

OREGON COAST JOURNEY · FREE GUIDE

The Alaska Cruise Guide

Glaciers, whales & the trip of a lifetime —
planned the smart way.

*When to sail, which side of the ship to book, the ports worth your day,
and how to see the most without overpaying — from an advisor who
plans these every week.*

YOURS FREE

Melinda · Oregon Coast Journey

Independent Cruise Advisor · Cruise Brothers

oregoncoastjourney.com

Alaska is the one everyone remembers

Of every cruise I plan, Alaska is the one people come home changed by. Glaciers calving into the sea, humpbacks breaching beside the ship, eagles overhead, little gold-rush towns tucked against the mountains. It's a bucket-list trip — and getting a few decisions right up front is the difference between a good Alaska cruise and an unforgettable one.

This guide is the shortcut. And remember: planning it with me is **free** — I'm paid by the cruise line, never by you, and your fare is the same as booking direct (often better, with perks).

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Skim the contents, land on what matters for your trip, and keep it handy while you plan. When you're ready, the button on the last page opens live Alaska fares — or just reply to any of my emails and I'll do the work for you.

What's inside

- 01 **When to go** — the season, month by month
- 02 **Which cruise & cabin** — the balcony question, and which side
- 03 **The ports** — Juneau, Ketchikan, Skagway & the glaciers
- 04 **Wildlife & glaciers** — how to actually see them
- 05 **What to pack** for Alaska (it's cooler than you think)
- 06 **Excursions** — the ones worth it
- 07 **Ready to sail** — book direct & get in touch

SECTION 01

When to go

Alaska's cruise season is short — May to September — and each month has a personality.

MAY

Value & calm

Lower fares, fewer crowds, drier weather, and snow still on the peaks. Wildlife is waking up. My pick for a quieter, better-priced trip.

JUNE – JULY

Peak everything

Longest daylight, warmest temps, most wildlife, greenest scenery. The most popular window — book early, it sells out.

AUGUST

Wildlife & salmon

Prime bear-and-salmon season and still-long days. Slightly wetter, but fantastic for animal sightings.

SEPTEMBER

Northern lights shot

Fewer crowds, fall color, lower fares, and an early chance at the aurora on north-facing nights. Cooler and wetter.

Two routes to choose from

Round-trip (Inside Passage): usually from Seattle or Vancouver, back to where you started. Easiest to plan — no one-way flights. Great for first-timers.

One-way (Gulf of Alaska): between Vancouver and Anchorage/Seward, often paired with a land tour into Denali. More to see, but you'll book open-jaw flights. Ideal if you want the interior too.

SHOULDER-SEASON SECRET

Late May and early September deliver most of the magic at a fraction of peak pricing. If your dates flex even a week, tell me — I'll show you what moving them is worth.

SECTION 02

Which cruise & cabin

On Alaska, one cabin decision matters more than on any other cruise.

Yes, book the balcony

On a warm-weather cruise a balcony is a lovely extra. On **Alaska it's the main event**. The scenery slides past all day — glaciers, fjords, whales — and a balcony means you watch it in your robe with coffee, in private, whenever it appears. It's the one splurge almost no one regrets here. If the budget won't stretch, an oceanview beats an interior for this trip.

Which side of the ship?

It's a common question, and the honest answer: **it evens out**. On a round-trip Inside Passage sailing you cruise scenery on both the way up and the way back, so each side gets its turn. In glacier bays the ship usually rotates 360° so everyone sees. The real move is simply to **get out on deck** at the glaciers — that's where the views are.

Match the ship to your trip

- **Big, activity-packed ships** — great for families and multi-gen groups; lots to do on sea days.
- **Mid-size & premium** — calmer, refined, often get closer into the fjords.
- **Glacier access matters** — some itineraries include Glacier Bay National Park (limited permits); others visit Hubbard or Dawes. Ask me which sailings hit the glacier you want.

SEASICKNESS NOTE

The Inside Passage is largely sheltered and calm. The Gulf of Alaska (open-water one-ways) can be rougher — pick a mid-ship, middle-deck cabin and pack relief just in case.

SECTION 03

The ports

What each stop is known for — so you spend your day on the right thing.

CAPITAL CITY

Juneau

Whale-watching central, plus the Mendenhall Glacier and a tram up Mount Roberts. The best single day for humpbacks and a glacier in one.

GOLD RUSH

Skagway

The White Pass & Yukon Route railway climbs into the mountains on a historic narrow-gauge train — one of Alaska's iconic excursions.

RAINFOREST

Ketchikan

Totem poles, Creek Street, and salmon. Gateway to Misty Fjords by floatplane. Wettest port — bring the rain jacket.

SCENIC CRUISING

Glacier day

Glacier Bay, Hubbard, Tracy Arm or Dawes — a full day of scenic cruising with no port. The highlight of the whole trip. Be on deck.

