainhead Antique Auto Museum

Fountainhead Antique Auto Museum

Alaska's road to modernization a century ago was a dramatic journey. On the grounds of Wedgwood Resort, this museum showcases dozens of historically significant pre-World War II automobiles and offers visitors a trip back to Alaska's rugged and exciting formative years. 907-450-2100

Ice Museum

This museum will put you in a winter mood no matter what the summer temperatures are. You'll see several large ice displays and a freezer you can walk into, where it feels like it's 20 degrees below zero. 907-451-8222

Tanana Valley Railroad Museum

Learn about the role of this railroad in Fairbanks's first industry through historical exhibits, interpretive train rides, and on-site restoration. 907-459-7421

TRAILS



Chena Riverwalk

A relaxing, self-paced stroll along the Chena River, through the scenic parks and plazas of historic downtown.

It's best in July and August, when flowers are in full bloom. The path stretches approximately 3.5 miles between Pioneer Park and Airport Way, with longer options available.



Granite Tors Trail

This 15-mile loop is well worth the moderate-to-strenuous hike. This trail provides views of tors, unusually shaped outcroppings formed 70 million to 90 million years ago when molten rock pushed upward and cooled before reaching the surface.



Table Top Mountain Trail

The drive here is easily one of the most scenic in the Interior, and the hike is just as spectacular, providing panoramic views of the White Mountains from the center of the range.



Wickersham Dome Trail

Travel along ridges and above treeline, atop packed dirt and exposed rock, with a panoramic picture of the White Mountains and as far north as the Brooks Range on a clear day. Berry-picking is also popular here in late summer.



UAF Trail System

UAF maintains an in-town trail network for skiing, hiking, snowshoeing, biking, and running that is directly accessible from campus. It's also very popular with dog walkers.

RESTAURANTS



Trackers Bar and Grill

This casual bar and restaurant inside the Fairbanks Princess Lodge offers a full bar, featuring Alaska Distillery spirits and Alaskan beers, which complements a menu of quality pub fare and Alaskan favorites, like fish and chips or smoked salmon chowder. 907-455-4477; \$\$



HooDoo Brewing Company

This brewery offers quick tours (Saturdays at 1pm, 3pm, and 5pm) of the operation, which was inspired by a German method rarely employed by a brewery of this size. 907-459-2337; \$\$



Lavelle's Bistro

Open kitchen, modern art on the walls, great food, and a 4,000-bottle wine list. The seafood and rack of lamb are highlights. 907-450-0555; \$\$\$

Blue Loon

Enjoy live music and a relaxed bar, along with good pizza and sandwiches, and great appetizers like calamari and fried halibut. 907-457-5666; \$\$

Zach's Restaurant

With its warm atmosphere, lush setting, and elegantly rendered Alaskan cuisine, it's not hard to see why this hotel-based restaurant attracts locals and travelers alike. 907-479-3650; \$\$

TOWN INFORMATION

TALKEETNA

Accommodations, Tours, Trails, & Attractions



This charming pioneer town, with its block-long Main Street, sits halfway between Anchorage and Denali and offers tons of adventures, as well as great views of Mt. McKinley. Talkeetna is also home to the convergence of three major glacial rivers, which makes for great excursions, whether by air on a flightseeing or zipline tour, by guided hike, or by jet boat tour or rafting trip.

HOTELS

Mt. McKinley Princess Wilderness Lodge

Mt. Denali is right outside your window when you stay at this luxurious modern wilderness lodge within Denali State Park on the Chulitna River. 800-426-0500

Denali Fireside Cabins & Suites

Homey cabins within walking distance of Talkeetna's activities. The facility is sparkling clean and beautifully decorated. 907-733-2600

Caribou Lodge Alaska

Fly-in wilderness lodge with individual cabins on a private lake in the Talkeetna Mountains, southeast of Denali National Park. 907-733-2163

TOURS

Alaska Nature Guides

Takes hikers through Denali State Park, always listed as one of Alaska's top hiking destinations. 907-733-1237

Hurricane Turn Train

Operates from mid-May to mid-September,

Thursdays through Sundays, between Talkeetna and Hurricane Gulch. You can either take a scenic round-trip journey or ask to be let off at whichever mile marker you choose. 907-265-2494

Denali Zipline Tours

Set in the forested ridges above the Talkeetna River Valley, this is the farthest-north canopy tour in North America. On these nine ziplines and three suspension bridges, you can get up close to the birch, cottonwood, and spruce trees of the boreal forest. 907-733-3988



© Mahay's Jet Boat Adventures

Mahay's Jet Boat Adventures

Explore the expansive Susitna River in the comfort of a fast jet boat. Several tours available. 907-733-2223

Alaska Farm Tours

Tour working farms and sample locally made and grown cuisine. 907-519-7067



© K2 Aviation

FLIGHTSEEING

Choose a once-in-a-lifetime flightseeing tour around Mt. McKinley and the Alaska range with **K2 Aviation Talkeetna** (800-764-2291), or splurge for a glacier landing with **Talkeetna Air Taxi** (907-733-2218).

FISHING



© Hell Bent Fishing Charters

Wander the bank and cast for Silvers, Chums, Pinks, and Sockeyes, or troll from behind the boat as well as shore fish for the big Kings with **Phantom TriRiver Charters** (907-733-2400). Or combine a float and fishing trip with **Hell Bent Fishing Charters** (907-715-8683).

TOWN INFORMATION

TALKEETNA

Accommodations, Tours, Trails & Attractions

RAFTING

Enjoy some of the best views of Mt. McKinley on a float along the Susitna River with the [Denali View Raft Adventure Tour](#) (907-957-1391) or [Talkeetna River Guides](#) (800-353-2677).



© Denali View Raft Adventure Tour

POINTS OF INTEREST

Kahiltna Birchworks: Alaska Birch Syrup & Wild Harvest Products

Sample delicious syrup and sweets made from birch trees - like maple but not maple -at Kahiltna Birchworks in Talkeetna—the world’s largest producer of birch syrup 907-733-1409

Talkeetna Historical Society Museum

Learn about this rural town’s native, gold mining, and aviation history. The museum is housed in a little red schoolhouse and has a number of smaller, old railroad buildings. 907-733-2487

Fairview Inn

Opened in 1923 to accommodate travelers on the

new Alaska Railroad, this hotel is today made up of six recently renovated rooms, as well as a bar and live music venue. 907-733-2423



© Fairview Inn

TRAILS



Talkeetna Lakes Park

This recreation area is just a mile and a half from town, but it feels much farther. With deep woods, several lakes, and a 3.5-mile walking trail, it’s a great place to hike, run, canoe, fish, or look for wildlife.



Talkeetna Riverfront Park

Walk to the end of Main Street and find yourself at the confluence of three glacial rivers: the Talkeetna, Susitna, and Chulitna join to form the “Big Susitna River” here.



Chase Trail to Curry

Take an adventure: hike the 20-mile-long Chase Trail to see what’s left of a luxury hotel built as a layover for the railroad journey between Seward and Fairbanks.

RESTAURANTS



Talkeetna Roadhouse

History, fun, and massive portions of food come together at this institution, built over 3 years starting in 1914. Try the sourdough hotcakes, the Roadhouse’s signature. 907-733-1351; \$\$



ALASKA NATURE GUIDES

TOWN INFORMATION

SEWARD

Accommodations, Tours, Trails, & Attractions



The gateway to Alaska's Interior and Arctic regions, Fairbanks is a great base for exploring northern Alaska. You can take day trips by air to exotic towns like Barrow and Nome, or go for a guided drive up the Dalton Highway. The city is also a great spot to experience Alaska's Gold Rush heritage firsthand. And in the summer you'll enjoy endless daylight hours, while in the winter, you'll see vivid displays of the northern lights.

HOTELS

Several in-town accommodations are available, including the [Seward Harbor 360 Hotel](#) (907-865-6224) which features Harbor views and you can hop a day cruise right from the hotel. Enjoy some seclusion and privacy at the [Adobe Wells Cabins](#) (907-224-6788) while still having close access to Exit Glacier and other day activities.

WILDERNESS LODGES

The [Kenai Fjords Glacier Lodge](#) (800-334-8730), which lies within a 1,700-acre, Native-owned wildlife sanctuary in the heart of Kenai Fjords National Park, and the central lodge and 16 guest cabins have full views of Pedersen Glacier. To reach [Orca Island Cabins](#) (888-494-5846), leave from the Seward Boat Harbor and ferry out to a private one-acre island and remote peninsula 9 miles southeast of Seward in Humpy Cove. [Shearwater Cove](#) (907-750-8095) offers four "unplugged" yurts, with queen-size beds, linens, shower, heater, kitchenette, and unlimited access to kayaks. Or head to the fly-in only wilderness chalets at [Johnstone Adventure Lodge](#) (907-290-1958), situated on a strip of land facing the ocean and backed by a glacial lake.

