

Contents at a Glance

Introduction	1
Part I: Introducing Alaska	7
Chapter 1: Discovering the Best of Alaska	9
Chapter 2: Digging Deeper into Alaska	15
Chapter 3: Deciding Where and When to Go	25
Chapter 4: Great Alaska Itineraries	35
Part II: Planning Your Trip to Alaska	45
Chapter 5: Managing Your Money	47
Chapter 6: Getting to Alaska	58
Chapter 7: Getting Around Alaska	69
Chapter 8: Cruising Alaska's Coast	81
Chapter 9: Planning an Outdoor Adventure	108
Chapter 10: Booking Your Accommodations	130
Chapter 11: Catering to Special Travel Needs or Interests	136
Chapter 12: Taking Care of the Remaining Details	142
Part III: Anchorage and Environs	157
Chapter 13: Settling Into Anchorage	159
Chapter 14: Exploring Anchorage	180
Chapter 15: Side Trips from Anchorage	202
Part IV: Road Trips from Anchorage	219
Chapter 16: The Kenai Peninsula: Seward, Kenai Fjords National Park, Kenai, and Homer	221
Chapter 17: Fairbanks	260
Chapter 18: Driving Alaska's Highways	283
Chapter 19: Denali National Park	297
Part V: Southeast Alaska	321
Chapter 20: Juneau	323
Chapter 21: Skagway	343
Chapter 22: Sitka	352
Part VI: The End of the Road and Beyond:	
Bush Alaska	365
Chapter 23: The Arctic	367
Chapter 24: Bear Country: Katmai National Park and Kodiak Island	378

<i>Part VII: The Part of Tens</i>	389
Chapter 25: Ten Great Walks and Hikes in Alaska	391
Chapter 26: Ten Questions to Ask an Alaskan	395
Chapter 27: Ten Ways to Be an Alaska Know-It-All.....	399
<i>Appendix: Quick Concierge</i>	404
<i>Index</i>	411

Maps at a Glance

Alaska Wildlife.....	122
Anchorage	168
Downtown Anchorage	173
The Kenai Peninsula and Prince William Sound	223
Seward	226
Homer.....	248
Fairbanks	264
Downtown Fairbanks	269
Alaska Highways	285
Denali National Park.....	304
Greater Juneau	327
Downtown Juneau	329
Skagway	346
Sitka	354

Table of Contents



***Introduction* 1**

About This Book.....	1
Conventions Used in This Book	2
Foolish Assumptions	3
How This Book Is Organized.....	3
Part I: Introducing Alaska	4
Part II: Planning Your Trip to Alaska	4
Part III: Anchorage and Environs	4
Part IV: Road Trips from Anchorage	4
Part V: Southeast Alaska.....	4
Part VI: The End of the Road and Beyond:	
Bush Alaska	5
Part VII: The Part of Tens.....	5
Icons Used in This Book.....	5
Where to Go from Here.....	6

***Part 1: Introducing Alaska*..... 7**

Chapter 1: Discovering the Best of Alaska9

The Best Big Ice.....	10
The Best Bear Viewing.....	11
The Best Places to Encounter Indigenous Culture	12
The Best Gold-Rush Towns	12
The Best Day Hikes	13
The Best One-of-a-Kind Lodgings	14

Chapter 2: Digging Deeper into Alaska15

Understanding Alaska's Native Cultures	15
Being courteous among Alaska's first people	17
Finding Native culture	17
Alaska History: Not an Oxymoron	18
Searching for Russian America (1741–1867)	18
Rushing for gold (1867–1940).....	18
Defending the United States (1940–1968).....	19
Discovering oil (1968 to the present).....	20
Speaking Alaskan.....	21
Ordering Dinner: Hope Ya Like Fish.....	22
Background Check: Recommended Books, Movies, and TV Programs	23

Chapter 3: Deciding Where and When to Go25

Narrowing Your Destination Options25
 Anchorage.....25
 The Kenai Peninsula26
 Fairbanks and the Interior Highways27
 Denali National Park27
 Southeast Alaska.....27
 The Bush28
Understanding the Secrets of the Seasons28
 The seasons from Anchorage north.....29
 The seasons in coastal Alaska.....31
Perusing Alaska’s Calendar of Events.....32
 March32
 May33
 June.....33
 July.....33
 August34
 November34
Focusing on the Purpose of Your Trip.....34

