

Best Time to Visit Alaska

Your Month-by-Month Guide to Planning the Perfect Alaska Adventure



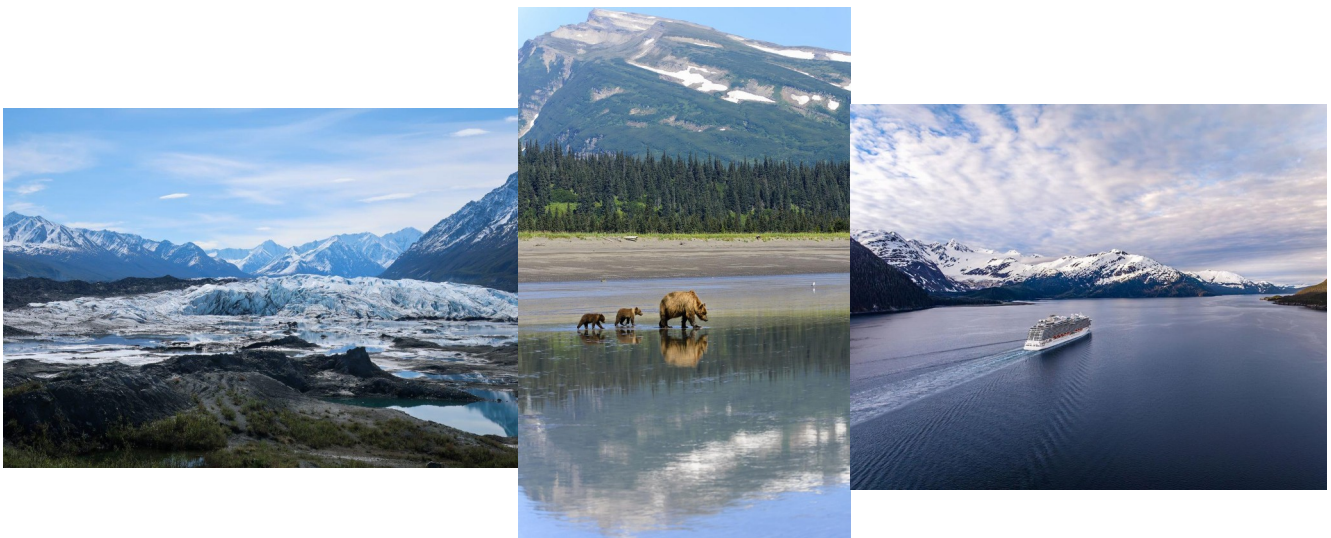
One of the most common questions travelers ask is, "**When is the best time to visit Alaska?**" The answer depends on what you want to experience.

Do you dream of watching humpback whales breach beside your ship? Seeing bears catch salmon? Enjoying nearly 20 hours of daylight? Photographing brilliant fall colors? Or perhaps even catching the Northern Lights?

Alaska's travel season is relatively short, typically running from **late April through early October**, and each month offers its own unique experiences.

This guide will help you choose the best time for your Alaska adventure.

May – A Beautiful Start to the Season



May is one of Alaska's best-kept secrets.

Why Visit in May?

- ✓ Lower cruise fares
- ✓ Smaller crowds
- ✓ Snow-covered mountain peaks
- ✓ Fresh spring scenery
- ✓ Excellent glacier viewing
- ✓ Active wildlife

Temperatures:

- 45–60°F (7–16°C)

Ideal for:

- Photography
- Scenic cruising
- Budget-conscious travelers

☀ June – Long Days & Peak Wildlife



June marks the beginning of Alaska's busiest travel season.

Highlights

- ✓ Up to 18–20 hours of daylight
- ✓ Excellent whale watching
- ✓ Wildflowers
- ✓ Comfortable temperatures
- ✓ Beautiful hiking conditions

Temperatures:

- 50–65°F (10–18°C)

Ideal for:

- Families
- First-time visitors
- Wildlife lovers

🌞 July – Peak Alaska Season



July is Alaska's warmest and busiest month.

Highlights

- ✓ Warmest weather
- ✓ Peak cruise season
- ✓ Active wildlife
- ✓ Excellent fishing
- ✓ Long daylight hours

Temperatures:

- 55–70°F (13–21°C)

Ideal for:

- Cruise Tours
- Families
- Outdoor adventures

Keep in mind:

- Highest prices
 - Larger crowds
-

August – Wildlife & Late Summer Beauty



August offers an outstanding balance between weather and wildlife.

