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[VoyageMonkey Home Page](#)

[Book Travel](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Acapulco, Mexico](#)

[Alaskan Cruise](#)

[Aruba](#)

[Bahamas](#)

[Bermuda](#)

[Boston Cruise Vacation](#)

[Cabo San Lucas, Mexico](#)

[California](#)

[Cancun, Mexico](#)

[Caribbean Cruise](#)

[Costa Rica](#)

[Florida Gulf](#)

[Golf Vacations](#)

[Grand Cayman](#)

[Hawaii Big Isle](#)

[Hilton Head](#)

[Ixtapa - Zihuatanejo](#)

[Jamaica](#)

[Kauai, Hawaii](#)

[Las Vegas, Nevada](#)

[Manzanillo, Mexico](#)

[Maui, Hawaii](#)

[Mazatlan, Mexico](#)

[Mediterranean Cruise](#)

[New York City](#)

[Oahu, Hawaii](#)

[Orlando, Florida](#)

[Palm Springs](#)

[Puerto Vallarta,](#)

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[ALASKAN CRUISE](#)

When I hear words like majestic, grand and magnificent, Alaska comes to mind. Alaska is indeed the last frontier. With much of the beauty being land locked or hard to get to by way of roads, one of the best ways to see Alaska is by taking a cruise. Alaskan cruises have become one of the most popular cruise destinations in recent years. When you used to hear about Alaskan cruises you may have thought about a ship full of retired people. Not so anymore. Alaska has something for everyone. In fact, many of the shore excursion activities offered by the cruise lines are very physical.



BOOK YOUR ALASKAN CRUISE NOW!

On an Alaskan cruise you want to be sure to splurge and get a stateroom with a balcony. Much of the beauty will be enjoyed from the comfort of your own balcony as you sail through the inland passages and witness the grandeur of tidal glaciers, whales and bald eagles soaring past you.

One of our VoyageMonkey.Com staff was kind enough to share their recent Alaskan cruise with our readers. They write:

“ We arrived in Anchorage late at night and proceeded to get our rental car. Our Carnival Cruise ship was departing from Whittier two days later. There is no inexpensive way to get to Whittier so I recommend renting a car one way and turning it in when you get to Whittier. Other transportation options cost just about as much and restrict your freedom.

[Mexico](#)[Punta Cana](#)[Scottsdale Arizona](#)[Tahiti](#)

Anchorage and Whittier



ALYESKA PRINCE
RESORT

We chose to stay at the Alyeska Prince Resort half way between Anchorage and Whittier. The Alyeska is a magnificent ski resort hotel. It looks like something you would find in the Swiss Alps. In the summer time it is very quiet with good service. The surroundings are beautiful. There are miles of hiking trails; a couple restaurants, an indoor pool and spa, and the rooms are nice. Room prices are reasonable. One of the restaurants serves some of the best Halibut I've ever tasted. When visiting Alaska in the summer bring an umbrella because it does rain off and on.



MILES OF HIKING
TRAILS

The next day we hiked a bit and hoped to see some bears or moose but we fortunately had no luck at that. We then drove into Anchorage to get lunch and do some shopping. Anchorage is a small city with a nice downtown. You can purchase typical Alaskan souvenirs. The merchandise is different. Local hardware stores sell guns and fishing gear. The people were friendly and the food in town was good. Other than shopping and grabbing some lunch, there did not appear to be much else to do. I think there is a museum of some sort. My wife did have fun shopping for inexpensive local gifts for friends. We slept really well that night as the hotel was quiet and the bed was really comfortable.



ALASKAN SUNSET

We departed for Whittier in the morning after breakfast. A great buffet breakfast was included with our hotel room. When going to Whittier be sure to check the time schedule for the one-way tunnel that you share with a train. The hotel concierge can tell you what time to get there. Yes, it is a narrow one-way tunnel wide enough for a bus or a train. The direction of traffic alternates so if you get there at the wrong time you may have to wait a while.

