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Alaska's Scenic National Parks Road Trip

2026

Alaska Self-Drive Road Trip

15 Days / 14 Nights Anchorage to Anchorage Not yet on sale

INTRODUCTION

This epic Alaska road trip is comprehensive, wide ranging, and no holds barred. A self drive that screams 'go big or go home,' you'll depart Anchorage for 15 days of exploring Alaska's most popular and accessible National Parks. Embark on your choice of tours in Seward, plus see Homer, Cooper Landing and Talkeetna. Enjoy your choice of tours once again at Denali National Park, then continue to Fairbanks, Chitina, McCarthy and Valdez with a cruise into Prince William Sound.

Itinerary at a Glance

DAY 1 Anchorage to Seward

DAY 2 Seward | Freedom of Choice - Choose 1 of 11 Excursions

Option 1. Tonsina Point Resurrection Bay Kayaking Adventure

Option 2. Bear Lake Kayak | Canoe Trip
Option 3. Wilderness Dog Sled Ride Tour
Option 4. Resurrection Bay Wildlife Tour

Option 5. Exit Glacier Hike

Option 6. Upgrade Option: Guided Walking Salmon Fishing - Seward Area Option 7. Upgrade Option: Bear Glacier Iceberg Kayaking Adventure

Option 8. Upgrade Option: Helicopter Bear Glacier Flight with Landing

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Option 9. Upgrade Option: Helicopter & Glacier Dogsled

Option 10. Upgrade Option: Helicopter & Glacier Dogsled with Bear Glacier Tour
Option 11. Upgrade Option: Helicopter Bear Glacier Iceberg, Kayaking Adventure

DAY 3 Seward to Homer

DAY 4 Homer | Day at Leisure

DAY 5 Homer to Girdwood

DAY 6 Girdwood to Talkeetna

DAY 7 Talkeetna to Denali National Park

Talkeetna | Freedom of Choice - Choose 1 of 3 Excursions

Option 1. Wilderness Excursion Jetboat Tour

Option 2. Upgrade Option: Denali Flightseeing Experience | Small Aircraft

Option 3. Upgrade Option: Denali Flightseeing with Glacier Landing | Small Aircraft

DAY 8 Denali | Freedom of Choice - Choose 1 of 4 Excursions

Option 1. Denali Highway Jeep Excursion | Self-Drive Guided 4x4 Excursion

Option 2. Tundra Wilderness Tour | Coach Tour

Option 3. Upgrade Option: Denali Summit Flightseeing | Small Aircraft

Option 4. Upgrade Option: Denali Glacier Landing | Helicopter

DAY 9 Denali National Park to Fairbanks | Sternwheeler Riverboat Cruise

DAY 10 Fairbanks to Chitina | Chitina to McCarthy | Flight

DAY 11 McCarthy | Kennicott | Root Glacier Hike

DAY 12 McCarthy to Chitina | Flight | Chitina to Valdez

DAY 13 Valdez | Prince William Sound Columbia Glacier Cruise with lunch

DAY 14 Freedom of Choice from Valdez to Sheep Mountain Lodge or Alaska Glacier Lodge

Option 1. Valdez to Sheep Mountain Lodge | 309 km/192 mi Option 2. Valdez to Alaska Glacier Lodge | 445 km/277 mi

DAY 15 Freedom of Choice Option from Sheep Mountain Lodge or Alaska Glacier Lodge

Option 1. Sheep Mountain Lodge to Anchorage | 67 km/42 mi Option 2. Alaska Glacier Lodge to Anchorage | 80 km/50 mi



MAP

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DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 Anchorage to Seward | 204 km/127 mi

This morning travel along the Seward Highway towards scenic Turnagain Arm. Turnagain Arm is a body of water featuring the world's second highest tides at over 30 feet. Keep an eye out for Beluga whales chasing salmon in the bay or Dall sheep along the highway.

Day 2 Seward | Freedom of Choice - Choose 1 of 11 Excursions

Today you can personalize your day by choosing one of these excursions

Option 1. Tonsina Point Resurrection Bay Kayaking Adventure

Resurrection Bay is surrounded by snow-capped mountains and home to several Alaska state parks that offer abundant opportunities to hike, sea kayak and explore!

Option 2. Bear Lake Kayak | Canoe Trip

Kayak or canoe on this scenic local lake with fun-loving guides. Bear Lake is located just outside Seward, Alaska and normally offers flat calm waters, and a home for Sockeye salmon. On the way there is a stop to visit the salmon weir and learn about their life cycle. Eagles, loons, and bears are often seen while on this adventure

Option 3. Wilderness Dog Sled Ride Tour

Visit the Seavey Family Homestead in Seward and tour the beautiful tether free summer camp for Iditarod athletes! Meet the dogs, feel their excitement as teams are hitched to comfortable summer sleds, then mush for two miles through the scenic rainforest.

