

Alaska Bald Eagle Guide

Your Complete Guide to Seeing America's National Bird in the Last Frontier



Few wildlife sightings are as thrilling as watching a **bald eagle** soar over Alaska's mountains, rivers, and coastline. With an estimated **30,000–40,000 bald eagles** living in Alaska—more than in any other U.S. state—your chances of seeing one during an Alaska cruise are incredibly high.

Whether perched high in a spruce tree, gliding over the shoreline, or diving into the water to catch a salmon, bald eagles are one of Alaska's most iconic and photographed animals. In fact, many visitors see their very first bald eagle within minutes of arriving in Alaska.

If spotting a bald eagle is on your bucket list, Alaska is one of the best places in the world to make it happen.



Quick Facts



Scientific Name: *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*

Wingspan: Up to 8 feet (2.4 meters)

Weight:

- Males: 6–9 pounds
- Females: 8–14 pounds

Lifespan:

- 20–30 years in the wild

Diet:

- Fish (especially salmon)
- Waterfowl
- Small mammals
- Carrion

Fun Fact: Despite their name, bald eagles are not actually bald. The word "bald" comes from an old English word meaning **white-headed**.



Where Can You See Bald Eagles?



The good news is that bald eagles can be seen throughout coastal Alaska.

Some of the best locations include:

- Juneau
- Ketchikan
- Sitka
- Seward
- Homer
- Kodiak
- Petersburg
- Wrangell
- Glacier Bay National Park
- Kenai Fjords National Park

It's not uncommon to see several eagles in a single day.

★ Best Place in Alaska to See Bald Eagles



The **Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve** near Haines is world-famous.

Every fall, thousands of bald eagles gather along the Chilkat River during the late salmon run, creating the largest concentration of bald eagles anywhere in the world.

Even during the summer cruise season, eagle sightings are common throughout the preserve.

🐟 Why Do Eagles Love Alaska?



Alaska provides everything bald eagles need:

- Abundant salmon
- Clean rivers
- Coastal waters
- Large nesting trees
- Protected wilderness
- Minimal human disturbance

The annual salmon runs provide an incredible food source that helps support Alaska's large eagle population.



Seeing Bald Eagles on a Cruise



One of the best things about Alaska cruises is that you don't always need an excursion to spot wildlife.

Keep watch from your ship as you cruise through:

- Glacier Bay
- Tracy Arm
- Endicott Arm
- The Inside Passage
- Prince William Sound

Many passengers spot bald eagles directly from the open decks.



Photography Tips



For the best photos:

- Bring a zoom lens (200mm or longer if possible).
- Use burst mode for birds in flight.
- Keep your camera ready near shorelines.
- Early morning and late afternoon often provide the best lighting.
- Watch for eagles perched in tall spruce trees before they take flight.

Patience often leads to the best wildlife photographs.



Interesting Behaviors

Bald eagles are fascinating to watch.

You may see them:

- Diving for fish
- Soaring on thermal currents
- Perched high in trees
- Competing with ravens or gulls
- Feeding on spawning salmon
- Building enormous nests

Some eagle nests can weigh more than **a ton** after years of use!



Best Time to See Bald Eagles

Bald eagles can be seen year-round in many parts of Alaska.

For cruise travelers:

May

Excellent viewing

June

Excellent viewing

July

Excellent viewing

August

Outstanding as salmon runs increase

September

Excellent wildlife activity

There really isn't a bad time to look for bald eagles during Alaska's cruise season.



What to Bring

Bring:

- ✓ Binoculars
- ✓ Camera
- ✓ Zoom lens
- ✓ Waterproof jacket
- ✓ Extra batteries
- ✓ Patience

Wildlife often appears when you least expect it.



Premium Travel Group Tip

One of the easiest mistakes travelers make is spending too much time looking at the mountains and glaciers. While those views are spectacular, remember to scan the treetops and shoreline as well. Bald eagles are often perched quietly in tall spruce trees or on rocky outcroppings, and once you spot your first one, you'll begin noticing them everywhere.



Continue Exploring Alaska

Continue planning your Alaska adventure with our other guides:

- Alaska Wildlife Guide
 - Brown Bear Guide (*future guide*)
 - Humpback Whale Guide (*future guide*)
 - Sea Otter Guide (*future guide*)
 - Puffin Guide (*future guide*)
 - Alaska Inside Passage Guide
 - Glacier Bay National Park Guide
 - Kenai Fjords National Park Guide
 - Haines Cruise Port Guide
 - Juneau Cruise Port Guide
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Fun Facts

- Bald eagles can fly **up to 40 mph** in level flight and even faster when diving.
 - Their eyesight is estimated to be **four to five times sharper than a human's**.
 - Eagles often return to the same nest year after year, adding new material each season.
 - Female bald eagles are noticeably larger than males.
 - Alaska is home to more bald eagles than all of the lower 48 states combined.
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Why Are Bald Eagles So Special?

Bald eagles symbolize strength, freedom, and the wild beauty of North America. In Alaska, they're not just a symbol—they're a daily part of the landscape. Watching one glide effortlessly above a glacier-fed river or swoop down to catch a salmon is one of those unforgettable moments that reminds you just how extraordinary Alaska truly is.



Joe's Logbook

One of the questions I get asked most often is, "Will we really see bald eagles in Alaska?" My answer is usually, "You'll probably stop counting after a while."

The first eagle you see is exciting. The tenth one is still exciting. There's just something about watching these incredible birds soar overhead that never gets old.

One piece of advice I always share is to **look up**. Most people spend so much time watching the water for whales that they forget to check the treetops. Bald eagles love to perch in tall spruce trees overlooking the shoreline, and once you train your eyes to spot that distinctive white head and tail, you'll start seeing them everywhere.

If you're lucky enough to visit Haines or the Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve, you're in for something truly special. Seeing dozens—or even hundreds—of bald eagles in one area is an experience that reminds you why Alaska is one of the greatest wildlife destinations on Earth.