

An Overview of Alaska Cruising

Weather- Alaska is our country's northern most state. It's above Canada and close to the North Pole. The cruise ships visit places with lots of ice and you can take tours, which give you the opportunity to go dog sledding or trek across a glacier. With this said, you would expect it to be very cold in Alaska. It can be, but not really in the May - September Alaska Cruise Season. Alaska is a big state and weather can vary greatly by region and season. The table below shows average temperatures and hours of daylight across the state. Alaska does not have a 'rainy season'. Southeast Alaska typically receives the most rainfall, while warmer sunny weather is typical of interior Alaska summers. When packing for Alaska travel your best bet is to dress in layers regardless of which regions you plan to visit. Weather changes quickly in Alaska so be prepared. Alaska is also very causal. Bring along jeans, slacks, sweaters, sweatshirts, t-shirts (short and long sleeve), a rain jacket and comfortable walking shoes.

Far North Alaska - Barrow, Kotzebue, Nome, Prudhoe Bay (annual precipitation 4.8 inches) <i>temperature shown in Fahrenheit</i>	Hi	Low	Daylight
May	24	14	23 hours
June	38	30	24 hours
July	45	33	24 hours
August	42	33	19 hours
September	34	27	13 hours
Interior Alaska - Fairbanks, Denali National Park (annual precipitation 10.8 inches) <i>temperature shown in Fahrenheit</i>	Hi	Low	Daylight
May	59	38	18 hours
June	70	50	21 hours
July	72	52	20 hours
August	66	47	16 hours
September	54	36	13 hours
South central Alaska - Anchorage, Seward, Talkeetna, Kenai (annual precipitation 15.9 inches) <i>temperature shown in Fahrenheit</i>	Hi	Low	Daylight
May	54	39	17 hours
June	61	47	19 hours
July	65	51	18 hours
August	63	49	15 hours
September	55	41	13 hours
Southeast Alaska - Juneau, Ketchikan, Skagway (annual precipitation 54.38 inches) <i>temperature shown in Fahrenheit</i>	Hi	Low	Daylight
May	55	38	16 hours
June	60	45	18 hours
July	64	48	17 hours
August	62	47	15 hours
September	55	43	13 hours

Daylight in Alaska - Alaska is known as the Land of the Midnight Sun because of the really long days you may experience in April through September. It's really quite a feeling to be cruising the Inside Passage, stepping out to your private balcony and enjoying the view at 11:00 pm at night!

Packing for an Alaska cruise - The key word for dressing for an Alaska Cruise is "Layering." Casual sportswear including windbreakers, pants and jogging suits are well suited at both sea and ashore in Alaska. Remember to bring a sweater or jacket for cool evenings. The weather is unpredictable and you should plan on bringing a rain resistant jacket for shore side activities. Light gloves, a hat or visor and sunglasses are also recommended. You'll also want comfortable

walking shoes and sandals with a rubber sole as you explore the shores of Alaska. Alaska Cruises tend to be more casual than other destination. However, many of the contemporary cruise lines still observe formal nights and resort-casual nights. Smart Casual is similar to what you would wear at home going out to dine at nice restaurant and can include skirts/dresses, slacks, sweaters and blouses for ladies and pants and open neck shirts for men. A jacket and tie are optional. In the dining area, items such as cutoff t-shirts, halter-tops and torn jeans are not permitted. In the evening, ships vary as to dress. As on shore, attire is dictated by occasion. **Packing Your Carry On** - Plan your carry-on load carefully. A larger carry-on bag (within airline carry-on requirements) is useful so that you can comfortably carry a change of clothing. Keep your carry-on bag safe when you're in the airport; never leave it unattended. **Divide and Conquer** - If traveling with a companion or spouse, divide your checked items into two (or more) suitcases. That way, if one is lost, you will both have some clothing to wear! It would be terrible for your spouse to have all of his clothes and you to have nothing but your carry-on. Also, be sure to carry-on anything that you cannot live without for a couple of days (or more), just in case your luggage is lost or delayed.

Formal nights are not necessarily extremely formal - Some passengers, who enjoy dressing up, will go all out with tuxedos, long gowns, etc. On most seven-night cruises, this is not necessary. The majority of men wear a suit or blazer with white shirt and conservative tie on formal nights. Many women wear cocktail dresses, fancy dresses, or suits. It's like getting dressed for a nice wedding. Young boys can wear nice slacks with a shirt and a tie. A good rule of thumb: The more expensive the ship, the more likely that formal wear will be worn.