Chapter 4: Great Alaska Itineraries35

Touring Southeast Alaska in One Week
 without a Cruise Ship.....36
Seeing the National Parks: Denali and
 Kenai Fjords in One Week.....38
Covering a Lot of (Alaskan) Ground in Two Weeks39
Planning a Kid-Friendly Week in Alaska41
Experiencing Alaska in White: A Week of Real Winter.....43

Part II: Planning Your Trip to Alaska45

Chapter 5: Managing Your Money47

Planning Your Budget47
 Transportation48
 Lodging.....49
 Dining49
 Sightseeing and outdoor activities50
 Shopping50
 Nightlife52
Keeping an Eye on Hidden Expenses.....52
Cutting Costs — But Not the Fun.....53
Handling Your Money55
 Using ATMs and carrying cash.....55
 Charging ahead with credit cards.....55
 Toting traveler’s checks.....56
Dealing with a Lost or Stolen Wallet56

Chapter 6: Getting to Alaska.....	58
Flying to Alaska	58
Finding out which airlines fly there.....	58
Getting the best deal on your airfare	59
Booking your flight online	60
Getting to Alaska by Road, Water, or Rail	61
Driving to Alaska.....	61
Taking the ferry to Alaska.....	62
Riding the rails to Alaska — not!	62
Finding a Travel Agent.....	63
Joining an Escorted Tour	64
Finding out the basics	64
Shopping for an escorted tour.....	65
Selecting an escorted-tour company.....	66
Choosing a Package Tour	67
Chapter 7: Getting Around Alaska	69
Flying Around Alaska.....	70
Flying around Southeast Alaska.....	71
Flying around Southcentral Alaska and the Interior	71
Flying to the Bush.....	72
Riding the Rails.....	72
Sailing the Alaskan Coast	72
Reserving ferry passage.....	73
Making your ferry ride more enjoyable	74
Covering Ground by Bus	74
Driving Around Alaska.....	75
Renting a car.....	75
Renting an RV	78
Driving safely in Alaska.....	79
Chapter 8: Cruising Alaska’s Coast	81
Contemplating Your Cruise Options	81
Choosing between a big and small ship.....	83
Finding the best cruise-ship experience for you ...	88
Booking Your Cruise	90
Reserving a small-ship cruise.....	91
Finding an agent who specializes in mainstream cruises	92
Keeping in mind some money-saving strategies.....	93
Booking air travel through the cruise line.....	94
Choosing your cabin	95
Speaking up about special health and dietary concerns	96
The Small-Ship Cruise Lines	96
The Big-Ship Cruise Lines	100

Chapter 9: Planning an Outdoor Adventure108

Nine Ways to Get Killed in Alaska's Outdoors.....	108
Getting eaten by a bear (and such).....	109
Drowning in freezing water.....	110
Succumbing to exposure.....	110
Getting eaten alive by bugs.....	111
Getting lost.....	111
Drowning while crossing a river.....	111
Keeling over from bad clams.....	112
Getting seasick.....	112
Drinking tainted water.....	113
Getting Active in the Alaska Summer.....	113
Backpacking.....	113
Biking off-road.....	114
Biking on pavement.....	114
Canoeing.....	115
Day-hiking.....	115
Fishing.....	116
Rafting.....	116
Sea-kayaking.....	117
Keeping Active in the Alaskan Winter.....	118
Dog-mushing.....	118
Skiing.....	119
Snowmobiling.....	119
Viewing Alaska's Wildlife.....	120
Bald eagle.....	120
Black bear.....	121
Brown bear (grizzly).....	121
Caribou.....	124
Dall sheep.....	124
Humpback whales.....	125
Moose.....	125
Musk ox.....	126
Orca (killer whale).....	126
Polar bear.....	127
Puffin (and other alcids).....	127
Sea otter.....	128
Wolf.....	128
Choosing an Activity-Based Escorted Tour.....	129

Chapter 10: Booking Your Accommodations130

Getting to Know Your Options.....	130
Bed-and-breakfasts.....	132
Hotels.....	132
Wilderness lodge look-alikes.....	132
Knowing When to Reserve.....	133

Finding the Best Room at the Best Rate.....133
 Shop early for peak times133
 Travel off-peak.....134
 Ask for discounts134
 Don't stop with the Internet134
 Book a package tour134
 Don't worry about it135
 Booking Rooms Online135

