



Alaska's Highways and Byways

Media Information



Driving Alaska

The 49th State Looks Great from Behind the Wheel

By Melissa DeVaughn

I remember the first time I drove across the Canadian border into Alaska, with visions of life on the Last Frontier flooding my brain. The sun shone, and the temperature was a scorching 80 degrees, a far cry from the frozen land I expected.

A huge “Welcome to Alaska” monument stood on the border separating Canada’s Yukon at Beaver Creek from Alaska on the Alaska Highway. I stopped the truck, got out and gave it a look. Technically, not a thing was different from the ground I was standing on now versus that of the land across which I just drove. But psychologically, it meant all the difference in the world. I would have years to explore the rest of Alaska on foot, dog sled and skis, but on this fine July morning, I had the open road.

Seeing what Alaska has to offer behind the wheel of an automobile or RV is an unforgettable experience. Alaska is a huge state, so driving offers a chance to see more in less time from the comfort of a car or RV. This doesn’t mean you’ll be cruising along at a steady 65 mph. On the contrary, Alaska’s roads require thoughtful, planned travel. Some roads are little more than gravel paths over mountain passes. Some are wide, four-lane affairs with lots of amenities along the way. And most are something in between, well tended but modest.

“I would encourage people that besides going to the popular places like the Kenai Peninsula, that they also check out some of the more off-the-beaten-path roads,” said Kris Graef, editor of *The Milepost*, which for more than 50 years has offered travelers an annually updated, mile-by-mile guide to the entire Alaska road system. “There are so many other places, like the Elliott Highway, the Steese, even the Edgerton Highway.”

ALASKA HIGHWAY

But for many, there’s only the highway: The Alaska Highway, once known simply as “The Alcan.” The Alaska Highway is the main corridor between the outside world and the 49th state, and driving it is an adventure in itself. Most of the road’s 1,520 miles actually are in Canada, beginning in Dawson Creek, B.C., and ending in Fairbanks, Alaska.

The Alaska Highway celebrated its 60-year anniversary in 2002. It has come a long way from the muddy trail built to move troops and supplies during World War II. (See Alaska Highway sidebar.)

“I remember a lot of mud, an enormous amount of mud, especially around the little settlements we would come to,” said Jill Shepherd, who moved from California to Alaska with her family in 1951, hauling a 35-foot trailer behind their 1949 Studebaker pickup. “There were some places to stop and get gas, and everyone was very hospitable no matter how small (the community) was. The truckers helped you, too. Everyone watched out for each other.”



Today, the road is paved, but it's not uncommon for improvement projects to slow you down. Take the time to look for wildlife, including bears, moose, caribou and even the occasional wolf, if you're really lucky.

Amenities on the Alaska Highway vary greatly depending on where you are, so having a spare tire and some snacks in the car can't hurt. But for the most part, you'll never be more than 50 miles from the nearest service station, and in the summer, plenty of other explorers travel the road.

RICHARDSON HIGHWAY

The 366-mile Richardson Highway runs from Valdez to Fairbanks and is an incredibly scenic road trip for those willing to take it slow. The Chugach Mountains and the Alaska Range will keep you company along the way, as will the 800-mile Trans Alaska Pipeline, which serves as a steely silver companion along the drive.

The Richardson is Alaska's oldest road. It started out as a sled dog trail in 1898 from Valdez to Eagle. By 1902, it led to Fairbanks, and in 1910 was upgraded into a bona fide wagon trail by a man by the name of Richardson. The name has stuck ever since.

Thompson Pass, just outside of Valdez is a breathtaking spot, with open mountain vistas at an elevation of 2,678 feet. Thompson Pass is the site of some of the deepest snowfalls Alaska has ever encountered: In the winter of 1952-53, for example, the area was buried in 81-plus feet of snow.

The Klutina and Gulkana rivers also are popular roadside attractions, and during the summer are rich with wild Alaska salmon. Fishing guides and charter boat operators can help arrange a fishing expedition. Check at the Delta Junction Visitor Center for more information.

South of the crossroads town of Glennallen (the Glenn Highway intersects the Richardson here, about 120 miles north of Valdez), the Wrangell Mountains tower over miles of rolling hills. View points are scattered along the highway.

DALTON HIGHWAY

The Dalton Highway is the road to take if you simply want to drive as far north as possible. From its starting point at the Elliott Highway, it continues for more than 400 miles until nearly reaching the shores of the Arctic Ocean in Deadhorse after crossing the Arctic Circle.

Deadhorse is the village that serves the North Slope oilfield, with several hotels, a store and gas station. The community is a superlative of sorts: it is as far north as you can go on Alaska's primary road system, and it is worth exploring, especially if your goal is to dip your toe in the Arctic Ocean.

The Dalton Highway begins 85 miles north of Fairbanks and is perhaps one of the roughest roads in Alaska. It was constructed in the mid-1970s to haul freight to and from construction camps and workers building the 800-mile long trans-Alaska oil pipeline that stretches from Prudhoe Bay in the north all the way to the ice-free port of Valdez in Prince William Sound. The road offers relatively little in the way of modern conveniences. The washboards are many, the grades can be steep (as much as 10 and 12 percent in some places) and the big rigs delivering to Prudhoe Bay along the "haul road," as it's called by the locals, can make for uncomfortable traveling companions.



Not all car and RV rental companies allow their vehicles on the Dalton, so check ahead of time and be prepared for this road trip. Carry two spare tires, a jack, tool kit, emergency flares, extra gasoline, oil, wiper fluid and a first aid kit. Bring drinking water and plenty of ready-to-eat-food, and all of your camping gear. A CB radio is also not a bad idea (monitor channel 19). Travel services are nonexistent. The 244-mile stretch north of Coldfoot is the longest service-free stretch of highway in North America.

So, why go to all this bother, you may ask?

Consider the scenery, which includes views of the mighty Yukon River, Atigun Pass (at the crest of the Continental Divide), the caribou of the north slope tundra, 375-million year-old limestone-filled Sukakpak Mountain (elevation 4,459 feet at Mile 203.5) and

any number of sweeping mountain vistas opening into the Brooks Range, Gates of the Arctic National Park or Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Another trip highlight is crossing the Arctic Circle just past mile 115.

Several tour companies offer a guided Dalton Highway/Arctic Ocean experience. (See the “If You Go” section at the end of this story.)

