



## 10 To Know: Indagare's Tips for an Alaska Vacation



*Courtesy Travel Alaska. From Left: Brian Adams, Kenai Fjords National Park, Bears Playing. Far Right: Courtesy Blaine Harrington III, Haines*

It's America's last frontier, as remote and exotic as you can get without using a passport. [Alaska](#) offers some of the most magnificent wildlife experiences in the world, yet it remains a mystery to many. Its sheer size is daunting, and there is a distinct lack of roads, but the destination is perfect for travelers looking to explore vast, untrammeled wilderness. The key to enjoying an Alaska vacation is to let go of the goal of seeing everything and focus on just one or two destinations (and choose by lodge rather than location). Start by deciding between mountain lakes or saltwater inlets—or a combination of both. Here are 10 more things to know about planning an Alaska vacation.

***Contact Indagare for assistance planning a customized journey to Alaska.***

### **1. There's a lot more to do than fish.**

There's a misperception that casting and trawling are the only reasons to visit the 49th state. But only 10 percent of people who come to Alaska do so to catch fish. You can

also hike, mountain bike, heli-ski, kayak, stand-up paddle board, raft, take helicopter tours, birdwatch, view wild bears and even surf. There are lots of high-end lodges with a fishing focus, but plenty of others have more diverse offerings. Owned in part by an Olympic gold medalist, [Tordrillo Mountain Lodge](#) is the base for superb heli-hiking and skiing. **Favorite Bay Lodge** has spectacular bear-viewing and, if the owner is in residence, he sometimes leads guests on a mushroom foraging excursion.



Indagare's Sasha Feldman in a canoe at Winterlake Lodge, Alaska

## **2. Keep your bucket list handy.**

Alaska is a bucket list destination, brimming with opportunities to do, do, do. Race through the snow with real Iditarod huskies at [Winterlake Lodge](#)? Check. Watch the gentle giants of the sea, orca whales, skim the surface of the ocean and spout water freely? Check. Sleep on a secluded nunatak at [Sheldon Chalet](#) with clear views of the summit of Mount Denali? Check. Alaska offers a daily feast for the senses that never seems to let up.



Dog-sledding in Alaska, courtesy Chris McLennan, Nome; Travel Alaska

### **3. Get communal.**

Alaska promotes an ethos of community and socialization, in spite of the fact that most land-based lodge locations are incredibly remote. Shared dining tables for meals are common, and the few public spaces on each property will likely be filled with guests looking to unwind with a game of cards or lively conversation. Tordrillo Mountain Lodge has an especially well-kept series of fresh and contemporary public spaces. (If you'd prefer more privacy, the lodges are quite small, so a group of friends or a large family could easily take over the space for a few days.)

**Related:** [America's Untamed Frontier: Alaska](#)

### **4. Prepare to disconnect.**

Travelers should know beforehand that a journey to Alaska means embracing the spotty—and sometimes non-existent—WiFi and cell service. Many lodges operate entirely on a generator, which means electricity, water and WiFi may be limited to the hours that the generator is in use.



Indagare's Sasha Feldman relaxing at Sheldon Chalet, Alaska

## **5. Don't "DIY."**

Though Alaska's rustic and adventurous offerings may seem to align with a "do-it-yourself" trip-planning attitude, embarking on an Alaska vacation requires in-depth planning and logistical knowledge. Alaska's wilderness and wildlife can be unforgiving, and most activities should not be done without an expert guide. (Hiking without a guide even in more densely populated areas, such as Anchorage, is strongly discouraged.).

## **6. Understand the seasons.**

Summer in Alaska is short, touching only June, July and August, but May and September are less crowded months to visit. Winter is a good time to see the Northern Lights, while spring is prime heli-skiing season. (Travelers should note that skiing in Alaska is virtually all backcountry; there's just one lift in the state.) *Indagare Tip:* Around the equinoxes, sunrises and sunsets shift by nearly 10 minutes a day, so the transitions between seasons are abrupt—a week can make a big difference.

**Related:** [9 Ultimate Wilderness Vacations](#)

## **7. Boat-based itineraries are an option.**

Cruising along the southern coast of Alaska is a nice alternative for those who prefer a more leisurely approach to travel, with no need to pack and unpack luggage or navigate

complicated logistics. Crystal Cruises, Silversea and Regent all offer Alaska-based itineraries. The cruise-averse should also note that taking an Alaskan cruise doesn't have to mean confinement on a massive ship. UnCruise Adventures' Alaska ships hold fewer than 100 passengers, and their programming focuses on getting guests off the boat and into the wild. Indagare can also arrange a private charter boat, allowing guests to stray further from the beaten path and away from the traffic of the Inside Passage. Charters are also perfect for those looking for privatized shore excursions and a more personalized itinerary.



Courtesy Brian Adams, Haines

### **8. Fall in love with layering—and rain gear.**

The last thing you'll need to worry about in Alaska is dressing up. Lodges are extremely casual, and a tee-shirt and jeans are perfectly acceptable for a big night out in the backcountry. However, the cliché of "four seasons in a day" holds true here. Guides are undeterred by rain, so be prepared to go along with whatever Mother Nature throws at you. Pack lots of layers, including synthetic long underwear, waterproof coats and pants, thick wool socks, fleece-insulated jackets and solid, waterproof hiking boots. While activity-specific gear is often provided for you, be sure to plan ahead and bring the essentials.

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## **9. Book early, and don't wing anything.**

The luxury lodges of Alaska are small and sell out far in advance. The same goes for flights (which the lodges generally book for you). Rental cars can be expensive and hard to book last-minute, and tours do fill up. If you're planning to drive, gas stations can be hard to come by, so take fuel precautions. Overall, remember that Mother Nature calls the shots, so be prepared to go with the flow. Because of its unique positioning on earth, Alaska's weather conditions can change in a matter of minutes, so day-to-day activities are typically not scheduled in advance and may shift at the last minute.

## **10. Alaskan bush pilots are experts.**

A small, fixed-wing plane or a helicopter is the only way to reach many destinations in the state, including the most remote Alaskan landscapes. Adventure lodges, such as the spectacular [Ultima Thule](#) and the homey, fishing-forward **Crystal Creek**, also base their activities around two- and four-seater planes. Though intrepid travelers will likely jump at the chance to see Wrangell St. Elias National Park from above, more cautious travelers can rest assured that flying is a way of life for many Alaskans, and the skills of the pilots and quality of their machines can be trusted. What's more, flying offers an unparalleled perspective of the expansive mountain ranges, gorgeous glacial lakes and giant reliefs. If you're prone to motion sickness, pack ginger candies or Dramamine.

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*- Ann Abel, Sasha Feldman and Avery Carmichael*

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*- Indagare on June 24, 2019*