Option 4. Resurrection Bay Wildlife Tour

Admire the icy blue waters of Resurrection Bay as your boat glides past glaciers, snowcapped mountains, and dramatic cliffs. On this 5-hour Kenai Fjords cruise, watch for whales, puffins, and otters with a wildlife guide. Visit Fox Island for a delicious lunch at a private lodge and enjoy skipping stones at a pebble beach. Learn about the area's natural history during this unforgettable Resurrection Bay adventure.

Option 5. Exit Glacier Hike

This moderate hiking adventure is great for viewing the jewel of the Resurrection River Valley - Exit Glacier. This massive wall of blue ice descends the mountainside from the Harding Ice Field, down to the Resurrection River.

Option 6. Upgrade Option: Guided Walking Salmon Fishing - Seward Area

Experience the thrill of a guided walking salmon fishing tour in Seward, Alaska. Stroll along scenic rivers and streams with an expert guide who will help you reel in the catch of the day. Learn about local fishing techniques while surrounded by stunning Alaskan wilderness. Perfect for all skill levels, this adventure offers an authentic taste of Alaska's fishing heritage in one of its most picturesque settings.

Option 7. Upgrade Option: Bear Glacier Iceberg Kayaking Adventure

Explore the massive icebergs deposited by Bear Glacier, the largest glacier of the Harding Icefield, from the comfort of your kayaks. Enjoy the stability of your boats as you glide through the glacier's calm lagoon, navigating a maze of floating ice. The lagoon's features change daily, and your guide will select the best route. Wildlife sightings, including harbor seals and black bears, are also likely on this adventure.

Option 8. Upgrade Option: Helicopter Bear Glacier Flight with Landing

Fly into Kenai Fjords National Park for a breathtaking flight over Bear Glacier, showcasing its massive crevasses and iceberg-filled lagoon. Land on the shore to spend 35 minutes exploring with a pilot/guide. This is a unique opportunity to explore a remote Alaskan beach, hear and see the actively calving glacier, and interact with icebergs near the shore. Moose, Dall sheep, marine wildlife, and black bears are often spotted on this tour.

Option 9. Upgrade Option: Helicopter & Glacier Dogsled

Experience the thrill of mushing your own sled-dog team on real snow in summer. Begin with a helicopter ride over glaciers, spotting wildlife like moose and bears. Land on a glacier and enjoy an hour with an Alaskan Champion dogsled team, operated by 6-time Iditarod Champion Dallas Seavey.

Option 10. Upgrade Option: Helicopter & Glacier Dogsled with Bear Glacier Tour

Experience the thrill of mushing your own sled-dog team on real snow in summer. Begin with a helicopter ride over glaciers, spotting wildlife like moose and bears. Land on a glacier and enjoy an hour with an Alaskan Champion dogsled team, operated by 6-time Iditarod Champion Dallas Seavey. Then, soar across Resurrection Bay into Kenai Fjords National Park to explore Bear Glacier, with its massive icebergs and calving glacier

Option 11. Upgrade Option: Helicopter Bear Glacier Iceberg, Kayaking Adventure

Experience the ultimate Alaskan adventure by escaping the crowds and discovering an untouched gem. Start with a scenic helicopter ride over mountains and glaciers, then kayak through a freshwater lagoon filled with monumental icebergs. Bear Glacier, one of the largest off the Harding Ice Field in Kenai Fjords National Park, offers a unique and dynamic environment, where seals and bears can be spotted. Routes vary based on current ice conditions, ensuring each trip is a one-of-a-kind experience.

Day 3 Seward to Homer | 270 km/168 miles

Continue your journey and follow the Sterling Highway, a designated scenic highway covering miles of spectacular landscape. Along the way view snowcapped mountains, active volcanoes including Mt. Iliamna, Mt. Redoubt and Mt. Augustine, deep ocean bluffs, excellent salmon fishing opportunities along the Kenai River, and a magnificent coastline.

Day 4 Homer | Day at Leisure

Homer "Halibut Capital of the World" provides you with truly incredible panoramic views of mountain ranges, white peaks, glaciers and the famous Homer Spit. Use the day to explore the area - kayak to a remote cove, take a scenic cruise and spot wildlife including whales, seals, sea otters and many shorebirds. If you prefer to observe Grizzly bears up close, take an optional scenic flightseeing tour to the Katmai Coast.

