

## Overview of Alaska

More than twice the size of Texas, Alaska is the largest state in the USA, known as a land of vast natural splendour, abundant wildlife and few people. It offers unique experiences such as walking in unspoilt wilderness, spectacular cruising through the fjords of the Inside Passage, and frontier towns rich in gold rush history. Alaska's sense of undiscovered wilderness and promise of adventure is as prominent now as it was when it attracted thousands of pioneers in search of gold, fur, fishing, logging and oil. Today, this 'Last Frontier' lures travellers in search of unspoilt beauty and close encounters with nature. In fact, Alaska's three largest cities (Fairbanks, Juneau, and Anchorage) are home to fewer than 370,000 people between them.

The southeast epitomises classic Alaskan scenery, with its fjords, mountains, forests and glaciers. Alaska is one of the top cruise destinations in the world, and the main drawcard for visitors to this region is the wondrous scenery along the waters of the Inside Passage; a major marine highway ideal for ship travel. The number one attraction in the interior heartland is Denali National Park, an area of untamed magnificence that also encompasses North America's highest mountain, the snow-covered Mount McKinley. Arctic Alaska in the frozen north is less well-travelled, and few venture as far as Barrow and Nome.

Due to its northern location, Alaska is the land of the 'midnight sun', and visitors can experience the odd phenomenon of having over 21 hours of sunlight each day in the summer. Despite a reputation for high prices and inhospitable weather, millions of people have found Alaska to be a unique piece of the US that is worth every dollar.

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## Key Facts

### **Language:**

English is the most common language spoken but Spanish is often heard in the south-western states.

### **Passport/Visa:**

It is highly recommended that travellers' passports have at least six months' validity remaining after the intended date of departure from their travel destination. A visa is required for short visits unless travellers qualify for entry under the Visa Waiver Program. The Visa Waiver Program (VWP) enables citizens of certain countries to travel to the US for a stay of up to 90 days without a visa. Visitors under the VWP need to register online three days before travel and have an Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA). This allows the US government to screen all visitors before travel. Visitors entering the country under the VWP must have a machine-readable passport (MRP) that has a barcode on the photo page. Travellers under the VWP must have passports that include biometrics if they wish to enter the country without a visa, which means that passports must contain unique personal data such as fingerprints or iris details. All passports must contain a digital photo image in order to travel visa-free. All visitors to the USA have a photograph and two fingerprints taken by an inkless scanner on arrival, including those travelling visa-free under the VWP. As part of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), all travellers travelling between the United States and Canada, Mexico, Bermuda, and the Caribbean region are required to present a passport or other valid travel document to enter or re-enter the United States. If departing from the USA, a valid passport is required by immigration authorities. Immigration officials often apply different rules to those stated by travel agents and official sources.

### **Currency:**

The official currency is the US Dollar (USD), which is divided into 100 cents. Only major banks exchange foreign currency. ATMs are widespread and credit cards are widely accepted. Banking hours are Monday to Friday 9am to 3pm.

### **Electricity:**

Electrical current is 120 volts, 60Hz. Plugs are mainly the type with two flat pins, though three-pin plugs (two flat parallel pins and a rounded pin) are also widely used. European appliances without dual-voltage capabilities will require an adapter.

# Travel to Alaska

## Climate for Alaska

Although the assumption is that Alaska is a land of snow and sub-zero temperatures, the climate in Alaska is actually extremely varied, caused by the state's six different topographic regions. The far north is extremely dry and very cold, with Arctic conditions and temperatures averaging about 20°F (29°C), and the ground at Point Barrow remains permanently frozen to a depth of 1,330 ft (405m). However, summer temperatures in most of Alaska are surprisingly high, averaging in the 60s Fahrenheit (about 16C), and they have been known to reach 90°F (32C) and up. The southeast tends to be fairly moderate, with damp, rainy and sometimes mild conditions, with temperatures in July averaging 56F (13C) and temperatures in January averaging 30F (-1C). The south and central areas tend to be similar, with slightly colder winter temperatures. Western Alaska tends to be rainy, while the Aleutian Islands in winter are damp and rainy, with fog. Heavy snows are common in the north and central regions of the state. The best time to visit Alaska is in the summer months, when days are long and the weather is perfect for outdoor adventures.

## Health Notes when travelling to United States of America

There are no specific health risks associated with travel within the USA. Medical facilities are excellent, but expensive. Only emergencies are treated without prior payment and treatment can be refused without evidence of insurance or proof of funds. Good medical insurance is essential. Visitors must be fully vaccinated with the primary series of an accepted COVID-19 vaccine to travel to the United States by plane if they are non-U.S. citizens.

## Safety Notes when travelling to United States of America

Travel within the United States is generally trouble-free, though travellers should be aware that the US shares with the rest of the world, an increased threat from terrorist incidents. Security has been heightened, particularly at airports. Restrictions on hand luggage apply and travellers are advised to check on the latest situation with airlines in advance. Travellers should also be alert to the dangers of car and street crime in cities and should use common sense and take basic precautions. Hurricanes are common between June and November, putting the southern USA, including the Gulf Coast and the eastern US at risk. There is a risk of wildfires in many dry areas in the US, particularly on the West Coast from March to November.

## Customs in United States of America

Laws vary from state to state, including speed limit, fines and punishment. The age at which alcohol may be legally bought and consumed is 21 years.

## Duty Free in United States of America

Travellers to the United States who are returning residents of the country do not have to pay duty on articles purchased abroad to the value of \$800 provided their stay was longer than 48 hours and their duty-free allowance was not used in the 30-day period prior. For passengers arriving from Samoa, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands, a duty-free allowance of \$1,600 is allowed. The following items are included in this: 50 cigarettes and 10 cigars and 150 millilitres (5 fl. oz.) of alcoholic beverages or 150 millilitres (5 fl. oz.) of perfume containing alcohol. Restrictions may apply to goods from Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Burma (Myanmar), Angola, Liberia and Sudan. It is prohibited to import Cuban cigars from any country.

Travellers to the United States who are non-residents do not have to pay duty on the following items: 50 cigars or 200 cigarettes and gifts to the value of \$100 provided their stay in the USA is not less than 72 hours and that the allowance has not been used in the preceding six-month period.

Prohibited items for residents and non-residents include meat or meat products, poultry, narcotics, absinthe, plants, seeds, vegetables, fruits, soil, live insects and other living plants or animal pests. Fish is prohibited unless it carries disease-free certification. Wildlife and animals or their by-products carry restrictions. Dairy products and eggs from specified countries are not allowed. Firearms and ammunition are not allowed without the necessary license and permit.

## Doing Business in United States of America

In such a large country, filled with so many diverse groups, business practices may differ according to each state, however rarely to any large degree. The East Coast is traditionally more formal than the West Coast, though in states such as California, dress code and conservative appearance are as common as they would be in New York. Punctuality is important throughout the country and it is considered rude to be late for a meeting. Gift-giving is uncommon as it may be construed as bribery. Appropriate titles (Mr, Mrs, Ms) are used upon introduction and until otherwise stated. Americans favour politeness and greetings of 'Hello' and 'How are you?' are often expressed with sincerity. Business hours may vary in each state, but an 8am start and 5pm finish Monday to Friday is the most common with an hour over lunch.

Status and age are not necessarily indicative of seniority, nor do they carry much weight in themselves. Those doing business in the States should be mindful of this fact; foreigners should never make assumptions about someone's position or rank. Best practice is to be respectful to all parties. That said, the US upholds a hierarchal business structure, in which 'the boss' is the ultimate decision-maker. Senior leaders have the power of the last word, and can go against the grain just as easily as they can follow popular opinion. Foreigners should concentrate on winning over this individual, even if the greater group seems unsupportive. Americans value a direct style of communication. In this fast-paced, consumer culture 'time is money', and small-talk is viewed as unnecessary and wasteful. It's best for foreigners to get to the point quickly, speak about issues in a frank and open manner, and to avoid taking offence if someone questions or challenges them outright.

## Communication in United States of America

The international country dialling code for the United States is +1. Mobile networks cover most of the country, especially all urban areas, and WiFi is widely available.

## Tipping in United States of America

A 15 percent tip is expected by taxi drivers, bartenders, hairdressers and waiters, but travellers shouldn't tip in fast-food or self-service restaurants. In expensive restaurants or for large parties, the tip should be 20 percent of the bill. It is normal to tip staff such as valets and porters in hotels; this is discretionary, although a minimum of \$5 is expected. Most services are customarily tipped if the service is good.

