

Day 1: Fairbanks, Alaska

Our Alaska nature safari begins in Fairbanks, Alaska's "second city" and capital of the Interior, which retains its frontier flavor with pioneer saloons, paddle wheelers and outlying mining camps.

Days 2 & 3: Denali National Park—Kantishna

Today we travel south to Denali National Park, which at 6 million acres is larger than the state of Massachusetts and one of the world's great wilderness preserves. The park's namesake, formerly known as Mt. McKinley, is the highest peak in North America, towering 20,320 feet over the tundra and taiga below that provides habitat for wolves, grizzlies, moose and caribou. Its Athabascan Indian name—Denali—means "The Great One." From our remote base 90 miles inside the park we have time and space to encounter authentic wilderness. Hiking, nature walks, biking, fishing and optional flightseeing are available. The climate and environment of Alaska's interior at this latitude is harsh much of the year, and it takes a vast amount of habitat to sustain animals. Wildlife encounters thus tend to be fleeting, though always thrilling.

Day 4: Denali / Talkeetna

Depart for the park entrance this morning by road this morning, keeping a close eye out for moose, caribou, grizzly bears and other resident wildlife. At midday, board the Alaska Railroad for a classic train journey through Alaska's rugged interior. Our route through the Alaska Range climbs above tree line over Broad Pass, then descends to follow the Susitna River to historic village of Talkeetna, where we disembark for the night. The rustic town, founded a century ago as the district headquarters for the new railroad, sits at the confluence of three rivers and enjoys a striking panorama of Denali and adjacent peaks. An outdoor recreation mecca, the town's economy today thrives on rafting, flightseeing, mountain biking, hiking, camping, fishing and hunting, and it is also the main base for climbing expeditions to Denali. After dinner there's time to stroll the compact downtown, whose buildings dating to the early 1900s have been designated a National Historic Site.

Days 5 & 6: Talkeetna / Girdwood

Leaving Talkeetna, we continue south, eventually reaching the coast and following Turnagain Arm to Girdwood and Alyeska Resort, Alaska's premier ski area, where a host of exciting summer activities is also available. Set in a lush glacial valley in the Chugach Range southeast of Anchorage, Alyeska offers nature and luxury in tandem. Explore the northernmost temperate rain forest in North America that surrounds our deluxe accommodations at the Hotel Alyeska, or choose an optional tram ride to the alpine summit with vistas of the ice-bound peaks and inlet far below. On Day 6 we'll explore the scenic drama of iceberg-choked Spencer Lake, then take a gentle float trip down the Placer River before returning to Girdwood for the evening.

Day 7: Kenai Peninsula / Fox Island

This morning we enjoy magnificent scenery on the drive south to the fishing town and port of Seward on the Kenai Peninsula. Here we board a boat to Fox Island, a private island on the edge of Kenai Fjords National Park. Our secluded location, which we enjoy all to ourselves, reveals the pristine side of Alaska most visitors miss. The region is famed for sea kayaking, and an easy paddling excursion late this afternoon is likely to reveal some of the area's prolific marine life.

Day 8: Kenai Fjords National Park—Private Cruise

Iconic images of Alaska are on display today as we board a private chartered boat for a voyage through a realm where the Ice Age still lingers. Our small yacht allows us to approach wildlife at intimate range, and Kenai Fjords National Park provides unparalleled opportunities for viewing humpback and orca whales, porpoises, sea otters and a large colony of puffins. Glaciers pour from the jagged mountain heights into the sea, and we may observe icebergs calving with a thunderous crash. Following our all-day outing, our boat returns us to secluded Fox Island for a final night.

Day 9: Seward / Anchorage

After a last morning in the wild environs of Fox Island, we weave our way back through the maze of fjords to Seward, where we'll have lunch and visit the Alaska SeaLife Center, located on Resurrection Bay. While primarily dedicated to marine research and education, the center also features a public aquarium and is the only permanent marine mammal rescue and rehabilitation facility in the state. From Seward, we retrace our route northward, with the mountain ranges of the Kenai Peninsula rising one after another as we traverse Moose Pass and cross some of Alaska's richest salmon rivers. Overnight in Anchorage.

Days 10 & 11: Katmai National Park—Brooks Falls

Katmai National Park is home to the world's largest population of brown bears. We fly by small plane this morning to King Salmon, then by floatplane to world-renowned Brooks Lodge, one of the best places to view these giant coastal grizzlies in their natural habitat. From the safety of platforms built over Brooks Falls, we observe this iconic wildlife spectacle up close, as the bears fish vigorously for salmon swimming upstream to spawn, sometimes capturing them in their jaws as the fish leap in a streak of silver from the rapids.

Day 12: Katmai / Anchorage

After morning activities in Katmai, we fly back to Anchorage. Tonight our Expedition Leader hosts a farewell dinner to celebrate our Alaskan adventure.

Day 13: Anchorage / Depart

Our Alaska wildlife safari comes to a close today as we transfer to the airport for homewardflights, or ongoing travel for those who have booked extensions.