MAIN ROADS

The Glenn, Parks and Seward highways are three of Alaska’s most-traveled roads because they connect most Alaska residents. All of these roads have plenty of services, but that does not deter from the wild scenery.

The Glenn and Parks travel through Interior Alaska, while the Seward Highway follows the coastal edges of Turnagain Arm in Southcentral Alaska. All of them are road trips worth savoring.



“Another thing that I tell people is to slow down and really see Alaska,” Graef, of The Milepost, said. “I think that it would be really nice for people to have shorter distances on their itineraries. Yes, you can get from Tok to Anchorage in one day, but if you do that you miss so much.”

On the 362-mile Parks Highway, look for stunning views of Mount McKinley, with strategically placed pull-offs for viewing North America’s tallest peak. On sunny, clear days the mountain seems to take up the entire sky.

The Parks travels through some quintessential Alaska communities along its way, too. To experience Alaska’s small-town flavor, head to Talkeetna (off the Talkeetna Spur Road at Mile 99). Clapboard buildings, a railroad stop and a small local runway for the many commuter bush planes carrying climbers to Mt. McKinley’s base camp feature prominently downtown. Back on the Parks, look for the towns of Cantwell and Healy and the main park entrance to Denali National Park (at mile 237), where numerous rafting, flightseeing and tour opportunities are right off the highway.

You’ll also be traveling through Denali State Park territory, which sits adjacent to the sprawling national park. There are a number of scenic hiking and picnicking destinations along the way, as well as RV-equipped campgrounds, near this park. At Mile 135, there is a particularly beautiful stopping point within the park for views of McKinley. The park’s maintenance status is in transition, so check with the Alaska Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation before you go (see the “If You Go” listing at the end of this

story).

Branching off the Parks Highway near the towns of Wasilla and Palmer in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley, is the Glenn Highway. A section of the Glenn was named a National Scenic Byway in June 2002. As you drive its 328 miles, it will be easy to understand why: The road offers spectacular mountain vistas dotted with Dall sheep among the craggy peaks. At one point along the road, you can actually pay a small fee to walk on Matanuska Glacier (Glacier Park, at Mile 102, 888-253-4980). Further down the road is an awesome view of Gunsight Mountain, a must-have photo for your album. And if you have time, turn off at Mile 160 for a side trip to Lake Louise State Recreation Area.

The spectacular Wrangell Mountains in the nation's largest national park, Wrangell-St. Elias, begin to come into view on the Glenn, but a short drive south on the Richardson reveals their stunning repose.

The Seward Highway, which travels 127 miles from Anchorage to Seward, has been officially cited as an All-American Road, a recognition by the National Scenic Byways program that goes to a few and select group of national highways (for more on Alaska's Scenic Byways, see our accompanying story on the Scenic Byways program). The Seward Highway has it all — spectacular views of Turnagain Arm, scenic rest stops for beluga whale and Dall sheep watching, parking areas for access to some premier hiking trails in Chugach National Forest and countless camping, lodging and dining opportunities.

For those who have very little time to spend in Alaska, the Seward Highway is a viable destination unto itself. This is the best road from which to see a huge cross-section of Alaska's topography — from fireweed-covered hillsides to frozen-in-time glaciers, from serene lakes to fast-flowing rivers and streams.

OTHER OPTIONS

Finally, if you're interested in a "short" drive, consider a one- or two-day jaunt along some of Alaska's less-traveled roads. The ELLIOTT HIGHWAY covers 152 miles from just north of Fairbanks to the town of Manley and Manley Hot Springs in the state's Interior. Look for such attractions as Minto Lakes and the hot springs in Manley, an attraction among those seeking pure solitude. There is also the Arctic Circle Trading Post, at Mile 49 (907-474-4565), which is worth a look. The shop offers an official Arctic Circle registry, in which you can list your name and receive a souvenir certificate of arrival to the far north.

There are several campgrounds and a few places to re-supply along the way. In general, though, expect the mostly gravel road to be lightly traveled. When you get to Manley Hot Springs, check in at the Manley Roadhouse (Mile 152) for accommodations and details about soaking in the hot springs. The etiquette goes something like this: The hot springs are on private property, but visitors are welcome to use them by asking at the

roadhouse for an assigned time during which they can soak. Remember, this is a small town. Formalities, such as appointments, are foreign but good manners, such as asking politely, are expected.

Another northern road worthy of exploration is the STEESE HIGHWAY, a 162-mile-long road heading from Fairbanks to Circle. Most of the road is gravel, and conditions can vary with the weather. But the road is worthy of exploration because of its unobstructed views and access to summer and winter play areas. The Chena River and Chatanika River recreation areas offer summertime amusement for visitors and locals alike, and in the winter, there is access to the White Mountains National Recreation Area, which offers miles of groomed snow surface for skiers, snowmachiners and dog mushers. A relaxing end to this drive comes a few miles from the small mining community of Central. Circle Hot Springs features a Victorian-era hotel with restaurant and access to a steamy hot springs pool.



Further south is the equally stunning but sometimes less-maintained DENALI HIGHWAY, which connects the communities of Cantwell, on the Parks Highway, and Paxson, on the Richardson Highway. All but 20 miles of the 134-mile road is gravel, and depending upon the weather, the road can become washed out and slick. There are a few designated camping areas and some comfortable lodges to stay at, but in general, be prepared for a rustic trip with stunning scenery. Near the Richardson Highway end of the Denali Highway, Tangle Lakes is a particularly popular area with grayling fishing, canoeing and outstanding bird-watching.

Before you go, be sure to check the state's Department of Transportation roads hotline for the Denali Highway's current maintenance status.

ROAD RULES:

Be road-friendly

To make the driving experience more enjoyable for you and your fellow travelers, here are a few rules of the road to keep in mind while exploring Alaska:

1. Drive at the posted speed limit or within safe road conditions, and check your rear-view mirror often. On many roads in Alaska, it is required that you pull off to let five or more vehicles behind you pass. If you want to be really nice, pull off when you see three or more.
2. Always drive with your headlights on. Even in the summer, when the sun stays above the horizon nearly all night, those headlights can be helpful. Oncoming traffic is more likely to see you, especially in rainy weather.
3. Park only at waysides or other designated parking areas. Don't assume a pull-off is a

good place to camp; you may just be blocking access to someone's remote cabin.
4. Keep Alaska beautiful. Save RV waste for dumping stations and trash for your stops in town. Not only is litter unsightly, but animals who munch on it can become sick or die.