TOURS

[Stoney Creek Canopy Adventures](#)

This three-hour tour—the only canopy tour on the Kenai Peninsula—combines ziplines, rappels, and sky bridges, with panoramic views of Mount Marathon, Resurrection Peaks, and plenty of other gorgeous scenery. 907-224-3662



© Seavey's Iditarod Sled Dog Tours

DOG SLEDDING

Visit Iditarod champion Mitch Seavey's homestead at [Seavey's Iditarod Sled Dog Tours](#) (907-224-8607), home to three generations of Iditarod mushers. Experience an exciting two-mile dog-sled ride, tour the racing kennel, meet the dogs, cuddle adorable husky puppies, and listen to stories from the Iditarod trail. Or, Iditarod Finisher's Travis Beals and Sarah Stokay at [Turning Heads Kennel](#)

(907-362-4354). In addition to cart rides, they offer helicopter transport so you can dogsled on a glacier!

DAY CRUISES

[Resurrection Bay Day Cruises](#)

Take to the waters of Resurrection Bay and Kenai Fjords National Park on a wildlife day cruise with [Kenai Fjords Tours](#) (877-777-4051) or [Major Marine](#) (800-764-7300).

FISHING

Or try your hand at salmon or halibut fishing with experienced Alaskan guides at [Profish-n-Sea Charters](#) (888-385-1312), [Fish with Hill](#) (907-321-8905), or [Alaska Northern Outfitters](#) (907-224-2665).

KAYAKING

For a closer, quieter, and more peaceful version of the Alaskan glacier and wildlife cruise, travel by sea kayak with [Sunny Cove Sea Kayaking](#) (800-770-9119) or [Kayak Adventures Worldwide](#) (907-224-3960).

TOWN INFORMATION

SEWARD

Accommodations, Tours, Trails & Attractions

POINTS OF INTEREST



© Alaska SeaLife Center

Alaska SeaLife Center

This 115,000-square-foot facility was built with funds from the 1989 Exxon Valdez Oil Spill and serves to remind visitors of the importance of understanding and maintaining Alaska's marine ecosystem. Watch a 2,000-pound Steller sea lion through underwater viewing windows, see puffins diving in natural habitat, and check out harbor seals resting on rocky beaches. 907-224-6300

Town Mural Walk

The beautiful seaside town of Seward was officially designated "Mural Capital of Alaska" with the completion of the town's 12th colorful mural. This achievement resulted from the enthusiasm and energy of a group of local artists and art lovers.

Visit Exit Glacier [audio guide](#)

You can hike right up to Seward's Exit Glacier and feel the dense blue ice while listening to it crackle. Walk the lower trail to get a good photo in front of the glacier face. Or choose the more challenging 7-mile round-trip Harding Icefield Trail.

Seward Chamber of Commerce

Have your questions answered and learn about Seward at the Chamber of Commerce and Visitor's Center. It's centrally located and open seven days a week during summer months, so it's easy to stop by for a quick question or to plan an entire vacation itinerary. 907-224-8051

TRAILS



Mount Marathon Trail

This mountain famously hosts a marathon every 4th of July. Some 800 people participate in

a 3-mile, round-trip foot race that takes them up Mt. Marathon's 3,022 feet.



Lost Lake Trail

Also called the Primrose Trail at the north end, this 7-mile hike begins in a beautiful rainforest and takes you up to multiple beautiful lakes in high meadows, with snow-clad mountains all around you.



Caines Head Trail

This hiking area is rich with beach trails, glaciers, bald eagles, and World War II history, and this 4.5-mile trail is just one example. Depart from the end of the road in Seward, and for the first three miles you'll follow the Tonsina Point Trail, which uses the remnants of an old wagon track. You'll then zigzag down a hillside through an ancient rainforest hanging with moss and ferns. At the bottom, you'll cross a salmon-filled creek that's popular with the local eagles.



Tonsina Point Trail

This old logging trail near Miller's Landing, about 3 miles round-trip, lets you spot dog salmon coming in and salmon berries sprouting along the hillside. It's a very pretty place where you can access the beach, make a fire, or have a picnic.



Meridian and Grayling Lakes

These popular trails lead to two beautiful, pristine lakes. Bring a fishing pole and angle for stocked trout in Meridian Lake or grayling in Grayling Lake. No matter which lake you're headed to, you'll start out on a single trail, then come to a fork where you'll have to decide which lake to visit. You'll find the off-highway parking lot for the trailhead at around mile 14.

RESTAURANTS



Ray's Waterfront

Overlooking the harbor, ocean & mountains, Ray's is a local institution for seafood dinners. And, since the fishing boats unload right on the dock, the seafood couldn't be fresher. 907-224-5606; \$\$

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TOWN INFORMATION

COOPER LANDING

Accommodations, Tours, Trails, & Attractions



Some would say Cooper Landing is the heart of the Kenai Peninsula, both literally and figuratively. Located in the middle of the peninsula, the small town is an especially fertile fishing spot. You'll find world-class fishing for salmon and rainbow trout, as well as a lot of the great recreation options that the peninsula is known for, like horseback riding, rafting, and hiking.

HOTELS

Alaska Heavenly Lodge

This is a rare Alaskan gem: an intimate, fly-in lodge that's also affordable and convenient since it's on the road system. It's perfect for families or group fishing trips. Experience all the seclusion and luxury you'll find in fly-in lodges without the high cost. The three hand-hewn log cabins hold a maximum of 25 people, so you'll always feel secluded in this relaxed environment. And you'll find a main lodge with a full kitchen, dining room table, comfy sitting area with a wood-burning fireplace, loft library, and deck overlooking the Kenai River. And you don't have to give up any conveniences: there's wi-fi, flat-screen televisions, and a Jacuzzi. 866-595-2012

Kenai Princess Wilderness Lodge

Enjoy Alaska in style at this 86-room luxury lodge that sits on the fish-filled Kenai River and features endless views over a vast valley. The lodge has outdoor hot tubs, vaulted ceilings made of naturally finished wood, cozy sitting areas with wood-burning stoves, and private porches, making it feel like you have the place to yourself. The surrounding area is famous for fishing, but you'll also want to explore the glaciers, marine life, and mountains of the vast

Kenai Fjords National Park. Take a wildlife-viewing cruise or just go for a stroll along the lodge's own nature trail. 800-426-0500

Kenai Riverside Lodge

Intimate and authentic, this small lodge feels remote but is easy to reach. With just 16 cabins set on the Kenai River and surrounded by snow-capped mountains, it's the place to connect with the Alaskan wilderness. You'll also connect with fellow travelers; meals are served family style, creating a warm environment. Share tales of your day hiking, fishing, or strolling the lodge's self-guided trail. After dinner, experience a naturalist program, enjoy a wood-fired sauna, or take in the great views on the riverside deck by the fire pit. 800-478-4100

Kenai Backcountry Lodge

Rafting is the only way to reach this remote Alaskan lodge, but it's well worth the effort. The intimate lodge offers a real taste of the backcountry, with just four log cabins and five Yukon-style cabins featuring tongue-and-groove walls; propane heat and light; and two cozy double beds handmade with peeled spruce logs. The one-time hunting cabin, which dates to 1935, is now a great place for excursions, with experienced, passionate guides

committed to eco-tourism and giving you a real flavor for wild Alaska. 800-334-8730

TOURS

FISHING



© Alaska Wildland Adventures

With [Kenai Riverside Fishing](#) (800-478-4100) Professional Alaska Wildland Adventures guides are experts in fly-fishing, drift fishing, and back trolling, so you can fish with confidence from the boat, the bank, or both. With [Alaska River Adventures](#) (907-595-2000) angle from May through September, targeting salmon and trout.

RAFTING

Alaska Wildland Adventures pioneered floating the mellow, turquoise Kenai River, and has operated

TOWN INFORMATION

COOPER LANDING

Accommodations, Tours, Trails, & Attractions

continuously for more than three decades. Join [Kenai River Adventures](#) (907-783-2928) for a serene two-hour float, or take on a 7-hour adventure, complete with fun, Class II+ rapids and a cruise on a glacial lake. [Alaska River Adventures](#) (907-595-2000) offers half day trips on the upper Kenai, and full day floats through a 14-mile stretch of river, plus a full day that also includes panning for gold!

POINTS OF INTEREST

Kenai Visitor and Cultural Center

An impressive permanent collection of Native Alaskan and local history artifacts and art exhibits, as well as the largest collection of mounted bald eagles in North America. 907-283-1991



© KMTA National Heritage Area Guide

KMTA National Heritage Area Guide

audio guide

The Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area is a place where valleys, mountains, communities, and people tell the larger story of a wild place and a rugged frontier. This audio guide gives you the inside scoop on its fascinating history.

Skilak Lake Road Scenic Drive

This 18-mile-long gravel loop is the premier wildlife-viewing area on the Kenai Peninsula, and you'll get spectacular views of lakes and glaciers. Don't forget to stop and explore all the nature and wildlife around you!

TRAILS



Kenai River Trail

This 2.5-mile trail follows the Kenai River through the surrounding forests. It's a great trek for those who want to fish when they get to their destination. And while you'll find lots of salmon, you'll also find lots of other anglers.



Skilak Lookout Trail

This 4-mile hike is easily broken up into three short day hikes to viewpoints above Skilak Lake. These three trails

climb to fine views of the Skilak Lake country and the Kenai Mountains. Skilak Lookout, directly above the lake, is a longer hike; Bear Mountain is a shorter hike with a good view, but it's farther from the lake; and Vista, farther west, looks out on the lake and the distant, wetland-dotted lowlands of the Kenai Peninsula.