Whittier is a small fishing town and there is not much to do there unless you fish. Something like 90 percent or more of the residents live in the same building. No Joke. You can walk the town and be done with your sightseeing in about 20 minutes. There are a couple small hotels in town (only 1 I would consider staying at) and a couple restaurants and shops. You can turn in your rental car within walking distance of the ship. You can leave your luggage with the porters and check onto the ship.

Once we arrived on the ship they were already feeding us with all the food you could ask for. Food was nonstop including 24-7 room service. The average age of the passengers was probably around 50 with a good mix around that number

and young families with children. The ship was large with three pools, several restaurants, a theatre, casino, shops, gym & spa, disco, cabaret, several bars, cigar lounge and more. All food is included in the price of your cruise unless you want to dine at the supper club. It's worth the price for your special night. I ate the best porterhouse steak there on the night of our anniversary. Our stateroom was roomy by cruise ship standards and the bed was comfortable. I've stayed in much smaller staterooms before. We had a nice private balcony.

The first full day of our cruise was a full day at sea. We enjoyed the ship that day and all it has to offer. We did not get bored once. I worked out in a world-class gym, took a steam bath. My wife and I got massages. We enjoyed views from our balcony everyday. The photo to the side was taken one morning when we were awakened by loud cracking sounds. The sound was a glacier. This is one of the magnificent glaciers to see during the week. We were in awe of this wonder of nature. Dinner was great. We actually had an assigned table for two all week. There were delicious appetizers and entrées to choose from. I passed on the deserts because I was getting too full. After dinner we caught a Las Vegas style cabaret singing & dancing show then did a little gambling in the casino & listened to the live music. I actually won \$200. The day went by fast.



ALASKAN GLACIER

Sitka



BIKING SITKA



SITKA MOUNTAIN LAKE

On day three of our cruise we arrived at Sitka, an island that used to be the Russian capital of Alaska. I was surprised to find out this was once Russia. There is a lot of Russian heritage still here. This is a beautiful little city. There is lots of fur sold here in the local shops. Not the type of furs you are accustomed to. We opted for the biking Sitka adventure so we could burn off some of the calories we took on the day before. This was a very physical ride that had some hills to go up and down. We stopped along the way to hike through the woods to a pristine mountain lake and have packed lunched. When we started back on the bikes it started raining hard. It was not cold, just wet. When we returned back to town we strolled the streets and took in some of the local shops and stopped for a coffee before returning to the ship. Soon as we got back on the ship we did laundry to clean our wet & dirty clothes. There are coin washing machines and dryers throughout the ship. You can also have your cabin steward take care of your laundry for a small fee. Our evening was full of fun again. Another great sit down dinner, a show and some live music. My wife purchased a watch in the ships jewelry store. They have great promotional deals throughout the week and there is no sales tax.

Juneau

Day 4 of our cruise was in the port city of Juneau, the

capital of Alaska. This is another beautiful little city. Full of good shopping, restaurants and bars. On this day we did the glacier view sea kayaking adventure. After a quick kayaking lesson on shore we ventured down the shore in a group of around 30 people in individual and double kayaks. We saw seals swim up near us and saw several bald eagles along the shore. For such a noble bird, when they walk along the shore they walk like chickens. It looks funny to see. You can actually paddle up close before they fly away. The view of the Mendenhall Glacier was spectacular. You can feel the cold from the glacier in the air. The Kayaks are wide enough that nobody fell in. That would not be good because that water would turn you into an ice cube in minutes. We returned to downtown Juneau and got a snack at a local pub and shopped around town before returning to the ship. That evening we ate at the supper club. There is cocktail music and dancing while you dine. This was as fine as any fine restaurant I've eaten in. The appetizers were delicate and delicious. My Porter House steak melted in my mouth and was so large I had to take a break in the middle of it. The deserts were really good. It took us about 2 hours to eat with the dancing in between bites. After dinner we went downstairs and listened to a really good piano player in the piano lounge. Everyone at the bar was singing along. We went to bed around midnight, tired from our day.