IF YOU GO:

Alaska Travel Industry Association (800) 862-5275

www.travelalaska.com

Tourism North

www.northtoalaska.com

The Milepost: This phone book-sized guide offers mile-by-mile descriptions of the roadways in Alaska and parts of Canada.

www.themilepost.com

The Alaska Department of Transportation (800) 478-7675

The department has a statewide road-conditions hotline accessible by phone or on the web www.dot.state.ak.us

State of Alaska Scenic Byways Information

www.dot.state.ak.us/scenic/

Museum of Alaska Transportation & Industry (907) 376-1211

www.alaska.net/~rmorris/mati1.htm

DALTON HIGHWAY

Northern Alaska Tour Co. (907-474-8600) offers tours of the Dalton Highway and Arctic Ocean.

www.northernalaska.com

Trans-Arctic Circle Treks Ltd. is a tour operator that offers a "High-Arctic Three Day Tour." Optional flightseeing trips can be arranged. Contact them at 4825 Glasgow Drive, Fairbanks, AK 99709, (800) 336-8735

www.arctictreks.com

RICHARDSON HIGHWAY

Delta Junction Visitors Center is located at the junction of the Alaska Highway and the Richardson Highway. (907) 895-9941 or (877) 895-5068
www.alaska-highway.org/delta

Valdez Convention and Visitors Bureau: (800) 770-5954
www.valdezalaska.org

ELLIOTT, STEESE AND DENALI HIGHWAYS

Fairbanks Convention and Visitors Bureau: The Fairbanks CVB can also provide information on the Richardson and Parks highways. (907) 456-5774
www.explorefairbanks.com

Manley Roadhouse (907) 672-3161

GLENN AND SEWARD HIGHWAYS

Anchorage Convention and Visitors Bureau: (800) 478-1255
www.anchorage.net

Seward Chamber of Commerce: (907) 224-8051
www.sewardak.org

PARKS HIGHWAY

Denali State Park Ranger (907)745-3975
www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/units/denali1.htm

Mat-Su Convention & Visitors Bureau: (907) 746-5000
www.alaskavisit.com

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Roadhouses Still a Way of Life Along Alaska's Road System

In Alaska's early days, pioneers began building the first roads between communities, and, along with them, the roadhouse. The arrival of these bastions of comfort were much welcome to road-weary travelers. The roadhouses offered a warm place to sleep, hot food and some much-sought-after conversation.

At the turn of the 20th century, these roadhouses were found across Alaska, often every 20 or so miles apart from one another and a manageable distance for those traveling by stagecoach, horse or dog sled. They were simple buildings, low-roofed and built of thick locally cut timbers. Most of them were log, although clapboard buildings showed up now and then, as well.

In many areas, they needed no distinction and often were simply called "The Roadhouse." Today, many still offer room and board, while others stand as a historic reminder of the early days of transportation.

Knik Hall: This roadhouse is thought to have been constructed sometime between 1900 and 1914, and originally was used as a roadhouse, pool hall and store. The two-story, wood-framed building still stands today and is home to the Knik Museum and Sled Dog Musher's Hall of Fame. To find it, turn south off the Parks Highway in Wasilla onto Knik Road and drive about 14 miles.

Sourdough Roadhouse: This 1906-era building is one of Alaska's better-known roadhouses, and is billed as the longest-running original roadhouse in Alaska. Built along the then-Valdez-to-Fairbanks Trail, it today can be found at Mile 147.5 of the Richardson Highway. The roadhouse still serves Richardson Highway travelers and is a recognized National Historic Landmark.

Rika's Roadhouse: This delightful roadhouse still operates today as a historic site at the Big Delta State Historical Park at Mile 275 of the Richardson Highway. The roadhouse was yet another Alaska Railroad project, built in 1909 and 1910. It was used a stopping point for those on the Valdez-to-Fairbanks Trail. After the Richardson Highway was built and upgraded, the roadhouse became less prominent and its owner, Swedish immigrant Rika Wallen, closed the doors. The State of Alaska upgraded the building in 1986 and it became the popular roadside diversion it is today.

Gakona Lodge and Trading Post: Built in 1905, the original roadhouse sits next to a newer two-story log counterpart built in 1929. Today's lodge is on the National Register of Historic Places and features an excellent dinner out of the Carriage House dining room. Look for both at Mile 2 of the Tok Cutoff.

Copper Center Lodge: The lodge was built in 1897, and it still serves travelers today with basic rooms and a restaurant featuring sourdough pancakes. The roadhouse can be found past Mile 100 on the Old Richardson Highway.

Manley Roadhouse: This roadhouse, filled with antiques, is an antique itself. It was built in 1906 to serve dog mushers, gold prospectors and the occasional adventurer of the early 1900s. The roadhouse still operates today, with accommodations with shared and private baths. Look for it near Mile 150 of the Elliott Highway in Interior Alaska.

It's All Scenic: National Byways Program Recognizes Best of Alaska's Roads

There's one thing Alaska has no shortage of, and that's incredible scenery along its many highways. The problem often is not whether to take a road trip but which one to take.

Alaska has come to the attention of the National Scenic Byway program, established by Congress in 1991. The program preserves and protects the nation's most scenic roads and, at the same time, promotes tourism and economic development along them. Roads are judged on six intrinsic values — archaeology, culture, history, nature, recreation and scenic qualities. Alaska has had three such road systems nationally recognized, and 11 that have been recognized by the state.

The Seward Highway is Alaska's crown jewel. It was given the national program's highest honor as an All-American Road in 2000, and was named a National Forest Scenic Byway in 1998. To receive an All-American Road designation, a road must have one-of-a-kind features that do not exist elsewhere and it must also had to be considered a "destination unto itself," according to the National Byways program.

"The basic premise of the program is that there are 4 million miles of highway in America, and there are just some that are so unique that they should be recognized," said Murph O'Brien, the regional byway facilitator in Anchorage.

The 127-mile Seward Highway is indeed a trip worth taking. From Anchorage, it follows the coastline of Turnagain Arm, climbs Turnagain Pass onto the Kenai Peninsula and meanders through the mountains of Chugach National Forest as it heads to the waters of Resurrection Bay and Seward. The drive can take three to five hours if you take your time and stop often for photos.

A portion of the Glenn Highway between Anchorage and Glennallen was recognized as a National Scenic Byway in June 2002. Those who travel the Glenn Highway will understand why it was recognized, with spectacular mountain scenery (King and Pinnacle mountains, along the Matanuska River, are particularly photogenic) and access to several popular recreation areas.