Crescent Lake Trail

This 6.5-mile trail makes for a good day hike for the whole family, alternating between open meadows and

forests filled with moose, goats, and bears.

RESTAURANTS



Rafter's Lounge

A fly fishing-themed bar with a deck overlooking the Kenai River at the Princess Wilderness Lodge. The bar has

four Alaskan beers on tap, a selection of 52 wines, and a full bar. The pub fare includes burgers and sandwiches, as well as entrée salads and of course plenty of seafood. 907-595-1425; \$\$

Eagle's Crest Restaurant

Located on-site at the Kenai Princess Wilderness Lodge, this restaurant features a wood-burning fireplace and spectacular views of the Kenai River and Mount Cecil Rhodes, create an inviting atmosphere. Serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner. 907-595-1425; \$\$



Gwin's Lodge and Restaurant

This historic log roadhouse, restaurant, and bar were built in 1952 by cutting,

hauling, and peeling spruce logs in true pioneer fashion. Stop in for a fantastic Alaska-size meal or for information about area activities.

907-595-1266; \$\$

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TOWN INFORMATION
VALDEZ

Accommodations, Tours, Trails, & Attractions



This Gold Rush town, located at the head of a fjord on the eastern side of Prince William Sound, is well known for the 1989 Exxon oil tanker spill. Today, though, you'll only see the wonders that the Sound is known for: a wide range of wildlife, from sea otters and puffins to humpback whales, bald eagles flying overhead, and tidewater glaciers visible from a day cruise or sea kayaking trip.

HOTELS

Consider several convenient accommodations within the coastal town of Valdez. You'll find the trusted brand [Best Western Valdez Harbor Inn](#) (907-835-3434) as well as other options, including the [Keystone Hotel](#) (907-835-3851), the [Mountain Sky Hotel and Suites](#) (907-835-4445), the [Glacier Sound Inn](#) (907-835-4485), or the [Robe Lake Lodge](#) (907-831-2339), which is open year-round.

TOURS



Stan Stephens Cruises

This family-run company operating out of Valdez will show you the best glaciers, with great customer service along the way. On any given trip, you'll likely see huge rafts of sea otters, horned and tufted puffins, cormorants, humpback whales, or

even bald eagles. Stan Stephens offers two daily tours, one of which features Columbia Glacier, the largest tidewater glacier in Southcentral Alaska. 866-867-1297

Anadyr Adventures Sea Kayaking

Anadyr has carefully tailored its trips to offer an option for everyone. Never kayaked before? Try the Valdez Glacier Tour for a relaxing paddle on a lake with an easy hike to the glacier. Got a six-year-old that can't wait to get out there? At 3-4 hours, the Duck Flats tour offers a mix of wildlife (sea lions and otters are common) and Valdez history. And if you want the comfort of a bed with remote rugged views, then a mothership or lodge-based experience is for you. 907-835-2814

POINTS OF INTEREST

Crooked Creek information Site

This information Center and salmon-viewing platform are located on the outskirts of Valdez at Mile 0.5 of the Richardson Highway. Pink and chum salmon return to this clear water stream each summer to spawn, with peak numbers seen in mid-August. Occasionally, black or brown bear can be observed feasting on the returning fish.



Old Valdez Town Site

This was the original port and city of Valdez, which was moved to its current location 4 miles down the road after being devastated by the 1964 Good Friday Earthquake.

Valdez Museum & Historical Archive

The museum portrays the community's unique and colorful history from European exploration in the 1700s to contemporary oil transportation. Other exhibits depict the effects of the 1964 earthquake and the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill on this small Prince William Sound community. 907-835-2764

Maxine & Jesse Whitney Museum

One of the world's largest collections of Native Alaskan art and artifacts. Displays include Trophy Class Taxidermy mounts, Native Alaskan dolls,

TOWN INFORMATION
VALDEZ

Accommodations, Tours, Trails, & Attractions

beadwork, baskets, masks, archaeological artifacts, and a large collection of ivory carvings and tools.
907-834-1690

TRAILS



Bridal Veil Falls Trail

This two-mile-long hike is a restored section of the Trans-Alaska Military Packtrain Trail that leads to the first glacier-free route from Valdez to the interior of Alaska.

Solomon Gulch Trail

About four miles in, there is a fish hatchery on this trail, created to provide a close look at the

hatchery's dam, lake, and aqueducts. It also offers a good view of the Port of Valdez.

RESTAURANTS

The Potato (907-835-3058) is open summer only and serves up everything potato, plus wraps, pitas, and po'boys. **\$**

Fat Mermaid (907-835-3000) is popular for views of the marine, and casual eats like pizza and fried seafood. **\$\$**

Mike's Palace (907-835-2365) serves up pasta, hamburgers, pizza and more. **\$\$\$**

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© Pamela Ligori



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TRIP PLANNING & GENERAL INFORMATION

WHEN TO VISIT

Driving throughout Alaska can be one of the most freeing and awe-inspiring experiences of your visit. Choose from hundreds of miles of roads spanning from the South-Central coastlines up into the interior of the Arctic Circle, or to the more off-the-beaten-path towns like McCarthy and Glennallen. Some of the most beautiful places to see in Alaska are tucked away and worth the extra planning to get there. You may also be surprised at how accessible and pristine many areas of the state are by car. Use these tips and tricks to take to the Alaskan roads like a seasoned traveler and discover what incredible sights and experiences are just beyond the highway.

When to Visit

Visitors often ask: When is the best month to visit Alaska? You can't go wrong visiting Alaska anytime between May 10 and September 15. The days are long, nature is in full bloom, and the air is alive with energy.

Alaska Summer Visitor Season

Most tours operate mid-May to mid-September, with the exception of those into Denali National Park (mid-June to end of August). Peak season is mid-June to mid-August. Before and after, some day tours and hotels offer "shoulder season" discounts of 10-25%.

Alaska Daylight

June 21 is the longest day of the year, with 19 hours of daylight in Anchorage, 22 in Fairbanks, and 18 in Southeast. But from early May through September, days are considerably longer than at lower latitudes.

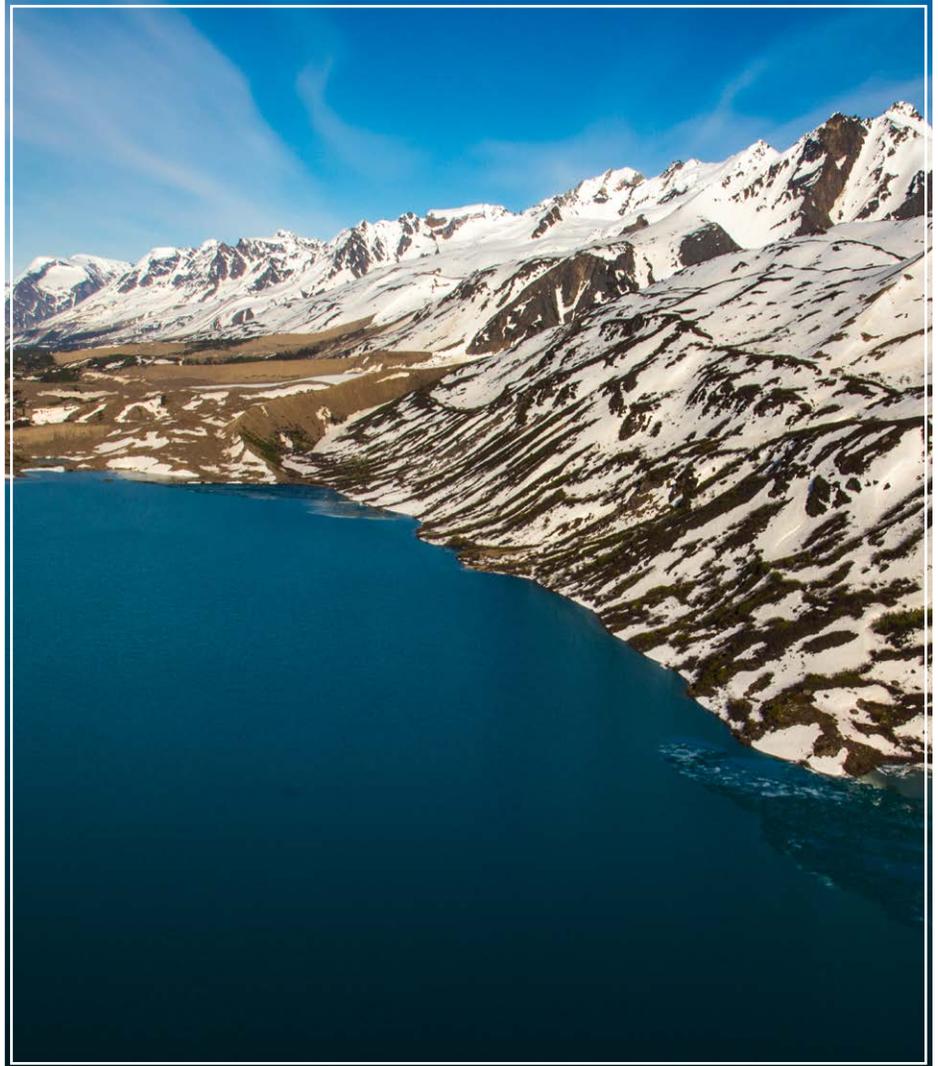
Alaska's sky is light nearly all night long from late May to late July (unless you're out and about at 3am). And it's light past 10pm for another month on either side of that. Use our Alaska daylight calculator to find out when the sun will set during your trip.