Viewing Glaciers - Many people think that the right side of the ship (starboard side) is better for scenery on a Northbound cruise, and the left side (port side) better on a Southbound cruise but this isn't true. When cruising the Inside Passage, there is scenery on both sides of the ship and when you are entering the fjords in Alaska, the viewing will be equally good from both sides of the ship over the duration of your cruise vacation. In other words, during your cruise, you'll see scenery from both sides of the ship

Fishing - If you love fishing, you will love Alaska. There are plenty of opportunities to enjoy full or half-day fishing excursions in all the ports of call. You can fish for King Salmon, Pink & silver salmon, Sockeye, Halibut, Rainbow Trout, Char, and Steelhead depending on the port or city. This is one of the most popular activities on an Alaska cruise. Not only is it a high adventure sport that gives you a chance to land "the big one," it also combines the benefit of exploring some of the most beautiful scenery in Alaska, and maybe some glacier viewing or whale watching depending upon your fishing guide and tour. Fishing excursion can be booked through the cruise line.

Seasickness in Alaska - Cruising the Inside Passage, Glacier Bay or through College Fjord is like sailing on glass. Not only are the waters in these areas smooth, today's modern cruise ships are quite large and contain hi-tech stabilizing devices. In the unlikely event you experience motion discomfort, there are a number of over-the-counter solutions to ease your concerns. These include Bonine, Mecklizine, Dramamine, Transderm Scope Patches, and Seabands. Please consult with your physician or pharmacists before taking any medication.

Shore Excursions - Shore excursions are optional, guided tours in a cruise ship's port of call. They are offered in all Alaska ports and cities and are a great way to enhance your cruise experience while seeing more of the places you visit. An organized Shore Excursion can maximize your time ashore and eliminate the need for making time-consuming arrangements while in port. These tours are led by local residents, who's expertise and first-hand knowledge of the history and folklore of a local attraction can offer colorful insights and anecdotes that you just cannot experience on your own with a city map and guide-book. Every cruise line has guided tours available in each port of call, highlighting the places to sightsee, shop and experience local culture. As a convenience to their passengers, they provide a complete list of shore excursions, descriptions, and prices in advance with your cruise documents and on their websites to help you decide which tours you can take. You can pre-book them prior to leaving home or wait until you board your ship.

Wheelchair Accessibility - Most cruise lines will do their best to accommodate wheelchair passengers wherever possible. Many of today's modern cruise ships are built with wheelchair-accessible staterooms that include wide doors and large bathrooms with roll-in showers and handrails, hand-held showerheads, and fold-down seats and stools. Many of the rail cars used by Holland America, Princess and Celebrity Cruise Tours are accessible to the lower levels including the dining, restroom facilities and viewing platforms. Whenever possible, they will use motor coaches or vans equipped with lift-platforms to assist passengers in boarding and departing the coaches. All cruise lines require advance notice of wheelchair passengers for all travel in order to ensure appropriate accommodation. Note that while all guests are provided

assistance in boarding and departing the cruise ship, motor coaches and rail segments on the land tours, passengers with disabilities must be able to travel independent of assistance in other situations or travel with a companion who is capable of providing assistance. You may wish to bring a rental wheelchair or scooter with you. Simply contact **Care Vacations** at 877-478-7827 or res@carevacations.com and they will arrange the delivery and pick up at the ship for you.

The Inside Passage - This region gives the most complete overview of the communities and surrounding wilderness preserves and parks in Southeast Alaska. Almost every popular small town in Southeast Alaska will be a part of an Inside Passage itinerary, introducing you to Alaska's state capitol, a Norwegian fishing village, a native town, towns built on the timber industry, the gold of rush of 1898, and the historic Russian capitol of Sitka. While not in port, you will visit some of the most pristine and dramatic wilderness areas and parks, such as Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, Misty Fjords National Monument, and Tracy Arm Wilderness Area. These are amongst the most dramatic locations you can explore in southeast Alaska, offering the most dramatic views of glaciers and sheer granite walls reaching 3,000 feet out of the water. Many photographic opportunities will exist in the Inside Passage. Snow-capped mountains surround it and you have opportunities to spot mountain goats, bears, whales, porpoise, sea otters, dolphin, and moose. While visiting many of these ports, there are very special opportunities to take advantage of. This includes kayaking, hiking, biking, visits to museums and native cultural centers, flight seeing, river rafting, train rides, dog mushing and ice climbing, street walks, and taste testing.