For the first time in the history of the National Scenic Byways program, a marine-based system was recognized. The Alaska Marine Highway, which celebrates its 40th anniversary this year, also received a National Scenic Byway designation in June 2002.

The Alaska Marine Highway covers nearly 9,000 miles of coastal ocean routes connecting 31 port communities throughout Alaska as well as a port in British Columbia and one in Washington. It's a great way to see the coastal regions of Alaska yet still have access to a vehicle for inland travel.

On the ferry, you'll see some of the less-visited communities of Alaska, have a chance to photograph whales and other sea creatures, and, in general soak in the essence of coastal life. Vehicles and RVs are allowed, and there are cabins with bunks for overnight sailings.

There also is a statewide Scenic Byways program, O'Brien said, and so far, 11 roadways — including the Alaska Marine Highway and the Alaska Railroad — have been recognized since 1993. The other highways are the Glenn, Seward, Dalton, Haines, Steese, Taylor, Parks between Denali State Park and Healy, Richardson between Valdez and Glennallen and Sterling from the Seward Highway to the southern exit at Skilak Lake and from Anchor Point to the Homer Spit.

IF YOU GO:

Alaska Scenic Byways Program

www.dot.state.ak.us/scenic/

Alaska Public Lands Information Center: (907) 271-2737

www.nps.gov/aplic/center/

Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities: Road Condition Hotline

(800) 478-7675

www.dot.state.ak.us

Chugach National Forest: (907) 743-9500

www.fs.fed.us/r10/chugach/

Matanuska-Susitna Convention & Visitor Bureau: (907) 746-5000

www.alaskavisit.com

Alaska Marine Highway System: (800) 642-0066

www.ferryalaska.com

The Anton Anderson Memorial Tunnel – Gateway to Whittier

This Tunnel gives visitors the opportunity to drive through the Chugach Mountains to reach the sea at the northwest edge of the Prince William Sound community of Whittier. The \$90 million Whittier toll road isn't a long drive – only about 12.5 mi (20 km) – but it's interesting. Leaving the Portage Road near the Begich Boggs Visitor Center on the shores of Portage Lake, the new highway passes 430 ft (131 m) through a tunnel in the base of Begich Peak into Bear Valley. A desolate bowl full of willows, rocks and tundra at the base of Boggs Peak, the valley is aptly named for the wildlife that roam the area. Not far beyond where the salmon spawn, the Whittier road stretches from one lane to two as drivers begin a 2.5 mi (4km) journey through the heart of a mountain shared with the Alaska Railroad. This is the last and longest of the two tunnels.

Emerging at the Prince William Sound end of the tunnel, drivers find themselves in Whittier at the head of Portage Canal. Built quickly as a hidden, ice-free port for the U.S. military during World War II, the community hasn't changed much since.

Here, visitors will have the option of incredible adventures by high-speed catamarans into Prince William Sound for a day of visiting as many as 26 glaciers. Kayakers also use this port town for staging expeditions or daytrips into the sound. And, of course, the Alaska Marine Highway, the M/V Bartlett, begins its Prince William Sound traverse in Whittier.



Sights of the sea:

Alaska Marine Highway Celebrates 40 Years of Serving Residents and Visitors

By Melissa DeVaughn

For longer than recorded time, watery pathways have been Alaska's thoroughfares. Aleut traders in tiny sea-hugging bidarkas sailed here. Brightly painted Tlingit war canoes sailed to potlatches. Explorers from Spain, England, Russia and France – some purposely seeking a northwest passage, others hopelessly lost – mapped these waters. Fur traders and lumbermen raised sail here and gold seekers packed into leaky steamers on their way to the Klondike. Sailors sweated and shivered in wartime submarines on patrol. In the 1970s, oilfield workers greased their toolboxes against the salt air and sailed north. Today, every type of vessel from fiberglass kayaks to oil tankers to luxury cruise ships ply these waterways, and among them, the great ferries of the Alaska Marine Highway move patiently and predictably, taking ordinary people on an extraordinary voyage.

The vessels of the Alaska Marine Highway trace thousands of miles of the world's most scenic coastline. From the verdant rain forests of Northern British Columbia and the Inside Passage of Southeast Alaska to the smoldering volcanoes of the Aleutian Chain to the glaciers and fjords of Prince William Sound, the ships glide over crystal seas and plow through ocean swells.

The Alaska Marine Highway has been offering its passengers a chance to escape for 40 years, starting with just one vessel, the M/V Malaspina, which arrived in Ketchikan on Jan. 23, 1963. Today, the ferry system has nine vessels and anticipates at least two more by the end of 2004.

“It is not happenstance that the term ‘highway’ is in our name,” said Alaska Marine Highway General Manager George Capacci. “The Marine Highway is the way people and vehicles move about in the coastal zone of Alaska.”

Anchorage resident Tim Deal and his brother-in-law have taken the ferry M/V Tustumena from Homer to Port Lions on Kodiak Island several times to go hunting. And although, as a pilot for Alaska Airlines, he likes to fly, he recommends the ferry to everyone.

“The ferry left at 8 p.m. so it was an all-night crossing,” Deal said. “But we used our ground pads and a sleeping bag and slept up on deck.” At times, the crossing around the Barren Islands got rough, but as they approached Homer on the return trip, the sight of Kachemak Bay was unforgettable.

“People were starting to rouse and we got up and had a nice breakfast in the restaurant,” he said. “It was a great trip, a great way to travel.”

In fact, Deal, his wife and three boys are hoping to plan a ferry trip all the way to Dutch Harbor, in the Aleutians, for one of their upcoming vacations. And the oldest Deal boy, Conor, has a school fieldtrip planned from Whittier to Cordova.

Sharon Gaipman, marketing manager for the Alaska Marine Highway, recommends that sightseers not only take in the glacier-and-wildlife-rich Inside Passage but also suggests a ferry ride like Deal’s, from Homer or Seward to Kodiak. Such trips give visitors a sense for the rhythm of Alaska’s rural communities.

“Anchorage in the summertime is the No. 1 visitor destination for Alaska Marine Highway passengers,” Gaipman said. “They also want to see Juneau, the (Matanuska-Susitna Valley), Fairbanks and Kenai. Only one of those places is in the Inside Passage, and that’s the thing about the Alaska Marine Highway. You can get to all those places and do it on your own schedule.”

