

Smith Family Alaskan Adventure

Itinerary and Travel Notes

Day 1: Saturday, June 30 Flight to Alaska and Drive to Denali National Park

TRANSPORTATION

Flight

United Flight 1234 departs from Cleveland at 6:00 AM
Layover in Chicago (4 hours) before United Flight 5678 departs at 10:19 AM
2:04 PM scheduled arrival in Anchorage
Booked: 10/8
Confirmation: 123ABC

Rental Car

Pick up at Enterprise Rent-a-Car
Car Size: Full-Size SUV
Booked: 10/17
Confirmation: 123ABC

Notes: Car rental area is directly across the street from the airport terminal.
Car is reserved but has not yet been paid for. Total cost at reservation was \$1,016.02.

On your way out of town, I recommend stopping by Moose's Tooth Pub and Pizzeria for a bite to eat - it's right on your way. The beers are very tasty and the pizzas are delicious. Just up the street from Moose's Tooth is a Fred Meyer (like a classier Walmart), where you can buy any groceries, snacks, personal items, etc. that you might need for the week. It will be cheaper here than trying to purchase when you get to Denali. Fred Meyer also has some good grab-and-go food options if you'd prefer to kill two birds with one stone, or you'll pass plenty of fast food and other restaurants on your way out of Anchorage. I would definitely recommend getting food before you leave the town of Wasilla (about an hour or so outside of Anchorage), as options will be sparse after that. The drive to your accommodations in Denali will take about 4.25 - 4.5 hours.

Moose's Tooth: 3300 Old Seward Hwy, Anchorage, AK 99503
Fred Meyer: 1000 E Northern Lights Blvd, Anchorage, AK 99508



LODGING

Carlo Creek Lodge - Mile 224 Parks Highway

Length of Stay: 6/30 - 7/2

Booked: 10/24

Confirmation: 123ABC

Notes: You have reserved Cabin 1 with a deposit of \$175.20.

The Lodge is located on the left side of the highway about thirteen miles north of the town of Cantwell.

Turn left immediately after the sign (also on the left side). If you cross Carlo Creek, you have gone too far.

** Your Tundra Wilderness Tour confirmation suggests calling to confirm your tour time for the next day. The phone number is (800) 622-7275.

Day 2: Sunday, July 1
Denali National Park

ACTIVITIES

6:40 AM: Tundra Wilderness Tour (approximately 8 hours)

Booked: 12/6

Itinerary Number: 123ABC

Reservation Number: 123ABC

Notes: You will need to meet your tour bus at the Denali Bus Depot, which is located at Mile 1 of the Denali National Park Road and is about a 15-minute drive from Carlo Creek. I recommend arriving 10-15 minutes early just to be on the safe side.

A boxed lunch will be provided, but in my experience it is fairly meager. I recommend taking extra snacks and water for the journey.

Be aware that the ride can be bumpy and take any necessary precautions for comfort (medication for back pain, an extra cushion, etc.)

Don't forget your camera and binoculars!



Days 3 and 4: Monday, July 2 and Tuesday, July 3 Denali National Park

HIKING RECOMMENDATIONS

Near the Park Entrance:

- Mt. Healy Overlook (two hours one-way, 2.7 miles, 1,700 ft. elevation gain, great views)
- Triple Lakes (five hours one-way, 9.5 miles, 1,000 ft. elevation gain)
- Horseshoe Lake (two hours roundtrip, 3.2 miles, 250 ft. elevation gain, moose love the lake!)

Savage River (located near miles 13-15 of the Park Road; accessible via the free Savage River shuttle)

- Savage River Loop (1.5 hours roundtrip, 2 miles, no significant elevation change)
- Savage Alpine Trail (three hours one way, 4+ miles, strenuous with some steep sections)

Near Eielson Visitor Center (66 miles into the park, accessible by shuttle bus)

- Eielson Alpine / Thoroughfare Ridge Trail (less than two miles roundtrip, but very steep, excellent views with the possibility of seeing Denali on a clear day)
- Gorge Creek Trail (1.5 hours roundtrip, 2 miles, descends into a gorge)

Information, trail maps, etc. are available [here](#) as well as at the Visitor Center.

Guided hikes are available through the Visitor Center or can be privately arranged through [Traverse Alaska](#), a locally-owned guide business.