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# Airports in Alaska

## Anchorage International (ANC)

### *Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport*

**www.anchorageairport.com**

**Location:** Anchorage The airport is situated about six miles (10km) south of Anchorage.

**Time:** GMT -9 (GMT -8 from mid-March to the first Sunday in November).

**Contacts:** Tel: +1 907 266 2526

**Transfer between terminals:** There is a free airport shuttle bus between the South (Domestic) Terminal, the North (International) Terminal and the rental car lots.

**Getting to the city:** The People Mover bus service stops regularly at the airport, taking travellers to downtown Anchorage. It operates between roughly 6am and 11pm daily, at 30-minute intervals. Many hotels offer free airport pick-up services for their guests, and limousines and taxis are also available for hire. Ride-hailing services, such as Uber, are available.

**Car rental:** Car rental companies include Alamo, Avis, Budget, Dollar, Hertz, National and Thrifty.

**Airport Taxis:** Taxis are available outside both terminals. The ride to downtown Anchorage takes approximately 15 to 20 minutes.

**Facilities:** Facilities include ATMs, currency exchange, restaurants, bars, shops, a massage centre, a barbershop, a nursery, mail drop points, a military lounge, a hotel reservations desk and tourist information. Disabled facilities are very good.

**Parking:** Short-term parking outside the North Terminal (international) is free for the first half hour, then \$6 for two hours, and \$10 for three hours up to \$13 per day and \$78 per week (10-day maximum). Short-term parking at the South Terminal (domestic) is slightly more expensive, charging \$3 for the first hour, \$6 for two hours, and \$10 for three hours, up to \$16 per day and \$96 per week (30-day maximum). Long-term parking is near the South Terminal, costing \$13 per day and \$78 per week (90-day maximum). The Park, Ride and Fly Lot is the cheapest long-term option; located across from the DOTPF Central Regional Headquarters on International Airport Road, it charges \$9 per day, \$40 per week, and \$100 per month (90-day maximum). The lot is serviced by a free shuttle to both terminals.

## Ketchikan Airport (KTN)

### *Ketchikan International Airport*

**www.borough.ketchikan.ak.us/130/Airport**

**Location:** Ketchikan The airport is situated three miles (5km) northwest of central Ketchikan.

**Time:** GMT -9 (GMT -8 from mid-March to the first Sunday in November).

**Getting to the city:** An airport ferry regularly leaves the airport for Ketchikan between 6.15am and 9.30pm. Metered taxis and a public bus service are readily available from the mainland ferry and water taxi docks.

**Car rental:** Budget car rental is represented at the airport.

**Airport Taxis:** Water taxis are available from the airport and many hotels offer complimentary taxi or shuttle services for guests. Taxi cabs meet the airport ferry in Ketchikan.

**Facilities:** There is a lounge and snack bar in the terminal, as well as free WiFi, rental car desks, a gift shop and a lost and found service.

**Parking:** Parking is available.

## **Juneau Airport (JNU)**

### ***Juneau International Airport***

**[www.juneau.org/airport](http://www.juneau.org/airport)**

**Location:** Juneau The airport is situated eight miles (13km) northwest of central Juneau.

**Time:** GMT -9 (GMT -8 from mid-March to the first Sunday in November).

**Getting to the city:** Juneau's public transit system, Capital Transit, provides bus and shuttle services to and from the airport. A number of hotels also offer shuttle services for guests. Rental cars and taxis are available at the airport.

**Car rental:** Car hire companies represented at the airport include Alamo/National, Avis, Budget and Hertz.

**Airport Taxis:** A number of taxi companies service the airport.

**Facilities:** Facilities at the airport include a visitor information desk, baggage storage, a lost and found service, smoking rooms, disabled facilities, free wifi, a computer lounge, a gift shop and restaurants.

**Parking:** Short and long-term parking is available directly in front of the terminal building. In short-term parking the first 15 minutes are free, the first hour costs \$3, and each hour thereafter costs \$2. In long-term parking the first two hours cost \$5 and each extra hour costs \$1, up to a daily rate of \$14, and a weekly rate of \$75.

## Anchorage

Alaska's largest city is the hub of the state, and its central position, comparatively mild temperatures and outstanding transport system to and from the rest of the country, have made it an important destination for travellers.

Perched on the edge of a vast beautiful wilderness, Anchorage is encompassed in scenic splendour, surrounded by mountains, forest, rivers and tundra; a short drive in any direction offers an abundant variety of wilderness experiences.

The city started out in 1915 as a tented camp for the workers on the Alaska Railroad, and with the later discovery of oil at Prudhoe Bay and the construction of the trans-Alaska pipeline, Anchorage's development was fast and furious. Today this sprawling city is full of life, with an array of dining options, a thriving music scene, theatres, and museums.

Its conservative, transient character is due in part to the fact that many of its residents are from other parts of the US, working for a few years and then moving on. The rest of the population is made up of Alaskan indigenous peoples, oil workers, gold seekers, loggers, and fishermen, together with the moose and occasional bear that wander into town. As a cosmopolitan urban area, it has similarities with other small American cities, but still retains a uniquely Alaskan feel.

## Getting around in Anchorage

Anchorage's public transit system, People Mover, provides easy access to most tourist attractions and places of interest. The buses run roughly between 6.30am and 9pm on weekdays and thereafter until 11pm, but the service during these late hours is limited. Travellers should note that operating times vary by route and are reduced on weekends. Maps and schedules are available from the People Mover Transit Center on 6th Avenue. Adult bus fare starts at \$2. Day passes are available and good value for money if you will be sightseeing all day.

Some tourist attractions provide free shuttles to and from downtown Anchorage, where many of the hotels are situated. There are also taxis, rental cars and rental bicycles available. Ride-hailing services, such as Uber, are also available.

## Climate in Anchorage

Anchorage has a subarctic climate characterised by short, cool summers and long, cold winters. Average daytime summer temperatures range from 55F (13C) to 78F (26C), while average daytime winter temperatures range from 5F (-15C) to 30F (-1C). The average winter snowfall is 70 inches (1778mm).

As with all of Alaska, Anchorage has extremely long days in the summer, with the Summer Solstice in late June experiencing 22 hours of sunlight; winter is just as dark as summer is light, and at the Winter Solstice in late December the daylight lasts less than six hours. The best time for visitors to travel to Anchorage is the period between May and early September when long days, clear skies and warm afternoons prevail.

## Sightseeing in Anchorage

Anchorage is a priceless travel hub for many visitors to Alaska, but the appeal for tourists is rooted firmly in the good transport networks and the glorious wilderness on the city's doorstep. Anchorage itself is not a renowned tourist destination. Having said that, the city retains a sort of pioneer charm as it is still a gathering point for Americans and foreigners looking to make their fortune in various trades. Within the city, the most popular sightseeing attractions include the Alaska Native Heritage Center and the Anchorage Museum of History and Art. Downtown Anchorage also hosts the fantastic Anchorage Market and Festival every weekend in the summer, which is a great attraction for visitors. The market offers an array of locally made goods including clothing, paintings, handmade jewellery and *babushkadolls* (Russian nesting dolls), as well as a great selection of food from all over the world. There are also entertaining music and dance performances to enjoy, and a special Kids' Market where children sell their hand-made items to raise money for charities and other organisations.

Most visitors quickly exit the urban sprawl to enjoy the wonders just beyond the city, such as Prince William Sound, Chugach National Forest and Flattop Mountain, the most climbed mountain in Alaska. The Denali National Park is one of the top attractions in the state and encompasses many of the most beautiful landscapes Alaska has to offer. Those in need of some information or advice should pop into the Anchorage Log Cabin Visitor Information Center, situated at 524 West Fourth Avenue.