Part of the Marine Highway’s 40th anniversary “Sailabration” is the system’s recent designation as a National Scenic Byway, a federally funded U.S. Department of Transportation program that recognizes unique and scenic roadways. This is the first time a marine-based system has received the honor, Gaipman said, and there is still a lot of work to be done on a local level to promote the honor.

“Being the first marine-based scenic byway award makes this doubly exciting,” Gaipman said. “We’re planning to have dedications at every port location, and there are 33 ports and about 3,000 miles — 8,800 miles when you count all the routes together.”

Capacci said the yearlong Sailabration also will include: a ceremony to name the ferry currently being built to serve residents of Metlakatla; special travel offers for those on a budget; and, the unveiling of the Marine Highway’s official 40th anniversary poster.

Although there will be special 40th birthday celebrations all year, it will still be business as usual for the ferry system, especially for those who rely on the ferry for everyday transportation. “Many Alaska families, like mine, rely on the ferry system, and in many cases, it’s the only way to get a high school sports team to a regional tournament. It’s the same for church groups, for individuals who need medical care, for shopping opportunities or for those who want to attend regional cultural events.”

“There is no perfect way to see Alaska,” Gaipman said. “The reality is that I think that there are many special ways to get around Alaska, but the Marine Highway is among the most unique because it enables you to see Alaska your way.

“You can get on and off when you want,” Gaipman continued. “If you want to take time and see communities in the Inside Passage, you can do it. If you want to get off and travel inland, you can do it. You just kind of sit there and go, ‘Here’s the Alaska of my dreams. Here’s the Alaska not many people see.’ “

IF YOU GO FERRYING

Walk-on reservations are almost never needed. But if you want a private cabin or to book vehicle, you should call ahead of time. Cabins are comfortable but small, and keep in mind that the beds are in a bunk arrangement. If you need two beds for sleeping but neither person in your party can climb to a top bunk, get a four-berth cabin with two bunks. Kayaks, bicycles and other outdoor gear are allowed. Call ahead for details. Pets may travel with you, but must have current health certificates (within 30 days) in order to travel through Canada or into Alaska from another state. The cost for pets is \$10 to \$25, depending upon your port of departure. Pets must stay in pet carriers or in your vehicle.

Alaska Marine Highway: (800) 642-0066
www.ferryalaska.com

Alaska Marine Highway Running Times

Taking the ferry reminds you that Alaska is a big place—a very big place. The following timetable, provided by the Alaska Marine Highway, will give you an idea of how long it will take to reach your port of call.

All times are approximate. Weather, tidal conditions and the amount of traffic on the water all will affect how long it takes to reach a particular destination.

Our advice? Don't worry about it. Slow down, enjoy the views and use the ferry time to relax. Now that sounds like a great vacation!

To reach the Alaska Marine Highway, call 1-800-642-0066 or visit www.dot.state.ak.us/amhs/.

Southeast Alaska

Inside Passage

| | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Bellingham, Wash. to Ketchikan | 37 hours |
| Prince Rupert to Ketchikan | 6 hours |
| Ketchikan to Wrangell | 6 hours |
| Wrangell to Petersburg | 3 hours |
| Petersburg to Juneau | 8 hours |
| Petersburg to Sitka | 10 hours |
| Sitka to Juneau/Auke Bay | 8 hours, 45 minutes |
| Juneau/Auke Bay to Haines | 4 hours, 30 minutes |
| Haines to Skagway | 1 hour |

Southeast Alaska

Smaller, feeder routes

| | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Ketchikan to Hollis | 2 hours, 45 minutes |
| Ketchikan to Metlakatla | 1 hour, 15 minutes |
| Metlakatla to Hollis | 3 hours, 30 minutes |
| Hollis to Wrangell | 6 hours, 30 minutes |
| Hollis to Petersburg | 8 hours, 30 minutes |
| Petersburg to Kake | 4 hours |
| Kake to Sitka | 8 hours |
| Kake to Angoon | 4 hours |

| | |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| Sitka to Angoon | 5 hours, 30 minutes |
| Angoon to Hoonah | 4 hours |
| Angoon to Tenakee | 2 hours, 30 minutes |
| Tenakee to Hoonah | 3 hours, 15 minutes |
| Hoonah to Juneau | 3 hours, 15 minutes |
| Hoonah to Pelican | 4 hours, 15 minutes |
| Juneau to Pelican | 6 hours, 30 minutes |

Southcentral Alaska

| | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| Valdez to Cordova | 5 hours, 30 minutes |
| Cordova to Whittier | 7 hours |
| Whittier to Valdez | 6 hours, 45 minutes |
| Cordova to Seward | 11 hours |
| Valdez to Seward | 11 hours |
| Seward to Kodiak | 13 hours, 15 minutes |
| Kodiak to Port Lions | 2 hours, 30 minutes |
| Port Lions to Homer | 10 hours |
| Homer to Seldovia | 1 hour, 30 minutes |
| Homer to Kodiak | 9 hours, 30 minutes |

Southwest Alaska

| | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Kodiak to Chignik | 18 hours, 30 minutes |
| Chignik to Sand Point | 9 hours, 15 minutes |
| Sand Point to King Cove | 6 hours, 30 minutes |
| King Cove to Cold Bay | 2 hours |
| Cold Bay to False Pass | 4 hours, 15 minutes |
| False Pass to Akutan | 10 hours, 30 minutes |
| Akutan to Unalaska | 3 hours, 30 minutes |



Tied to history:

Alaska Railroad's Growth Begins Humble, Continues Strong

It is no wonder that great minds were trying to gain access to Alaska's remote yet beautiful frontier. In 1903, entrepreneurs schemed for a way to complete a railroad across this huge state. But time and money worked against them, and it wasn't until 1914 that the federal government stepped in, creating what is today known as the Alaska Railroad.

It took eight years for the 525-mile system to be built, and as each track and tie was laid, small towns and bustling cities emerged. Anchorage, the state's largest city, would not have been established if it not for the Alaska Railroad. Fairbanks, too, profited from the railroad's existence, as gold-seekers found an affordable way to transport their discoveries.

The inaugural trip on the newly built Alaska Railroad was July 15, 1923. Then-president Warren G. Harding arrived for the event, tapping a golden spike into the last rail of the system in the town of Nenana.

In its infancy, the Alaska Railroad relied on steam engines to power the train, which performed well until the arrival of more modern engines. The last of the steam engines, many of which were also used in the construction of the Panama Canal, retired from the Alaska Railroad in 1962. To get a glimpse of one of these historic steam engines, look for retired Locomotive No. 1 at the Alaska Railroad depot in downtown Anchorage.