Other stops you may see

Sitka (Russian heritage, wildlife, quieter), **Icy Strait Point** (Hoonah — whales, the world's largest ziprider, authentic Tlingit culture), and **Victoria, BC** (a brief evening stop on many round-trips to satisfy maritime rules).

PLAN THE GLACIER DAY

The scenic-cruising day has no excursion to book — it's about being outside. Dress warm, grab a hot drink, claim a deck spot early, and just watch. Bring binoculars.

SECTION 04

Wildlife & glaciers

The part you'll be telling people about for years.

What you can realistically see

- **Humpback whales** — common all season, especially around Juneau and Icy Strait. Orcas too, with luck.
- **Bald eagles** — everywhere; you'll stop noticing them by day three.
- **Bears** — black and brown, best in July–August near salmon streams (a guided excursion is your best shot).
- **Sea otters, seals & sea lions** — frequent from the ship and on tours.
- **Mountain goats & moose** — on land tours and railway routes.

Glaciers — how to experience one

You'll meet glaciers three ways: **from the ship** on the scenic day (effortless, spectacular), **up close by boat** on a small-craft excursion into a fjord, or **on the ice** via a helicopter-and-glacier-walk tour (unforgettable, splurge). Watch and listen for calving — that thunder-crack of ice breaking free is the sound everyone remembers.

My "don't miss it" list

A **whale-watch in Juneau**, a **full day on deck at the glacier**, and if the budget allows, one **bucket-list splurge** (glacier helicopter, floatplane, or the Skagway railway). Do those three and Alaska delivers.

SECTION 05

What to pack for Alaska

Cooler and wetter than most people expect — even in July. Layers win.

The secret to Alaska comfort is layering, not bulk. (The links below are things I recommend; as an Amazon Associate I may earn a small commission at no cost to you.)

The Alaska essentials

- [A waterproof rain jacket](#) — non-negotiable. It will rain, and a real shell beats an umbrella on deck.
- [Warm mid-layers \(fleece\)](#) — the glacier day is cold and windy even in summer.
- [Binoculars](#) — for whales, bears, eagles and glaciers. Bring your own; you'll use them constantly.
- [A waterproof phone pouch](#) — for wet decks, tenders, and small-boat tours.
- [Gloves & a warm hat](#) — your hands will thank you at the glacier rail.
- [Waterproof walking shoes](#) — ports are wet and often uneven.
- [Motion-sickness relief](#) — smart insurance for the open-water stretches.

THE LAYERING RULE

Base layer + fleece + waterproof shell. Add or shed as the day changes — and it will. One nicer outfit covers dinners; comfortable, warm, waterproof covers everything else.

SECTION 06

Excursions worth it

A few standouts — and how to book them smartly.

- **Whale watching (Juneau or Icy Strait)** — the highest-payoff tour in Alaska. Most operators all but guarantee sightings.
- **White Pass & Yukon railway (Skagway)** — a historic mountain train with jaw-dropping views; easy, iconic, family-friendly.
- **Mendenhall Glacier (Juneau)** — a glacier and waterfall you can reach easily; pair it with the whale watch.
- **Glacier helicopter & walk** — the big splurge: land on the ice and walk on a glacier. Unforgettable.
- **Misty Fjords floatplane (Ketchikan)** — soaring over granite cliffs and waterfalls; a bucket-list flight.

My go-to for booking tours

Independent operators are often the same tours for less than the cruise line charges. I curate trusted, well-reviewed Alaska excursions so you're not gambling on a random listing:

[Browse Recommended Alaska Tours »](#)

Powered by Viator, a Tripadvisor company. Free cancellation on most tours up to 24 hours before.

TIMING RULE

If you book an independent tour, leave a generous buffer before all-aboard — the ship guarantees the wait only for its own excursions. Pick earlier tours and pad the end.

SECTION 07

Ready to sail to Alaska?

Two easy ways to take the next step — both free, both no-pressure.

You've got the playbook. Here's how to turn it into a trip:

OPTION 1 · SEE LIVE ALASKA FARES NOW

Book Direct & Browse Alaska Cruises

Search real, current sailings and prices for Alaska — the same booking engine I use, with my advisor support behind every booking.

Browse & Book Your Alaska Cruise »

Option 2 · Let me do it for you

Tell me your rough dates, who's coming, and round-trip vs. one-way — I'll find the best sailing at the best price, glacier day and perks included, and hand you a simple plan. No fee, no obligation.

Get Your Free Alaska Plan »

Or reply to any email from me — I read every one myself.

Refer a friend — you both win. Know someone dreaming of Alaska? When they book a cruise through me, **you both** get a thank-you. Just have them mention your name.

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