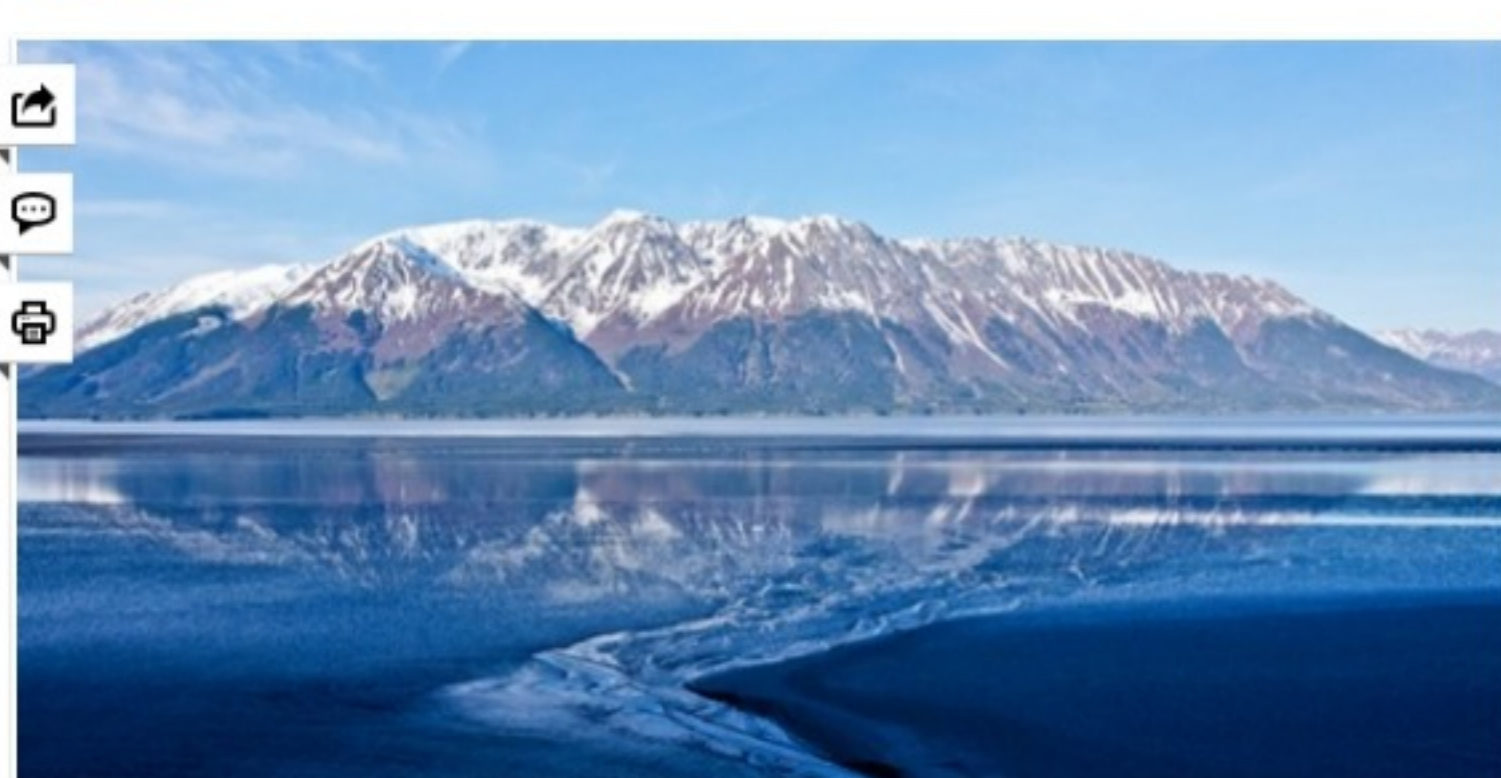


Wayback Machine: http://www.lifestyle.com.au/travel/5-reasons-to-visit-alaska.aspx
 26 captures 28 Aug 2013 - 15 Mar 2021
 Calendar: NOV FEB 23 DEC 2013 2014 2015

LifeStyle Channel » Travel » Travel Tips » 5 Reasons to Visit Alaska
5 Reasons to Visit Alaska
 by Fiona Harper



Big bold and brash, Alaska is far from subtle with her kick butt 'look at me' dramatic landscape populated by larger than life characters.

With so many reasons to visit the USA's northernmost State, we did our best to narrow it down to just five of the best.

1. Mountains

Big ones. As in 17 of the USA's 20 highest peaks, thanks to eons of geological violence perched on the edge of the North American plate. The Alaska Range has Mt McKinley as its poster child, rising 6,193 metres above sea level. Native Athabascans know it as Denali, meaning the high one, despite it being renamed in 1896 after US Presidency candidate William McKinley.