Today the state-owned railroad carries visitors and residents, freight and cargo to some of Alaska's most unique communities. According to the company, about 70 percent of Alaska's population lives along the Alaska Railroad corridor. The rail line's most popular destinations include Fairbanks, Denali National Park and Preserve, Talkeetna, Anchorage and Seward.

The newest addition to the Alaska Railroad is a brand-new depot at the Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport, which allows passengers headed north from Seward or south from the destinations listed above easy access to the airport.

To reach the Alaska Railroad, call (800) 544-0552 or www.alaskarailroad.com

Hitch a ride on the rails:

Alaska Railroad Offers On-board Comfort, Off-board Adventure

Taking a day trip on the Alaska Railroad is an unforgettable experience for people of all ages. From its unique flag-stop service to exhilarating rafting-and-riding combination packages, the Alaska Railroad has something to offer travelers of all ages and inclinations.

From the comfort of roomy coaches with oversized seats and giant windows, you can see Alaska at its most wild. The railroad climbs through mountain passes and across open valleys, skirt within a few hundred yards of glaciers and parallel coastal inlets.

You can take in this spectacular scenery from the comfort of the rail cars, while eating in the dining car or while standing outside on the small platforms between cars. The Alaska Railroad even features special domed cars that offer a bird's-eye view of the surrounding landscape in a double-decker glassed-in enclosure.

But with its unique flag-stop service, the Alaska Railroad takes sight seeing by rail a step further. This is just one of the services that make this state-owned railroad so special.

“We have what is called the Hurricane Turn, a flag-stop service, and it runs ... from Talkeetna up to Hurricane (Gulch),” said Alaska Railroad sales executive Jeff Johnson. “For a long time it has been popular with the locals to reach their cabins, although it is becoming more popular with campers and fisherman.”

The flag-stop service harks back to an earlier era and conjures images of a Norman Rockwell-esque engineer waving to his passengers as if they're old friends. In times past, getting around via train was just that easy: get off the train where you choose, and flag it down when you want to get back on. In Alaska, where so much of life has remained consciously simple, that freedom still exists today.

Locals may see the flag-stop service as a necessity, but visitors to Alaska will be intrigued by the recreational opportunities it affords. Board the train in Talkeetna, about two hours north of Anchorage, and bring along a fishing pole, camera or backpack. On clear days, the hulk of North America's highest peak, 20,320-foot Mount McKinley, dominates the landscape. If you get off close to Hurricane Gulch, hang on. The Hurricane Gulch trestle is nearly 300 feet above the creek below and offers wide-open views in every direction.

The flag-stop service is a great option if you're an independent traveler comfortable with your wilderness survival skills. Carry a map and compass, be prepared for cold weather, even in the summer, and be respectful of private-property owners. It's a great ride even if you don't get off the train, offering a glimpse of some of Alaska's most remote back country.

Sound just a bit too ambitious? If you like the idea of an off-train excursion, but would prefer the company of others, the Alaska Railroad has yet another option, this one brand-new for 2003, called the Glacier Discovery Train.

The train takes off from Anchorage and arrives near Spencer Glacier, at which point passengers

may disembark for a raft trip down the Placer River or stay aboard for a few more miles to the scenic, much-photographed area of Grandview. Those who opt for the two-hour float trip will meander through the wilderness until they reach the Seward Highway, where the Placer River crosses. Visitors then board a motorcoach for a leisurely drive back to Anchorage, just in time for dinner.

“There really seems to be a need for more day tours out of Anchorage and we thought it was a perfect fit,” Alaska Railroad Marketing Manager Susie Kiger said. “(Passengers) will enjoy a nice lunch out on the boat of fresh fruit, caribou, and salmon. They’ll be pampered a bit, but it won’t be difficult, just beautiful. In fact, a 5-year-old could do it.”

Don’t think of the raft trip as a white-knuckle adventure, said Johnson. “Actually, it’s a very mel-low float, so it’s good for everybody — it’s a very scenic float just a few hours out of Anchorage, and that’s why it’s special.”

IF YOU GO:

The Alaska Railroad offers many other tour packages on its more than 500 miles of rail. An Anchorage-to-Seward day trip called the Coastal Classic is one of the most popular trips. Or try the 356-mile trip between Anchorage and Fairbanks.

The Alaska Railroad: (800) 544-0552

www.alaskarailroad.com

History Comes Alive on the White Pass & Yukon Route

Train lovers of all types can steam into Gold Rush history aboard the White Pass & Yukon Route railway and, traveling along the cliff-hanging route, can share the trip that miners took to the Klondike Gold Fields 100 years ago.

Construction on the 110-mile rail line from Skagway to Whitehorse began in 1898 and was built through Southeast Alaska and Canada's steep coastal mountains. Completed in 1900, the White Pass is Alaska's oldest railroad. One hundred years later, in 1999, the railway was named an International Historic Civil Engineering Landmark – an award it shares with the Panama Canal, the Eiffel Tower and the Statue of Liberty.

But at the turn of the century, Skagway lured gold seekers north with promises of riches for big dreamers. Hundreds of men and women on steamer ships came north to seek their Klondike gold fortunes. They traversed the unforgiving White Pass and Chilkoot Trails to Lake Bennett, BC. If they made it that far, the stamperders boarded homemade rafts for the treacherous journey down the Yukon River to Dawson.

The railroad was built in hopes of offering an easier route to the gold fields, but by the time construction was complete, the gold rush was all but over.

Today, along the very same route, the White Pass & Yukon Route diesel engines climb 3,000 feet in less than a half hour and takes passengers past majestic Bridal Veil Falls, Inspiration Point, Dead Horse Gulch and along the original "Trail of 98." For the adventurous, the train will drop you off for a day of hiking at Bridal Veil Falls or pick you up after your multi-day hike on the historic Chilkoot Trail. For those more interested in gold rush history, the train offers views of historic mining sights and one tour even offers a walking excursion through Bennett, B.C.



To share their dreams, contact the White Pass and Yukon Route railway at (800) 343-7373 or www.whitepassrailroad.com



A writer's memories of the Alaska Highway

By Stanton H. Patty

ALASKA-CANADA BORDER -- “Where are you headed today, pardner?” The immigration officer at the Alaska-Yukon border on the Alaska Highway had the voice of a Texas cowpoke.