## Anchorage Attractions

## Denali National Park and Preserve

Famous for its spectacular mountain vistas, abundant wildlife, glaciers, vast expanses of sub-arctic tundra, and North America's highest mountain, Mount McKinley, Denali National Park and Preserve is a real wilderness area that attracts millions of visitors each year. More than six million acres are home to grizzly bears, caribou, moose, Dall sheep, wolves and numerous species of birds. The main attraction is the snow-covered massif of Mount McKinley, towering 20,320ft (6,096m) above the peaks of the Alaska Range, the definitive symbol of untamed Alaska. On a clear day its twin peaks can be seen from Anchorage, 149 miles (240km) away. The Alaska Range divides the park into north and south sides, with the majority of visitors accessing the north where the main visitors centre is located. Mountaineers seeking out the challenges of Mount McKinley need to access the park from the south side. Other peaks offer excellent climbing opportunities for those not wishing to risk the mountain that has earned its reputation as one of the world's most difficult climbs. The park region also offers a wide variety of other activities including day hikes or backcountry hiking, camping, mountain biking, whitewater rafting and ice climbing.

**Address:** George Parks Hwy, Denali

**Telephone:** (907) 683 9532

**Website:** [www.nps.gov/dena/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/dena/index.htm)

## Anchorage Museum of History and Art

**Opening time:** Tuesday to Saturday 10am-6pm; Sunday 12pm-5pm. Closed Monday.

**Admission:** \$20 adult, \$10 children, other concessions available.

The world-class Museum of History and Art is the largest museum in Alaska and is one of the most visited attractions in Anchorage. The exhibits cover the history and cultures of Alaska (from Native American beginnings to American colonisation) and explore the natural resources and landscapes of the country. Part of exploring the cultures of the country is exhibiting Alaskan art, and the museum has a good permanent collection and hosts multiple temporary art exhibitions. Art, history and the natural sciences are combined to great effect in this wonderful museum. Visitors of all ages should find something to interest them.

**Address:** 625 C St, Anchorage.

**Telephone:** (907) 929 9200

**Website:** [www.anchoragemuseum.org](http://www.anchoragemuseum.org)

## Alaska Native Heritage Center

**Admission:** \$24.95 adult, \$16.95 children, other concessions available

The Alaska Native Heritage Center is a wonderful place for visitors to learn about the culture and heritage of the native Alaskan people while in Anchorage. Indigenous traditions, customs and lifestyles are showcased in the centre's exhibits, which include artefacts such as tools, watercraft, clothing, pieces of art and musical instruments. The centre also hosts local storytelling, dancing and craft events which help to bring the traditions to life for visitors. The Alaska Native Heritage Center is closed in winter, but hosts monthly cultural events.

**Address:** 8800 Heritage Center Drive

**Telephone:** (907) 330 8000

**Website:** [www.alaskanative.net](http://www.alaskanative.net)

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## Juneau

Accessible only by sea or air, Alaska's 'Gateway to the Glaciers' is the state's scenic capital, situated among spectacular mountains on the shores of the Gastineau Channel. The holiday destination of Juneau is, however, not as wild as one might expect of such a remote destination. It affords all the pleasures of a large city, while also offering an abundance of activities and natural escapes for outdoor enthusiasts in its backyard. Although the city is not without appeal and is a popular travel hub and port of call for cruises, it is undoubtedly the natural setting that attracts tourists rather than the urban sightseeing opportunities.

In 1880 the city swarmed with gold prospectors, but today it is the cruise ship passengers who pack the streets every summer, enjoying the shopping, dining and picturesque surroundings. Mendenhall Glacier, Alaska's most visited glacier due to its easy access and proximity to the city, is a highly worthwhile attraction. Glacier Bay National Park is one of the country's more dramatic regions and is also accessible from Juneau, by boat or plane. Helicopter rides, fishing, whale-watching, hiking and kayaking are popular activities through which to fully appreciate the vast wilderness surrounding Juneau.

## Getting around in Juneau

You can only get into Juneau by air or sea, although it is possible to take your car across by ferry. Once in the city, however, it is easy to get around on land. There is a public bus system popular with locals and tourists, and taxis and rental cars are also available. Many of the tourist attractions in Juneau are conveniently clumped around the waterfront area, making walking a good option for cruise passengers. Visitors may also enjoy hiring a kayak to paddle along the coast, or taking a helicopter ride over some of the area's natural attractions.

## Climate in Juneau

Juneau has a subarctic maritime climate, which is milder than many people expect. Winters are long, dark and wet but not very cold by Alaskan standards, with an average low temperature of 23°F (-5°C) in January. Spring, autumn and summer are mild, with high temperatures averaging about 65°F (18°C) in July, the hottest month. Rain is common throughout the year, but April and May tend to be the driest months. Snowfall can be heavy between November and March. Late-spring and summer are the best times to visit Juneau.

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## Fairbanks

Like many other cities in Alaska, Fairbanks' history is full of explorers, gold prospectors, swindlers, and other colourful characters associated with the Gold Rush that populated much of the state. Now Alaska's second-largest city, with something like 33,000 residents, Fairbanks nonetheless maintains a quirky small-town attitude that is both wary of and welcoming to the hordes of tourists that make their way here each year.

The city of Fairbanks is spread across the flat base of the Tanana Valley, straddling the Chena River. There are few architectural gems in the low-rise buildings that make up the downtown area and the skyline is far from dramatic. Within one or two hours visitors will be well-orientated and have no trouble getting around in Fairbanks, which is best done by car (although there is an infrequent bus service).

There are several attractions in Fairbanks worth visiting, including museums dedicated to uniquely Alaskan activities such as ice carving and dog sledding, as well as one designed solely to show summer visitors just how cold the weather in Fairbanks can get. Children in Fairbanks will love the rides at the low-key Pioneer Park amusement park, including the Whiskey Island Railroad and the carousel. Finding a satisfactory bite to eat is also fairly easy, with everything from well-known fast food joints to fine-dining bistros, pioneer-themed grills and a surprisingly broad range of international dining options, including Thai, Eastern European, Indian and Vietnamese cuisine, on offer.

While the city offers some urban diversions, the most popular activities and attractions in Fairbanks take advantage of the abundance of natural beauty surrounding the city. Riverboat tours stop in Athabascan Indian fishing villages, dog sledding tours add a sense of adventure to city excursions, and the Chena Hot Springs Resort is only 60 miles (96km) out of town. Of course the most spectacular attraction in Fairbanks is the unforgettable sight of the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights). Fairbanks is considered one of the best places to see the Northern Lights, a phenomenon that occurs with some regularity in the dark months from September to April. Whether it's sunny and warm or cold and dark you're after, a holiday in Fairbanks always has something to appeal to the adventurous traveller.

## Ketchikan

The 'salmon capital of the world' started as a summer fish camp on the shores of Ketchikan Creek used by the Tlingit natives, and slowly became a major salmon canning centre. Native Inuit heritage plays a large role in the touristic appeal of Ketchikan, which boasts the largest collection of totem poles in the world in the Ketchikan Totem Bight State Historical Park, Saxman Native Village and the Totem Heritage Center Museum. Ketchikan has more cultural sightseeing opportunities than most cities and towns in Alaska, making it the perfect Alaskan getaway for those keen to experience indigenous culture as well as the stunning natural landscapes of Alaska.

Rustic Creek Street, with its picturesque wooden boardwalks and stilts, was once the town's red light district, and today the houses have been converted into restaurants, shops and galleries. Ketchikan is located on Revillagigedo Island, 235 miles (378km) south of Juneau. If staying in the capital, Ketchikan is a popular excursion from the city; in fact, the quaint old town feels much more authentic and traditional than the larger city. The town is a popular cruise destination and is the starting point for most Inside Passage tours. Excursions into the surrounding wilderness include air or boat trips to nearby Misty Fjords, an area of pristine, spectacular scenery with soaring cliffs, waterfalls, lakes and glaciers.

## Getting around in Ketchikan

The airport is located on Gravina Island and visitors can get into Ketchikan by ferry or water taxi. Once in town there is a municipal bus service provided by Ketchikan Gateway Borough Transit operating hourly every day of the week. A seasonal, complimentary Shuttle Bus runs a 20-minute circuit around downtown Ketchikan, which is very useful for tourists. Taxis can be ordered or hailed on the street. Cars and bicycles can be rented in town, but those hiring cars should note that parking can be expensive as permits are required.

## Climate in Ketchikan

Ketchikan features an oceanic climate, with very wet but otherwise fairly mild weather. Winters are not cold by Alaskan standards, with an average low temperature of only 28F (-2C) in January, the coldest month. In mid-summer, the average high temperature is a pleasant 64F (18C). Rain is plentiful all year, but the wettest seasons are autumn and winter, between September and February. The best and most popular time to visit Ketchikan is between March and August, when it is comparatively warm, sunny and dry.