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Day 5 Homer to Girdwood | 297 km/185 mi

This morning, drive north on the scenic Sterling and Seward Highways back towards Girdwood. Along the way we have included admission to the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center which provides care and rehabilitation for injured and orphaned wildlife. Here you can safely get close, observe, and photograph some of Alaska's largest land animals including moose, bison, elk, deer, caribou, bears, muskox. Continuing to Girdwood, take an aerial tram up Alyeska Mountain for views of Turnagain Arm, up to seven "hanging" glaciers and the endless peaks of the Chugach Mountain Range. At the base of the tram is your overnight accommodation at Alyeska Resort.

Day 6 Girdwood to Talkeetna | 241 km/150mi

Drive north from Girdwood along scenic Turnagain Arm, traveling through Anchorage and the agricultural region of the Matanuska-Susitna Valley, to the small, picturesque town of Talkeetna. Talkeetna serves as a base camp for Mt. Denali climbers; the community of 857 residents is located at the confluence of the Talkeetna and Susitna Rivers. A turn-of-the-20th-century gold-mining centre, the town has retained much of its early Alaskan flavour.

Day 7 Talkeetna to Denali National Park | 257 km/153 mi

Talkeetna | Freedom of Choice - Choose 1 of 3 Excursions

Today you can personalize your day by choosing one of these excursions

Option 1. Wilderness Excursion Jetboat Tour

Embark on a narrated river cruise into Alaska's wilderness, with views of Denali. Travel 20 miles as a naturalist shares insights on local history, wildlife, and Denali. Explore a Dena'ina Indian encampment and a historic trapper's cabin, learn about trapping, and discover edible plants used by Native communities.

Option 2. Upgrade Option: Denali Flightseeing Experience | Small Aircraft

This flightseeing tour brings you within 6 miles of Denali's north (19,470 ft.) and south (20,320 ft.) summits. Explore rugged peaks, glacier-filled valleys, and Denali's south and east faces. View the dramatic rise from 2,000 ft. to over 20,320 ft., the Ruth Glacier, Sheldon Amphitheater, Great Gorge, and stunning blue meltwater pools.

Option 3. Upgrade Option: Denali Flightseeing with Glacier Landing | Small Aircraft

Fly within 6 miles of Denali's north summit (19,470 ft) and south summit (20,320 ft), showcasing a landscape of rugged peaks, snow-capped mountains, and glacier-filled valleys. Explore the south and east faces of Denali, witnessing its dramatic rise from 2,000 ft to over 20,320 ft. Highlights include the flowing Ruth Glacier, Sheldon Amphitheater, Great Gorge with mile-high granite walls, and striking blue meltwater pools.

After your excursion, drive the Parks Highway north to Denali National Park, passing by incredible forest and mountain landscapes. You'll have as much time as you like to experience the majesty of Denali National Park, take in the sights of the George Parks Highway or arrive at your hotel near the park entrance to take advantage of an optional excursion or a visit to the Denali Visitor Centre.

Day 8 Denali | Freedom of Choice - Choose 1 of 4 Excursions

Option 1. Denali Highway Jeep Excursion | Self-Drive Guided 4x4 Excursion

Ranked #2 in Drives of a Lifetime by National Geographic Traveler magazine, experience the natural wonders of Alaska's Denali Highway — this time by Jeep! This 4-hour guided excursion travels along a 135 mi (217 km) gravel road & takes you off the beaten path in a 4 x 4 to enjoy scenic views of Denali, the Alaska Range, glaciers and wildlife.

Option 2. Tundra Wilderness Tour | Coach Tour

This half day tour offers incredible scenery, a narrated history of the park road and opportunities to view the park's wildlife inhabitants. Picturesque highlights include the craggy cliffside of Cathedral Mountain, wildlife rich Sable Pass and braided wash of the East Fork River in Denali National Park.

Option 3. Upgrade Option: Denali Summit Flightseeing | Small Aircraft

Get a closer look at Alaska's majestic Denali from the comfortable window seat of a small aircraft. Slip on your provided headset to hear commentary from your guide as you fly over the snow-covered peaks, jagged ridgelines, and glacier carved valleys of Denali National Park, and get within half a mile of the mountain peak.

Option 4. Upgrade Option: Denali Glacier Landing | Helicopter

Be immersed in the vastness of the Denali National Preserve. On your way to the massive Yanert Glacier, your pilot will serve as your guide through this unique glacially-carved environment. Soar over the rolling tundra, keeping an eye out for local residents – caribou, moose, bear, and Dall sheep. Snow capped peaks and glaciers abound on this journey before you set down on a river of ice.