Areas you will visit and see

Glaciers - Nothing compares to the sight of a monumental glacier calving icebergs into the sea. In Glacier Bay, you'll linger before the most active glaciers of them all. In College Fjord, sixteen glorious rivers of ice line up from starboard to port. And the twin Sawyer Glaciers forms a massive ice wall to highlight the stunning beauty of Tracy Arm.

Portage Glacier - One of the most spectacular sights in Alaska is glacier calving. This is when massive chunks of ice break away and plunge into the water. One of the very best places to witness calving is Portage Lake, located an hour south of Anchorage just outside of Girdwood. Here, Alaska's second most visited attraction is just a boat ride away: mighty Portage Glacier. A tour of Begich Boggs Visitors Center on Portage Lake offers a first look at the glacier through interpretive displays, including a walk-in simulation of a glacier fissure. Due to its retreat in recent years, however, Portage Glacier is no longer visible from the visitor's center.

Glacier Bay National Park - How does it feel when a monumental chunk of ice splits off a glacier and crashes into the sea? The sound is like thunder. The impact shoots water hundreds of feet into the air. You hold your breath as you catch the moment on film. Then you wait for it to happen again. And it does. Glacier Bay has more active calving glaciers than anywhere else in the world. Cruise by Reid and Lamplugh glaciers to the mighty John Hopkins - surrounded by rugged peaks and sheltering a seal pupping ground. Linger at Grand Pacific and Margerie glaciers for the grandest spectacle of them all. Margerie is an Ice Age giant a mile wide and 25 stories high. You will marvel at nature's unrelenting power as you witness the birth of one massive iceberg after another.

Glacier Bay - When John Muir discovered Glacier Bay in 1879; he surveyed the unblemished panorama and declared it "still in the morning of creation." Muir wasn't the first explorer to be in the area. Nearly a century earlier, George Vancouver's ships sailed right past it because a wall of ice sealed off the entrance to the bay. But over the last 200 years, the ice has been steadily receding, revealing a stark landscape that's slowly being taken over by vegetation that can't resist the fresh rock and soil. The result is a lush, temperate rainforest of spruces and hemlocks that carpets large portions of the stunning terrain.

Tarr Inlet - At the head of Glacier Bay is the Tarr Inlet, where scientists have found exposed rock that's believed to be more than 200 million years old. The Tarr Inlet is home to the Grand Pacific Glacier, an active body of ice that's slowly making its way toward the Margerie Glacier, which it last touched in 1912.

John Hopkins Inlet - As you cruise by the northeastern edge of the robust Fairweather Range, you'll enter the Johns Hopkins Inlet, home to no less than nine glaciers. Framed by rocky slopes that stretch skyward more than 6,000 feet, these wondrous bodies are eclipsed only by the mighty Mount Fairweather itself, which at more than 15,300 feet is the highest point in southeast Alaska.

Brilliant Blue Glow- In the northeastern corner of Glacier Bay, the snow-covered Takhinsha Mountains feed the active Muir Glacier, which regularly sheds walls of ice into the bay. The brilliant blue glow of a calving glacier and the thunderous roar of ice crashing into the water below are sights and sounds that you'll remember for the rest of your life.

Hubbard Glacier - Stand in awe before Alaska's most massive tidewater glacier. This dazzling ice-blue behemoth fills your view and extends for miles at either side. It originates on the slopes of Mt. Logan 76 miles away in Kluane National Park, and spreads across a valley 40 miles wide. By the time it reaches Disenchantment Bay, its architecture towers 40 stories high, dwarfing even the largest cruise ships.

Nicknamed the "Galloping Glacier," Hubbard moves faster than almost any other glacier on the continent. It advanced so

fast in 1986 it dammed Russell Fjord. And now it threatens a repeat performance. As your ship sails along its looming mass, listen for the loud, deep rumble. Wait for the mighty crack and the thunderous crash. Then marvel as icebergs the size of large buildings crash into the sea.