“Going home,” I said.

“Where’s that?”

“Alaska—Fairbanks. “I don’t live there now, but that’s where I’m from.”

“How long ago was that?”

“Way before you were born.”

“That long, huh? “Well, you have a good one,” he said, waving me north.

“Welcome home.”

I’d been on the Alaska Highway since 5 a.m., camera cocked and ready. First light was sweeping like a golden wave across spruce and birch forests that roll over the horizon, beyond imagination. I’d driven this highway enough to know that this was the hour when magic creeps along the ALCAN as it was once known.

A young black bear, not bothered at all by the sight of a tourist’s car, sat smack in the middle of the road and looked my way. I stopped and reach for the camera, but it was too late. The bear bounded off into the woods.

Around the very next corner a cow moose was drinking from a pond where shadows had turned the water the color of dark sapphires. Another perfect photo op. As I stopped to grab another shot, I found that I was talking to myself and remembering good times along the Alaska Highway.

Northway Junction

At Northway Junction, just ahead at Milepost 1264 of the Alaska Highway, I remembered well the last time I turned for the Northway village -- (pop. 364) – a few years ago to talk with Chief Walter Northway. I wanted to know more about the World War II years, when American-built warplanes were being ferried to Russia via Northway and other North country airfields.

It was early in 1941. Nazi troops had driven deep into the Soviet Union. Russia was fighting for its life. The United States was not yet in the war. But could the U.S. provide urgently needed fighter planes and bombers to help turn the tide against Germany on the Eastern Front?

Yes. The United States government offered to fly lend-lease aircraft all the way to Siberia. But the wary Soviets didn't want us learning about the Siberian airfields.

So, it was agreed that American pilots would deliver the planes to Fairbanks, where they would be turned over to Soviet aircrews. Russian pilots then would whisk them from Fairbanks to Nome, then across Bering Strait to Siberia and on to the European combat zones.

Soon a chain of landing strips was sown across more than 2,000 miles of Canada and Alaska for ferrying the planes to Fairbanks. The network of airfields was designated the Northwest Staging Route. But most of those who were there remember it as the Alaska-Siberia Route. ALSIB, for short.

ALSIB'S operations stretched from Great Falls, Mont., through Calgary and Edmonton and other sites in Alberta, then Fort St. John and Fort Nelson in British Columbia, to Watson Lake and Whitehorse in Canada's Yukon Territory, and finally through Northway, Tanacross and Big Delta in Alaska to Ladd Field at Fairbanks. Many of the airports would later become bases for building the wartime Alaska Highway, a raw truck trail punched through the wilderness in just eight months and 11 days. The Army Corps of Engineers called the project "one of the greatest undertakings since the building of the Panama Canal."

But in order for the warplanes to move west, the airstrips had to be built. Walter Northway, traditional chief of his Athabascan Indian Village, was hired as a \$1 an hour laborer to clear brush for the airstrip at Northway.

The Chief's Athabascan name, Haa Chi'jini'aa, means "Looking Back"—back to a time when time, as we know it, did not exist.

Northway was the name given to Walter's father by Capt. James A. Northway, a gold-rush trader in Alaska's heartland. It seems the captain couldn't pronounce the father's Indian name, T'aaiy Ta—"Strong Man."

By the time World War II ended, more than 7,800 warplanes had been delivered to the Soviet Union over the ALSIB Route.

Ladd Field at Fairbanks, where Russian pilots bunked and bought chocolate bars and lingerie for their back-home wives and girlfriends, has changed, and it's now called Fort Wainwright.

Now the Alaska Highway is paved. Travelers in all sorts of rigs, from family sedans to RV's, travel my favorite highway in comfort to explore the north's heartland. Legends such as Walter Northway are gone. I miss them. But there's another story just up the road to tell.

Dawson Creek, BC and Points North

I drive on from Northway Junction, watching a jet trail streak across the blueberry sky. A car packed with a boisterous family zooms past, and I'm immediately reminded of when, as a boy, my family drove the Alaska Highway. Three boisterous brothers were

scrapping in the back seat of the 1935 Plymouth.

“Stop that!” my father shouted, blowing a nauseous blue cloud of cigar smoke over his right shoulder.

“I’m getting carsick,” I complained.

“If you don’t behave, we’ll stop and cut a switch off one of those willows.” Dad said. “I mean it.”

He meant it. We three had qualified for many switchings on family outings. But just then, the car began swaying. A stray rock had punctured the gasoline tank. We were in trouble. My mother reached into her purse and produced two packages of gum.

“Quickly, boys” she said—chew!”

We chewed big wads of rubbery gum until our cheeks puffed.

“I’m running out of spit,” Ernie complained.

“Never mind, chew!” Mom said.

A few minutes later she collected the masticated goo, patted it into a sort of flap-jack and handed it to my dad.

“Use this to patch the tank,” she instructed, and he did as he was told.

How many times have I traveled the Alaska Highway? Maybe a dozen in all seasons. In family cars, RVs and aboard the highballing trucks while gathering stories for The Seattle Times and other newspapers.

Once on a trip with my granddaughter Christine, we panned for gold near Haines Junction, Yukon Territory, with a local character who called himself “Old Griz.” The prospector made certain that Christine would find some glitter in the bottom of the pan.

“Old Griz” said he helped build the Alaska Highway back in World War II.

That was an epic effort. Construction crews pushed through the lifeline to Alaska in just eight months and twelve days.

“We didn’t have sense to know that it couldn’t be done,” said “Old Griz”.

Down at Muncho Lake, B.C., where the water is as green as jade, we were filling the gasoline tank. A few minutes later, a mountain sheep with curled horns pranced out on a ledge only 20 feet or so above the highway.

By the time I attached a telephoto lens to my camera, the sheep was gone. Christine snapped a great shot with her no-frills camera.

A few days later, we stopped at Kluane Lake for a picnic. We walked awhile, then began to pick through leftovers in our ice chest.

“Hi, there,” called a visitor from an RV parked nearby. “Why don’t you folks have lunch with us?”

Our fellow travelers, Raul and Yvonne Miller, from Escondido, Calif., were enjoying a two-month-long loop around Alaska.

“We’re having the time of our lives,” they said.

Raul weighted a tablecloth with rocks and pieces of campground firewood. Yvonne served toasted-cheese sandwiches and lentil soup.

As happens often on northern highways, strangers get acquainted easily. They tell stories about their travels and swap addresses for Christmas cards. It’s a frontier-friendly fraternity.