Highlights

- ✓ Peak whale watching
- ✓ Beginning of salmon runs
- ✓ Bears become more active
- ✓ Comfortable temperatures
- ✓ Lush scenery

Temperatures:

- 50–68°F (10–20°C)

Ideal for:

- Wildlife photography
- Fishing
- Nature lovers

Rain becomes more common, especially in Southeast Alaska.

🍁 September – Alaska's Hidden Gem



September is one of my favorite months to recommend.

Highlights

- ✓ Beautiful fall colors
- ✓ Smaller crowds
- ✓ Lower prices
- ✓ Snow returning to mountain peaks
- ✓ Possible Northern Lights
- ✓ Excellent wildlife viewing

Temperatures:

- 45–60°F (7–16°C)

Ideal for:

- Couples
- Photographers
- Repeat Alaska visitors

❄️ October – End of the Cruise Season

By October, most Alaska cruise itineraries have ended.

While some land travel remains possible, many seasonal attractions, lodges, and excursions begin closing for the winter.

This month is better suited for travelers specifically seeking winter experiences or the Northern Lights in Alaska's interior.

Best Time for Wildlife



Wildlife	Best Time
Humpback Whales	May – September
Orcas	May – August
Brown Bears	July – September
Black Bears	May – September
Moose	May – September
Bald Eagles	All Season
Puffins	May – August
Salmon Runs	June – September

Best Time to See Glaciers

The good news...

Glaciers are spectacular all season long!

However:

Best Viewing

- May
- June

- July

These months often provide:

- More snow-covered mountains
- Longer daylight
- Better photography

Best Time for the Northern Lights



Although Alaska's cruise season ends in early fall, it is still possible to see the Northern Lights.

Best chances:

- Late August
- September
- Winter months

Interior Alaska offers the highest probability of seeing the aurora because of darker skies and clearer conditions.

Best Month by Travel Style

First-Time Visitors

★ June

★ July



Best Weather

★ July

Best Value

★ May

★ September

Wildlife Lovers

★ August

★ September

Photography

★ May

★ September

Cruise + Land Tour

★ June

★ July

Fewer Crowds

★ May

★ September



Weather Expectations

Remember...

There is no "perfect" weather month in Alaska.

It's entirely possible to experience:

- Sunshine
- Rain
- Wind
- Clouds

- Blue skies

...all in the same day.

The secret is dressing in layers and embracing whatever Mother Nature provides.

Premium Travel Group Tip

If someone asks me for the **best overall month**, I usually recommend **June**. It offers an excellent combination of long daylight hours, comfortable temperatures, active wildlife, and beautiful scenery.

If you're looking for the **best value**, choose **May or September**. You'll often find lower prices, fewer crowds, and unforgettable scenery—especially if you don't mind slightly cooler temperatures.

Continue Exploring Alaska

Continue planning your Alaska adventure with our other guides:

- Alaska Vacation Planning Guide
 - Alaska Packing Guide
 - Alaska Wildlife Guide
 - Alaska Cruise vs. CruiseTour Guide
 - Glacier Viewing Guide
 - Alaska Railroad Guide
 - Denali National Park Guide
 - Juneau Cruise Port Guide
 - Ketchikan Cruise Port Guide
 - Skagway Cruise Port Guide
 - Sitka Cruise Port Guide
 - Icy Strait Point Cruise Port Guide
-

Every Month Offers Something Special

There truly isn't a bad time to visit Alaska during the cruise season. Each month brings its own unique beauty, whether it's spring snow on the mountains, endless summer daylight, bears fishing for salmon, brilliant autumn colors, or the first hints of the Northern Lights. The best time to visit is simply the one that matches the experiences you dream about most.

Joe's Logbook

People often ask me, "**When should I book my Alaska cruise?**" My answer is usually another question: "**What do you want to experience?**"

If you want long days and classic Alaska scenery, June is hard to beat. If wildlife is at the top of your list, August and September are fantastic, especially when the salmon are running and bears are more active. And if you're hoping to stretch your travel budget a little further, don't overlook May or September—you'll often enjoy fewer crowds and some incredible photo opportunities.

One thing I've learned is that Alaska is beautiful in every month of the cruise season. Don't spend so much time worrying about finding the "perfect" week that you miss the opportunity to go. Alaska has a way of surprising you, no matter when you visit, and I can almost guarantee you'll come home already thinking about your next trip to the Last Frontier.