Tracy Arm and the Twin Sawyer Glaciers - This narrow, 26-mile-long fjord is another of Alaska's most dramatic glacier settings. Stand out on deck as the lush rain forest recedes and you enter a stunning canyon of bare rock. The panorama of 7,000-foot mountain peaks and nearly vertical rock cliffs is astounding. Countless waterfalls appear at every turn. Icebergs make their way to the sea in all sorts of wondrous shapes. And tucked away at the end of this remarkable waterway are two very active reminders of the Ice Age - the twin Sawyer Glaciers. The face of South Sawyer Glacier stretches one-third of a mile and calves icebergs big and small. Hundreds of harbor seals dot the floating platforms. Kittiwakes and mountain goats are a common sight. Whales and bears may even make an appearance in this magical place where closeness and intimacy make you part of the scene.

College Fjord - Only one place in Alaska surrounds you on all sides with tidewater glaciers. Within the dramatic setting of this narrow fjord, sparkling blue glaciers flow to the sea. One after another, glaciers named Princeton, Yale, Bryn Mawr and Vassar line up from starboard to port. At the head of the fjord lies Harvard Glacier. Here you'll linger for an in-depth lesson on nature's power. You'll be following in the wake of an illustrious group funded by railroad magnate Edward H. Harriman that traveled here in the summer of 1899. This scientific expedition found the mother lode of Ice Age glory - the greatest density of tidewater glaciers in Alaska - and returned with over a hundred trunks of specimens and thousands of photographs and color illustrations.

Mendenhall Glacier and the Juneau Ice Field - Embark on a trip back in time during a visit to the Juneau Ice Field. Located in the Coast Mountain Range, North America's fifth largest ice field blankets over 1,500 square miles of land, and stretches nearly 85 miles north to south and 45 miles east to west. It feeds 38 large glaciers, including the Mendenhall, on the road system just north of Alaska's capital city, Juneau, and the Taku, the largest, visible only by boat or plane. The Juneau Ice Field is a massive accumulation of ice and snow stretching from upper Taku Inlet north to Skagway. Scientists estimate the ice field's snow and ice depth to be from 800 to over 4,500 feet (245 to 1371 meters). It lies around peaks called nunataks, which push through the ice. Devil's Paw, the ice field's highest peak, and straddles the Alaska-Canada border, stands 8,584 feet (2616 m) tall. Like a parent, the Juneau Ice Field sends its offspring down from the heights to find their way inexorably down between the peaks in the many glaciers it feeds.

Columbia Glacier - The largest tidewater glacier in Prince William Sound and the second largest in the entire state of Alaska, Columbia Glacier is 25 miles from Valdez and covers more than 400 square miles. It encompasses a magnificent region of over fifteen thousand miles of water, ice and mountains. The face is more than 3 miles wide and is rapidly moving backward at a rate of 4 feet per day in the summer. The Sound's clear seawaters produce a rich marine life. Spot porpoises, killer whales, humpback whales, seals, sea lions, eagles and otters.

Misty Fjords - Set aside as a national monument in 1978, Misty Fjords is a wonderful example of the majestic Alaskan wilderness. As you cruise this remote section of the Alaska Panhandle, the sight of towering trees, deep bays, fjords and extraordinarily tall cliffs will awe you with the scale and power of nature. When you're cruising through this natural wonder, marvel at the mammoth cliffs rising out of the water and see the majesty of Alaska. Keep a watchful eye out for amazing wildlife. You may see bald eagles soaring overhead, black and brown bears foraging along the shore, Dall porpoises riding the bow wave of the ship, harbor seals sunning themselves along the rocky ledges, and possibly even humpback whales. Experience the sheer granite cliffs, plunging 1,000-foot waterfalls, crystalline lakes, and low hanging mists on a Misty Fjords Seaplane Adventure.

Icy Strait Point - Icy Strait Point is a virtual den of antiquity. It's very popular for a number of reasons. These include: Proximity to Wildlife Untouched and nestled in a pristine old growth rainforest Native Tlingit People They are your host for Native theatre, a ceremonial salmon bake, and the "Journey Through Time" native historical experience. Historic Cannery - The Icy Straits Packing Company has been restored, providing visitors a glimpse into the life and times of a historic salmon fish cannery circa 1930.