## Airports in Ketchikan

### Ketchikan Airport (KTN)

*Ketchikan International Airport*

<http://www.borough.ketchikan.ak.us/130/Airport>

**Location:** Ketchikan The airport is situated three miles (5km) northwest of central Ketchikan.

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**Airport Taxis:** Water taxis are available from the airport and many hotels offer complimentary taxi or shuttle services for guests. Taxi cabs meet the airport ferry in Ketchikan.

**Facilities:** There is a lounge and snack bar in the terminal, as well as free WiFi, rental car desks, a gift shop and a lost and found service.

**Parking:** Parking is available.

## Skagway

The holiday destination of Skagway, at the northernmost point of the Inside Passage, is the main port of call for cruise ships, and was the trading post serving the Klondike Gold Rush in 1897. Within three months, a tent and shack town of 20,000 people had sprung up and throngs of hopeful gold-seekers stampeded the town, the jumping-off point for the 500-mile (805km) trek to the goldfields in the Yukon. Skagway's rapid growth brought in its wake disease and violence, and it was notorious for lawless characters.

Today much of Skagway town lies within the Klondike Gold Rush National Historic Park, which includes an excellent Visitor Information Centre offering fascinating exhibits and a film on the Gold Rush days. The heart of Skagway is the historic district where the wooden boardwalks lining the restored buildings, false-fronted shops and saloons, and the original appearance of many of the houses, all enhance the character of a town rich in Gold Rush history. On holiday in Skagway, it is also possible to follow in the footsteps of the Klondike gold seekers along the famous 33-mile (53km) Chilkoot Trail, literally an outdoor museum strewn with reminders of the past, where abandoned pick axes, shovels and old supplies can be found along the way.

## The Inside Passage

Shaped by the carving of massive glaciers millions of years ago, Southeast Alaska is an astounding region of deep fjords, glaciers, majestic mountains and forests. Known as the 'panhandle', it epitomises classic Alaskan scenery. Thousands of islands form a pristine protected waterway called the Inside Passage that is lined with many charming towns and small villages rich in history. About half of the tourists who travel to Alaska arrive on cruise ships that wind their way through the islands of the Inside Passage to ports of call such as Ketchikan, Juneau, Sitka and Skagway.

The area is home to the native cultures of the Tlingit, Haida and Tshimshian tribes; the art of totem pole carving, as well as traditional music and dance have been preserved, especially in Ketchikan. Russian settlers have also left their legacy of icons and onion-domed churches, having been drawn to the region in search of fur. The region's promise of gold, salmon fishing and forests of timber attracted many other profiteers. Today the business of tourism is an additional income-earner for many of the picturesque coastal communities.

The history of the Gold Rush days is especially evident in the town of Skagway at the northern tip of the Inside Passage, once a lawless trading post serving the Klondike Gold Rush pioneers. Juneau is Alaska's attractive capital, with a bustling waterfront and a scenic mountain backdrop, and is the gateway to one of the country's most glorious regions, Glacier Bay National Park.

## Sightseeing in The Inside Passage

Alaskan cruises happily trade the warm blue waters of tropic destinations for the rugged scenery of craggy islands, jutting glaciers and forested coastline. Instead of open ocean, cruise ships weave through the Inner Passage, up the Gulf of Alaska and past scores of islands and inlets. Cruise ships traverse a string of coastal cities which include Ketchikan, Skagway, Haines, Sitka and Juneau. Stacked together, their unique atmospheres make a diverse totem pole of cruise ports with Juneau at the top.

Most ships will call port in Juneau, a unique state capital nestled into mountain steps and a narrow inlet. The small city is accustomed to water transportation as no roads lead in or out of the city. Cruise liners are berthed at one of three docks, all within an easy walk of a rustic and charming downtown area. Here, visitors can take a tramway up Mount Roberts to share an eagle's view of the city and landscape below. Visitors can also view scenery with whale watching tours starting from Juneau's waterfront. Those in port for longer stays can catch a ferry to Glacier Bay National Park to see 16 enormous glaciers cut into the land and sea. Others can visit Mendenhall Glacier, close to town.

With no roads connecting the towns the best way to travel is by the Alaska Marine Highway ferry that hops from town to town, or on one of the numerous and very popular cruises that ply the channels. The Alaska Marine Highway is a designated National Scenic Byway and is one of the most beautiful ways to explore Alaska. The deep waters and mild climate provide a prime habitat for whales, sea lions and porpoises, which can often be spotted from the deck. Between the picturesque fishing town of Petersburg and Russian-founded Wrangell is the spectacular Wrangell Narrows that is only 300ft (91m) wide and so shallow in places that the boat is forced into a slalom course of 46 turns to avoid grounding on the channel bottom. Frederick Sound is a prime whale sighting area.

## The Inside Passage Attractions

### Glacier Bay National Park

When the early explorers and pioneers of the 18th century sailed this way, Glacier Bay was hidden under a huge sheet of solid ice, more than 4,000ft (1,219m) thick and up to 20 miles (32km) wide. Today the branching 65-mile (105km) long fjord is the work of the fastest-receding glacier on earth; the melting ice of the Grand Pacific Glacier opening up a spectacular carved terrain of steep rock walls lining deep-water fjords. Sliding out of the mountains are 16 active glaciers that fill the sea with different shaped icebergs, creating the icy blue landscape that is world-renowned. At the head of the fjord is the massive ice wall of the Grand Pacific Glacier, slowly melting and sculpting the still-unfinished land as it backs away from the sea, a natural work of art in progress. An added attraction is the variety of aquatic life including humpback whales, sea otters, seals and porpoises, while bears, moose, mountain goats and many species of birds inhabit the land. This rugged landscape can only be accessed by boat or small plane as most of the park is made up of water. As opportunities to see this huge wilderness are limited, facilities can be crowded, especially on the tour boats. Activities are somewhat expensive, and wildlife sightings cannot be guaranteed. Gustavus is the small settlement that services the park, but the park headquarters is at Bartlett Cove from where boats can be arranged or alternate means provided to enjoy the park experience. Kayaking or camping in the backcountry, ranger-led programmes or walks, hiking and fishing are all available.

**Telephone:** (907) 697 2230

**Website:** <http://www.nps.gov/glba>



## Hubbard Glacier

There is surely no more spectacular experience on the planet than to witness the calving of a titanic glacier. A stopover to watch nature's incredible marvel, the Hubbard Glacier, in action as the high wall of ice thickens and advances towards the Gulf of Alaska is one of the unforgettable moments that makes thousands of holidaymakers opt for an Alaskan cruise every year. The Hubbard Glacier is the largest tidewater glacier in North America, beginning its 75-mile (121km) journey to the sea on the tallest mountain in Canada, Mount Logan, and finally shedding tons of its bulk in awesome ice falls across the six-mile (10km) wide head of Yakutat Bay. Every day cruise liners pull in, their passengers bundled up in their warmest clothing and festooned with cameras and binoculars, as they hang over the deck rails to witness the stunning sight of the luminous blue-green ice wall as it creeps inexorably forward. Those who visit at the right time could be fortunate enough to see one of nature's most awesome events, when a chunk of ice cracks and falls thunderously from the wall into the ocean as the mighty glacier calves, startling the seals basking on ice floes.

## Alaskan Ferry

Large cruise ships regularly travel to major ports in Alaska but a better idea for those who prefer a more intimate option is the Alaskan Ferry. Departing from Bellingham, Washington, these large ferries bounce through the major coastal towns of Canada and The Gulf of Alaska before stretching to the Alaskan Peninsula. The landscapes are staggering, revealing hundreds of craggy forest-dense islands and coastlines. Eagles, killer whales, bears and other hardy wildlife are all part of the view. The months of operation are May to September, when the weather is bearable and sunshine illuminates most of the evening hours. Costs vary greatly depending on the length of the voyage and style of accommodation. Most ferries rent out cabins but those in tune with Alaska's pioneer spirit can pitch a tent on deck or just use a blanket.