Day 9 Denali National Park to Fairbanks | 198 km/123 mi | Sternwheeler Riverboat Cruise

Continue on the George Parks Highway north to Fairbanks. Accompanied by incredible forest and mountain landscapes, you drive through the communities of Healy, Nenana and Ester - an old mining camp. In the afternoon, climb aboard the Riverboat Discovery III for an unforgettable 3-hour cruise into the Alaskan Interior, traveling the Chena and Tanana Rivers on the only authentic sternwheeler riverboat operating in Alaska. This narrated tour provides background on the area's natural history and the Athabascan Indian culture.

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Day 10 Fairbanks to Chitina | 498 km/310 mi | Chitina to McCarthy | Flight

Settle in for a day of driving through some of Alaska's most diverse and dynamic landscapes. You'll drive the Richardson Highway along the Tanana River through Delta Junction, home to the Delta Bison Sanctuary. Once you've reached Copper Center you'll turn east to the small town of Chinitna. Flying from Chitina is the best way to get to McCarthy-Kennicott and the flightseeing that is included in the trip makes it a great value. On the way to McCarthy fly alongside 16,000' Mt. Blackburn, over the Kennicott and Root Glaciers, past the Erie Mine and view the awe-inspiring Stairway Icefall. A flyby of Kennicott and McCarthy before landing will orient you to the area you are about to explore. Along the way your pilot will describe landforms, point out wildlife and fill you in on a bit of the human history of the area. (Please note: Flying has the added benefit of saving 4-5 hours of driving on the single lane, gravel surfaced McCarthy road)

Day 11 McCarthy | Kennicott | Root Glacier Hike

Spend the morning exploring the dynamic features of nearby Root Glacier on a guided trail and ice hike. The afternoon is yours to visit the Kennecott Mines National Historic Landmark and the funky-rustic nearby enclave of McCarthy.

Day 12 McCarthy to Chitina | Flight | Chitina to Valdez | 194 km/120 mi

Today fly back to Chitina by bush plane while enjoying great views of the Wrangell Mountains. From Chitina continue south where you will begin to enter the Chugach Mountains that ring the coast of Alaska from Prince William Sound. At Thompson Pass you may wish to stop at one of the pullouts for the scenery and views of Worthington Glacier before you begin the descent into Valdez.

Day 13 Valdez | Prince William Sound Columbia Glacier Cruise with lunch

Discover the magic of Alaska on this 7-hour Columbia Glacier cruise from Valdez. A local captain and crew will guide you through the Trans Alaska Pipeline Terminal and Columbia Bay before arriving at Columbia Glacier, the largest tidewater glacier in South Central Alaska. Look out for wildlife along the way; if you're lucky you could spot porpoises, puffins, sea lions and sea otters among other creatures. (Lunch included)

Day 14 Freedom of Choice from Valdez to Sheep Mountain Lodge or Alaska Glacier Lodge

Option 1. Valdez to Sheep Mountain Lodge | 309 km/192 mi

Today, drive north from Valdez through the dramatic Thompson Pass, known for its towering peaks and cascading waterfalls. Stop at Worthington Glacier, where you can explore the glacier up close. Continue along the Richardson Highway, passing through the lush Chugach Mountains. Visit the historic Copper Center, a former supply hub during the Klondike Gold Rush, to explore the local museum showcasing Native Alaskan artifacts and gold rush memorabilia. Stop by the Gulkana River viewpoint to watch for salmon or spot bald eagles. Continue toward Sheep Mountain Lodge, where the colorful mountains and surrounding glacial valleys offer stunning views of Alaska's rugged terrain.

Option 2. Valdez to Alaska Glacier Lodge | 445 km/277 mi

Today drive north from Valdez along the Richardson Highway, first stopping at Worthington Glacier, a must-see roadside glacier offering a close-up view of ice formations. Continue towards Thompson Pass, where high mountain peaks and sweeping vistas define this historically significant trade route. Further along, visit Bridal Veil Falls, a towering waterfall cascading down steep cliffs. Pause at the abandoned Copper Center, once a critical hub for prospectors during the Gold Rush. End at Alaska Glacier Lodge near the Matanuska Glacier, where glacial formations and the lodge's rustic setting provide a glimpse into the area's rich geological and settlement history.

