

All Alaska Interior & Coastal Tour - Ext.

INTRODUCTION

In nine days, this wonderful itinerary offers a representative cross section of Alaska from the varied wilderness interior to the rugged maritime environments, traversing three major mountain ranges and hundreds of miles of marine sanctuary and coastline in this tour accessible to all. By being small and mobile, we can leave the crowds behind and explore treasures unavailable through other means, allowing a true sense of self-discovery. From visiting many unspoiled frontier towns and the national parks of Denali, Wrangell-St. Elias, and Kenai Fjords; to exploring a remote ghost city, to traversing famous Prince William Sound to view whales, bald eagles, and glaciers; this overview of Alaska goes far beyond what the merely conventional tourist will ever see. While many means exist to visit the wild North, the only way to truly experience it is to get off the beaten track. This 9-day itinerary provides a bit more leisure than our venerable shorter version, both offering a wonderful option to enable a tremendous and personal overview, without sacrificing several weeks or all idea of comfort. Staying each night in lovely and unique accommodations and dining in restaurants, this tour still retains a very definite spirit of adventure in the places and people we visit. If longing to see some of the real Alaska, but don't care to camp, then this is the tour for you.



9 Day / 8 Night

\$3575/person

2012 Tour Dates **Code**

May 31 - June 8	9A3
June 25 - July 3	9A7
July 22 - July 30	9A11
Aug 13 - Aug 21	9A14
Aug 29 - Sept 6	9A16

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Trip cost includes all modes of transportation, meals, lodging and guiding. Accommodations range from semi-deluxe to log cabins, with shared bath the only option at some destinations. Physical fitness is not a prerequisite, though some walking is involved. A moderate level of fitness will add greatly to the overall enjoyment of the trip with several short optional hikes. Alcoholic beverages and gratuities to guides not included. Additional information and a suggested personal packing list sent upon deposit, and is available on the website. Group size is limited to ten persons.

ABBREVIATED AGENDA

Day 1 Anchorage-Denali National Park; depart AM towards Park; visit Iditarod Headquarters; lunch in Wasilla; optional flightseeing; dinner and overnight just outside of the Park entrance

Day 2 Denali; Park Visitor Center for overview; guided natural history and wildlife tour into Park interior; afternoon walk at Park entrance; overnight Healy north of Park

Day 3 Denali-Copper Center; drive across spectacular Denali Highway; old homestead visit; optional hike; Glennallen; Wrangell-St. Elias National Park (our country's largest!) Visitor Center; overnight accommodations in the historic Copper Center Lodge

Day 4 Copper Center-McCarthy; historic museum; Chitina; follow old railroad grade 60 miles into heart of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park; cross Kennicott River on footbridge to reach historic McCarthy; overnight in the historic Ma Johnson Hotel

Day 5 Kennicott/McCarthy; travel four miles to abandoned town/mine of Kennicott; extensive exploration; hike to Root Glacier; lunch overlooking Kennicott & Root Glacier; optional flightseeing; dinner at McCarthy Lodge; overnight Ma Johnson Hotel

Day 6 McCarthy-Valdez; morning departure for Valdez across spectacular Thompson Pass; stops at Tiekel River and Worthington Glacier; Valdez museum; dinner; overnight B&B

Day 7 Valdez-Hope; board ferry for spectacular trip across Prince William Sound to Whittier, passing Columbia Glacier; drive through mountain tunnels; road through Kenai Mtns. to end of the road frontier town of Hope; overnight Discovery Cabins along Bear Creek

Day 8 Seward-Hope; morning trip to Seward; board vessel for spectacular day tour of Kenai Fjords National Park to view marine life and glaciers; afternoon return through Moose Pass; overnight in creekside Discovery Cabins

Day 9 Hope-Anchorage; morning exploration around Hope (older than Anchorage!); optional gold panning; historical museum; lunch at the world class ski resort, Alyeska, in Girdwood; optional hike; late afternoon return to Anchorage

Day 1 Our first day will begin at 8AM, meeting downtown with pick-ups at previously arranged locations. We'll head northward rounding Knik Arm and stop at the headquarters for the 1000 mile Iditarod Sled Dog Race. The displays and short video here give a good insight into dog mushing in general, as well as the life-style and the commitment that it takes to train for and run the Iditarod itself. Before pushing northwards, we'll have lunch in the old Teeland's Department Store building, sitting on what was the center of Wasilla in the settlement days. We'll then return to the Parks highway, entering the great Alaska Range of mountains and on to Denali National Park. Flightseeing tours of the mountain are available just outside of the Park and are very highly recommended (cost approx. \$250-375/person) --sliding between towering peaks and over monstrous glaciers, this is an indescribable glimpse of a world that few experience. If the weather isn't cooperative, we'll have another equally good opportunity on Day 3. Dinner is just outside the entrance of Denali National Park, with lodging in Healy a few miles north.