## Ketchikan

The 'salmon capital of the world' started as a summer fish camp on the shores of Ketchikan Creek used by the Tlingit natives, and became a major salmon canning centre. Native Inuit heritage plays a large role in the touristic appeal of Ketchikan, which boasts the largest collection of totem poles in the world in the Ketchikan Totem Bight State Historical Park, Saxman Native Village and the Totem Heritage Center Museum. Rustic Creek Street, with its picturesque wooden boardwalks and stilts, was once the town's red light district, and today the houses have been converted into restaurants, shops and galleries. Ketchikan is located on Revillagigedo Island, 235 miles (378km) south of Juneau. The town is a popular cruise destination and is the starting point for most Inside Passage tours. Excursions into the surrounding wilderness include air or boat trips to nearby Misty Fjords, an area of pristine, spectacular scenery with soaring cliffs, waterfalls, lakes and glaciers.

**Website:** <http://www.visit-ketchikan.com>

## Mendenhall Glacier

The most popular attraction in Juneau is the Mendenhall Glacier, located just 12 miles (19km) from the downtown area. Originally known as Sitaantaagu ('the Glacier Behind the Town') by the Tlingits, it was renamed in honour of Thomas Corwin Mendenhall, an American physicist, in 1891. The Mendenhall Glacier is 1.5 miles (3km) wide, and calves into its own lake. Visitors have several options for seeing the Mendenhall Glacier. It can be viewed from the Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center, which includes a recreation area good for viewing black bears; or visitors can hike to the glacier via the Mendenhall Glacier West Glacier Trail, which takes roughly five hours both ways. It is a good idea for visitors to hike with a guide, and bring crampons if they want to hike on the glacier itself. As an added option, several businesses in Juneau offer helicopter rides to the glacier itself, although these are fairly expensive.

## Port of Call - Frederick Sound

Frederick Sound is one of the busiest ports of call along the Inside Passage. Of all the cruise ports in Alaska, it has a well-earned reputation for being the best place to see humpback whales. Roughly 500 of the graceful creatures pass through Frederick Sound each year, using the area as a feeding ground and giving visitors an opportunity for a once-in-a-lifetime encounter.

Cruise ships dock in the town of Petersburg. While the shallow waters can't accommodate large cruise ships, Frederick Sound is popular with smaller ships and buzzes with activity all summer long.

## Shopping in Frederick Sound

Shopping opportunities in Frederick Sound are not abundant, however there are some small bookshops and art galleries in town where you can find handmade items as well as tacky tourist memorabilia.

## Dining in Frederick Sound

Coastal Cold Storage - takeaway restaurant with good fried fish and chips and breakfast sandwiches

Tina's Kitchen - salmon and halibut burgers in a casual environment

Papa Bear's Pizza - friendly restaurant serving pizza, chicken wings, and burgers

## Things to do in Frederick Sound

Explore the LeConte Glacier and spot humpback whales on a sea kayak tour

Go bird-watching in the Blind Slough or at Eagle Roost Park

Enjoy the panoramic views from the Petersburg High School boardwalk

Soak up some local history at the Clausen Memorial Museum

Have a picnic and explore the tide pools on Sandy Beach

Petersburg Chamber of Commerce +1 (907) 772-4636 [www.petersburg.org](http://www.petersburg.org) [visitorinfo@petersburg.org](mailto:visitorinfo@petersburg.org)



## Port of Call - Haines

Haines connects the Inside Passage to the Alcan Highway, making it a popular stop on both land and sea holidays in Alaska. The scenic location Haines is situated in is known as the Valley of Eagles for its abundant Bald Eagle population. A unique phenomenon in North America, the small population of around 2,000 people is dwarfed each winter by the arrival of more than 3,500 of the majestic birds.

The town of Haines was originally occupied by the Tlingit people, and while it was caught up in the Klondike Gold Rush in the late 1800s it was only after World War II that Haines truly became connected to the outside world. Now most of the region flocks there each July for the Southeast Alaskan State Fair.

A fairly new port of call on cruise itineraries, one of the best aspects of a stop in Haines is the lack of crowds; fewer than 20 ships dock here each year so the town retains an undiscovered air that seasoned cruise passengers will find refreshing. Cruise ships dock at the Port Chilkoot Wharf, at the foot of Portage Street below Fort Seward.

## Shopping in Haines

There are a few souvenir shops in town for cruise passengers, selling everything from postcards and t-shirts to beautifully-made local art. The Sea Wolf Art Studio is the best place to go for native Tlingit art, including totem poles, masks, woodcarvings and jewellery. You can also pick up fresh smoked salmon and halibut at Dejon Delights.

## Dining in Haines

The Bamboo Room & Pioneer Bar - casual diner with excellent fish and chips

Mountain Market & Spirits - good vegetarian and healthy foods in a relaxed environment

Fireweed Restaurant - simple and tasty salads, pizzas and pastas made from scratch

## Things to do in Haines

Visit the Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve

See the Takshanuk Mountain Trail by 4x4

Hike Battery Point Trail along the beach to Mt Riley

Charter a flight to a glacier with Mountain Flying Service

Go rafting on the Chilkat River

Haines Convention and Visitors Bureau +1 (907) 766-2234 [www.haines.ak.us](http://www.haines.ak.us)

## Port of Call - Icy Strait

One of Alaska's newest cruise ports, Icy Strait is an attractive mix of scenic natural beauty and small-town charm. Conveniently located near Hoonah, a large Tlingit Indian settlement, and Glacier Bay National Park, the port strikes a balance between providing memorable experiences for visitors and preserving the local lifestyle and ecosystem.

Icy Strait has many miles of untouched wilderness to enjoy, and the local wildlife includes grizzly bears, humpback whales, seals, sea otters, bald eagles, and more. Organised excursions are available to many scenic points of interest.

Cruise ships dock just off Icy Strait Point in Port Frederick Bay, centrally-located for good restaurants and shopping.

## Shopping in Icy Strait

Icy Strait's dedication to keeping things local means visitors can stock up on unique berry jams and confectionaries you won't find anywhere else. The Icy Strait Point shopping centre has a variety of choices, including food, artisan crafts like blankets and wooden carvings, and jewellery. Cruise passengers should keep in mind that there are no banks or ATMs in Icy Strait, and draw cash on the ship before disembarking, however many shops accept credit cards.

## Dining in Icy Strait

The Crab Station - fresh Dungeness Crab in a casual outdoor dockside setting

The Landing Zone Bar & Grill - hot food with great views of Port Frederick and the zipline

The Cookhouse Restaurant - halibut fish and chips with waterfront views

## Things to do in Icy Strait

Try your hand at saltwater salmon fishing

Take a zip-line tour 1,300 feet (396m) above sea level

Learn to make smoked salmon dip in an Alaskan cooking class

Watch traditional Tlingit dances at the Native Heritage Center Theater

Take a wine-tasting and whale-watching cruise to Point Adolphus

Icy Strait Point Tourism +1 (907) 945-3141 [www.icystraitpoint.com](http://www.icystraitpoint.com) [info@IcyStraitPoint.com](mailto:info@IcyStraitPoint.com)

## Port of Call - Juneau

Juneau, Alaska's capitol city stretching along a narrow strip between mountains and the Gastineau Channel, is an unexpectedly cosmopolitan port stop on Inside Passage cruises. Mountains and stretches of wilderness cut off any land access to Juneau making it very reliant on its cruise industry. Juneau's best attractions lie in the scenery surrounding it; some of the best are longer excursions, but quick popular trips include riding Mount Roberts Tramway for an eagle's eye view of the city, or visiting nearby Mendenhall Glacier. Several ships can dock at the terminal located just next to downtown. When the docks are full, which is often in peak season, ships anchor in the harbour and tender passengers in. The town can get incredibly crowded on days in the peak cruise season.

## Shopping in Juneau

There are many small souvenir shops near the cruise terminal. Downtown Franklin Street and Mendenhall Valley both are popular shopping districts both with tourist merchandise and boutique shops. Many art galleries are spread around town including great examples of Native American arts and crafts.

