



Glacier Bay National Park Guide

Your Complete Guide to Alaska's Crown Jewel of Scenic Cruising



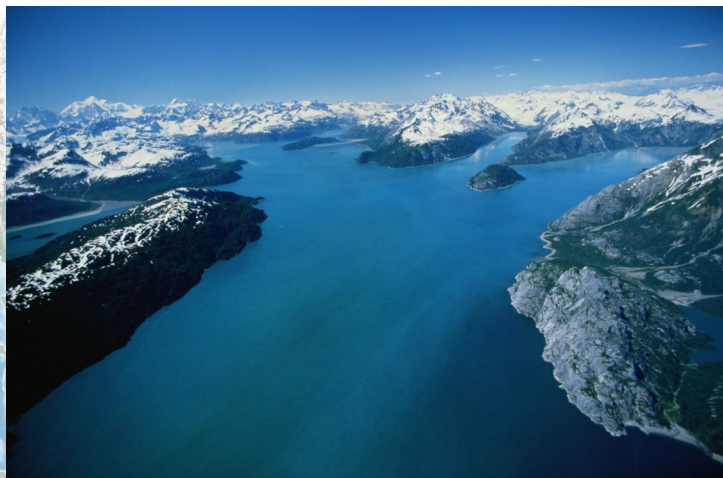
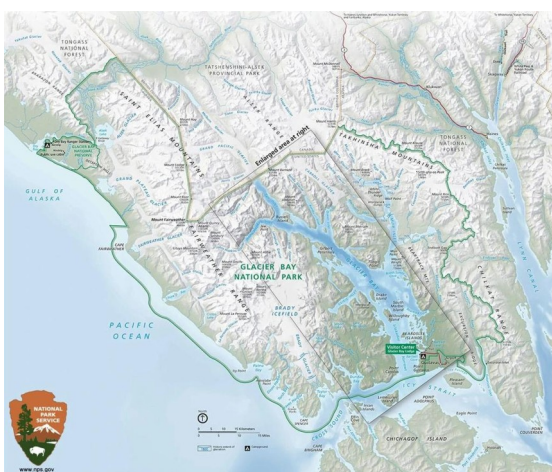
For many travelers, **Glacier Bay National Park** is the single biggest reason to choose one Alaska cruise over another. Covering more than **3.3 million acres**, Glacier Bay is one of the world's most spectacular protected wilderness areas and has been designated both a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** and part of an **International Biosphere Reserve**.

Unlike a traditional cruise port, Glacier Bay is a full-day scenic cruising experience. Throughout the day, your ship glides through pristine fjords surrounded by towering mountains, active tidewater glaciers, floating icebergs, waterfalls, and incredible wildlife.

Many experienced Alaska cruisers will tell you that Glacier Bay isn't simply another stop on the itinerary—it's the highlight of the entire voyage.



Where is Glacier Bay?



Glacier Bay National Park is located in **Southeast Alaska**, west of Juneau, and is accessible primarily by:

- Cruise ships
- Small expedition vessels
- Air taxi
- National Park boats

Because access is carefully regulated, only a limited number of cruise ships are permitted to enter the park each day, helping preserve its fragile ecosystem.

Why Glacier Bay is Special

Glacier Bay isn't just one glacier—it's an entire wilderness ecosystem.

The park features:

- More than **1,000 glaciers** (large and small)
- Towering snow-covered mountains
- Deep fjords
- Ancient rainforests
- Marine wildlife
- Protected wilderness

It's one of the few places on Earth where visitors can witness a landscape still being shaped by glaciers.

Famous Glaciers



Depending on conditions, your cruise may visit several of Glacier Bay's famous tidewater glaciers.

Margerie Glacier

The park's most famous glacier.

Highlights:

- Approximately 250 feet tall above the water
- Nearly one mile wide
- Brilliant blue ice
- Frequent calving

Many cruise ships spend significant time here.

Grand Pacific Glacier

Located beside Margerie Glacier.

Unlike the brilliant blue Margerie Glacier, Grand Pacific appears darker because of the rocks and sediment carried within the ice.

The contrast between the two glaciers is remarkable.

Johns Hopkins Glacier

One of Glacier Bay's most active glaciers.

Access depends on:

- Ice conditions
- Wildlife protection
- National Park regulations

Not every cruise is able to approach this glacier.

Lamplugh Glacier

Known for its striking blue ice and beautiful location along the western arm of Glacier Bay.

