

Alaska is calling: Five reasons to visit the Great Land in 2026

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA — Alaska's wide-open spaces, glaciers, wildlife and Indigenous cultures have always enticed travelers, according to the Alaska Travel Industry Association. This year, new ways to experience those Alaska icons will be the top draws.

Here are five reasons to visit Alaska this year:

- **To explore national parks**

Denali National Park and Preserve's Park Road has been closed at mile 43 for several years, but the full-length of the road will reopen to travelers in 2027. This will be the last summer that visitors to the park's backcountry lodges — Camp Denali, Denali Backcountry Lodge and Kantishna Roadhouse — will basically have the place to themselves.

Don't stop there. [Alaska is home to eight national parks and that's not counting national historic areas, preserves, monuments and more.](#)

- **To ride the rails**

For those in Southeast Alaska, the White Pass and Yukon Route Railroad will celebrate its 125th anniversary this year. Established in 1898 during the Klondike Gold Rush, the railroad remains a visitor attraction, offering historic excursions along the original route between Skagway and the Yukon.

Travelers in the Southcentral and Interior regions should book a ride on the Alaska Railroad, stretching 470 miles from Fairbanks to Seward. The railroad is offering two new packages this year: the 11-day "Glaciers, Rails & Trails" and the six-day "Active Alaska Adventure," featuring ziplining, hiking, glacier treks and heli-hiking experiences.

[Both trains journey through areas of the state that are inaccessible by road.](#)

- **To experience Alaska Native culture**

Sealaska Heritage Institute will hold its biennial event, Celebration, in Juneau from June 3–6. As one of the largest gatherings of Southeast Alaska Native peoples, the multi-day event pays tribute to the history and traditions of the Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian cultures. While in Alaska's capital city, take time to walk along Kootéeyaa Deiyí, the Totem Pole Trail. Or [attend other Alaska Native events](#) across the state.

Indigenous-owned tourism experiences are an immersive way to learn more about [Alaska Native culture](#) as well. Alaska Native-owned businesses can be found across the state, from a bear-viewing lodge in Kodiak to tour operators in Anchorage, Sitka, Portage or Ketchikan.

- **To get up close to a glacier**

[With over 27,000 glaciers in Alaska, there are a variety of ways to experience them.](#) Some of the most accessible glaciers can be found in Southcentral and Southeast Alaska. Reach them on guided tours by car, boat, helicopter or on foot.

This year, Alaska Helicopter Tours launched a new Glacier Exploration adventure in the Knik River Valley, north of Anchorage. Summer tours will feature glacier treks, swimming and polar plunges.

- **To see whales, bears, bald eagles and other wildlife**

[Alaska is a wildlife lover's dream](#) and there are a multitude of excursions that can help spot bears, moose, Dall sheep and more in the wild or watch whales, sea lions and sea otters frolic in the sea.

This May 1-3, the first-ever Migration Celebration in Haines will feature world-class birding and wildlife viewing, Alaska Native cultural programming and spring harvest traditions. Or join Seabird Ventures for its new, small-group, eco-focused tours designed to highlight seabird and marine life encounters in Kachemak Bay near Homer.

Use the resources at [TravelAlaska.com](#) to plan a vacation as an independent traveler.

About Alaska Travel Industry Association

The Alaska Travel Industry Association, Alaska's leading statewide nonprofit membership association for the travel industry, promotes Alaska's tourism industry as an economic contributor while providing statewide marketing resources, education opportunities and advocacy to members. ATIA has long managed Alaska's destination marketing program: Travel Alaska. Visitor information can be found at [TravelAlaska.com](#).

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