

Alaska Jellyfish Guide

Your Complete Guide to Alaska's Graceful Drifters of the Sea

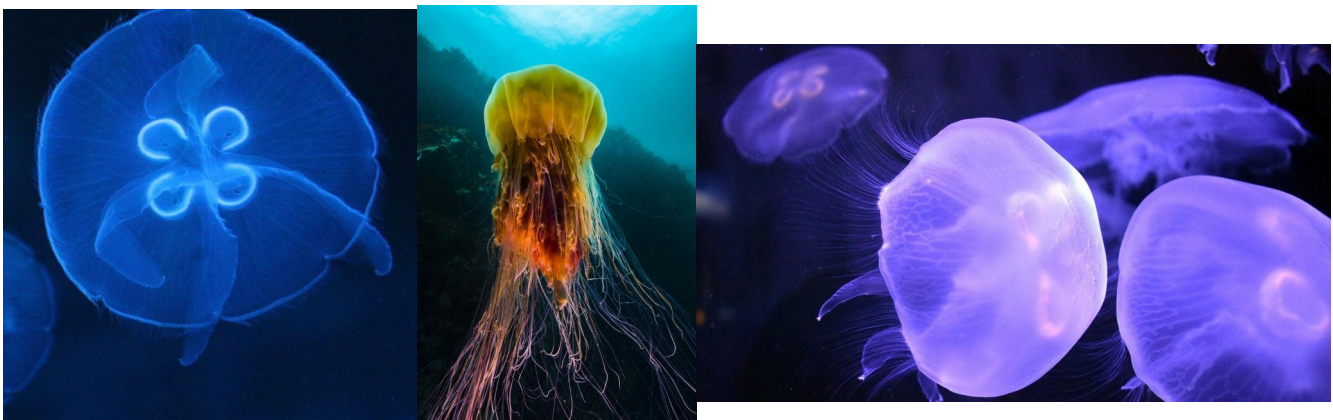


Floating gracefully through Alaska's cold coastal waters, **jellyfish** are among the ocean's oldest and most fascinating creatures. They've been drifting through the world's oceans for more than **500 million years**—long before dinosaurs ever walked the Earth.

Although many people think of jellyfish as tropical animals, Alaska is home to dozens of species, ranging from tiny transparent moon jellies to the spectacular **Lion's Mane Jellyfish**, one of the largest jellyfish species on Earth.

Whether you spot one from the deck of your cruise ship, during a wildlife excursion, or in an Alaska aquarium, jellyfish offer a beautiful reminder that some of the ocean's most remarkable creatures move with the currents rather than fighting against them.

Quick Facts



Group:
Cnidarians

Common Alaska Species:

- Moon Jelly
- Lion's Mane Jellyfish
- Crystal Jelly
- Egg Yolk Jelly

Size:

- Moon Jelly: **6–16 inches**
- Lion's Mane Jelly: Bell can exceed **7 feet**, with tentacles reaching **100 feet or more**

Diet:

- Plankton
- Small fish
- Fish eggs
- Tiny crustaceans
- Zooplankton

Jellyfish have no brain, no heart, and no bones—yet they are incredibly successful ocean predators.

Where Can You See Jellyfish?



Jellyfish can be found throughout Alaska's coastal waters.

Common locations include:

- Kenai Fjords National Park
- Prince William Sound
- Glacier Bay National Park
- Resurrection Bay
- Inside Passage
- Sitka Sound
- Ketchikan
- Coastal bays and harbors

They are most often seen on calm days when the water is clear.

★ Meet the Lion's Mane Jellyfish



One of Alaska's most impressive marine creatures is the **Lion's Mane Jellyfish**.

It is famous for:

- Massive size
- Long flowing tentacles
- Golden to reddish coloring
- Beautiful appearance

Its tentacles can stretch more than **100 feet**, making it one of the longest animals on Earth.

Although beautiful, its sting can be painful, so it's best admired from a safe distance.



Can You See Jellyfish on an Alaska Cruise?

Absolutely!

Jellyfish are commonly seen from cruise ships, especially when:

- Sailing through calm bays
- Visiting glacier fjords
- Docking in harbors
- Looking down into clear water

On sunny days, they often appear just beneath the surface, gently drifting with the current.

Photography Tips



For the best photographs:

- Look over the side of the ship on calm days.
- Use polarized sunglasses to reduce glare.
- Photograph when the sun is high for better visibility.
- Include the blue-green water for contrast.
- Visit aquariums for close-up opportunities.

Best Time to See Jellyfish

May

Excellent.

June

Outstanding.

July

Outstanding.

August

Excellent.

September

Very Good.

Jellyfish are commonly observed throughout Alaska's cruise season.

Interesting Behaviors

Jellyfish are known for:

- Drifting with ocean currents.
- Pulsing their bell to move slowly through the water.
- Using stinging cells called **nematocysts** to capture prey.
- Glowing underwater in some species.
- Surviving without a brain or heart.

Many species are almost completely transparent, making them difficult to spot.

What to Bring

Bring:

- ✓ Camera
- ✓ Polarized sunglasses
- ✓ Binoculars
- ✓ Curiosity

Sometimes simply looking over the side of the ship reveals amazing marine life.

Premium Travel Group Tip

When your ship is docked or cruising through calm water, spend a few minutes looking straight down into the water instead of out toward the horizon. Jellyfish often drift just below the surface, and once you spot one, you'll likely begin noticing several more.

Continue Exploring Alaska

Continue planning your Alaska adventure with our other guides:

- Alaska Wildlife Guide
- Giant Pacific Octopus Guide
- Sea Star Guide
- King Crab Guide
- Harbor Seal Guide
- Sea Otter Guide
- Humpback Whale Guide
- Kenai Fjords National Park Guide
- Glacier Bay National Park Guide
- Alaska Marine Life Guide (*future guide*)



Fun Facts

- Jellyfish have existed for **more than 500 million years**, making them older than dinosaurs.
- They have **no brain, heart, or bones**.
- Some jellyfish species are naturally **bioluminescent**, meaning they can produce light.
- The **Lion's Mane Jellyfish** is one of the longest animals on Earth, with tentacles that may exceed **100 feet**.
- Jellyfish are made up of approximately **95% water**.



Why Are Jellyfish So Special?

Jellyfish may seem simple, but they're among the ocean's most successful survivors. Their graceful movements, fascinating biology, and incredible diversity add another layer of wonder to Alaska's marine ecosystems. Whether you're watching a moon jelly drift beneath your ship or admiring a giant Lion's Mane Jellyfish, these ancient creatures remind us that some of nature's greatest marvels move with quiet elegance.



Joe's Logbook

Jellyfish probably aren't the first thing people hope to see on an Alaska cruise, but they're one of those pleasant surprises that make you appreciate the ocean even more.

One of my favorite things to do when the ship is docked or moving slowly is simply look over the rail into the water. It's amazing how often you'll spot jellyfish quietly drifting below the surface. Their gentle movements almost look hypnotic.

The Lion's Mane Jellyfish is especially impressive. Knowing that its tentacles can stretch over 100 feet really puts into perspective just how incredible Alaska's marine life can be.

Sometimes the best wildlife experiences don't involve excitement or speed. Sometimes they're simply about taking a moment to look a little closer and discovering an entirely different world just beneath the surface.