

AK SEA to SOUND

- ⇒ 7 days trip, small group up to 10 people
 - ⇒ Starts on SUNDAY, finishes SATURDAY
- [see dates & prices 2019](#)

Day 1: Kenai Fjords National Park

Drive from Anchorage to Seward (120 miles, approx. 2.5 hours)
Kenai Fjords National Park tour (6 hour tour to Aialik Bay) , depart 11:30 am, return 5:30pm
Camp at Trail River CG (28 miles drive north of Seward)

Beginning from Anchorage we drive south on one of America's most scenic routes to Seward, gateway to the Kenai Fjords National Park. A day long glacier cruise will show you this amazing landscape, protected as a national park since 1980. The southern coast of Alaska is a place where mountains literally crumble to the sea in ancient fingers of land formed from magma once shed by eruption then driven landward from the sea bed by plate tectonics to be sculpted over by glaciers descending from the mountaintop ice fields to the sea. Towering glacial skyscrapers, built over thousands of years of ice age, the tidewater glaciers of the Kenai Fjords still soar many stories over the deep water fjords they once carved out, waters that contain a sunken treasure of biomass that forms the building blocks of the pacific ocean food chain. Hundreds of hungry humpback whales migrate to these waters every summer to feed , their passage in turn attracts the large orca pods that prey upon them. Most sailings see whales, or orcas, or both on the passage from ocean water into the fjord to the voyage's ultimate highlight, the tidewater glacier's of Aialik Bay. Few experiences rival that of viewing a massive tidewater glacier firsthand, especially when it sheds tons of ice into the water with a thunderous crack like cannon fire and sets the placid ice strewn water alive with rolling waves. Known as calving, seeing the dynamic ice shedding of a tidewater glacier up close is an iconic Alaskan experience you must see to believe.

Where the ice has receded from the land the cycle of life has taken root. The jigsaw puzzle cliffs that jut impossibly out of the seawater provide habitat, nesting sites or simple landing spots, for a number of birds that call the northern pacific home in the summer months, especially the entertaining puffins. Dense forests have reclaimed the coastal mountain slopes, prime bear habitat, and the high grassy ridgelines are dotted with mountain goats. The Kenai Fjords are truly a unique niche within Alaska's mosaic of intact wilderness habitats and one you will not want to miss on your Alaskan trip.

After our return to Seward's small boat harbor with some time to see the sportfishing catch of day on display, and explore the village a bit, we'll make a short drive to our camp for the next two nights and prepare our dinner.

Day 2: Exit Glacier Hike

Drive to Exit Glacier (approx 35 miles, <1 hour)
Hike Harding Icefield Trail (4miles one way, approx 3,000 ft elevation gain)
Visit Seward after hike, (shower option at harbormaster) Dinner at Rays
Evening drive back to camp at Trail River CG

Day two we will explore the Kenai Fjords from its landward side, shake off our sea legs with one of Alaska's most rewarding hikes, a climb through the lush northern rainforest to a viewpoint of the Harding Icefield, the largest icefield within the United States. The demanding day long hike climbs beside the Exit glacier, offering the unique perspective of a glacier from above. Traversing the treeless slopes to the hike's dramatic end point, a viewpoint overlooking the 400 square mile icefield, is a glimpse into the heart of the ice age. Descending back to the trailhead with a hearty appetite we'll enjoy an evening meal at one of Seward's fine seafood restaurants at the harbor before returning to our camp.

Day 3: Whitewater Rafting or Hiking in Hope

Drive to Exit Glacier (approx 35 miles, <1 hour)

Hike Harding Icefield Trail (4miles one way, approx 3,000 ft elevation gain)

Visit Seward after hike, (shower option at harbormaster) Dinner at Rays

Evening drive back to camp at Trail River CG

Day 3 we will make the short drive north to where the road ends on the shore of the Turnagain arm and the tiny little town of Hope. Founded in the heyday of Alaska's gold rush and optimistically named by the earnest prospectors who dreamed of sudden fortunes flowing down from the mountains above town, Hope is now the home of Alaska's premiere whitewater run on what is known as the 6 mile creek. Launching out of the Kenai Mountains and gathering tributaries as it carves its way to tide water, the 6 mile progressively builds through three separate canyon, ultimately culminating in a class V third canyon. With an option to run just the first two canyons, or all three, the 6 mile trip offers the whitewater lover a memorable afternoon, from mild to wild. Aside from the rafting, great hiking opportunities surround the picturesque town of Hope.

Hiking or rafting, however you choose to spend your day in the outdoor loving enclave of Hope, an evening in the historic 100 year old pub, where the draft beer is served in mason jars and live music is often on tap, will be a welcome finish as you watch the midnight sun sort of set in the northern sky across the Turnagain Arm.

Day 4: Kayaking Prince Williams Sound

Drive to Whittier small boat harbor (50 miles, 1 hour plus tunnel allowance)

Visit Portage lake enroute

Transfer to water taxi for overnight kayak camp in Blackstone Bay

Afternoon kayaking Blackstone Bay

Wilderness camp, dinner in Prince William Sound

After another short drive on day 4, we will return to sea via a converted railroad tunnel to make our way under the coastal range to reach the former war time supply depot known as Whittier. What made Whittier an essential naval base in WWII—a deep water port hidden in an arm of Prince William Sound—today makes it a perfect access point for water excursions into the Sound. From the small boat harbor in Whittier we will join with a sea kayaking team to travel into the Sound by water taxi where we will land on a remote beach and establish our base camp.