KAYAKING JUNEAU

MENDENHALL
GLACIEREVENING ENJOYING
THE SHIP

Skagway



SKAGWAY ALASKA

Next day we arrived at Skagway. This town takes you back to the Alaskan gold rush days with its wooden sidewalks and sleepy little saloons all around town. It looks like a western movie set. Very cute! Be sure to stop into the historic Red Onion Saloon, an old brothel from the gold rush days. They serve good bar food and drinks. There are local Alaskan micro beers to try.

We started our day going on the Klondike Bicycle Tour. This is my kind of bike ride, all downhill. You are driven to the top of White Pass to the top of the summit at the Canadian border. Here you are in the clouds. You actually have to ride your bike back through the US border inspection station. I've never ridden across the US border on a bicycle. Not much security going on there. They asked all of us at once if we were US citizens and then let us ride through without showing any documentation. The downhill ride was fast and fun. We stopped several times along the way to take photos and take in some of the beautiful mountain scenery. This

BIKING THE
KLONDIKE TRIAL

bike ride was dry compared to our ride in Sitka.

After the ride we had plenty of time to site see around Skagway. It is a really nice town to walk around with its historic wooden buildings. There are shops that let you sample some of the local smoked salmon and other local goodies such as chocolates. The locals are all very friendly. We returned to the ship and showered up for dinner. After dinner we took a Jacuzzi on the deck then went back to our stateroom to watch some TV before going to sleep.

Ketchikan

On day 6 we arrived in Ketchikan at around 11 a.m. It was nice not to arrive so early so that we could enjoy a nice relaxing breakfast on the ship. My breakfast favorite they serve everyday is the lox and bagels. I guess it's the fresh salmon. We sat at a table with two other couples and enjoyed conversation about where we were all from and what we all do in our normal lives. One of the best parts of spending time on the ship is getting to meet all kinds of different people from different places. My wife enjoys that and could sit at breakfast for the longest time just talking.



KETCHIKAN ALASKA

We proceeded to the pier to meet up with our shore excursion tour guides. My wife enjoyed the Kayaking so much earlier in the week that we booked ourselves on the Tatoosh Islands Sea Kayaking Tour for the day.

Before the tour started we had some time to walk around Ketchikan and look around. I really liked the look and feel of Ketchikan with its cruise ships docked downtown and its horse drawn carriages. The salmon were running at the edge of town at the mouth of a river. Locals say there are usually a few bears there catching their meals for the day. We did not see any while we stood there but the running salmon were interesting to watch. The town is typical of Alaska with its many shops, restaurants and pubs. Ketchikan is the last stop before Vancouver, B.C. Canada, so my wife made sure we did the rest of our Alaskan gift shopping and we enjoyed a cup of coffee before starting our tour.

Our tour guides took a group of us out to the Tatoosh islands on a fast zodiac boat (had a hard bottom and inflatable sides). It was a fun ride. The Tatoosh Islands are a series of very small-uninhabited protected islands. The terrain is all forest with many bald eagles soaring and sitting in the treetops. We landed at a small deserted cove where our Kayaks were waiting for us.



KAYAKING TATOOSH ISLANDS

We were provided with our gear, received our Kayaking instructions and shoved off on our way. We hugged the rocky coastline paddling slowly and enjoying the scenery. This was a really beautiful place. You could smell the trees in the air and feel the crispness on your face. The only sounds you could hear were the sounds of your own paddles and the voices of our group. To my surprise, the water here was not that cold. I'd guess about 60 degrees, perhaps in the upper 50s. The water was crystal clear, you could see the bottom. We probably saw about 30 eagles during the course of the afternoon. We spent around 90 minutes

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