## Dining in Juneau

Red Dog Saloon - Iconic restaurant and bar popular with cruisers

Tracy's King Crab Shack - best seafood in Juneau

Silverbow - The state's oldest bakery

## Things to do in Juneau

River raft on any class of rapids

Trek the glaciers

Whale Watch up close on a rented boat

Zip through the rainforest in a canopy tour

Helicopter over the glaciers

Tourist Kiosk

101 Egan Dr or at Davis Log Cabin Visitor Information Center on 134 Third Street

Tel: +1 (907) 586 2201 [www.traveljuneau.com](http://www.traveljuneau.com)

## Port of Call - Ketchikan

Known as the 'Salmon Capital of the World' and the rainiest town in southeast Alaska, the port of Ketchikan is named after the Ketchikan Creek, which flows through the town. The town boasts the world's largest collection of standing totem poles, which can be viewed at the Saxman Village, Totem Bight and the Totem Heritage Center. Other attractions include The Southeast Alaska Discovery Center, Eagle Spirit Gallery, Scanlon Gallery, the Misty Fjords and the WestCoast Cape Fox Lodge where visitors can enjoy spectacular views over the city. Cruise ships dock in the centre of town but when the port is crowded, ships may be required to anchor in the bay and tender passengers into Ketchikan.

## Shopping in Ketchikan

Those with a penchant for shopping should look no further than Creek Street where all the best boutiques and specialist stores can be found. The galleries along Stedman Street, such as Blue Heron, also provide some wonderful shopping opportunities.

## Dining in Ketchikan

Annabelle's Keg and Chowder House - stylish eatery or gastropub for diners to choose from

Pioneer Cafe - classic American diner food

Bar Harbor Restaurant - great seafood eatery

## Things to do in Ketchikan

Visit Neets Bay in Tongass National Forest and watch the Black bears

Go hiking in Deer Mountain

Go sea-kayaking

Go deep sea fish

Admire the Misty Fjords by air

Ketchikan Visitors Bureau Tel: +1 800 770 3300 [www.visitketchikan.com](http://www.visitketchikan.com) [info@visit-ketchikan.com](mailto:info@visit-ketchikan.com)

## Port of Call - Kodiak

Known as Alaska's Emerald Isle, Kodiak rewards visitors to its port with a strikingly beautiful vista of verdant wilderness, craggy peaks and plunging fjords. Inhabited by Alutiiq natives for over 7,000 years, Kodiak is a small but vibrant port town on Kodiak Island. The inhabitants of Kodiak are passionate about the outdoors, with hunting and sport fishing being two of the most popular activities. Authorities are careful to regulate these industries however, to protect local wildlife like elk, Sitka Deer, mountain goats, puffins and the famous Kodiak Bear, as well as fish including Alaskan salmon and halibut.

A busy commercial port town, Kodiak welcomes the tourist industry but doesn't pander to it. There are no tourist buses, backpacker hostels or airport shuttles, but the opportunity to experience life in the Alaskan Archipelago is a fascinating one for visitors from all walks of life.

Cruise ships dock at Kodiak's City Dock II, located about 1.5 miles (2km) south of the downtown area.

## Shopping in Kodiak

For a small town, Kodiak has a large number of gift shops and galleries tucked around corners. Tourist shops in Mill Bay Road have t-shirts and hats emblazoned with the town's name, while the downtown mall is ground zero for local art, Russian crafts, and other locally-made Kodiak souvenirs. Look for the 'Made in Alaska' emblem to ensure you're supporting the local community.

## Dining in Kodiak

Old Powerhouse - Japanese restaurant with harbour views and good sushi

Henry's Great Alaskan - Friendly sports bar serving burgers and deep-fried seafood

Mill Bay Coffees and Pastries - Excellent seafood, sandwiches and pastries made by a French chef

## Things to do in Kodiak

Hike the quick 1.2 mile (2km) loop at North End Park

Hire a mountain bike to explore Fort Abercrombie State Historical Park

Go salmon fishing in Kodiak's lakes and rivers

Play a round at the Bear Valley Golf Course

Spot whales on guided kayak tours

Kodiak Island Convention & Visitors Bureau Tel: +1 (907) 486 4782 [kodiak.org](http://kodiak.org) [visit@kodiak.org](mailto:visit@kodiak.org)

## Port of Call - Seward

The tiny town of Seward, located 126 miles (200km) south of Anchorage, isn't much to shout about in terms of architecture or nightlife; Seward's main attractions are the glaciers that surround it, home to spectacular vistas and abundant wildlife that includes whales, sea lions, otters, puffins, eagles, bears and more.

The town itself is a charming and photogenic slice of old Alaska, and is best experienced with a slow stroll past the bustling harbour through the historic downtown with its interesting little shops and art galleries.

Seward is a popular stop on Alaskan cruises, and sees more than 100,000 visitors brought in on cruise ships each year. Many cruises start or end here, as the town is in close proximity to major highways, train stations, and airports. Cruise ships dock at the Dale R. Lindsey Alaska Railroad Seward Intermodal Terminal, about a mile (2km) from downtown Seward.

## Shopping in Seward

Seward isn't exactly a shopper's paradise, but you'll find some small gift shops and art galleries downtown. Not surprisingly, many shops stock cold-weather gear: something to be grateful for if you didn't pack warm enough!

## Dining in Seward

Exit Glacier Salmon Bake - casual restaurant near the highway with great seafood

Smoke Shack - humble-looking restaurant with good ribs and pulled pork

Thorn's Showcase Lounge - great halibut fish and chips in a retro setting

## Things to do in Seward

Take a hike on Exit Glacier or the Soldier Icefield

Spot seabirds and otters from a kayak in Kenai Fjords National Park

Go dog-sledding on Godwin Glacier

Try your luck fishing for salmon and halibut in Resurrection Bay

See porpoises, sea lions and other undersea creatures at the Alaska SeaLife Center  
Seward Chamber of Commerce Conference & Visitors Bureau (907) 224-8051 [seward.com](http://seward.com)  
[visitseward@seward.net](mailto:visitseward@seward.net)

## Port of Call - Sitka

The small town of Sitka on Baranof Island has a rich and colourful history. Originally occupied by the Tlingit Indians, the town was also an important Russian outpost before Alaska was sold to the US in 1867 (a transfer that took place in Sitka).

Despite its size of only 9,000 people, Sitka is a bustling town that attracts more than a quarter of a million visitors each year. With both cultural and natural attractions as well as a variety of good restaurants and lively pubs, Sitka has something to offer everyone.

Cruise ships dock offshore from Sitka, and smaller boats are used to ferry passengers ashore to the O'Connell Bridge Lightering Facility at the foot of Castle Hill or the Crescent Harbor Lightering Facility near the Centennial Hall.

## Shopping in Sitka

There are plenty of shops in Sitka, stocking everything from tacky t-shirts to delicious smoked salmon. Furs are a popular souvenir from Sitka, as well as Russian and Tlingit art and crafts. On busy cruise ship days, head over to the Baranof Arts & Crafts Association, which has a great selection of items made by local artists.

## Dining in Sitka

The Larkspur Cafe - lively cafe with evening entertainment

Ludwig's Bistro - upmarket Mediterranean cuisine in a cosy atmosphere

Dock Shack - cheap and cheerful seafood at the waterfront

## Things to do in Sitka

Watch traditional Russian dances performed by the New Archangel Dancers

See brown bear cubs at the Fortress of the Bear educational and viewing centre

Experience Tlingit culture and history on a Sitka Tribal Tour

Go birdwatching at the Saint Lazaria National Wildlife Refuge

Explore islands and kelp forests on a kayak tour

Sitka Convention and Visitors Bureau Tel: +1 (907) 747-5940 [www.sitka.org](http://www.sitka.org) [scvb@sitka.org](mailto:scvb@sitka.org)

## Port of Call - Skagway

Situated in a narrow glaciated valley at the head of Alaska's Taiya inlet, the small town of Skagway first earned its place on the map in 1897 when prospectors from all over the world arrived by steamship in search of gold in the Dawson Gold Fields, turning it into a bustling port town with saloons, hotels and railways. Skagway is today one of Alaska's most popular ports and cruise passengers arriving here will still feel the same gold rush atmosphere of the town as period buildings and wooden sidewalks are restored to their former glory reinforcing the distinctive charm of this port. Visitors will love the authenticity of the town and exploring the attractions such as the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park Visitor Center or even trying their hand at a gold panning at Liarsville Gold Rush Trail Camp. Cruise ships dock at one of three deep-water docks which are all just a short walk from town. Smaller ships may dock at the Ferry Dock, which is also just a short walk from the heart of the town.