**Chapter 11: Catering to Special Travel Needs
 or Interests 136**

Vacationing in Alaska with Children136
 Tackling the challenges137
 Finding a family-friendly package138
 Keeping kids happy on the road138
 Traveling as Senior Citizens.....140
 Accessing Alaska: Advice for Travelers
 with Disabilities140
 Resources for Gays and Lesbians141

Chapter 12: Taking Care of the Remaining Details... 142

Playing It Safe with Travel and Medical Insurance142
 Trip-cancellation insurance.....143
 Medical insurance.....143
 Lost-luggage insurance144
 Staying Healthy When You Travel.....144
 Reserving Activities, Restaurants, and Shows145
 Booking your activities146
 Reserving a table at restaurants147
 Getting performing-arts reservations147
 Packing for the North148
 Summer clothing.....148
 Winter clothing.....149
 Dressing like a local150
 Communicating on the Road150
 Logging onto the Internet150
 Making a cellphone call.....151
 Keeping Up with Airline Security Measures151
 Flying with Bulky Outdoor Equipment154

Part III: Anchorage and Environs 157

Chapter 13: Settling Into Anchorage 159

Getting to Anchorage.....160
 Flying in.....160
 Getting into town from the airport161

Arriving by car	162
Arriving by train.....	162
Orienting Yourself in Anchorage.....	162
Downtown.....	162
Midtown and the rest of the Anchorage Bowl	163
Beyond the Bowl.....	163
Finding Information after You Arrive.....	163
Getting Around Anchorage.....	164
Driving around town.....	164
Calling a cab	165
Waiting for the bus.....	165
Riding a bike	165
Using shoe leather	165
Where to Stay in Anchorage	166
The top hotels and B&Bs	166
Runner-up accommodations	171
Where to Dine in Anchorage.....	172
The top restaurants	172
Runner-up restaurants	178
Chapter 14: Exploring Anchorage.....	180
Hitting the Top Sights	181
Getting Outdoors: Summer and Winter in the City.....	182
Summertime outdoor activities	183
Wintertime outdoor activities.....	189
Discovering More Cool Things to See and Do	191
Downtown.....	191
Beyond downtown.....	191
Seeing Anchorage by Guided Tour	193
Spending One, Two, or Three Days in Anchorage	193
Day 1 in Anchorage.....	193
Day 2 in Anchorage.....	194
Day 3 in Anchorage.....	194
Saving Time for Alaska Shopping.....	194
Finding the best shopping areas	194
What to look for and where to find it	196
Getting Out in the Evening.....	198
Attending the performing arts	198
Hitting the nightclubs and bars	198
Spending the evening at the movies	199
Fast Facts: Anchorage	200
Chapter 15: Side Trips from Anchorage.....	202
Driving between Mountain and Sea	
on the Seward Highway	202
Getting there.....	202
Seeing the sights	203

Enjoying the Slopes of Girdwood206
 Getting there207
 Seeing the sights207
 Getting outdoors in Girdwood208
 Where to stay209
 Where to dine210
 Embarking on Prince William Sound from Whittier211
 Getting there211
 Getting out on the sound213
 Where to dine215
 Taking a Side Trip to the Mat-Su Area215
 Seeing the valley’s highlights216
 Where to stay and dine217

Part IV: Road Trips from Anchorage219

**Chapter 16: The Kenai Peninsula: Seward, Kenai
 Fjords National Park, Kenai, and Homer221**

Discovering the Kenai Peninsula and
 Its Major Attractions222
 Seward222
 Kenai Fjords National Park222
 Kenai and Soldotna222
 Homer224
 Landing in Seward224
 Getting there225
 Getting around225
 Where to stay226
 Runner-up accommodations228
 Where to dine228
 Seward’s top attractions229
 Getting outdoors in Seward230
 Other cool things to do in Seward232
 Fast Facts: Seward232
 Getting there233
 Getting park information234
 Enjoying the park234
 Deciding on a tour235
 Checking out Exit Glacier237
 Kenai and Soldotna238
 Getting there and getting around239
 Where to stay239
 Where to dine240
 Fishing in Kenai and Soldotna241
 Canoeing near Kenai and Soldotna243
 Other things to do in Kenai and Soldotna244