Tracy Arm Fjord - is perhaps one of the most dramatic locations in all of North America. Completely protected within the Tongass National Forest, this fjord stretches some 25 miles up into the Coastal Range Mountains. Tracy Arm Fjord is home to Sawyer Glacier. Though it's not as well known as Glacier Bay, some naturalists claim Sawyer Glacier is even more spectacular. Framed by 7,000-foot-high snowcapped mountains, which drop immediately to sea level. The area is surrounded by sheer 1,500-to 2,000-foot walls of granite falling into the extremely narrow passage, creating countless waterfalls and strange rock formations covered in forest, and trees hanging on to precipices at impossible angles. Sawyer Glacier boasts an impressive list of wildlife: black and brown bears, deer, wolves and moose. Even mountain goats, which usually keep to higher elevations, have been seen near its base.

Whittier - is located at the northern end of glacier-lined Passage Canal in Prince William Sound, 65 miles southeast of Anchorage. This tiny, remote community was established as a strategic military facility during World War II. Whittier's ice-free port has served various marine activities from freight transfers of searain

barges heading to South-central Alaska to a fishing and tourism port. In 1941, the U.S. Congress appropriated \$5 million to construct a 2.5-mile tunnel to penetrate the mountains to connect Whittier to Anchorage. This tunnel would be one of the largest in the world, and two years and two tunnels later; the first train arrived in Whittier on June 1, 1943, forever linking this Alaskan outpost by sea and land. By the year 2000, the tunnel began to serve both vehicles and the train. Two of the largest buildings in Alaska were also constructed in Whittier during the war, with the unique concept of housing all residents under one roof. To this day, most of the population of 185 lives in one of these tall buildings, and its tiny boat harbor remains the gateway to the pristine wonders of the beautiful Prince William Sound wilderness.

National Parks - With such a diverse landscape, the park provides a variety of habitats for animals, big and small. Large colonies of seabirds, migrating ducks and geese, black bears, seals, sea lions, porpoises and whales are all common here. It's not surprising that in the land that has the biggest bears in the world, the largest salmon, the greatest gathering of bald eagles and more than half the world's humpback whale population, you'd find this kind of spectacular wilderness. View with your own eyes the most dramatic scenery and the most abundant marine life and wildlife in the world on your Alaska cruise. Gaze at rugged, snowcapped mountains flanked by miles of open tundra as you explore Denali National Park, Alaska's peak attraction. Experience the beauty of Wrangell-St. Elias, America's largest national park. Marvel at glacier-carved valleys in Kenai Fjords National Park. Discover the magnificent wilderness of Banff, Jasper and Kluane National Parks in the heart of the Canadian Rockies.

Denali National Park - The Athabaskan native people called it "The High One" - and for thousands of years the crowning peak of the 600-mile Alaska Range has humbled those who glimpse its mighty beauty. Denali, at 20,320 feet, is the highest mountain in North America. The astonishing peak, also known as Mt. McKinley, rises almost alone, 16,000 feet above the snow line, and stands in sharp relief as one of the world's most impressive mountains. The only higher peaks in the world are in the Himalayas and the Andes. This spectacular peak is the landmark of Denali National Park and Preserve. At 6,000,000 acres, the Park is larger than the state of Massachusetts. This is the heart of Alaska, wild and unspoiled, just as it was when the first people looked in wonder and named it Denali. Denali's more than 6 million acres also encompass a complete sub-arctic ecosystem with large mammals such as grizzly bears, wolves, Dall sheep, and moose.

St. Elias National Park - The Chugach, Wrangell, and St. Elias mountain ranges converge here in what is often referred to as the "mountain kingdom of North America." The largest unit of the National Park System and a day's drive east of Anchorage, this spectacular park includes the continent's largest assemblage of glaciers and the greatest collection of peaks above 16,000 feet. Mount St. Elias, at 18,008 feet, is the second highest peak in the United States. Adjacent to Canada's Kluane National Park, the site is characterized by remote mountains, sweeping valleys, wild rivers, and a variety of wildlife.

Kenai Fjords National Park - Sweeping from rocky coastline to glacier-crowned peaks, Kenai Fjords National Park is one of Southeast Alaska's most scenic attractions. A day boat cruise through the park's long, steep-sided, glacier-carved valleys finds you an up-close look at abundant wildlife.