Day 15 Freedom of Choice Option from Sheep Mountain Lodge or Alaska Glacier Lodge

Option 1. Sheep Mountain Lodge to Anchorage | 67 km/42 mi

Continue your journey towards Anchorage, stop at Matanuska Glacier, offering incredible views and hiking opportunities. Explore Independence Mine State Historical Park near Hatcher Pass, where you can walk through the remnants of an old gold mining town and learn about Alaska's mining heritage. Glenn Highway offers expansive views of the Chugach Mountains and winding rivers. Eagle River Nature Center is perfect for a short walk with mountain and river views, rich in wildlife. Finish your trip with a visit to the Alaska Native Heritage Center, offering cultural insights into Alaska's indigenous history.

Option 2. Alaska Glacier Lodge to Anchorage | 80 km/50 mi

Continue along the Glenn Highway towards Anchorage, passing through Matanuska Valley, where sweeping views of Matanuska Glacier provide an impressive backdrop. Stop at the Musk Ox Farm in Palmer to observe unique arctic wildlife and learn about their historical significance to the region's indigenous cultures. Further along, Thunderbird Falls offers an accessible hike leading to a waterfall surrounded by lush greenery. Explore the Eklutna Historical Park, home to St. Nicholas Church and traditional Athabascan spirit houses. The journey concludes in Anchorage, where the stunning Chugach Mountains and Cook Inlet meet, offering views steeped in Alaskan history.

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INCLUDED

Package Includes:

- Accommodation including taxes for 15 nights
- Seward | Freedom of Choice Choose 1 of 11 Excursions
- Tonsina Point Resurrection Bay Kayaking Adventure
- Bear Lake Kayak | Canoe Trip
- Wilderness Dog Sled Ride Tour
- Resurrection Bay Wildlife Cruise
- Exit Glacier Hike
- Upgrade Option: Guided Walking Salmon Fishing | Seward Area
- Upgrade Option: Bear Glacier Iceberg Kayaking Adventure
- Upgrade Option: Helicopter Bear Glacier Flight with Landing
- Upgrade Option: Helicopter & Glacier Dogsled
- Upgrade Option: Helicopter & Glacier Dogsled with Bear Glacier Tour
- Upgrade Option: Helicopter Bear Glacier Iceberg, Kayaking Adventure
- Admission to Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center
- Alyeska Scenic Tram Ride
- Talkeetna | Freedom of Choice Choose 1 of 3 Excursions
- Wilderness Excursion Jetboat Tour
- Upgrade Option: Denali Flightseeing Experience
- Upgrade Option: Denali Flightseeing Experience with Glacier Landing
- Denali | Freedom of Choice Choose 1 of 4 Excursions
- Denali Highway Jeep Excursion
- Tundra Wilderness Tour
- Upgrade Option: Denali Summit Flightseeing by Plane
- Upgrade Option: Denali Glacier Landing by Helicopter
- Sternwheeler Riverboat Discovery Cruise
- Scenic Return Flight Chitina McCarthy
- Kennecott Mill Town Tour
- McCarthy | Kennicott Morning Glacier Hike
- Prince William Sound Columbia Glacier Cruise with lunch
- Meals as per itinerary

Hotel Information | Moderate Grade

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- Seward Seward Windsong Lodge | Standard Room
- Homer Land's End Resort | Midship Bay Room
- Girdwood Alyeska Resort | Deluxe Room
- Talkeetna Talkeetna Alaskan Lodge | Main Lodge Room
- Denali Park Entrance Denali Cabins | Standard Cabin
- Fairbanks Rivers Edge Resort | Garden Cottage
- McCarthy Ma Johnson Hotel | Standard Room
- Valdez Best Western Valdez Harbor Inn | Standard Room
- Sheep Mountain Sheep Mountain Lodge | Premier Cabin

Hotel Information | Superior Grade

- Seward Seward Windsong Lodge | Standard Room with Deck
- Homer Land's End Resort | Stateroom
- Girdwood Alyeska Resort | Deluxe Room
- Talkeetna Talkeetna Alaskan Lodge | Mountainside Lodge Room
- Denali Park Entrance Grande Denali Lodge | Standard Room
- Fairbanks Rivers Edge Resort | River Cottage
- McCarthy Ma Johnson Hotel | Standard Room
- Valdez Best Western Valdez Harbor Inn | Standard Room
- Sheep Mountain Sheep Mountain Lodge | Premier Cabin

Homer, McCarthy & Valdez accommodation is the best available in the area and considered lower end of 3 star.

Not included:

- Gratuities
- · Activities other than specified
- Portage fees
- Rental car
- Road and tunnel tolls