

МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ ТУРИЗМ

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TOURISM IN ALASKA: ECONOMIC ADVANTAGES

Alaska, the largest U.S. state with 1,530,700 square kilometers of land area in the Northwest of the North American continent, is known for its wide-open spaces, abundant outdoor experiences, and Alaskan Native culture. Alaska is also one of the best places in the world where one may view the Northern Lights. From the mountains to the sea fjords, and Alaska's vast interior terrain, from gliding past icy glaciers and epic mountain peaks to spotting humpback whales and bears, Alaska is the home to some of the world's wildest landscapes; the 49th state is a photographer's dream.

Alaska is truly different and unique. It has more mountains, glaciers, and wildlife than just about anywhere else in the world. Alaska is an ever-popular destination with more people than ever visiting the 49th American state. In fact, visitation records have been set year-after-year with an estimated 2.26 million visitors traveling to Alaska between May and September 2019. More than half of all visitors coming to Alaska arrive by cruise ship. In 2018, 1,169,000 traveled by cruise ship, 760,100 were air visitors, and 97,200 were highway or ferry visitors. There are thousands of businesses that depend on the passengers coming to Alaska to take their tours, dine in their restaurants, and stay in their guest rooms. Visitors benefit a multitude of Alaskan businesses in different ways. The top reasons to visit Alaska include the state's incredible scenery, wildlife and the opportunity to see the Northern Lights.

Generally, Alaska is divided into five regions: far north, interior, southwest, south central, and inside passage. Three of them are visited by tourists each year. They are southwest, south central and interior. Anchorage, Fairbanks, Denali National Park and the south eastern areas like Juneau are the most affected by tourism. Activities include sightseeing tours, whale watching, glacier viewing, flightseeing, wildlife viewing, hiking, ziplining, kayaking, rafting, and fishing. Fishing alone accounts for \$652,498,723 in annual spending by non-residents.

Alaska's economy is driven by the following industries: oil, tourism, and fishing. Other important industries are timber, mining, and agriculture. The oil and gas industry is the largest component of Alaska's economy. Nearly 85 percent of the state budget is supplied by oil revenues. The fortunes of Alaska's oil industry, and therefore many sectors of the economy, are dependent upon world oil prices.

Oil was discovered in Prudhoe Bay, on the Arctic coast, in 1968. Pipeline construction began in 1974 and was completed in 1977. About 1300 kilometers pipeline is the largest privately financed construction project in history. The pipe is 1.2 meters in diameter and oil moves at about 8.9 kilometers per hour, requiring just under six days to travel from Prudhoe Bay to Valdez.

The rich fishing waters off Alaska's coast make it one of the world's finest sources for wild seafood. Each year nearly 6 billion pounds of seafood are harvested. Alaska is the number one producer of wild salmon in the world and has the only salmon industry certified as "sustainable" by the Marine Stewardship Council.

Forests add to Alaska's beauty and provide a renewable economic resource. With 28 million acres of commercial forest, Alaska's timber industry supplies world markets with logs, lumber, pulp, and other forest products. Much of Southeast Alaska is part of the Tongass National Forest, a 16.8 million acre rainforest. The Chugach is the nation's second largest national forest with 4.8 million acres.

Alaska contains half the nation's coal reserves, and its largest silver and zinc mines. Glittering gold in Alaska's streams and mountains still lure miners to work private claims.

About 15 million acres of soil in Alaska are suitable for farming, with 1 million acres currently in production. The long daylight hours of summer produce vegetables of extraordinary size. Farmers in the Matanuska Valley grow cabbages weighing more than 90 pounds.

Tourism is also a major sector of Alaska's economy attracting over 1.1 million visitors annually. The tourism industry is Alaska's second largest primary employer. According to the statistics, there are about 36,000 people in the industry, and 78 percent of the people who work in the industry are residents of Alaska. The types of jobs, tourism creates, are guides, chefs, hotel staff, cruise ship staff. Tourism accounts for around 8 percent of all job places in the state.

Before COVID-19, more than 2.26 million visitors were expected to travel to Alaska in 2020, spending money on tours as well as public land permits, campgrounds, hotel stays, rental cars, food, laundry services, airline tickets, gifts, equipment and more. Visits bounced back partway by 2021, to 297 million. Alaska's parks were hit much harder. In 2020, visits fell by 86 percent from 2019's count of more than 1.8 million. That loss was more than triple the nationwide decline, proportionately.

Looking to the year 2022, interest in pure leisure travel grew to 69.2%. Over 30% more Americans expect to take leisure trips this year than in 2021, and American travelers say they will prioritize having fun at 75.8% over relaxing, finding happiness, and escaping stress.

Alaska remains the premier cruise destination market in the United States. Following a decade of incredible growth between 1997 and 2008, several cruise ships left the Alaska market following passage of an initiative that significantly increased the cost of operating in Alaska. Legislative assistance helped increase the attractiveness of the Alaska market and the industry brought its one millionth passenger in 2016. The last three years have been record setting years for the Alaska cruise industry with 2020 projected to bring 1.3 million passengers to Alaska's shores. Cruise visitors comprise 57 percent of Alaska's summer visitors. Cruising the far-flung waters of Alaska offers unparalleled sights to behold, like Tracy Arm fjord and the Hubbard and Mendenhall glaciers. Much of the Last Frontier is sweeping, untouched tracts of wilderness, rugged mountains, glaciers and wide waterways.

Beginning in late April and continuing through the first week in October, Alaska itineraries consist primarily of two routes: round-trip through Southeast Alaska's Inside Passage, primarily from Seattle and Vancouver, B.C.; and cross-the-Gulf-of-Alaska trips, beginning or ending in Anchorage, primarily via the Southcentral Alaska port cities of Seward and Whittier. As more ships enter the market new itineraries are added, including the Northwest Passage, the Aleutians, Valdez, and smaller communities in Southeast Alaska.

Nearly \$300 million in direct spending by cruise lines on goods, services, and payroll in Alaska. Cruise passengers account for a sizable portion of the \$2.2 billion spent in Alaska on tours, retail, lodging, transportation, and dining.

Thus, tourism is one of the most profitable areas in Alaska in recent years. In a normal year, some 2.25 million visitors come to Alaska and spend \$2.2 billion during their stay. Those visitors provide 10% of Alaska's jobs. Tourism offers great opportunities for emerging economies and developing countries. It creates jobs, strengthens the local economy, contributes to local infrastructure development and can help to conserve the natural environment and cultural assets and traditions, and to reduce poverty and inequality.

Tourism Employs: 1 in 9 jobs in Alaska is in tourism.

Tourism Sustains: each year travelers contribute more than \$30 million in local hotel and car rental taxes to the Municipality of Anchorage alone.

Tourism Provides: visitors spend hundreds of millions of dollars in Alaska annually, on top of what they pay for a cruise or airfare.

Tourism Improves: visitation helps to expand the number of cities connected through Alaska by airlines, and helps local businesses, from restaurants to retailers and beyond, to rise, to thrive, and to expand.

Tourism Connects: tourism links Alaskans to the globe, sharing our stories, traditions, and lifestyles and discovering those of others.

Tourism Benefits: tourism brings \$126 million in state revenue and \$88 million in municipal revenue, with a total economic impact of \$4.5 billion.