Day 2 After an early breakfast, we'll head to the new Park Visitor Center for an overview of what we're about to experience. There's a great movie and extensive interpretive displays. Nearby we'll pick up our scheduled concessionaire shuttle bus, the only means into the interior of the Park. There are chances of seeing caribou, moose, Dall sheep, bears and wolves in the wide open vistas, with the vehicle stopping for wildlife or scenic photos whenever anyone would like. Hopefully too, the mountain will be "out" . . . It'll be a full dose no matter what animals and views grace the experience, begging for a leg stretching short hike on the great network of trails near the Visitor Center. Then it's a bit of leisure in "Glitter Gulch" the less than complementary name for the proliferation of businesses just north of the Park entrance. We'll then head back to Healy and take the Stampede Road a few miles into the high country to have dinner at the Earth Song Lodge, with an after dinner multimedia program on winter in the neighborhood. Lodging is back at the White Moose Inn.

Day 3 Turning back south to reach Cantwell, brings us to the western terminus of the beautiful Denali Highway. A 135 mile gravel road across wide valleys, alpine tundra and breathtaking scenery, the Denali "Highway" is open only in the summer months and is the only road through this remote area. Crossing glacial river and lake country, wildlife viewing opportunities abound in this large stretch of wilderness inhabited year-round only by the occasional trapper and wilderness hermit. We'll make a mandatory stop at the Gracious House, an old homestead on the road and one of the last occupied; most succumbing to the increasing unwillingness of most folks to work so physically hard for so little monetary gain. We'll later cross the Susitna River and follow the winding road over ancient glacial eskers and over the Maclaren Summit (elev. 4082 ft), the second highest point on the Alaska road system, stopping for photos or a short hike as time and weather permit. We then travel through the Tangle Lakes Archeological District, thought to be the principal corridor through which the earliest peoples passed to populate the rest of the Americas after making their way over the Bering land bridge from eastern Asia. The Richardson Highway, following the old Valdez-Eagle trail, leads us southward through Glennallen and Copper Center. We'll stop at the new Visitor's Center of our nation's largest national park, Wrangell-St. Elias, for an introduction to this uncommercialized jewel more than twice the size of Denali. The contrasting lack of crowds and regimentation is more than apparent. Just a few miles away is our lodging in the historic Copper Center Lodge, a roadhouse dating from the earlier days.

Day 4 Just next door is a great little museum for after breakfast. After that, the scenic Edgerton Highway leads to the old railroad town of Chitina at the confluence of the Copper and Chitina rivers. There's also a great little Park history intro in the nearby log cabin of one of the early settlers. From here we will travel the tortuous abandoned railroad grade 60 miles through the mountains back to the tiny town of McCarthy in the heart of Wrangell-St. Elias. At the end of the gravel road we'll grab our overnight bags, leave the van, and cross two forks of the Kennicott River (by footbridge) to reach the near-ghost town of McCarthy on the other side a half mile away, the only means of surface access in the months when the river isn't frozen. Excellent flightseeing tours of the area may also be available from the McCarthy airstrip that give an incomparable overall perspective. After a short hike onto the glacial terminal moraine, and having dinner at the McCarthy Lodge, the night will be spent in the historic "Old Ma

Johnson" Hotel.

Day 5 A van trip up the remainder of the road four miles to the abandoned company town of Kennicott, takes us to where we'll breakfast overlooking its namesake glacier. Walking allows an almost unbelievable exploration of an entire town sitting much the way it was when the mine closed in 1938. The Park Service has been busy for the last several years, renovating, shoring and adding interpretive displays to the historic buildings, as well as the incredible 14-story mill building itself. Kennicott is truly a ghost town without equal, due to its remoteness and fortunate lack of vandalism. A couple mile hike to the Root Glacier allows those interested to clamber onto the face of an active glacier. Others might choose the optional tour of the Mill building (surprisingly fascinating). Lunch is overlooking all this incredible scenery before our van shuttle back to McCarthy. Some might even opt for a return by the old Wagon Road, past the old cemetery. Dinner is back at The Golden, with the attached bar a must for lingering with the locals and getting a feel for those that call this home for the summer or a lifetime. Lodging is back across the street at the "Ma Johnson".

Day 6 After breakfast, we again cross the footbridges to the van for the beautiful trip to Valdez across Thompson Pass. Stopping at Tiekel River and the Worthington Glacier, we'll climb toward the pass where it's been known to snow almost a thousand inches in a winter. It's quite breathtaking in summer too. Descending through Keystone Canyon, a dramatic waterfall-filled passage to the ocean, the challenge of the terrain shows why the route took many years to discover and pioneer. In the late afternoon we'll have an opportunity to explore the wonderful museum and stroll the streets. Dinner will be on the town in Valdez with accommodations at a nearby bed and breakfast.