Fast Facts: Kenai and Soldotna.....	246
Driving to the Sea in Homer.....	246
Getting there.....	247
Getting around Homer.....	247
Where to stay	247
Runner-up accommodations	251
Where to dine.....	251
Finding Homer's top attractions	253
Getting outdoors in Homer.....	254
Other things to do in Homer	258
Nightlife.....	259
Fast Facts: Homer.....	259
Chapter 17: Fairbanks	260
Getting There.....	261
By car	261
By air	261
By train.....	261
Orienting Yourself in Fairbanks.....	261
Getting around by car	262
Getting around by bus.....	262
Getting information	262
Where to Stay in Fairbanks.....	263
Runner-up accommodations	267
Where to Dine in Fairbanks.....	268
Runner-up restaurants	271
Exploring Fairbanks	271
The top attractions.....	271
Getting outdoors in Fairbanks	273
Other cool things to see and do	276
Spending one, two, or three days in Fairbanks.....	277
Shopping.....	278
Nightlife.....	278
Fast Facts: Fairbanks	279
A Side Trip on Chena Hot Springs Road.....	280
Getting there.....	280
Where to stay and dine	280
Getting outside on Chena Hot Springs Road.....	281
Chapter 18: Driving Alaska's Highways	283
Understanding Alaska's Road Map	284
The Prince William Sound Loop: Anchorage to Whittier to Valdez to Glennallen.....	286
Day 1: Anchorage to Valdez	286
Day 2: A day in Valdez	287
Day 3: Valdez to Glennallen	287
Day 4: The road back to Anchorage	288

The Denali/Fairbanks Loop: Anchorage to Glennallen to Fairbanks to Denali.....	289
Day 1: Anchorage to Glennallen.....	289
Day 2: Glennallen to Fairbanks.....	290
Day 3: A day in Fairbanks.....	290
Day 4: Fairbanks to Denali.....	290
Day 5: A day in Denali.....	291
Day 6: Denali back to Anchorage.....	291
Linking up the Loops.....	291
Driving to the Arctic and Other Extremes.....	292
Dalton Highway (Route 11).....	293
Denali Highway (Route 8).....	294
Edgerton Highway and McCarthy Road (Route 10).....	294
The Klondike Loop.....	294
Steese Highway (Route 6).....	295
Chapter 19: Denali National Park.....	297
Planning Ahead.....	299
Reserving shuttle seats and campsites in advance.....	299
Reserving when you arrive.....	300
Paying entrance fees.....	300
Reserving rooms.....	300
Packing for the park.....	301
Getting There.....	301
Driving to the park.....	301
Taking the train.....	301
Taking the bus.....	303
Flying to Denali.....	303
Learning the Lay of the Land.....	303
Arriving in the Park.....	305
Arriving at the park's main entrance.....	305
Arriving in Talkeetna.....	305
Riding the Shuttle Bus.....	306
Choosing your bus and destination.....	306
Getting ready.....	307
Spotting wildlife on your way.....	308
Hiking and Backpacking from the Shuttle Bus.....	308
Day hikes by bus.....	309
Backpacking.....	309
Great Activities off the Bus.....	310
Day hiking near the park entrance.....	310
Flightseeing.....	311
Rafting.....	311
Ranger programs.....	312
Visiting educational centers.....	312

Where to Stay313
 The top hotels and lodges313
 Runner-up accommodations315
 Campgrounds316
Where to Dine317

Part V: Southeast Alaska321

Chapter 20: Juneau323

Getting There324
 Arriving by air324
 Arriving by ferry324
Getting Downtown324
 Navigating by taxi324
 Navigating by bus325
 Navigating by rental car325
Orienting Yourself in Juneau326
 Getting around by car326
 Getting around by bicycle326
Where to Stay in Juneau328
 The top hotels and B&Bs328
 Runner-up accommodations331
Where to Dine in Juneau331
Exploring Juneau333
 Exploring the top attractions334
 Other cool things to see and do336
Shopping336
Nightlife337
Getting Outdoors in Juneau337
 Bear-viewing337
 Fishing and whale-watching338
 Flightseeing and dog-mushing338
 Hiking339
 Sea-kayaking339
Spending One, Two, or Three Days in Juneau340
 Day 1 in Juneau340
 Day 2 in Juneau341
 Day 3 in Juneau341
Fast Facts: Juneau341