Rain

On average, Alaska's summers are slightly rainier than the rest of the U.S. But May is dry, with only a 25% chance of measurable rain on any given day. Alaska gets rainier as the summer progresses. By August, the chance of rain is just over 50%. Compare Alaska's rainfall to your hometown.

Temperatures

You'll find Alaska's summer temperatures surprisingly pleasant. Daytime highs range from 60°F - 80°F. Nighttime lows are refreshingly cool, dipping into the 40's - 50's. May and September are 5° - 10° cooler. However, temperatures vary wildly depending on which region of Alaska you plan to visit.



So When's the Best Season to Visit Alaska?

Put it all together, and we peg June 15 - July 15 as the best time to visit Alaska. But not everyone can visit during that month window, and that's no problem. Alaska weather is not predictable. You can come in August and bask in sunshine or in June and face "horizontal rain" (driving rain plus strong winds). Alaskans have learned not to let weather interfere with their plans—or mood. The trick is to know how to dress and what to wear in Alaska. Plus, we remind ourselves: if the weather were better, it wouldn't stay Alaska for long; it would start to look more like Los Angeles.

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HOW MANY DAYS?

You can have an epic Alaska adventure in a long weekend—many of our friends and guests do. But of course, the longer you stay, the more you can explore and really get to know this state. A week or two gives you the chance to discover small roadside communities and off-the-beaten-path parks.

Two to four weeks is not too long....even if you saw a million acres a day, it would take you more than a year to see all of Alaska! Here's what you can expect to do if you have:

4-5 DAYS

Fly into Anchorage or a town in Southeast Alaska and rent a car so you have to wait on train or bus schedules. You can easily do 2-3 excursions per day—for example:

Fish & Flightsee Go fishing in the morning and flightsee over magnificent mountains in the afternoon.

Cruise
Take a half-day cruise (you'll see more glaciers and marine wildlife than most people see on a week-long conventional cruise), then enjoy a

fresh seafood dinner that evening.

Try a Soft Adventure Hike, river raft, sea kayak, dogsled, zipline, experience native culture...all these and more lie within a 2-hour drive from Anchorage.

Take a 2-Hour Drive Meet the locals and experience life in a unique small town—Seward, Talkeetna, or Glacier View—and spend a night (or two). If you start your trip around the Inside Passage, hop an inter-island ferry or small commuter flight to experience smaller towns.



7 DAYS

Take a week and you'll have enough time for one relaxed land tour or cruise that take you to some of Alaska's most popular spots. This includes most group tours as well as flexible land packages (self-drive or by rail/coach). Here are some options.

Get the Best of Land and Sea Combine the glaciers and marine wildlife of Kenai Fjords with the interior wildlife, mountains, and tundra of Denali National Park. Catch the culture and nightlife scene in Anchorage and experience small town Alaska in Talkeetna. See an itinerary for this trip.

Take a 7-Day Cruise Sail round-trip from Seattle or Vancouver, or go one way across the Gulf of Alaska, ending near Anchorage. Better yet, fly to Alaska and take a 4- to 7-day small-ship cruise. You'll spend all your time in Alaska

and explore smaller ports and wildlife hot spots where big ships can't go.

Drive off the Beaten Path Rent a car and drive the gorgeous Glenn Highway, then continue to McCarthy-Kennicott. Spend 2-3 nights there while exploring Wrangell St. Elias. It's North America's biggest national park, yet it has absolutely no crowds. . .this is the Alaska you came to see! See an itinerary for this trip.

Have Wilderness Lodge Experiences Spend 2-3 nights at both a coastal lodge and a lodge in the interior. On the coast, you can walk the beach, kayak to a glacier, and hike mountain trails while looking for whales, eagles, coastal bears, and sea otters. Inland, go to a bear-viewing lodge or enjoy hiking from a lodge in a wilderness area like Denali National Park or the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. See a small group itinerary of this trip.



HOW MANY DAYS?

10 DAYS

This is a very popular vacation length, and no wonder: 10 days is enough time to combine a cruise with a land tour and experience both sides of Alaska. Trips of this length usually include a whirlwind tour of some of Alaska's popular interior and Southcentral destinations, plus a 7-day cruise. Here are some things to consider.

Take a Small Ship An alternative to the large-ship cruise and land tour would be to fly into Anchorage and combine an independent land tour with a small-ship cruise in Prince William Sound. Get a similar experience with a small ship and lodge package in Southeast Alaska.

Go All Mainland Fly round-trip to Alaska and spend all your time in the Southcentral and Interior region. A 7-day trip may allow adequate time to visit 2 national parks, but a 10-

day vacation allows you to immerse yourself in those destinations. Along with parks like Denali and Kenai Fjords, you can spend 2–3 nights at wilderness lodge in either location. Or combine 2 or 3 wilderness lodges and spend your entire vacation immersed in the Alaskan wilderness.

Get Off the Beaten Path Another option is to choose one region (like Southcentral) and take the extra time to explore more off-the-beaten-path destinations. Stay at intimate roadside adventure lodges, where you'll meet local Alaskans and fellow travelers. On a 10-day self-drive tour, you could combine 3–4 different roadside adventure lodges: one emphasizing glaciers, another fishing and hiking, and another history and culture. Passage, hop an inter-island ferry or small commuter flight to experience smaller towns.

Take a Relaxed Group or Alaska Railroad Tour See the highlights without rushing. You can incorporate more railroad travel into your itinerary (the Alaska Railroad operates on a set schedule and takes 1–3 hours more than driving). If you don't mind traveling at someone else's pace, the views can be rewarding and you don't have to worry about navigating.

See the Railbelt, Fairbanks, and the Arctic With 10 days, you can comfortably include Fairbanks in your itinerary. And from there, you can take a 1- or 2-night overnight with Northern Alaska Tour Company to any number of Arctic destinations where you'll visit an Alaska bush community for an in-depth experience of Alaska history and native culture. history and culture. Passage, hop an inter-island ferry or small commuter flight to experience smaller towns.

12-14 DAYS

Spend more time and you'll not only see more but have more varied experiences. And two full weeks is enough to slip into an "Alaska state of mind." You'll slow down, relax, and appreciate each experience more, because you won't be worried about rushing to squeeze everything in. Here are some options.

Do a Cruise and Land Tour This is another popular length of time for cruise plus land tours. Instead of the whirlwind land tour you get on a 10-day trip, you'll have more time to explore all

the highlights of land and sea.

Go Small Ship + Railbelt Explore less-visited towns, glaciers, and wildlife attractions on an Inside Passage small-ship cruise. Then fly to Anchorage and join a small-group land tour that will take you to wilderness lodges.

Stay on the Mainland Fly into Anchorage and spend 2 full weeks experiencing all that Southcentral and Interior Alaska have to offer. You could easily spend a week on the Kenai

Peninsula in the coastal towns of Seward and Homer going fishing, taking day cruises, and staying at roadside adventure lodges or remote wilderness lodges. Then head north, where you'll have plenty of time to see Denali National Park and the small town of Talkeetna. Next, visit Fairbanks and take a tour of the Arctic; or, instead of Fairbanks, head east towards Wrangell-St. Elias National Park.

3-4 WEEKS

This is a chance to really get to know Alaska. Spending a month is popular with overseas visitors who have flown a long way and want to see two or three of Alaska's regions, along with the Yukon or Canadian Rockies.

Combine The Most Popular Itineraries: This is the perfect length of time to take a 7-day cruise, a 10–12 day land tour covering the entire Railbelt, see the Arctic, and visit two wilderness lodges.

8 WEEKS

Something magical happens when you commit this much of your life to Alaska — she gives back in ways you could never foresee and you can have the expedition of a lifetime.

[Read about one traveler we worked with to plan an 8-week trip](#)

ALASKA ON A BUDGET

The same wilderness that makes Alaska unique also means you have to think about your Alaska budget differently from other destinations. Some of Alaska's most dramatic sights can only be accessed by plane or boat, and most unique experiences require expert guides and gear (river rafting, glacier hiking, dog sledding).

Unlike resort or city vacations where your hotel choice can define your experience, you'll want to reserve more of your Alaska travel budget for Alaska day tours that let you explore the otherwise inaccessible wilderness.

ALASKA DAY TOURS & ACTIVITIES

Day tour costs range from as little as \$80 for a 2-hour raft trip to \$650 for an all-day, fly-out bear-viewing safari. Is it really worth it? We think so.

If you can afford it, we don't think you'll regret any of the recommendations on Alaska.org. But watch our day tour video previews so you can decide for yourself. And, if your budget is limited, review our cost-cutting strategies and ways to effectively discount your Alaska vacation.