Day 7 After breakfast we board the Alaska State ferry for the beautiful ride across Prince William Sound. We should see many local creatures including murrelets, puffins, and sea otters, with a good chance of humpback and maybe even orcas or killer whales, as we weave amongst the many islands of the Sound before reaching Whittier. Here we will be reunited with our van and drive 2.5 miles through the Whittier Tunnel, the longest highway tunnel and the only one combining both rail and vehicle use in North America, which connects Whittier with the 1964 earthquake-destroyed community of Portage. Just out of the tunnel is the fine Portage Glacier Visitor's Center, and an easy short hike to view the Byron Glacier. From here we will head through the Kenai mountains to the tiny end-of-the-road frontier town of Hope on Cook Inlet. Far older than Anchorage, this first gold rush community in Southcentral Alaska is still a place of log buildings and an atmosphere that can only be experienced. It's the Alaska many have in mind from stories past. Lodging is in the cozy log cabins of Discovery Cabins, on the edge of rushing Bear Creek.

Day 8 Following a hearty breakfast, we'll head down the road to Seward and board the tour boat to head out into the Gulf of Alaska for the spectacular Kenai Fjords National Park, passing through the Chiswell Islands Refuge. Here we will view calving glaciers up very close in our small vessel and cruise the rugged coastline to view a tremendous concentration of wildlife including orcas and humpback whales, sea otters, sea lions, porpoises, eagles, and many different kinds of sea birds. It's one of the best one-day experiences in Alaska. Returning late afternoon we'll head north through the mountain lake community of Moose Pass and back to Hope. If inclined after dinner, we'll have a walk to the historic Seaview Bar down on the waterfront to meet some of the local "wildlife". Or, you might just like to poke around the old settlement and see the magnificent views of the mountains bordering Cook Inlet, before lodging again for the night at Discovery Cabins.

Day 9 After a leisurely breakfast, we might try our luck at gold panning (optional) and visit the Hope Historical Museum before following the road to the small town of Girdwood, home of the world-class Alyeska Ski Resort. Here there is an option to take the tram ride to the summit if the clouds permit for a spectacular view of the surrounding Chugach Range and Cook Inlet, while others might opt for a short hike through the rainforest (yes, rainforest) after having lunch at the locally famous bakery. Depending on the day's activities, we'll return to Anchorage in late afternoon and officially end nine incomparable days on the Last Frontier ---you'll most likely be already planning a return . . .



Client Pre-Trip Information

9- Day All Alaska Tour

Accessibility/Fitness

This is one of our most accessible trips as it does not require a high level of fitness,, though the spirit is very definitely adventure. At least a moderate level of fitness is certainly desirable, as not to preclude the many options that can add tremendously to the overall experience. Walking is also the only way to get around and fully appreciate some of the destinations. As we do leave the beaten path, a certain flexibility and zest for adventure go a long way towards your enjoyment as well as that of the entire group.

Accommodations/Dining

Our lodging ranges from log cabins to lodges to bed & breakfasts, with private bath facilities unavailable at several of the locations. All are very comfortable and are chosen for their uniqueness and charm. Dining is in local restaurants or lodges. Most feature a variety of standard dishes though in some we will be dining from a fixed menu with a choice of one or two main entrees. Special dietary needs cannot always be met as some locations are quite remote and goods purchased weeks in advance. Let us know well in advance if you have any strict or medical dietary needs and we'll gladly discuss the options. A vegetarian diet is usually not a problem. All meals from lunch on Day 1 through lunch on Day 9 are included. Alcoholic beverages are not included.

Luggage/Clothing

No specialized equipment is needed beyond your personal clothing (see separate Trip Packing List). Clothing should be comfortable, limited to three or four changes for the trip (laundry facilities available on Day 7), and when layered be warm to 40 degrees Fahrenheit. Dress at our destinations and in the North in general, varies from the very casual to the extremely so. Footwear must of course be comfortable and designed for walking. Rain gear is essential. All clothing and personal items are limited in volume to no more than a manageable medium-sized soft-sided suitcase or duffle bag. Our vans have very limited luggage space, so please pack prudently. Extra items/luggage can usually be left in Anchorage during the trip. A small daypack for cameras, water bottle and miscellaneous items is great for in the van as well as for walks/hikes. The day pack (or a small overnight bag) is necessary also for Day 4, as we will be walking a half mile from the van, across the footbridges to McCarthy.

Pre/Post-Trip Lodging/Trip Addons

Many types of lodging are available in Anchorage as are independent extensions before or after your trip with us. Facilities fill up very early during the summer season. Please advise us of your interests well in advance so that we are able to guarantee suitable accommodations. If you need suggestions for other things to do, just let us know.

Miscellaneous

Purchases can be made with cash, traveler's checks and often (but not always) credit cards. TRAVELERS INSURANCE is strongly recommended, as the season is very short and our cancellation policy is necessarily quite strict. EMERGENCIES: A list of lodging/contacts is sent upon confirmation, though the best way to be reached is through the Adventure Alaska office in Hope. Smoking is not permitted in the vans and nearly all lodging facilities and all restaurants in Alaska are non-smoking. Cell . GRATUITIES to your guide(s) are not included.

Suggested Reading

Each client's appreciation will be immeasurably heightened by gaining some background beforehand of Alaska and the areas of our travels. A wide selection of books and information is available from Alaska Geographic: 810 E 9th Ave, Anchorage, AK 99501; (866) 257-2757; www.alaskageographic.org and also from our local bookseller, Title Wave Books, in Anchorage - www.wavebooks.com; 907-278-9283