Gates of the Arctic National Park - You know you must be heading somewhere incredible when you have to pass through stone gates thousands of feet high to get there—and the Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve more than lives up to its promise. Legendary wilderness advocate and far-north explorer Robert Marshall, who described two peaks, Frigid Crags and Boreal Mountain, as the gates from Alaska's central Brooks Range into the arctic regions of the far north, coined the park's dramatic title. As any trip to the park will attest, Marshall wasn't just exercising poetic license. The gates lead to a labyrinth of glaciated valleys and forbidding, snowcapped peaks, of innumerable rivers running rampant through a landscape populated by caribou, sheep, wolves, and brown bears. Wind, water, ice, and plate tectonics all played a part in sculpting the park's wildly varied landscape. Southerly foothills run smack into rows of mountains averaging 4,000 feet, some of which climax in peaks soaring to more than 7,000 feet high. At the Arctic Divide, the story is played out in reverse, culminating in tundra plain that stretches to the Arctic Ocean.

Mountains - Mt. McKinley's vertical relief of 18,000 feet is greater than that of Mt. Everest. Measured from the 2,000-foot lowlands near Wonder Lake to its summit of 20,320 feet, Mt. McKinley, in Denali National Park, is considered by many to be the highest in the world. Mt. Logan, in Kluane National Park, is the second-tallest peak in North America. The most enormous mountain above water in the world, the ridgeline alone is 45 miles long.

Seven Highest Peaks in North America		
Mt. McKinley	Denali National Park	20,320 ft.
Mt. Logan	Kluane National Park	19,545 ft.
Mt. St. Elias	Kluane National Park/Wrangell-St. Elias National Park	18,008 ft.
Mt. Foraker	Denali National Park	18,400 ft.
Mt. Lucania	Kluane National Park	17,150 ft.
Mt. King	Kluane National Park	17,130 ft.
Mt. Steele	Kluane National Park	16,625 ft.

Wildlife- In Alaska, wilderness is king. You never know exactly what wildlife you're going to see. Besides whales, bears, birds, caribou, moose and the abundance of marine life, Alaska is also home to the gray wolf, red fox, musk oxen, mountain goats, lynx and much more. Only 90 miles of main road traverse the six million acres of Denali National Park, leaving the wildlife free to roam forests, tundra, glaciers, and mountains uninhibited.

Whales - For most, the concept of Alaskan wildlife doesn't extend beyond polar bears and salmon. But those who venture north know there's nothing like the sight of a 40-ton humpback whale breaking the surface of the water for air. During the summer months, more than 2,000 humpbacks are known to feed in the waters off Alaska, offering visitors plenty of chances to enjoy the splendor of these magnificent giants of the sea. Killer (Orca) and beluga whales are equally abundant and bowhead whales, Alaska's state marine mammal, are found in the Arctic Ocean and northern Bering Sea.

Bears - One of the things that make Alaska so special is that all three species of North American bears flourish here. Brown/grizzly bears are found from the islands of southeastern Alaska to the arctic. Black bears inhabit most of Alaska's forests. Polar bears frequent the pack ice and tundra of extreme northern and western Alaska. Bears are curious intelligent and potentially dangerous animals, but undue fear of bears can endanger both bears and people. People who are afraid of them kill many bears each year. Respecting bears and learning proper behavior in their territory will help so that if you encounter a bear, neither of you will suffer needlessly from the experience. Alaska is home to over 98 percent of our country's brown bear population so it is no wonder that Alaska bear viewing is a popular visitor attraction. Bears are found in nearly every corner of Alaska. Adult black bears range in weight from 200 to 500 pounds while Alaska brown bears may grow as large as 1,500 pounds. Grizzlies and brown bears are part of the same Alaska bear family. The term brown bear is usually given to bears that reside in Alaska coastal areas, while grizzlies usually reside inland. Alaska brown bears tend to be larger than grizzlies due to a more abundant supply of protein to eat such as salmon. Viewing a bear in the wilds of Alaska is a truly awesome experience, and often one of the highlights of a trip to Alaska. There are a number of Alaska bear viewing opportunities available to visitors. Denali National Park is one of the most popular areas in Alaska to view bears in their natural habitat. Each year tens of thousands of Alaska visitors board buses to travel all or part of the 90-mile road that travels deep into Denali Park. While bear sightings in Denali are by no means a sure thing, most visitors do see bears in Denali, although sometimes at a distance. For a more up close and personal Alaska bear viewing experience many visitors travel to southwest Alaska to locations such as McNeil River, Katmai National Park, Kodiak Island and Lake Clark National Park. In the summer months, typically from early June through late September brown bears gather near area streams to feed on Alaska salmon