WHAT TO BUDGET FOR DIFFERENT TOURS

Tour/Activity	Budget	Length	Value
Fixed-Wing Flightseeing	\$150 to \$350	1 to 3 hr	Highest
Helicopter Flightseeing	\$250 to \$400	1 to 2 hr	Medium*
Helicopter Flightseeing and Glacier Dogsledding	\$350	2 hr	Medium*
Glacier and Wildlife Cruise	\$60 to \$150	2 to 8 hr	Highest
Rafting or Kayaking	\$80 to \$150	2 to 4 hr	Highest
Bear Viewing	\$400 to \$650	4 to 8 hr	High**
Fly-In Fishing (Guided)	\$350 to \$400	Full Day	Varies****
Ocean or River Fishing Charter	\$135 to \$250	½ or Full Day	Medium
Museums and Cultural Attractions	\$10 to \$35	2+ hr	Varies
Fly-In Wilderness Lodge	\$100 to \$1200 per night	Days	High**
Boat-In Wilderness Lodges***	\$250 to \$500 per night	Days	High**
Roadside Adventure Lodges	\$150 - \$350 per night	Days	High

Note:

* Helicopters are more expensive to operate and the tours are shorter.

** Expensive, but if you can afford it, unique and memorable.

*** Lodges across the Bay from Homer or Kenai Backcountry Lodge

**** Varies based on crowds and fishing conditions. But the flight in is always special

ALASKA LODGING

Unlike day tours, many visitors consider Alaska lodging to be one of the least compelling values of an Alaska vacation. Alaska hotels are really just a place to sleep (except wilderness lodges), and yet they can be pricey.

But don't feel gouged—it's just the laws of economics. Alaska hotels need to recover 365 days of costs in a 120-day season.

Expect to pay \$150 – \$175 for a basic hotel room in most Alaska destinations. Luxury Alaska hotels run \$200 – \$250 a night. The difference is larger rooms, better location, and more amenities (restaurants, health club, business center, etc.)

One way to reduce costs is to stay at Alaska B&B's, which can cost \$100 – \$175 per night, depending on room size and whether you have a private bathroom. In addition, you'll meet real Alaskans and get their friendly advice on things to do. The Alaska B&B's listed on alaska.org are all great finds, with great decor, rooms, and hosts.



ALASKA ON A BUDGET

How To Save \$1,500 On Your Alaska Vacation

If you want to see Alaska on a budget—you can! Take a few of the higher-value day tours listed below, then rent a car and create your own adventures. It's easy to do in Alaska: the most famous Alaskan adventures ever done were on a shoestring budget.



© Alaska Wildland Adventures



© Alaska Native Heritage Center

LODGING Save \$50 – \$100 per night by staying at less expensive hotels or B&B's. Or, for the truly hardcore, bring a tent and sleeping bag.

ALASKA TRANSPORTATION Save \$100+ by using an Alaska car rental rather than riding buses and the Alaska Railroad, especially if you're a party of two or more.

HIGH VALUE DAY TOURS Alaska glacier cruises, rafting, hiking, and museums offer great value for what you'll see and their length. Fixed-wing flightseeing is \$150+ for a short tour, but so unique and memorable we still recommend you do it.

FISHING CHARTERS Save \$225 by doing an ocean or river fishing charter rather than a fly-in.

FISHING LODGES Rather than stay at a high-end fishing lodge, rent a public use cabin with good fishing for under \$40 per night for up to 7 nights (plus the cost of getting there)

GLACIERS Save \$350+ by visiting a roadside glacier rather than a helicopter tour.

NATIVE CULTURE Save \$450 by visiting museums and cultural centers rather than flying to Kotzebue or Barrow.

SHOULDER SEASON Visit Alaska before June 13 or after August 20 for 10 – 25% discounts on some tours and lodging.

ALASKA BEAR VIEWING Save \$350+ by hoping to see bears from a distance on a Denali Park Road Tour rather than taking a fly-in bear viewing tour for guaranteed, up-close viewing. However, if you want to splurge big on one thing, treat yourself to fly-in bear viewing. Justify the expense as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.



MORE BUDGET TIPS FROM BOB

PICK ONE OR TWO REGIONS TO VISIT

While every region is distinct, each offers most everything you came to Alaska to do: go flightseeing, bearviewing, fishing, hiking, see glaciers, check out native culture. Alaska to do: go flightseeing, bearviewing, fishing, hiking, see glaciers, check out native culture. Alaska to do: go flightseeing, bearviewing, fishing, hiking, see glaciers, check out native culture.

DON'T OVERBOOK

Even if your first instinct is to rush around and try to see everything, don't. Many of Alaska's best moments aren't ones you can plan for, so leave time and flexibility in your schedule. You'll want the time to pull over and watch a moose amble along the roadway; the time to ponder Mt. McKinley and the endless Alaska Range as it peeks through the clouds; the time to chat with locals you meet along the way. Alaska is as much a state of mind as it is a place.

ALASKA PACKING LIST

PACK FOR A VARYING CLIMATE



Packing for a trip to Alaska can quickly get overwhelming: do you need shorts, a ski cap, or both?

The answer is both—and then some. Here are our suggestions on what to pack—based on what we’ve done, and what we know works in our famously varying climate:

COMING BETWEEN MAY AND SEPTEMBER? THINK LAYERS

Alaska is a pretty casual place, so our “dress code” is not about fashion so much as being comfortable, so that you can enjoy each day to the fullest, no matter the weather. That’s why our mantra is to dress in layers. From spring through early fall, be prepared for temperatures in the 50 to 70 degree range, always with the possibility of a little rain and wind. If you dress in layers and bring a small hip pack or backpack, you’ll stay warm and dry when it’s chilly or wet, and you can peel off layers and stow them as the weather changes.

Rain or shine, many day tours—flightseeing, cruises, bus tours—offer some access to shelter, but you should always be ready with your own raingear and basics (like, say, sturdy shoes or boots for a hiking trip), since you’ll easily be spending at least a little time outside. For specialized excursions, you can expect that the tour operator will provide specific gear that you would need for that day—like tackle and hip waders for a fishing trip, or a poncho, rain boots or dry suit for a rafting trip.

WHICH LAYERS DO YOU NEED?

If you’re just walking around town or enjoying the ship’s deck, there’s no need for specialized activewear. But if you plan to be in fluctuating temperatures—or do anything strenuous that causes you to sweat—you want have some specific of layers.



THE INNER OR BASE LAYER

The inner or base layer goes against your skin—it’s what we think of as long underwear. Its job is to wick moisture away from our skin—keeping us feeling warm and dry—and towards the outer layer, where it evaporates. On a hot day, you can also wear this alone instead of a cotton shirt, and it’ll dry much more quickly. In general, don’t choose cotton for active wear: If you get sweaty or it rains, cotton absorbs water, conducting heat away from your body.



THE BEST SYNTHETIC FABRICS (LIKE MERINO WOOL)

For years, we favored synthetic polypro long underwear, such as Capilene from Patagonia. But in recent years, we’re increasingly using—and preferring—merino wool under-layers. Unlike the stiff, itchy ragwool of old (that comes from more common sheep with short, coarse hairs), merino wool is a soft, fine material that feels good on the skin (because Merino sheep have longer, finer hair fibers).

Even though it’s 20 to 50 percent more expensive, wool now sells 50/50 with polypro in Alaska.

ALASKA PACKING LIST

THE MIDDLE AND OUTER LAYERS

Pros and cons of each:



Synthetics cost less, and dry quicker—but can smell. Bacteria grow readily on them, so they develop an odor after a day or two of wear—even the versions that weave in silver or charcoal into the fiber to deter bacterial growth. (Brand names for synthetics include: Capilene, Under Armour, REI Polartec Power Dry, and Ex Officio.)



Wool can be higher maintenance, but has natural anti-bacterial qualities. You can wear it for days with almost no odor. Wool does absorb 30% of its weight in moisture, but it still does a good job of wicking the moisture away, making you feel dry longer. The downsides are that it costs more, takes longer to dry when it gets wet, and should be washed with a mild, non-detergent soap then hung dry. (Brand names for merino wool include: Smartwool, Icebreaker, and Ibex.)

Wool is also more fire retardant. If you plan to be near campfires or in other situations with possible fire risk, know that polypro is made of plastic; a spark from a campfire (which happens frequently) puts an immediate hole in it.

THE MIDDLE, INSULATING LAYER

The middle, insulating layer has traditionally been expedition-weight long underwear, a fleece or synthilla jacket, or even a sweater. These synthetic materials have the edge over wool or cotton because of their lightness and warmth. They work well.

But lightweight synthetic or down jackets are now becoming popular mid-layers in Alaska as well. They're lightweight and pack down smaller, yet provide more loft as an insulating layer. When it's not raining, you can also wear them as an outer layer. They're wind- and abrasion-resistant and can handle a lot of perspiration, because they're so breathable.



DOWN IS MAKING A COMEBACK

Ounce for ounce, nothing insulates like duck down. Compared to synthetics, down is lighter weight, more breathable, more durable, softer against the skin, packs down even smaller and has a broader temperature comfort range.



Down traditionally has not been as popular in Alaska, because when it got wet, it was useless. But quality manufacturers now treat down with the same durable water repellent (DWR) they use to waterproof their outer shells. The result is down can be water-resistant, and if it does get wet, it dries out faster. The downside? It's more expensive.