DINING

Many dining options can be found in the little tourist village farther up the Parks Highway. Some recommendations:

- [Black Bear Coffee House](#): Great for coffee, breakfast, quick bites. Open until 1 PM.
- [Prospector's Pizzeria and Ale House](#): Good pizza and pub food with lots of local beers on tap.
- [49th State Brewing Company](#): Craft brewery located in Healy.
- [229 Parks Restaurant and Tavern](#): Fine dining five minutes from Carlo Creek.
- [Denali Park Salmon Bake](#): Denali institution with decent food and live music



Day 5: Wednesday, July 4

Drive to Homer

Driving straight to Homer will take almost eight hours, so consider an early departure.

SIGHTS ALONG THE WAY

Hurricane Gulch Bridge (Mile 181 - about 50 minutes south of Carlo Creek)

- Massive bridge spanning impressively scenic gorge.

Denali Viewpoint South (Mile 135 - about 1.5 hours south of Carlo Creek)

- Pull-off viewpoint with facilities that is worth a stop on a clear day, as the scenery is beautiful and you have a chance to see the mountain.
- There is a short hiking trail that offers additional views.

Talkeetna (turnoff at Mile 99 - approximately 2 hours south of Carlo Creek, then 10 miles to town)

- Fun, funky little town that serves as a base for climbers headed to Denali.
- Home to gift and art shops, outdoor activities, and a decent number of eateries to break up your drive.

Willow (2.5 hours south of Carlo Creek)

- Small town with potential views of Denali.
- Home of the Iditarod restart (the race begins ceremonially in Anchorage and officially here).

Seward Highway (south of Anchorage)

- Enjoy the views as you travel along the gorgeous Turnagain Arm! There are lots of places to pull off to take photos or stretch your legs, one of the best being Beluga Point (Mile 110).

Portage Townsite Ruins Park

- Just after the Twentymile River bridge, you can see the sunken buildings and petrified trees of the old town of Portage, which was destroyed in the 1964 earthquake when the ground sank ten feet.

LODGING

Airbnb: [Red Barn Loft](#)

Length of Stay: 7/4 - 7/5

Booked: 11/3

Address and confirmation information should be available through your Airbnb account.



Day 6: Thursday, July 5
Bear Viewing Expedition to Katmai National Park

ACTIVITIES

8:15 AM: Bear Viewing Flightseeing Tour (approximately 9 hours)

Booked: 10/25

Confirmation: 123ABC

Notes: Meet at 1244 Lake Shore Drive Homer, AK 99603. I recommend arriving 10-15 minutes early.

You can park in the lakeside lot for the Homer FloatPlane Lodge (ignore first lot and follow driveway down to lower lot).

Bring a packed lunch, snacks, water, and a two-day supply of any necessary medications.

Dress in layers and be prepared for all kinds of weather. Rain gear and two pairs of socks encouraged.

Flying in small planes can be bumpy, so bring motion sickness medication if you are susceptible.

Don't forget your camera and binoculars!

Upon your return (around 5:00 PM), drive to Seward. It should take a little over three hours without stops.

It may be worthwhile to grab dinner in Homer before leaving. Dining recommendations include [The Little Mermaid](#) (seafood and other fare), [Finn's Pizza](#) (pizza, soups, and salads), [Fat Olives](#) (seafood, Italian, sandwiches), and [Captain Pattie's](#) (seafood). The [Salty Dawg Saloon](#) on the Spit is a historic Homer institution if you'd like to grab a celebratory beer and some light food.

LODGING

[Exit Glacier Lodge](#) - 31832 Herman Leirer Road, Seward

Length of Stay: 7/5 - 7/7

Booked: 11/2

Confirmation: 123ABC

Notes: You have booked room 105 - Deluxe.

Lodge is located 1/4 mile up Herman Leirer Road on the right.



Day 7: Friday, July 6 Seward

ACTIVITIES

9:00 AM: Exit Glacier Hike (approximately seven hours)

Booked: 10/17

Notes: Dress in layers and be prepared for any weather.
Bring snacks.
Don't forget your camera!

7:00 PM: Kayaking Pre-Trip Meeting

Meet at Kayak Adventures Worldwide shop: 328 3rd Ave, Seward
Street parking is available in front of the shop.

Notes: Make sure to confirm with Kayak Adventures that you will be spending the final night of the trip closer to Seward (Resurrection Bay) to enable a 2:00 - 3:00 PM return for your flight
Please refer to the "Mothership Packing List" document you received when we booked the tour to ensure that you have everything you need for the trip.