From there, we will spend the afternoon kayaking for a truly unique wilderness experience in a landscape of forests, mountains, glaciers and tides best experienced from sea level, from the cockpit of a kayak. A sound, by definition, is a body of water that connects or sits between two other bodies of water. Prince William Sound is a landscape of sea accretions that looks like a half assembled puzzle of islands strewn between a border of jagged fringe, where the mountainous mainland meets the ocean in a multitude of bays and fjords while the large

southern islands of Hitchinbrook and LaTouche act as protective barriers against the massive open ocean swells of the Pacific.

In short, Prince William Sound offers a perfect combination of scenery and conditions to make sea kayaking readily accessible and vastly rewarding, perfectly suitable for the first time paddler. A night camped in the Sound completes a perfect day in this special place.

Day 5: Ferry across Prince William Sound to Cordova

Morning kayak option, early

Water taxi return to Whittier harbor

AMH Ferry to Cordova (2:30 pm departure, ETA 9:15pm, 6 hour 45 minutes)

Dinner on ferry

Indoor accommodations in Cordova

Day 5 we will wake at our wilderness camp in the Sound and have time for breakfast and a morning paddle before breaking camp and returning with the water taxi back to Whittier for our afternoon departure aboard the Alaska Marine Highway Ferry across the whole of Prince William Sound to the fishing village at its southeastern corner known as Cordova.

A day long crossing, we'll arrive in the ferry port in the early evening and transfer to our lodging to prepare for two days exploring this off the beaten path uniquely Alaskan area.

Day 6: Exploring Cordova

Hike Heney Ridge (6 miles one way, approx 2000 feet elevation gain)

Dinner in town, Indoor Accomodation

The salmon rich Copper River delta area was inhabited for 1000's of years by the native Eyak people, but the name Cordova first appears on the Alaskan map at the dawn of the 1900's with the discovery of the great copper reserves in the Wrangell Mountains. As the Kennecott Corporation began mining some of the purest copper ore ever discovered from the mountains at the Copper River's headwaters, the challenge of how to move the mineral to market quickly arose as the riddle to be resolved. The nearly pure copper seams that rippled through the ridgeline and appeared to be green alpine meadows from below obviously contained ore of phenomenal value, but encased in mountains more than 200 miles from the ocean, in a completely undeveloped landscape of glacial rivers, icefields and dense northern forests, the task seemed insurmountable. The Kennecott Corporation moved ahead with plans for a railroad to move the copper to market, but when winter storms destroyed their first ocean pier and a second route out of Valdez was scuttled, the skeptics who said the railroad was impossible to build seemed to be proved right. With time running out a seemingly impossible route paralleling the Copper River was chosen as the only hope even though it required construction of a bridge across the massive river between the faces of two gargantuan advancing glaciers in the dead of an Alaskan winter. Truly an engineering marvel of its time, with a price tag to match, the Million Dollar Bridge was completed in 1911 and the Copper River & North Western railroad (long derided as the "Can't Run & Never Will") began operation between the mill town of Kennicott and the newly developed port town on the shores of Prince William Sound known as Cordova.

The town and the copper trade flourished until the late 1930's when a number of factors shut down the operation in Kennicott. Without the railroad, Cordova was no longer accessible overland. Plans to convert the old rail bed to a road were put into motion during the post war

wave of Alaskan road development, but the massive '64 earthquake (at 9.2 the largest ever recorded in North America) scuttled this plan by collapsing a number of bridge spans along the route, including a section of the Million Dollar bridge.

With regular ferry service across the Sound, many Cordova residents are just fine with no road. Some even reacted to the abandoned road plan with relief. Though welcoming to visitors, Cordova is truly a working fishing village where the majority of the residents make their living from the sea and take a certain pride in being just a bit harder to reach. The extra effort required to reach Cordova is exactly why it is a special place to visit.

On the Alaska Sea to Sound we will spend two days exploring the rich natural habitat around Cordova, where the Copper River delta empties more than a fifth of Alaska's overall freshwater into the northern Pacific, receiving in return annual migrations in the millions of shorebirds, in the spring, and salmon, throughout the summer. From our base in Cordova we will travel the Copper River delta road to explore the easy hiking trails that lead into the lush coastal rainforests and stunning glacial lakes. To bring the history of the CR&NW alive and travel beyond the road's end we'll transfer to a jetboat and go upriver through the myriad channels of the delta to view and visit the famous Million Dollar bridge and gaze across the river at the face of the Child's Glacier.

Day 7: Hike in Cordova & Flight back to Anchorage

Morning tour along Cordova road, short hike option

Late Afternoon return flight to Anchorage

On our final day in Cordova we will hike out of the harbor setting just south of town through the old growth coastal rainforest, progressively climbing from dense forest to bog meadows crossed by boardwalks until we surmount tree line and access the high ridge well above town. Named for the chief engineer of the CR&NW Railroad, the "Irish Prince" Mike Heney is said to have climbed this ridge to survey the railroad's route through the delta's maze. Though the railroad is long gone, the inspiring views from this ridge, sandwiched between the Copper River watershed to the east and the vast expanse of the islands and open water of the Sound to its west, remain.

A scenic hour long flight from Cordova's commercial airport will return you to Anchorage and conclude the week long Alaskan Sea to Sound adventure.