THE OUTER LAYER

The outer layer is the one you really need to get right. You want a shell that's waterproof and breathable to stay warm when it's windy and dry when it's rainy. These thin, outer jackets can be tucked into the outer compartments of your suitcase and should be fully waterproof.

DOES GORE-TEX WORK IN ALASKA?

A high quality Gore-Tex® or eVent jacket (including a hood) will keep a wet day from turning into a miserable one. Those two waterproof fabrics' brand names can indeed make a big difference, both in what you're getting and how much you're spending. If the jacket is under \$200, you're probably not getting Gore Tex or eVent, but rather a spray-on coating that allows for only limited breathability (Marmot precip, for example). If you wear them for long periods, you'll think those cheaper fabrics are leaking, but what's actually happening is condensation from your body is not escaping, and it "wets out" inside the jacket. (One way to abate that problem: unzip your vents every now and then.)



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ALASKA PACKING LIST

DON'T FORGET TO PACK WARM-WEATHER GEAR

THE OUTER LAYER (continued)

High-quality Gore-Tex and eVent jackets — stretched polyurethane fabrics that are glued to the outer nylon layer — help those vapors escape without unzipping, or letting in more moisture. Gore-Tex has been around for years (you'll find the thicker, most durable Pro line of Gore-Tex, as well as the more streamlined PackLite), while the newer eVent (increasingly available at REI) is gaining fans for perhaps being a little more breathable.

Either way, the laminate construction of Gore-Tex or eVent is more expensive; a jacket can cost \$300-400 or more. But they're more breathable, so they'll keep you drier, and you should get 3-4 years of use out of them. A lot of people are afraid to wash their \$500 jacket, but if you use non-detergent soap, keeping it clean allows it to perform better.

Have you ever noticed how water beads up nicely on new raingear? It's not the fabric that's causing the repellency, but rather a chemical treatment called DWR. Putting your Gore-Tex or eVent jacket in the drier reactivates that factory treatment. You can also buy spray-on or wash-in DWR treatments to extend your jackets repellency, or to treat your soft-shell insulating layers.



RAINPROOF PANTS

If you're going to be doing any hiking or kayaking, pick up a pair of rainproof pants as well, so that your legs will stay dry if you get rained or splashed on. All these synthetic outerwear garments have the added perk of being pretty wrinkle-proof, so you can roll them up tight in your bags.

BRING WARM-WEATHER GEAR, TOO

Pack some shorts and short-sleeved shirts for your vacation, too. There are plenty of outdoor retailers to find any last-minute items you may need, such as Big Rays, REI, Cabela's, Bass Pro Shop, Sportsman's Warehouse, and more. Recent Alaskan summers have been hot and sunny. See: Alaska weather.

SWIMSUIT

Your hotel may have a hot tub, sauna or pool facilities — or you may want to invigorate yourself with some Alaska lake swimming. (No kidding: read about Bob's swim across Kachemak Bay.)

SUN PROTECTION

Bring sunglasses, sunscreen and a lightweight, brimmed hat for sun and rain. Interestingly, the intensity of the sun in Alaska on a peak summer day is probably equivalent to a spring day in the Lower 48, because of the lower angle of the sun in the subarctic regions. But due to the long summer days, there are twice as many hours of daylight, so you definitely want to protect your skin.



OTHER EXTRAS

GLOVES & HAT

Even on a warm summer day, it can get pretty chilly when your ship pulls up to a glacier. While you won't need a parka or anything winter-weight, a pair of thin gloves and a light hat will be worthwhile. If anything, you'll be able to spend more time on deck taking great photos.



PROPER FOOTWEAR

Never bring new shoes to Alaska — you'll be walking a lot, and don't need blisters. We'd rather see you in old tennis shoes that are well-worn than fancy boots that have never been taken out of the box. If you want waterproofing, look for Gore-Tex socks that can slip over your regular, non-cotton socks. If you're going to invest in hiking shoes, we advise against old-fashioned heavy hiking boots. They're heavy, stiff, and can cause blisters. Instead, get yourself a comfortable pair of lightweight hikers with good traction — two pairs, actually, in case one gets wet. And break them in before you come!



LIGHTWEIGHT HIKING SHOES: MEN'S BY MERRELL (LEFT) WOMEN'S BY KEEN (RIGHT)

ALASKA PACKING LIST

AVOID MOSQUITOS AND CONSIDER SOME EXTRAS



© Alaska Nature Guides

EXTRAS (continued)

FISHING LICENSE

You can order this ahead of time online, but it's easy to obtain from your air taxi, fishing guide, or most local grocery stores. See: [Where to get your Alaska fishing license](#).

SMALL FIRST AID KIT

Most hotels and tour operators will have you covered, but it's convenient to have Band-Aids and ointment for minor emergencies

BACKPACK OR TOTE BAG (MEDIUM TO LARGE)

Layers are useless unless you have away to stow them. You'll likely be away from your hotel for most of the day, so it's a good idea to have a bag to carry your camera, extra clothing layers, medications.

BINOCULARS/SPOTTING SCOPE

Wildlife won't (always) stroll up to you. Having binoculars to see them in greater detail can really make the difference between a good trip and a great trip.

ZIPPER-TOP BAGS

Freezer-sized, zipper-top bags are great for keeping your clothing folded and leak-prone toiletries isolated. Separate baggies also make it easier to repack in case your luggage is searched, and extra bags are handy for storing dirty or damp clothing.

IDENTIFICATION AND/OR PASSPORT

Bring enough ID: If you're a U.S. citizen and flying or driving, a driver's license will suffice. But if you're a U.S. citizen and cruising from Canada, you'll need a Passport to for the Canadian portion of your trip.

WATCH/ALARM CLOCK

With so much daylight, it's easy to lose track of time.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Bring cards with your contact information to give new friends, and mailing labels for sending postcards.

CAMERA / VIDEO CAMERA

Capture your Alaska experiences, and don't forget the extras: batteries, lenses, chargers and memory cards. Anchorage, Fairbanks and Juneau each have a good camera shop, but you're better off bringing everything you might need.

Get more Alaska advice: [Alaska photography](#).

MOSQUITO PROTECTION

Mosquitoes aren't as much of a problem as most people think. But you'll still want to bring "bug dope" as an insurance policy.



30-40% DEET usually does the trick. The only time you'll need 100% DEET is on a backpacking or float trip in the interior near standing water.

DEET is a harsh chemical. It can sting eyes, cause glues to delaminate, burn through synthetic fabrics, and even melt camera plastics. The **natural plant extracts** we've tried, such as citronella, don't work consistently in Alaska.



The best DEET alternative we've found is **Picaridin**. This synthetic compound doesn't have as good of repellent qualities as DEET, but it works pretty darn well—and it doesn't damage fabrics like DEET, nor have the odor or oily feel, nor have the bad taste when applied to the skin.

If you're looking to reduce the chemicals you put on your body, a loose-cut long sleeve shirt creates a physical barrier to mosquitoes reaching your skin. Permethrin-treated clothes (such as Ex Officio BuzzOff) are even better and will last a good 50 washings.

Get more Alaska advice: [Mosquitoes in Alaska](#).

ALASKA PACKING LIST

WHAT TO WEAR FOR ALASKA HIKING



Never set off without rain gear, extra clothing, gloves and a hat when hiking in Alaska.

THE BASIC GEAR

The rule of layering applies to hiking too, but there are some extra gear considerations before you take off down the trail. Even on a bluebird-sunny day, we never set off without rain gear, extra clothing, gloves and a hat—because temps can drop fast. Here's the complete rundown of what you need for a day hike in Alaska:

HIKING BOOTS

- Don't buy the classic, hard leather boots. They're too heavy for most day hikers, and hard to break in.
- Your best bet is a pair of lightweight boots with good ankle support.
- Trail running shoes are fine, too, if you're used to them on uneven terrain.

CHANGE OF CLOTHES

In case your clothes get wet, be sure to have:

- Extra pair of socks
- Extra long undershirt or upper body inside layer

ADVANCED GEAR

Thinking about a more extended hike? Or going off-trail or across tundra? Here are some tricks of the trade we've learned through experience.

ZIP-OFF LEG PANTS

- These are a huge convenience. If you get hot or cold, zip the lower pant legs on or off in a snap—no need to find a place to sit down and remove your whole pants.
- Pant legs also protect your calves when walking through brush.



HIKING POLES

First off, don't think of them as canes. Here's how any hiker will benefit from them:

- **Elevation.** When heading down hills, shifting weight to the poles will protect your knees.
- **Uneven terrain.** Using them on side hills—sloping terrain—can protect your ankles.
- **Whacking.** Poles are great for helping whack brush aside.
- **Water crossings.** Probe the depth of a stream before you plant your foot (or whole leg) into it.
- **An extra pair of feet.** They offer stability so you can look up and watch scenery, rather than look at your feet for every step.
- **Shopping for Poles.** Aluminum is cheaper and heavier, but carbon might not be as durable. Shock-absorbing tips are great if you're carrying a heavy load, but overkill for most day hikers. Look for something that can collapse and attach well to your pack. Cost: anywhere from \$70 to \$150.

