

# Alaska Vacations

## Is Alaska the right destination for you?

Immense in size, packed with natural wonders, and teeming with wildlife, Alaska gives exploring a whole new meaning. The 49<sup>th</sup> state is one of the world's last frontiers, where you still have a good chance of setting foot on untouched land and traveling off the beaten track is the norm. Venture out into the wilderness and get rewarded with epic adventures and unique experiences.

## Start planning your trip to Alaska

### What to see in Alaska

- An urban settlement surrounded by wilderness: Anchorage is the jumping-off point for many Alaska vacations and the best place to check out native museums.
- Denali, an icy rock bigger than Mount Everest, is the undisputed must-see of Alaska. Either climb the huge mountain or explore the surrounding national park.
- At the Kenai Fjords, watch massive tidewater glaciers churn against rocks and get up close with sea otters, harbor seals, and sea lions.
- Visit the quirky small town of Homer, known as the eco-tourism capital of Alaska and famous for its rich arts scene and excellent fishing.
- Get a four-wheel drive and conquer the McCarthy Road, cutting through the largest national park in the U.S., Wrangell-St Elias National Park.
- If you want to get even further off the beaten trail, tour the untamed wilderness of the Arctic Circle.

### What to do in Alaska

- Watch Alaska's Big Five – bears, wolves, Dall sheep, caribou, and moose – in action. Ever wanted to see a bear fishing for salmon?
- Explore Alaska by water for a different perspective: paddle your way through fjords and glaciers by sea kayak, or raft on state rivers.
- Take a boat ride and see colossal orcas, humpbacks, grays, and beluga whales splashing about in their natural habitat.
- Witness one of nature's most inspiring spectacles: the magical display of the Northern Lights dancing through the sky.
- Take to the skies for a unique view of Alaska's untouched landscapes and soar over icy mountains and green tundra's by bush plane or helicopter.
- Hiking is a great way to immerse yourself in Alaskan nature: hit the trails on your own or have a local guide show you the most scenic spots.

### When to go to Alaska

The summer months of June, July, and August are generally the best months to visit, with favorable weather conditions and easy access to the backcountry. This is also the most crowded and expensive travel period. The months of May and September constitute the shoulder season and are good alternatives. Whales can be spotted from May until September. The Northern Lights season runs from mid-September to late April.

## **Our advice for traveling to Alaska**

Distances in Alaska are huge and not to be underestimated. Getting from one place to another is an adventure of its own. The best itineraries combine different modes of transport. Chances are you will travel by sea at some point. Private cruises offering excursions and multi-day trips are popular among travelers, while locals often travel by ferry. Another option is to rent a car, which gives you the ultimate freedom to explore at your own pace. The Alaska Railroad is an interesting alternative and a scenic way to get to your destination. For getting to remote areas, traveling by air is often the only way. Private operators with small planes provide tours and services to small villages and remote areas.

## **Alaska trips created by local agencies**

Where to get started crafting your dream trip in a country this big and diverse? First of all, it is good to know that Alaska consists of five regions. Southcentral is home to the state capitol and half of the state's population. It has convenient transportation connections and great wildlife viewing, fishing and hiking opportunities. Interior is the state's heartland and the base of Denali, featuring wide expanses of tundra and forest. Southwest is characterized by varied landscapes of volcanos, hills, plains, and islands, while Inside Passage is dominated by forested mountains, fjords, and glaciers. The northernmost region, Arctic, is filled with natural wonders, rich history, and cultural heritage – the area is home to the Inupiat or Alaskan Inuit. Our local agencies are happy to help you create a tailor-made Alaska itinerary that includes all your favorite spots.

## **Alaska itineraries: plan your-tailor-made trip**

Many travelers kick their Alaska vacation off in Anchorage and spend a few days browsing the city and its surroundings before going into the wild. A classic itinerary, ideal for making the most out of your time, combines the highlights of Southcentral and Interior: Denali National Park and the Kenai Peninsula. The journey leads through a large variety of landscapes, showing a selection of everything Alaska has to offer and allows for stops at charming small towns. With more time on your hands, you can add side-trips heading deeper into the backcountry. If you want to go all the way, make your way to Arctic for an otherworldly experience.

## **Best places to visit in Alaska**

Although nobody comes to Alaska looking for city life, Anchorage is worth a few days. Browse local art shops and native museums and get your first taste of the wilderness in the city's surroundings. From there, head up north for Denali National Park, home to North America's highest peak and abundant wildlife. Don't forget to stop by at atmospheric towns, such as Talkeetna, along the way. Head down south for the Kenai Peninsula, where mountains meet the ocean and fjords and glaciers are your playground. Combine a trip to the fjords with stop-overs at the lovely towns of Seward and Homer. Alternatively, head eastwards to get to Wrangell-St Elias National Park, which is wild, rugged, and roughly the size of Yosemite National Park plus the country of Switzerland. Of course, this is just a tip of the iceberg: Alaska offers endless opportunities for exploring further and deeper. Southwest's Aleutian Islands, Inside Passage's Glacier Bay, and the Gates of the Arctic are all calling. Our local agents can tell you all about other hidden wonders to include in Alaska tours.

## **The best time to travel to Alaska**

Timing matters when planning an outdoor adventure. What is the best time to travel to Alaska?

- January: ok
- February: ok
- March: ok
- April: ok
- May: great
- June: great
- July: great
- August: great
- September: great
- October: ok
- November: ok
- December: ok

The best season for traveling to Alaska is summer, when the weather is pleasant and days are long. Travel in June, July, or August for warm weather and plenty of activity options, but know that this is also the most crowded and expensive time of the year. For fewer crowds and better rates, travel in May or September. In the winter months, temperatures drop, snowfall is common, and days are short. This is, however, the perfect season for skiing, snowmobiling, and dog sledding. Beware that the weather varies from region to region. It is always a good idea to research the weather patterns for the particular area(s) you plan to visit.