Birds - Flying high above it all is the majestic bald eagle, which boasts a wingspan of up to eight feet. Some 40,000 bald eagles reside in Alaska today, with most nesting near water for easy fishing. They are one of more than 300 species of birds that can be found here, each a delight to observe and photograph. Other signature birds include the horned and tufted puffins, which thrive on the western end of Prince William Sound and along the Kenai Peninsula; the docile kittiwake, which nest in colonies along Glacier Bay; and the red-tailed hawk, a fixture at Wrangell-St. Elias.

Moose - the largest deer species -- live almost everywhere in Alaska except on some islands and the far north. Anchorage, a city of 270,000, has hundreds of moose in the city limits; so don't be surprised to see a moose browsing in a park. Much of the Kenai Peninsula was set-aside as a national wildlife refuge to protect the moose population from over hunting. They're also found frequently along highways and railroad tracks, browsing on willows or in small ponds. As you drive at twilight, keep an eye on the sides of the road for horse-size animals that might walk in front of you. An adult male (bull) moose can weigh 1,600 pounds and the female (cow) a little less. Only the male has antlers, which fall off in the winter.

Their longer “bell” hanging from the lower jaw can also distinguish males. Moose calves are born in mid-May. Whatever you do, don't get between a moose (cow) moose and her one or two calves; she will be protective. Even though moose seem cute, like Bull winkle, they're wild animals and should not be fed or walked up to by well-meaning watchers. More than 30 herds of caribou are spread across mainland Alaska. Your best chances for seeing them are in Denali National Park and along the Denali Highway. Alaska Highway travelers may see caribou between Tok and Canada, and they're frequently found along the Dalton Highway, which stretches across the tundra of Arctic Alaska. Caribou live on the tundra and in the taiga, or short-tree forests. Caribou are medium-sized deer, 3 to 5 feet tall at the shoulder. Males weigh 275 to 660 pounds, and females 150 to 300 pounds. Cows give birth to one or rarely two calves in spring or summer. Newborns weigh up to 13 pounds at birth. Woodland caribou have brown shaggy fur with a white neck, mane, belly, and tail, but caribou that live in Alaska and the arctic are almost completely white. Both male and female caribou grow antlers, which the caribou use for protection and to shove snow aside so the animals can reach the moss and lichen.

Caribou – Caribou are the only deer species that lives above the tree line year-round in some of North America's harshest habitat. They live in Alaska, Canada, and parts of Washington, feeding on conifers, grasses, sedges, lichen, mushrooms, birches, and willows. However, since it is sometimes hard to find food in extreme cold, caribou populations migrate with the seasons.

Dall sheep are found in relatively dry country and frequent a special combination of open alpine ridges, meadows, and steep slopes with extremely rugged "escape terrain" in the immediate vicinity. They use the ridges, meadows, and steep slopes for feeding and resting. When danger approaches they flee to the rocks and crags to elude pursuers. They are generally high country animals but sometimes occur in rocky gorges below timberline in Alaska. Look for Dall sheep at Denali National Park; along the Seward Highway at Windy Corner, Mile 106; and along the Glenn Highway at Sheep Mountain, Mile 107. Dall sheep have curled horns and sleek legs, distinguishing them from the spiky horns and thick-haired legs of mountain goats. A Dall ram's horns grow into a half circle after two or three years and into a full circle, or curl, in seven or eight years. The nimble sheep grow to about 300 pounds for rams and 150 pound for ewes, feeding on a wide variety of plants. In the winter, they eat dried grass and sedge where the wind blows the snow off the ground.

Other - In Prince William Sound, seals and sea lions congregate along the shore and on chunks of glacier ice floating in the water. But the animal that seems to be enjoying itself the most is the irresistible sea otter, which often can be seen swimming on its back or hugging a friend as they frolic together in the water. Another active denizen of the sea is the salmon, famous for its gravity-defying leaps up waterfalls and streams in order to spawn. While this arduous trek only occurs at the end of an adult salmon's life, it never fails to coincide with feeding time for the brown bears that inhabit the Alaska coastline.