DINING

Some recommendations for Seward:

- The Cookery: Small but locally-sourced menu with an oyster bar. #1 Seward restaurant on TripAdvisor.
- Woody's Thai Kitchen: In case you're getting tired of seafood and pub fare.
- Salmon Bake Restaurant: Extensive menu, located within walking distance of your hotel.
- Ray's Waterfront: Excellent views and good, fresh seafood.
- Resurrection Roadhouse: Also near your hotel. Small menu but good food.
- Highliner Restaurant: Tacos, sandwiches, burgers, and larger entrees.



Days 8 and 9: Saturday, July 7 and Sunday, July 8 Kayaking Trip

6:45 AM: Meet at Kayak Adventures Worldwide shop (328 3rd Ave, Seward)

Notes: Eat a hearty breakfast beforehand.
Bring seasickness medication.
Have an amazing time and take lots of photos!

Days 10 and 11: Monday, July 8 and Tuesday, July 9 End of Kayaking Trip and Travel Home

The Mothership should return you to Seward between 2:00 - 3:00 PM on Monday, July 8. Your drive back to Anchorage will take around two and a half hours, and I would suggest getting started on it sooner rather than later just in case there are traffic issues on the Seward Highway. (There are no alternative routes back to Anchorage, so better safe than sorry!) You will most likely have time for some dinner in Anchorage before your flight, so please find some dining recommendations below.

DINING

- Glacier Brewhouse: My personal favorite dinner spot in Anchorage. It does get busy, so prepare for a wait. You may also try the more upscale Orso next door. Located downtown.
- Moose's Tooth Pub and Pizzeria: In case you didn't hit it on your first day!
- Kincaid Grill: Located near the airport. Reservations available.
- Ginger: Asian and American cuisine, and a nice break from seafood and pub fare. Also downtown.
- Simon and Seafort's: One of the best steakhouses in Anchorage. Located downtown with water views.
- Humpy's Alaskan Alehouse: Dive bar downtown that has been featured on the travel channel. Pub fare.



FLIGHT

United Flight 9876 departs from Anchorage at 9:55 PM

Layover in Chicago (2 hours) before United Flight 5432 departs at 9:00 AM on July 10

11:18 AM scheduled arrival in Cleveland

Booked: 10/8

Confirmation: 123ABC

Notes: Your rental car should be returned at the same Enterprise location from which you picked it up. Don't forget to refill the gas tank to the same level as when you got the car. (There are plenty of gas stations in Anchorage where you can do this.) It is also always a good idea to take some photos of the car exterior to have on hand in case there are any questions about damages.



Traveling to Alaska

General Tips, Tricks, and Helpful Hints

I hope you have a wonderful trip to the Great Land! Here are some of my best tips to maximize your time:

Weather and Clothing

The weather can be a bit unpredictable, so remember to always be prepared for changes in temperature and sudden rain showers, especially south of Denali. I would suggest that you make sure to dress in layers and keep a light jacket with you at all times. Alaska is very casual, so there is no need to dress up for anything unless you really want to do so or you're planning to visit a very swanky restaurant... and probably not even then.

Health

Thousands of tourists pass through Alaska every summer, particularly in the area that you will be traveling, so it's a good idea to wash your hands frequently and take advantage of any hand sanitizer stations you pass by to avoid picking up any nasty bugs. Also, because you will be flying in small aircraft and out on the open sea, I recommend bringing along some non-drowsy motion sickness medication even if you're not generally susceptible. Don't forget to drink lots of water!

Money Matters

- Because so many goods have to be imported from the Lower 48, be prepared for the cost of food, fuel, goods, and services to be higher in Alaska by as much as 25% compared to the costs to which you may be accustomed.
- Tips and gratuities for guides and other service personnel are greatly appreciated. A good rule of thumb is to tip 5%-10% of the total price of your excursion.
- While most restaurants accept credit cards, some smaller establishments, gift shops, and local artisans may prefer or only accept cash, so it's wise to have some on hand. (You will also want cash to tip your guides, per the above.)

Driving

For the most part, you will be traveling on major highways and paved roads, so normal precautions apply and you shouldn't have any trouble. Do watch out for potholes, unpaved sections, and rock slides (particularly on the Seward Highway south of Anchorage), and keep a vigilant lookout for moose on the road.