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ALASKA PACKING LIST

WHAT TO WEAR FOR ALASKA HIKING

EXTRAS



GAITERS (more for the hard-core, off-trail hiker)

- These nylon coverings fit over your lower pant leg and strap around the bottom of your shoe or boot.
- Extra protection from water, scrapes and debris that can get into your boots.
- Great if it rains—ground brush and twigs can get mushy and messy fast.
- About \$25 a pair.



BEAR PROTECTION

- **Don't bother with bells:** your voice is just as much of a deterrent.
- **Bear spray** (pepper spray) has limited range, but is good to carry. Just remember to shoot downwind.
- **Your best bet?** Hike with a friend and keep the conversation, and moderate noise, going. Most bear attacks are on people going solo.



WATER

If you're heading out for a long hike, you're probably going to need more water than you want to carry with you. The good news: there are streams everywhere. We Alaskans tend to take a bottle for water when hiking, and then just refill it in a stream or river. **If you don't want to, here are your options:**



SteriPen. These UV lights kill bacteria like giardia, but don't get rid of silt or grittiness from stream water. About \$90.



Filter Pump. They're low-tech, but they're your best bet for removing bacteria and bulk. \$40 and up for portable models.

Purifying tablets. Iodine or Chloride tablets are cheap and lightweight, and make a great back-up plan. The downsides: They're slow (half an hour to four hours), and iodine makes the water taste funny, too. They cost just a few dollars.

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CLOTHING CHECKLIST FOR AN ALASKA WINTER

KEEP WARM WHILE ENJOYING THE NORTHERN LIGHTS IN ALASKA



PHOTO BY MIKE HAGGERTY

- Top and bottom base layer.** Wear a midweight to heavyweight wool or synthetic base layer that fits snugly to your body. Avoid cotton, as it holds moisture and isn't a great insulator.
- Mid insulating layer.** This layer should be a bit looser; wear a midweight fleece or pile jacket. Top only.
- Outer layer.** A down or synthetic down parka is important to top it all off. Many companies (like L.L. Bean or Patagonia) will give you a weather rating for their parkas. Look for a coat good to -20 degrees. If you are actively moving about, you may only need the first two layers. But in temperatures below 0 degrees, you'll be glad to have this final layer. For bottoms, choose waterproof snow pants that have additional insulation to add to the warmth of your long underwear.
- Mittens, glove liners & hand warmers.** Remember that the warmest pair of gloves isn't as effective as a good pair of mittens. The glove liners can stay on when you pull off your mittens to capture that award-winning photo.
- Good Boots, Socks & Toe Warmers.** Warm feet are a must. If you can, purchase boots rated at -20 to -40, then add a pair of wool-blend or fleece socks. If you already have a pair of boots but are concerned they won't be warm enough, toe warmers can usually make up the difference. Avoid the brand Little Hotties — they don't work well in cold temperatures! Instead, try Grabbers. They have adhesive that sticks to the outside of your sock to keep them in place — and they last for 6+ hours. To get them hot fast, open them up and shake them around to get some air circulating through them.
- Hat & Scarf or Balaclava.** A hat paired with a balaclava or scarf that will cover your nose and cheeks is a winning combination. If you're active and get warm, swap the hat for a headband — but keep those ears covered to avoid frostbite!

CAR RENTAL & DRIVING TIPS

You can rent a car in Alaska from all the major brands: Hertz, Avis, Thrifty, Dollar, Budget, Enterprise, Alamo, National, and Payless. And you'll find rental offices in every major city and some smaller towns; you don't have to rent your car in Anchorage.

Here are the upsides to renting a car in Alaska:

- Roads are safe and easy to navigate.
- Cars are every bit as modern as those you'll find in the Lower 48.
- Driving is cheaper and faster than the train (and more reliable than the bus), and you can travel at your own pace.
- You will be able to cover much more of Alaska having your own personal vehicle.



Here's the one downside:

Rentals are expensive: from \$100–\$150 per day.

ANCHORAGE CAR RENTAL

Most Alaskan car rentals begin in Anchorage, the state's transportation hub. You can either launch a long driving vacation from Anchorage, or use the city as a base camp and do day trips with your rental car. Either way, here's what you need to know when renting a car in Anchorage:

- It's easy. You'll find all the top car-rental companies in Anchorage: Hertz, Avis, Thrifty, Dollar, Budget, Enterprise, Alamo, National, and Payless. Stay away from the off-brand companies.
- It's safe. Rental cars are new and well maintained (it's the same fleet as the Lower 48) and road conditions are good (free of snow by mid-May).
- It's expensive. Plan to spend \$100–\$150 or more per day. See our money-saving tips.
- It's navigable. Two-lane highways connect Anchorage, Fairbanks, Denali, towns in between, and points further east and north.
- It's freeing. Driving lets you travel at your own pace. Spend more or less time where you want. Stop for photos or to look for wildlife. Visit small towns and out-of-the-way places.
- It's cheaper and faster than the train. With 2 or more in your party, it can be cheaper than the train. It's also faster. You'll average 55-65 mph in a car versus 30-40 mph on the train.

Read more: [Rental Car vs Train, Average Driving Speed By Highway](#)

MONEY-SAVING TIPS

Come in May or September. When you rent a car in Anchorage, rates can be in the \$30–\$50 per day range for a midsize car.

- Reserve in advance. Rates usually go up as you get closer to your travel dates, especially during peak season. If you see a rate you like in advance, reserve it. You can always cancel it and rebook it later if rates drop, but not the other way around.
- If you have a corporate discount, use it during the peak season. But in the off-season, don't use it; regular rates can be \$25 per day or lower.
- Check back often if you're renting last minute. Rates change several times per day. You can call back later that day or the next day, and the rate may change. If call and want a rate quote, you have 15 minutes to book it; after that, you have to get a new quote.
- Ignore "percentage-off" specials and focus on the lowest base rate. In Anchorage, that's usually Thrifty Car Rental. We've seen shoulder-season days (in May or September) when Thrifty was offering \$60/day. Other major rental companies were at \$100/day with a 30% discount. Thrifty was still \$10 cheaper.
- Avoid airport fees by renting in the city. Anchorage airport built a beautiful rental-car facility a few years back. To pay for it, you're charged 11% of the base rate plus \$6.50 per day for a rental you pick up at the airport. For a typical 7-day rental, that works out to a \$150 surcharge. But if you're renting from Thrifty, for example, you can take a \$15 (7-minute) cab ride to their Spenard location or go straight to your hotel, drop your bags, and have Thrifty's courtesy shuttle pick you up to get your car.

CAR RENTAL & DRIVING TIPS

HOW TO SAVE 20–25%

Renting off-airport saves roughly 12–15%. You can save another 8–10% by using the following discount/promo codes:

BOOK ONLINE Book on the Thrifty.com site and use 101063 for an additional 8% off the base rate on all classes of cars.

BY PHONE Call Thrifty's direct number in Anchorage at 907-276-2855 and request the "Alaska Channel discount" for 10% off.

ONE-WAY RENTALS

It's possible to do a one-way rental between Anchorage and Fairbanks with Avis, Budget, and Hertz. If you're traveling from Anchorage to Fairbanks, you usually won't have to pay any extra fees. But most people pick up in Fairbanks and drive to Anchorage. So if you're driving south, expect to pay \$300 for a one-day, one-way rental; \$250 per day for a 2-day; and less for more days.

DRIVING RENTAL CARS ON GRAVEL HIGHWAYS

Alaska car rental companies don't allow their vehicles on non-paved roads; do so at your own risk. Many people do, and they don't have a problem. However, you're responsible for any damage, and any car insurance is voided because you broke the contract. Unlike false rumors on TripAdvisor, GPS tracking devices are not installed in the car.

- The Denali Highway (Hwy 8), an east-west highway between Cantwell and Paxson. The gravel surface is smooth and fast. (Note: Many people think the "Denali Hwy" is the route from Anchorage to Denali. It's not. That route is Hwy 3, the Parks Hwy, paved and fast.)
- The road from Chitina to McCarthy. The gravel surface is slow—it takes up to 3 hours to travel 60 miles. For \$200 per person round-trip, you can fly from Chitina to McCarthy with Wrangell Mt. Air. They offer 3 daily scheduled flights in summer.
- North of Fairbanks, the Steese, Taylor, and Dalton highways (the latter is also known as the "Haul Road") are gravel, but the surface is smooth and well-maintained. Alaska Auto Rental in Fairbanks specializes in vehicles equipped for Haul Road rentals; their cars have two spare tires and beefed-up suspension.

ALASKA DRIVING TIPS

IS RENTING A CAR SAFE?

The short answer is yes. And you can make it even safer:

- The speed limit is 65 mph maximum.
- Drive on gravel highways only at your own risk—officially, it's not allowed, so you're responsible for any damage.
- Keep your headlights on at all times. Most roads are two-lane.
- Pull over if five or more cars are trailing you; it's the law.
- Don't drive fast. You never know when a caribou or moose will wander into the road. And you may encounter jarring dips and bumps known as frost heaves.

FUELING UP

Especially when traveling through off-the-beaten-path areas, a safe road plan is to gas up/fuel up whenever possible. Keep in mind that the more remote the gas station, the greater the likelihood that gas prices will be more expensive. Try to fill up in more populated towns along the way for more competitive prices. Depending on where you plan to begin your drive, larger cities like Fairbanks or Anchorage will most likely have the most reasonable fuel prices.