Incredible Wildlife



Glacier Bay is one of Alaska's premier wildlife viewing destinations.

Keep your eyes open for:

Humpback Whales

Frequently seen feeding in the bay.

Harbor Seals

Often resting on floating ice near glaciers.

Sea Otters

Watch for rafts of sea otters floating together.

Brown Bears

Occasionally spotted along remote shorelines.

Mountain Goats

Look high on the cliffs above the fjords.

Bald Eagles

Common throughout the park.



What Happens During a Glacier Bay Day?

Unlike a typical cruise port, there is no docking.

Instead, you'll enjoy a full day of scenic cruising.

A typical Glacier Bay day includes:

- Early morning arrival
- National Park Rangers boarding the ship
- Live narration throughout the day
- Slow cruising past multiple glaciers
- Wildlife viewing
- Educational presentations

The Park Rangers add tremendous value by sharing fascinating information about the glaciers, wildlife, geology, and history of the park.



Glacier Calving

One of Glacier Bay's most exciting moments is witnessing a glacier calve.

Calving occurs when enormous chunks of ice break away from the glacier and crash into the water.

You may hear:

- Loud cracking sounds
- Deep rumbles
- Thunder-like booms

It's one of nature's most unforgettable experiences.

Photography Tips



Bring:

- ✓ Camera
- ✓ Zoom lens
- ✓ Extra batteries
- ✓ Extra memory cards
- ✓ Binoculars

For the best experience:

- Spend time outside on open decks.
- Dress in layers.
- Arrive early before reaching the glaciers.
- Keep your camera ready for wildlife and calving events.

Weather

Expect cool temperatures throughout the day.

Typical summer temperatures:

- **40–60°F (4–16°C)**

Near the glaciers it often feels cooler because of:

- Cold glacial air
- Wind
- Moisture

Bring:

- Waterproof jacket

- Gloves
 - Warm hat
-

Why Glacier Bay is Protected

Glacier Bay is one of America's most important national parks.

Strict regulations help protect:

- Marine mammals
- Bird nesting areas
- Glacier ecosystems
- Native cultural sites
- Wilderness habitats

This careful management ensures future generations can experience Glacier Bay much as it exists today.

Premium Travel Group Tip

If your Alaska cruise itinerary includes Glacier Bay, consider yourself fortunate. Not every cruise line has access to the park, and many experienced Alaska travelers specifically choose itineraries that include Glacier Bay because of its unmatched scenery and wildlife.

Wake up early, grab breakfast before entering the park, and spend as much time outside as possible. The sights, sounds, and even the cool air coming off the glaciers create an experience you simply can't duplicate from your cabin.

Continue Exploring Alaska

Continue planning your Alaska adventure with our other guides:

- Alaska Vacation Planning Guide
- Alaska Packing Guide
- Alaska Wildlife Guide
- Best Time to Visit Alaska
- Endicott Arm & Dawes Glacier Guide
- Hubbard Glacier Guide
- Alaska Railroad Guide
- Denali National Park Guide
- Juneau Cruise Port Guide
- Ketchikan Cruise Port Guide
- Skagway Cruise Port Guide



Why Visit Glacier Bay National Park?

Glacier Bay is more than just a destination—it's one of the world's great natural wonders. Towering glaciers, dramatic mountain scenery, abundant wildlife, and the peaceful silence of untouched wilderness combine to create an experience unlike anywhere else on Earth. Whether you're witnessing a glacier calve into the sea, watching humpback whales feed in the distance, or simply standing on deck surrounded by breathtaking scenery, Glacier Bay has a way of reminding us just how extraordinary our planet truly is.



Joe's Logbook

If someone asked me to name the one experience that defines an Alaska cruise, Glacier Bay would be at the top of my list.

One thing I always tell travelers is this: **don't spend Glacier Bay day in your cabin or by the pool.** This is the day you've been waiting for. Dress warmly, head outside, and experience it with all your senses. You'll hear the thunder of glaciers calving, feel the cool breeze coming off the ice, and maybe even spot whales or bears along the shoreline.

Another thing I love about Glacier Bay is the National Park Rangers who come aboard. Their stories and knowledge transform the scenery into something much more meaningful. You begin to understand not just what you're seeing, but how glaciers shaped Alaska over thousands of years.

If your itinerary includes Glacier Bay, you've chosen one of the very best Alaska cruise experiences available. Years from now, I suspect it will still be one of the first memories that comes to mind when you think about your journey to the Last Frontier.