Sighting McKinley's revered summit is a national pastime, particularly during summer when air clarity offers glimpses of craggy South Peak poking through the clouds.

With mountains come glaciers and Alaska has her fair share of these too. Glacial ice covers 3 percent of Alaska's landmass. Estimated at around 100,000, glaciers are constantly on the move. Governed by gravity and taking the path of least resistance, glaciers carve and grind valleys between jagged peaks. Easily accessible by light plane from Anchorage, Lake Clark Pass in the Chigmit Mountains is a jumbled mass of rugged snow-capped spires interspersed by tumbling turquoise glaciers emptying into winding river plains on the valley floor.

Stay: Redoubt Bay Lodge www.redoubtbaylodge.com

2. Bears

Most of Alaska is considered 'bear country' with black, brown (grizzly) and white (polar) bears wild, unpredictable and curious, making them an alluring attraction for visitors. Grizzlies, which can exceed 450 kg, (polar bears grow up to 700 kg) are omnivorous (feeding on plants and animals) and grow largest in coastal regions where food is abundant. The king of the food chain, they're not averse to consuming the odd human either, particularly when bulking up prior to hibernation.

Danger aside, and there are plenty of safe guided opportunities, viewing wild bears is an unforgettable experience. Flight seeing tours depart from Homer to Katmai National Park, home to the largest concentration of brown bears in North America.

Tour: Sasquatch Alaska Adventure Co www.sasquatchalaska.com



3. Salmon

A love of salmon is a common thread across Alaska with five species inhabiting Alaskan waters: chinook (known as king), pink, sockeye (red), coho (silver) and chum (dog) salmon. In 2010 commercial fishermen harvested 169 million of them. Or, to put it into perspective, around 230 salmon for each Alaskan resident.

Alaska's state fish, chinook are the largest, but sockeye are the tastiest, highly prized by both humans and bears. Sockeye migrate upstream to spawn, moving from saltwater to fresh in June and July: their most vulnerable time. Bears salivate by streams, ready to snatch salmon mid-air as they 'pool hop' to upper lakes. Fishermen lure them onto their lines as the salmon group in schools before making their dash for spawning grounds.

More info: Alaska Fish and Game: www.adfg.alaska.gov

4. Midnight Sun

Mid June is Summer Solstice when the sun barely kisses horizon and Alaska basks beneath the midnight sun almost 24 hours a day. According to one boat captain, 'we do the 90 day sprint like most Alaskans, working pretty hard from June to August.' Or, as a fisherman put it, 'we fish all night out on the lake, then around 6.00 we go home, get changed and go to work.' Urbanites from toddlers to Octogenarians hike aptly named Flattop Mountain overlooking Anchorage in the dead of night without the need for torches. Summer is not a time for sleeping in Alaska: there's ample time to rest up once winter darkness descends.

A by-product of extended sunshine is found in suburban veggie gardens, most notably the humble cabbage patch. An abundance of summer sun, cool climate and rich soil produces monster-sized cabbages. The Giant Cabbage Weigh Off at the Alaska State Fair is hotly contested with 2012's winner weighing in at an astonishing 62 kg.

More info: www.anchorage.net

5. Dogs

Alaska's state sport, Dog Mushing went out of favour a while back when motorised snowmobiles replaced working dogs. But dog sledding is back, helped in part by internationally famous stage races like the Yukon Quest or the Iditarod, but so too by a rekindled interest in traditional Native customs. Just maybe the exhilaration of controlling a gnashing, excited pack of harnessed dogs is a little too hard for outdoorsy Alaskans to resist.

Many locals keep packs of Alaskan Huskies to use for recreational mushing, either at club meets or just for the heck of it, to go mushing with family and friends. Top dogs don't come cheap though, with the bestselling for upwards of USD10,000. Sled rails are changed to suit the terrain and season, whether snow, ice or dirt, but so too are the dog's equipment: dog booties and belly pads protect delicate paws and undersides during winter. Experience mushing for yourself at Alaska Native Heritage Centre.

More info: Alaska Native Heritage Centre www.alaskanative.net

Related Articles

- Thumbnail of Top 13 Things to Do in Singapore
- Top 13 Things to Do in Singapore
- 8 Reasons to Visit the Galapagos Islands
- 5 Amazing Aussie Camping Spots

Join the Conversation

0 comments

Please login to comment

Food
 Vote to WIN \$10k in the I Love FOOD Awards!

Facebook Twitter Community
 Like us on Facebook

Calculators
 Property Calculators +
 Health Calculators +
 Home and Garden Calculators +

Win
 Thumbnail of Win a Samsung GALAXY Note 10.1 worth \$649!
 Win a Samsung GALAXY Note 10.1 worth \$649!

TV Guide
 LifeStyle FOOD HOME YOU
 Phil Spencer Secret Agent Down Under Adelaide
 Now: 8:30pm
 24 Hours In Emergency
 Next: 9:30pm