## Shopping in Skagway

Most shops are located on Broadway Street, but this small town does boast a few shopping opportunities, with everything from the regular touristy shops selling mass produced trinkets and junk to dinky independent clothing stores. For great crafts, prints, needlework and jewellery, visit Skagway Artworks or Changing Tides while Fairway Market is the place is a good place to pick up some fresh fruit snacks, film, health and beauty aids and sundries. Klothes Rush Gifts is the perfect place to pick up Alaska souvenirs while Miss Kitty's Buttonhole on French Alley sells funky hats, canes and 1898-style clothing.

## Dining in Skagway

Stowaway Cafe - casual eatery serving comforting homemade fare

Lemon Rose Bakery - sandwiches and great cinnamon rolls

Skagway Brewing Company - microbrewery with American pub food

## Things to do in Skagway

Play golf at 60 degrees North Latitude

Experience real Alaskan dog-sledding

Go whale watching on the ferry to Haines

Ride a bike along the White Pass Klondike gold route

Take a helicopter tour of the glaciers

Skagway Convention & Visitors Bureau Tel: 888 762 1898 or 907 983 2854 [www.skagway.com](http://www.skagway.com)  
[skagwayinfo@gmail.com](mailto:skagwayinfo@gmail.com)



## Port of Call - Whittier

A tiny town even in the busy summer cruise season, Whittier itself isn't much of an attraction with just more than 200 permanent residents. The town is a great base for exploring the pristine Alaskan wilderness however, and the region is filled with wildlife like bison, elk, moose, caribou, musk ox, bears, black-tailed deer, great horned owls and bald eagles.

Located just 34 miles (55km) from Anchorage, the town is a popular end point for Alaskan cruises as an alternative to the slightly larger Seward port. Cruise ships in Whittier dock at the Whittier cruise ship dock at the southern end of the town.

## Shopping in Whittier

There is very little shopping in Whittier, however cruise passengers will find several gift shops with a mixture of cheap souvenirs and handmade items.

## Dining in Whittier

Swiftwater Seafood Cafe - homey restaurant serving good halibut fish and chips

The Anchor Inn - serves hearty meals with big-screen sports playing

Lazy Otter Cafe - chili and chowder in a cosy cafe

## Things to do in Whittier

Try your luck at salmon fishing on a charter boat

Spot whales and otters from a hired kayak

Go dog sledding on a glacier

Get a bird's-eye view of Whittier on a helicopter tour

See moose, caribou and musk ox at the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center  
Whittier Visitor Information Center +1 (907) 472-2379 [www.whittieralaska.com](http://www.whittieralaska.com)

# Alaska Attractions

## Overview

Alaska contains some of the world's most intriguing wilderness areas and attracts nature lovers and adventurers keen for a taste of its yet untamed landscapes, huge glaciers and magnificent national parks. Outdoor activities and attractions dominate Alaskan itineraries, with all-time favourite destinations including the national parks of Glacier Bay, Denali, Kenai Fjords and Wrangell St Elias. A visit to Alaska is certainly not complete without seeing a glacier, and the Hubbard Glacier and Mendenhall Glacier are two of the best to seek out.

Aside from the wildlife and natural beauty, the history linked to Alaska's indigenous cultures prompts many travellers to visit Ketchikan, where the largest collection of totem poles in the world can be found in the Ketchikan Totem Bight State Historical Park and a number of other cultural sites. Anchorage also has some worthwhile cultural attractions, including the Alaska Native Heritage Center, the Anchorage Museum of History and Art, and some good markets selling art, local crafts, food and gifts. Although not prominent tourist hubs, Alaska's cities are gorgeously situated and provide access to the astounding natural bounty of the surrounding areas. Apart from Anchorage and Ketchikan, popular cities include the capital, Juneau, Skagway and Sitka, all common ports of call on the cruises that traverse the Inside Passage of Alaska.

## Denali National Park and Preserve

Famous for its spectacular mountain vistas, abundant wildlife, glaciers, vast expanses of sub-arctic tundra, and North America's highest mountain, Mount McKinley, Denali National Park and Preserve is a real wilderness area that attracts millions of visitors each year. More than six million acres are home to grizzly bears, caribou, moose, Dall sheep, wolves and numerous species of birds. The main attraction is the snow-covered massif of Mount McKinley, towering 20,320ft (6,096m) above the peaks of the Alaska Range, the definitive symbol of untamed Alaska. On a clear day its twin peaks can be seen from Anchorage, 149 miles (240km) away. The Alaska Range divides the park into north and south sides, with the majority of visitors accessing the north where the main visitors centre is located. Mountaineers seeking out the challenges of Mount McKinley need to access the park from the south side. Other peaks offer excellent climbing opportunities for those not wishing to risk the mountain that has earned its reputation as one of the world's most difficult climbs. The park region also offers a wide variety of other activities including day hikes or backcountry hiking, camping, mountain biking, whitewater rafting and ice climbing.

**Address:** George Parks Hwy, Denali

**Telephone:** (907) 683 9532

**Website:** [www.nps.gov/dena/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/dena/index.htm)

## Glacier Bay National Park

When the early explorers and pioneers of the 18th century sailed this way, Glacier Bay was hidden under a huge sheet of solid ice, more than 4,000ft (1,219m) thick and up to 20 miles (32km) wide. Today the branching 65-mile (105km) long fjord is the work of the fastest-receding glacier on earth; the melting ice of the Grand Pacific Glacier opening up a spectacular carved terrain of steep rock walls lining deep-water fjords. Sliding out of the mountains are 16 active glaciers that fill the sea with different shaped icebergs, creating the icy blue landscape that is world-renowned. At the head of the fjord is the massive ice wall of the Grand Pacific Glacier, slowly melting and sculpting the still-unfinished land as it backs away from the sea, a natural work of art in progress. An added attraction is the variety of aquatic life including humpback whales, sea otters, seals and porpoises, while bears, moose, mountain goats and many species of birds inhabit the land. This rugged landscape can only be accessed by boat or small plane as most of the park is made up of water. As opportunities to see this huge wilderness are limited, facilities can be crowded, especially on the tour boats. Activities are somewhat expensive, and wildlife sightings cannot be guaranteed. Gustavus is the small settlement that services the park, but the park headquarters is at Bartlett Cove from where boats can be arranged or alternate means provided to enjoy the park experience. Kayaking or camping in the backcountry, ranger-led programmes or walks, hiking and fishing are all available.

**Telephone:** (907) 697 2230

**Website:** [www.nps.gov/glba](http://www.nps.gov/glba)

## Anchorage Museum of History and Art

**Opening time:** Tuesday to Saturday 10am-6pm; Sunday 12pm-5pm. Closed Monday.

**Admission:** \$20 adult, \$10 children, other concessions available.

The world-class Museum of History and Art is the largest museum in Alaska and is one of the most visited attractions in Anchorage. The exhibits cover the history and cultures of Alaska (from Native American beginnings to American colonisation) and explore the natural resources and landscapes of the country. Part of exploring the cultures of the country is exhibiting Alaskan art, and the museum has a good permanent collection and hosts multiple temporary art exhibitions. Art, history and the natural sciences are combined to great effect in this wonderful museum. Visitors of all ages should find something to interest them.

**Address:** 625 C St, Anchorage.

**Telephone:** (907) 929 9200

**Website:** [www.anchoragemuseum.org](http://www.anchoragemuseum.org)

## Hubbard Glacier

There is surely no more spectacular experience on the planet than to witness the calving of a titanic glacier. A stopover to watch nature's incredible marvel, the Hubbard Glacier, in action as the high wall of ice thickens and advances towards the Gulf of Alaska is one of the unforgettable moments that makes thousands of holidaymakers opt for an Alaskan cruise every year. The Hubbard Glacier is the largest tidewater glacier in North America, beginning its 75-mile (121km) journey to the sea on the tallest mountain in Canada, Mount Logan, and finally shedding tons of its bulk in awesome ice falls across the six-mile (10km) wide head of Yakutat Bay. Every day cruise liners pull in, their passengers bundled up in their warmest clothing and festooned with cameras and binoculars, as they hang over the deck rails to witness the stunning sight of the luminous blue-green ice wall as it creeps inexorably forward. Those who visit at the right time could be fortunate enough to see one of nature's most awesome events, when a chunk of ice cracks and falls thunderously from the wall into the ocean as the mighty glacier calves, startling the seals basking on ice floes.

