

Alaska King Crab Guide

Your Complete Guide to Alaska's Most Famous Seafood



When people think of Alaska seafood, one delicacy stands above the rest—the **Alaska King Crab**. Famous for its enormous legs, sweet flavor, and legendary status, king crab has become one of the state's most recognizable culinary treasures.

But there's much more to king crab than what appears on a dinner plate. These remarkable crustaceans live in the cold waters of the North Pacific and the Bering Sea, where they spend their lives crawling across the ocean floor in search of food. Harvesting them is one of the world's most demanding and dangerous commercial fisheries.

Whether you're enjoying fresh king crab in Alaska or learning about the fishermen who catch them, this iconic species is an important part of Alaska's culture and economy.

Quick Facts



Scientific Name:

Paralithodes camtschaticus

Common Name:

Red King Crab

Leg Span:

- Up to **6 feet**

Weight:

- Up to **24 pounds**

Lifespan:

- 20–30 years

Diet:

- Clams
- Mussels
- Sea stars
- Sea urchins
- Worms
- Smaller crustaceans

King crabs are actually more closely related to hermit crabs than to true crabs.

Where Do King Crabs Live?



King crabs are found primarily in:

- Bering Sea
- Bristol Bay
- Gulf of Alaska
- Waters surrounding Kodiak Island

- Deep North Pacific waters

They typically live on sandy or muddy ocean bottoms at depths ranging from about **20 to over 600 feet**.

★ Why Are King Crabs So Valuable?



King crab is prized around the world because of its:

- Sweet, delicate flavor
- Large, meaty legs
- Tender texture
- Limited harvest seasons

Strict fishery management helps protect crab populations and ensures long-term sustainability.



Can Cruise Travelers See King Crabs?



While you're unlikely to see a live king crab from your cruise ship, many Alaska ports offer opportunities to learn about them.

Popular experiences include:

- Commercial fishing demonstrations
- Bering Sea crab fishing excursions
- Seafood restaurants serving fresh Alaska king crab
- Maritime museums

Ports such as **Ketchikan**, **Kodiak**, and **Seward** often feature king crab on local menus.

Photography Tips



If you encounter live king crabs during an excursion:

- Photograph the impressive claws and long legs.
 - Include people for scale.
 - Capture working fishing boats and crab pots.
 - Visit local seafood markets for close-up opportunities.
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Best Time to Experience King Crab

King crab can be enjoyed in Alaska throughout the cruise season.

Commercial harvest seasons are carefully managed and may vary from year to year based on fishery regulations and population health.

Fresh king crab is commonly available in many Alaska restaurants during the summer tourist season.

Interesting Behaviors

King crabs are known for:

- Walking sideways across the ocean floor.
- Molting their shells as they grow.
- Migrating to different depths throughout the year.
- Using powerful claws to crush shellfish.
- Gathering in large groups during certain stages of their life cycle.

Their hard shell provides excellent protection from many predators.

What to Bring

If you're planning a king crab excursion:

- ✓ Camera
- ✓ Waterproof jacket
- ✓ Comfortable walking shoes
- ✓ Appetite!

Sampling fresh Alaska king crab is an experience many visitors never forget.

Premium Travel Group Tip

Don't assume every restaurant serves authentic Alaska king crab. Ask whether it's **wild-caught Alaska king crab**, especially if you're looking for the real experience. If you have the opportunity to take a commercial fishing or Bering Sea crab excursion, it's a fascinating way to learn about one of Alaska's most famous industries.

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- Alaska Railroad Experience Guide
- Best Time to Visit Alaska

Fun Facts

- King crabs can have a **leg span of up to 6 feet**.
- Despite their name, they're more closely related to **hermit crabs** than true crabs.
- They periodically **molt**, shedding their shells to grow larger.
- Their powerful claws can easily crush shellfish.
- The famous *Deadliest Catch* introduced millions of viewers to the dangerous world of king crab fishing in the Bering Sea.

Why Are King Crabs So Special?

King crabs are more than just a world-famous seafood—they're part of Alaska's identity. From the icy waters of the Bering Sea to the hardworking fishing crews who harvest them, king crabs represent the resilience, tradition, and natural abundance that make Alaska unique. Whether you're tasting fresh king crab for the first time or learning about the incredible fishery behind it, it's an experience that connects visitors to one of Alaska's most iconic industries.

Joe's Logbook

I'll admit it—when I hear "Alaska king crab," my first thought is food!

But after learning more about these incredible creatures and the people who harvest them, I gained a whole new appreciation for what goes into bringing king crab to the table. Watching the fishing boats, seeing the massive crab pots, and understanding the challenges of working in the Bering Sea makes every meal a little more meaningful.

If you've ever watched **Deadliest Catch**, you'll already have an idea of just how demanding this fishery can be. Then, when you finally sit down to enjoy fresh Alaska king crab, you'll know you're tasting one of the state's true specialties.

For me, trying local seafood is part of experiencing a destination, and Alaska king crab is definitely one meal that's worth putting on your bucket list.