Later that day, the clouds parted and shafts of sunshine poured down on a chain

of snow-crowned mountains just ahead. The peaks seemed to be hanging in the sky like steeples. A blue-white glacier high in a mountain notch flashed like a gaudy diamond.

I looked at Christine and wanted to reminisce. “Did I ever tell you about the time your great-grandfather and I had to change a tire in a snowstorm near Whitehorse?”

The year was 1953. My father just had been named president of the University of Alaska. He asked me to share the driving from Seattle to the Fairbanks campus.

Back then, the Alaska Highway was a grueling series of narrow, twisting roads with sheer drop-offs, soggy swamps and little maintenance. Even getting to Dawson Creek, B.C.—Mile 0 of the Alaska Highway—was a challenge.

There were curves in British Columbia’s Fraser River Canyon, north of Vancouver, where the highway was so skinny that a vehicle’s rear tires rode for a frightening few seconds on little, wooden platforms, built over the roiling river.

The road seemed just too narrow for all the transportation modes crammed into the gorge—two crisscrossing railway lines and a highway.

“Why are we doing this?” my mother asked. “It would have been better to take the plane.”

“Because we’ll need the car when we get to Fairbanks,” my father explained as he steered around one of the killer curves.

In 1953, Alaska was still a territory. Statehood for this distant territory was still more than six years away. There was no Alaska-ferry system then. The Alaska Highway was the only overland link between Alaska and the “lower 48”.

We survived the Fraser River Canyon and made good progress until nearing Whitehorse on an icy night.

But we ran into blizzard conditions. The highway was like a skating rink. The temperature was almost 30 degrees below zero. The night was dark and dangerous.

“Oh, Oh, I think we have a flat tire,” Dad said, braking the Oldsmobile with a gentle skid.

A sliver of steel from the blade of a snow-clearing rig had shredded the right-rear tire. There was no choice but to unpack the trunk until we could free the spare tire. One of the items that came out of the trunk was my mother’s Sydney Laurence painting.

Can you imagine resting a Sydney Laurence painting on a snowbank in the middle of the Yukon wilderness? Mom had purchased an original canvas from the great artist for \$220 in the 1920’s, years before Laurence’s work fetched much higher prices. But right now it was blocking our access to the jack.

We draped a blanket over Laurence’s scene of an Athabaskan campfire, then took turns with the tire wrench. Our fingers were so cold that we were sure that we had suffered frostbite. Mom helped by holding a flashlight on the work zone.

When the job was done, we drove on to Whitehorse, along Kluane Lake and on to Fairbank. Then, like now, the road was our ribbon home, and it was good to get there.

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Alaska Highway

Driving the Alaska Highway is enjoyed by more than 82,000 people every year who travel the 1,520-mile stretch between Dawson Creek, B.C. and Fairbanks, Alaska. It remains one of the most scenic and beautiful drives of any road in the country.

Soldiers built the Alaska Highway during World War II to insure that the United States and its allies had a secure transportation route along the West Coast to military bases in Alaska. The road was pushed through raw wilderness in just over eight months, an average of eight miles per day, and its construction remains one of the engineering marvels of the 20th Century.

The project, known as the Alaska Canada Military Highway, began in early 1942 as the first road built from the contiguous United States through Canada to Alaska. More than 111,000 troops worked on the project along side of 16,000 civilians who worked for more than 70 private companies. Together, they built more than 8,000 culverts, 133 log and pontoon bridges, reduced along swampy sections and erected permanent bridges.

Aside from the construction accomplishments, however, the road brought with it human feats. As thousands of men and women came north to work on the project, towns throughout Canada and Alaska tripled in size. Riverboats were pressed into service while local packers ran the supply trains. Trappers and Natives guided surveyors who struggled to locate the right-of-way ahead of the advancing armada of bulldozers. And, new lives were forged in the wilderness along the Alaska Canada (Alcan) Highway. Today, the road is a wonderful journey North to Alaska.

Time Line:

Alaska Highway Construction

(Source: The Trail of '42 by Stan Cohen, 1979)

| | |
|------------------|--|
| 1905 | Major Constantine of the North West Mounted Police blazed a trail from Fort Worth St. John, B.C. 375 miles to Stikine River. |
| 1928 | U.S. government engineer Donald MacDonald proposed an over land route to Alaska. |
| 1933 | U.S. Congress authorized President Roosevelt to set up a joint commission with Canada to study a proposed road to Alaska. |
| September, 1939 | Beginning of World War II. |
| Spring, 1940 | First Major contingent of American troops arrived at Anchorage. Military bases also built at Sitka, Fairbanks, Anchorage and Kodiak. Naval base at Dutch Harbor strengthened. |
| August 1940 | Canadian-American Permanent Joint Board of Defense created. Defense policies included approval of the North West Staging Route air bases and the Alaska Canada Military Highway. |
| Dec. 7th, 1941 | Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. |
| Feb. 2nd, 1942 | Special Cabinet Committee chose "Route C" or the "Prairie Route" for the new "Alcan Highway". |
| Feb. 14th, 1942 | Directive issued for work to begin on the highway. |
| March 2nd, 1942 | First troops arrived at Dawson Creek, B.C. by rail. Regiments began construction at Fort Nelson, at Whitehorse (building the road south), at Fort St. John (building the road to Fort Nelson), and at Whitehorse (building the road northwest towards Alaska). |
| Sept. 24th, 1942 | Bulldozer operators from two regiments met at Contact Creek (Milepost 588.1) to close the southern sector of the road at Beaver Creek, Yukon. |

- Oct. 20th, 1942 U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, working south from Alaska, met those working north from Whitehorse at Contact Creek in Canada. The highway was officially opened.
- Nov. 20th, 1942 Official dedication at Soldier's Summit.
- Early to Mid 1943 Original construction regiments were re-deployed and private contractors were hired to do reconstruction work.
- 1943 Haines cutoff road constructed to link the port of Haines, Alaska with the Alaska Highway (160 miles).
- April, 1946 Royal Canadian Army officially took over operation and maintenance of the road.
- 1946-1947 Civilian traffic was restricted.
- 1947 Road open temporarily to civilian traffic but closed after high number of vehicle breakdowns.
- 1948 Highway was opened on a full-time basis and development of tourist facilities began.
- April 1st, 1964 Department of Public Works took over Canadian portion of the road. Alaska portion maintained by Alaska Road Commission.