Chapter 21: Skagway343

Getting There345
 By boat345
 By road345
 By air345
Orienting Yourself in Skagway345
Where to Stay347

Where to Dine.....	348
Exploring Skagway	349
The top attractions.....	349
Getting outdoors in Skagway.....	349
Other cool things to see and do	350
Nightlife.....	351
Fast Facts: Skagway	351
Chapter 22: Sitka.....	352
Getting There.....	353
By ferry	353
By air	353
Getting Around Sitka.....	353
By bus.....	355
By car	355
By bike.....	355
Where to Stay	355
Where to Dine.....	356
The top restaurants.....	357
Runner-up restaurants	357
Exploring Sitka.....	357
Exploring the top attractions	358
Getting outdoors in Sitka	359
More cool things to see and do.....	362
Shopping.....	362
Fast Facts: Sitka.....	363

***Part VI: The End of the Road and Beyond:
Bush Alaska*** **365**

Chapter 23: The Arctic	367
Discovering the Arctic and Its Major Attractions	368
Barrow	368
Nome	368
Going to the Top of the World: Barrow	369
Getting there.....	369
Getting around	369
Where to stay	370
Where to dine.....	370
Exploring Barrow	371
Getting outdoors in Barrow.....	372
Fast Facts: Barrow.....	372
On Your Own in Nome	373
Getting there.....	373
Getting around	373
Where to stay	374

Where to dine.....	374
Exploring Nome.....	375
Driving the tundra	375
Shopping	376
Fast Facts: Nome	376

Chapter 24: Bear Country: Katmai National Park and Kodiak Island378

Discovering Bear Country and Its Major Attractions	379
Katmai National Park.....	379
Kodiak Island.....	379
Bear-Watching at Katmai National Park	380
Getting there.....	380
Getting around	380
Where to stay and dine	381
Exploring Katmai National Park.....	381
Fast Facts: Katmai National Park	382
Crossing to Kodiak Island	382
Getting there.....	382
Getting around	383
Where to stay	383
Where to dine	384
Exploring Kodiak.....	384
Getting outdoors in Kodiak	385
Fast Facts: Kodiak Island.....	388

Part VII: The Part of Tens389

Chapter 25: Ten Great Walks and Hikes in Alaska391

Glen Alps: Stepping from City to Mountain	391
Tony Knowles Coastal Trail:	
Exploring Urban Wilds.....	392
Bird Ridge Trail: A Spectacular Cardiac Test.....	392
Alaska Center for Coastal Studies:	
Tide-Pool Adventure	392
Granite Tors Trail: Nature-Carved Monuments.....	393
Denali National Park: Finding Your Measure	
in the Backcountry.....	393
Outer Point Trail: Walking to Whale Waters	393
The Streets of Juneau: Finding the Charm	
of Old Alaska.....	394
Sitka National Historical Park: Picturing the War	394
Barrow's Arctic Ocean Beach: Standing	
at the World's Edge	394

Chapter 26: Ten Questions to Ask an Alaskan.....395

Where Are You from Originally?395
 How Long Have You Lived Here?.....396
 Would You Tell Me about Your Gun/Boat/
 Snow Machine?396
 What Do You Think of This New
 Land-Management Plan?.....396
 Is the Legislature Doing a Good Job?.....396
 Why Is the Capital in a City You Can't Drive To?.....397
 Where Do You Like to Go in Summer?397
 Have You Ever Encountered a Bear?397
 Here's My Itinerary — Do You Have
 Any Suggestions?.....398
 Why Do You Live in Alaska?.....398

**Chapter 27: Ten Ways to Be
 an Alaska Know-It-All.....399**

How Big Is It? 399
 That's a Lot of Park400
 Those Mountains Are Really Tall400
 And They're Getting Bigger.....400
 A Whole Lot of Shaking401
 . . . And a Whole Lot of Spewing.....401
 Free Money Just for Breathing401
 Redefining the Word Conservative402
 Catching Politically Correct Fish.....402
 Stating the Facts402

Appendix: Quick Concierge404

Fast Facts404
 Toll-Free Numbers and Web Sites407
 Major airlines serving Alaska407
 Major cruise lines serving Alaska.....407
 Major hotel and motel chains in Alaska.....408
 Where to Get More Information409

Index411