- Don't forget to have a spare gas can filled with fuel—if not for yourself, you may be able to assist a fellow driver along the road.

CREATING A GAME PLAN

Depending on where you want to stop and how much time you desire to spend in a certain place, you can expect to drive anywhere from 75-450 miles a day. For a comfortable driving itinerary, consider anywhere from 100-300 miles a day.

WHAT'S THE SPEED LIMIT?

65 mph maximum—Alaska highways aren't part of the federal interstate system. However, for calculating travel times, figure on these average speeds:

- Alaska Highway. Route 2 from the border to Delta Junction, 55–65 mph
- Glenn Highway. Route 1 from Anchorage to Tok, 55–65 mph, except 45 mph on Matanuska Glacier section.
- Parks Highway. Route 3 from near Anchorage to Fairbanks, 60–65 mph
- Richardson Highway. Route 4 from Valdez to Delta Junction, Route 2 from Delta Junction to Fairbanks, 50–60 mph, except 45 mph in the Thompson Pass section.
- Seward Highway. Route 1 from Anchorage to Tern Lake, Route 9 from Tern Lake to Seward, 45–60 mph, depending on traffic.
- Sterling Highway. Route 1 from Tern Lake to Homer, 50–60 mph, except 45 mph near Cooper Landing.

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ALASKA CAR CHECKLIST



WINTER TIPS

In addition to the previous items, it's good to have these on hand during the winter months.

- Snow and ice scraper with brush.** You'll need this on mornings when there's a strong frost. If you get a snowfall, it's also good to have a scraper with a brush on the other end. The best ones have a long handle (important for clearing snow off the top of the vehicle), a highly durable scraper, and a padded telescopic handle so you can extend it for big jobs and shrink it down to fit in your trunk. Two examples of excellent tools include the [Sub Zero Extendable 50" Crossover Snow Broom](#) or the [62" Telescopic Snow Removal Car Brush with Ice Scraper](#).
- Carpet remnant.** If you get stuck, this is an effective way to get yourself out. Place the remnant under your tire to add traction and help you get unstuck.
- Shovel.** We're not suggesting you carry around a full-size winter shovel like you would use on your driveway. The purpose of this shovel would be in case you run off the road and end up stuck in deep snow—often you can get out if you can clear a path for your tires. However, if you end up spinning your tires, the vehicle can become high-centered. A shovel will come in handy to clear snow from the middle of the vehicle as well. The best shovel for a driver has a medium-size scoop and a handle that extends, and packs small so as to not take up too much space in your trunk. Typing 'emergency car shovel' into the Amazon search bar pulls up lots of great options, but here's [one example](#).
- Emergency winter clothes.** The most important clothing options are gloves, a hat, boots, and hand and feet warmers that are air-activated and keep warm for about 6 hours. See our [list of what to pack in winter](#) for a complete list of winter clothes.

BEFORE YOU GO

- **Check your tire pressure.** Almost all vehicles have the recommended PSI written on a sticker on the driver side door. If your car tires seem low, most gas stations have an air tank to add air to your tires yourself. If you're uncomfortable with that, many car shops in Alaska ([Johnson's Tire](#) for example) will do it for free.
- **Check all your fluids** (though you should be fine if renting).
 - Windshield wiper fluid
 - Oil
 - Coolant
 - Transmission fluid
 - Brake fluid
 - Power steering fluid

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ALASKA CAR CHECKLIST



- Jumper cables.** Even if you don't need them, you could help someone else with a dead battery get their car started. It's the Alaskan way.
- Spare tire, jack, and wrench.** Yes, there's a very slim chance you'll need these. But if you get a flat in a remote area, having a spare tire kit is the difference between being stranded and being on your way. Also consider bringing a tire pressure gauge, a tarp or mat to kneel on, tire blocks, and Fix-a-flat spray foam. [Simple instructions to fix a flat.](#)
- Flares or reflectors.** Alerting other motorists if you have a breakdown is especially important in low-visibility situations. If you don't want to opt for the flammable option, small triangle emergency reflectors are a good alternative. Place one 10 feet directly behind the side of the vehicle, a second 100 feet behind, and a third 200–300 feet behind.
- Mosquito repellent.** Most Alaskans keep a backup repellent with Deet ([read more](#)) in their car in case it's necessary to change a tire in a buggy area—or even just to take an impromptu hike.
- Lighter or matches.** You'll likely never need to use them, but campfires save lives in Alaska when you're stuck somewhere cold for a long time. If you didn't also bring fire starter, use dried spruce twigs (which are abundant), birch bark, or dried grass for kindling.
- Flashlight/headlamp.** Whether you break down at night, are setting up your tent, or just want to read at night, hands-free headlamps are a huge convenience—and essential if you're traveling alone and don't have an extra set of hands to hold a flashlight. Get at least a 30-lumen headlamp for reading or general tasks, and a 100–150 lumen light for nighttime trail running. [Headlamps: How to Choose](#)
- Emergency blanket.** Don't underestimate how much the temperature drops at night in Alaska. Emergency blankets are a smart backup item in the summer months if you find yourself broken down late at night, or at any time of day [north of the Arctic Circle](#).
- Hat and gloves.** For something that takes up almost no weight or space, this combo can really make you comfortable when the temperature dips. Gloves double as hand protectors when clasp tools or breaking firewood.
- Poncho/raincoat.** If you're changing a tire or looking under the hood in the rain, this will prevent you from getting soaked.
- Emergency food and water.** The best items are non-perishable with a long shelf life—things like energy bars and trail mix. However, most travelers will be renting cars for a few weeks at the most and not storing goods for months, so just be sure to have a few snacks on hand in case you get stranded.
- Map.** If you plan to rely on your smartphone or tablet, know that Alaska has many long stretches without cell coverage. [The Alaska App](#) (free) works even where there's no cell coverage, and Alaska is easy to navigate since there are so few roads. However, a print map costs only a few bucks and gives you the big picture—it's a wise backup.
- Cell phone car charger.** Your smartphone is always scanning for a signal, and nothing wears the battery down faster than searching for a signal in a low-coverage area (and there are many in Alaska). Having your phone's Wi-Fi enabled improves GPS performance, but is even more battery-intensive. Combine that with the fact that drives are long between major areas (e.g. 5 hours from Anchorage to Denali) and you'll know why we suggest bringing a car charger!
- Duct tape.** A part of the Alaskan culture, duct tape is strong, highly adhesive, and handy in lots of situations, like taping plastic over a broken window or reattaching a muffler. Alaskan pilots have even [duct-taped airplanes](#) ripped apart by bears.
- Seat-belt cutter/window breaker.** This single tool would primarily be used in a situation where your vehicle is sinking or burning and you're without power, so your electric windows don't work. One end has a razor to quickly cut your seatbelt, and the other end is made of pointed steel and will shatter the window so you can escape.
- First aid kit.** This is essential to have in an accident, or if you come across someone else who has been in an accident. Here's a [great list from the Red Cross](#) detailing the basic items you should have in a first aid kit. For the adventurer heading into the backcountry, here's a more [comprehensive list from REI](#).

TRIP PLANNING & GENERAL INFORMATION

GOOD TO KNOW



BEAR VIEWING SAFETY

- If you encounter a bear, stand your ground, even if it approaches. Never run from a bear, as the action may encourage it to chase you.
- Never offer a bear food or let one take food from you
- Keep your personal belongings with you
- If you see a bear nearby but its not approaching, back away slowly and give the bear space
- Use binoculars and telephoto lenses. Don't stalk bears or try to get up close to them
- Stay on the trail or roadway and remain in close groups
- Never try to attract a bear's attention with food or loud noises

MOOSE COURTESY

- Never feed moose
- Give moose at least 50 feet. If it doesn't yield as you approach, give it the trail. (Either retreat or walk way around.)
- If its ears lay back or its hackles (the hairs on its hump) rise, it's angry or afraid and may charge; back off pronto
- Moose kick with their front as well as hind feet
- Don't corner moose into fences or houses
- If a moose charges, get behind a tree. You can run around the trunk faster than the gangly creature.
- Never get between a cow and her calf

PHOTO TIPS

LENSES Use a telephoto lens for wildlife. You'll need a 180mm or longer lens to bring moose and bear in close while keeping a safe distance. Eagles and birds generally require even longer lenses – 300mm or more. Remember, longer lenses magnify lens shake and can blur images at slow shutter speed.

COMPOSITION TIPS Keep your horizon level, especially when shooting Alaska's oceans and mountain ranges. Don't place the horizon in the center of the frame; it usually results in a static photo. Add something to the foreground to lead the viewer's eye through the photo, such as a boulder, river, or flower.

CELL PHONE/ INTERNET CONNECTION

Cell phone coverage and reception is unpredictable and sporadic outside the cities. Depending upon your cell phone service provider's coverage and roaming agreements, you may not even have service available within Alaska.

- Most hotels, motels, lodges, bed-and-breakfasts, hostels, and RV parks offer some form of Internet access to their guests.
- Overnight accommodations will provide some form of phone access whether directly within your room, or for public use at the front desk.
- Remote areas throughout the state receive internet connection via satellite, and usage is often limited to 10MB.

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Weather Forecasts, Sunrise & Sunset Times

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