## Alaska Native Heritage Center

**Admission:** \$24.95 adult, \$16.95 children, other concessions available

The Alaska Native Heritage Center is a wonderful place for visitors to learn about the culture and heritage of the native Alaskan people while in Anchorage. Indigenous traditions, customs and lifestyles are showcased in the centre's exhibits, which include artefacts such as tools, watercraft, clothing, pieces of art and musical instruments. The centre also hosts local storytelling, dancing and craft events which help to bring the traditions to life for visitors. The Alaska Native Heritage Center is closed in winter, but hosts monthly cultural events.

**Address:** 8800 Heritage Center Drive

**Telephone:** (907) 330 8000

**Website:** [www.alaskanative.net](http://www.alaskanative.net)

## Alaskan Ferry

Large cruise ships regularly travel to major ports in Alaska but a better idea for those who prefer a more intimate option is the Alaskan Ferry. Departing from Bellingham, Washington, these large ferries bounce through the major coastal towns of Canada and The Gulf of Alaska before stretching to the Alaskan Peninsula. The landscapes are staggering, revealing hundreds of craggy forest-dense islands and coastlines. Eagles, killer whales, bears and other hardy wildlife are all part of the view. The months of operation are May to September, when the weather is bearable and sunshine illuminates most of the evening hours. Costs vary greatly depending on the length of the voyage and style of accommodation. Most ferries rent out cabins but those in tune with Alaska's pioneer spirit can pitch a tent on deck or just use a blanket.

## Ketchikan

The 'salmon capital of the world' started as a summer fish camp on the shores of Ketchikan Creek used by the Tlingit natives, and became a major salmon canning centre. Native Inuit heritage plays a large role in the touristic appeal of Ketchikan, which boasts the largest collection of totem poles in the world in the Ketchikan Totem Bight State Historical Park, Saxman Native Village and the Totem Heritage Center Museum. Rustic Creek Street, with its picturesque wooden boardwalks and stilts, was once the town's red light district, and today the houses have been converted into restaurants, shops and galleries. Ketchikan is located on Revillagigedo Island, 235 miles (378km) south of Juneau. The town is a popular cruise destination and is the starting point for most Inside Passage tours. Excursions into the surrounding wilderness include air or boat trips to nearby Misty Fjords, an area of pristine, spectacular scenery with soaring cliffs, waterfalls, lakes and glaciers.

**Website:** [www.visit-ketchikan.com](http://www.visit-ketchikan.com)

## Mendenhall Glacier

The most popular attraction in Juneau is the Mendenhall Glacier, located just 12 miles (19km) from the downtown area. Originally known as Sitaantaagu ('the Glacier Behind the Town') by the Tlingits, it was renamed in honour of Thomas Corwin Mendenhall, an American physicist, in 1891. The Mendenhall Glacier is 1.5 miles (3km) wide, and calves into its own lake. Visitors have several options for seeing the Mendenhall Glacier. It can be viewed from the Mendenhall Glacier Visitor Center, which includes a recreation area good for viewing black bears; or visitors can hike to the glacier via the Mendenhall Glacier West Glacier Trail, which takes roughly five hours both ways. It is a good idea for visitors to hike with a guide, and bring crampons if they want to hike on the glacier itself. As an added option, several businesses in Juneau offer helicopter rides to the glacier itself, although these are fairly expensive.

# Currency

The official currency is the US Dollar (USD), which is divided into 100 cents. Only major banks exchange foreign currency. ATMs are widespread and credit cards are widely accepted. Banking hours are Monday to Friday 9am to 3pm.

## Exchange rate for 1 USD - U.S. Dollar

<b>0.00</b> BMD Bermudan Dollar	<b>0.93</b> EUR Euro	<b>0.80</b> GBP U.K. Pound Sterling	<b>152.99</b> JPY Japanese Yen	<b>1.37</b> CAD Canadian Dollar	<b>0.91</b> CHF Swiss Franc
<b>1.52</b> AUD Australian Dollar	<b>39.40</b> UAH Ukrainian Hryvnia	<b>443.91</b> KZT Kazakhstani Tenge	<b>93,075.00</b> LBP Lebanese Pound	<b>4.86</b> LYD Libyan Dinar	<b>6.86</b> BOB Bolivian Boliviano
<b>0.00</b> NPR Nepalese Rupee	<b>0.00</b> OMR Omani Rial	<b>0.00</b> QAR Qatari Rial	<b>1.35</b> SGD Singapore Dollar	<b>10.82</b> SEK Swedish Krona	<b>0.00</b> TTD Trinidad Tobago Dollar
<b>0.00</b> VEF Venezuelan Bolivar	<b>58.11</b> DOP Dominican Peso	<b>0.00</b> HRK Croatian Kuna	<b>16.95</b> MXN Mexican Peso	<b>610.53</b> XOF West African CFA Franc	<b>0.00</b> PGK Papua New Guinean kina
<b>0.00</b> BSD Bahamian Dollar	<b>0.00</b> FJD Fiji Dollar	<b>0.00</b> HNL Honduran Lempira	<b>133.87</b> DZD Algerian Dinar	<b>0.00</b> MMK Myanma Kyat	<b>0.00</b> BWP Botswana Pula
<b>3.72</b> PEN Peruvian Nuevo Sol	<b>938.44</b> CLP Chilean Peso	<b>386.84</b> AMD Armenia Dram	<b>23.29</b> CZK Czech Koruna	<b>17.63</b> MDL Moldova Lei	<b>139.89</b> ISK Icelandic Krona
<b>12,582.40</b> UZS Uzbekistan Sum	<b>3.72</b> ILS Israeli New Sheqel	<b>0.71</b> JOD Jordanian Dinar	<b>0.00</b> KWD Kuwaiti Dinar	<b>38.15</b> UYU Uruguayan Peso	<b>0.00</b> MUR Mauritian Rupee
<b>0.00</b> NIO Nicaraguan Córdoba	<b>10.88</b> NOK Norwegian Krone	<b>4.03</b> PLN Polish Zloty	<b>3.75</b> SAR Saudi Riyal	<b>0.00</b> LKR Sri Lanka Rupee	<b>36.79</b> THB Thai Baht
<b>3.66</b> AED U.A.E Dirham	<b>5.09</b> BRL Brazilian Real	<b>4.63</b> RON Romanian New Leu	<b>7.81</b> HKD Hong Kong Dollar	<b>610.53</b> XAF Central African CFA Franc	<b>25,405.70</b> VND Vietnamese Dong
<b>878.36</b> ARS Argentine Peso	<b>0.00</b> XCD East Caribbean Dollar	<b>0.00</b> GTQ Guatemalan Quetzal	<b>10.06</b> MAD Moroccan Dirham	<b>0.00</b> BHD Bahrain Dinar	<b>1.00</b> PAB Panamanian Balboa
<b>1.70</b> AZN Azerbaijan Manat	<b>3,920.00</b> COP Colombian Peso	<b>88.42</b> KGS Kyrgyzstan Som	<b>362.00</b> HUF Hungarian Forint	<b>10.89</b> TJS Tajikistan Ruble	<b>16,073.70</b> IDR Indonesian Rupiah
<b>47.95</b> EGP Egyptian Pound	<b>1,358.84</b> KRW South Korean Won	<b>7,456.52</b> PYG Paraguayan Guaraní	<b>4.74</b> MYR Malaysian Ringgit	<b>508.31</b> CRC Costa Rican Colón	<b>1.67</b> NZD New Zealand Dollar
<b>277.87</b> PKR Pakistani Rupee	<b>91.39</b> RUB Russian Rouble	<b>18.51</b> ZAR South African Rand	<b>3.13</b> TND Tunisian Dinar	<b>0.00</b> BBD Barbadian Dollar	<b>1.82</b> BGN Bulgarian Lev
<b>32.33</b> TRY Turkish Lira	<b>57.28</b> PHP Philippine Peso	<b>32.31</b> TWD New Taiwan Dollar	<b>1,164.84</b> NGN Nigerian Naira	<b>0.00</b> XPF CFP Franc	<b>0.00</b> GHS Ghanaian Cedi
<b>0.00</b> JMD Jamaican Dollar	<b>0.00</b> ANG Neth. Antillean Guilder	<b>0.00</b> BND Brunei Dollar	<b>108.90</b> RSD Serbian Dinar	<b>7.24</b> CNY Chinese Yuan	<b>6.94</b> DKK Danish Krone
<b>3.49</b> TMT New Turkmenistan Manat	<b>83.42</b> INR Indian Rupee				