

Alaska Mountain Goat Guide

Your Complete Guide to Seeing Alaska's Incredible Cliff Climbers



Few wildlife sightings capture the rugged spirit of Alaska quite like a **mountain goat** standing effortlessly on a steep cliff hundreds of feet above the valley floor. With their brilliant white coats, powerful legs, and incredible climbing ability, mountain goats are among the most remarkable animals you'll encounter during an Alaska vacation.

Although they may look peaceful, mountain goats are elite athletes capable of navigating cliffs that seem impossible to climb. Their specialized hooves and exceptional balance allow them to reach places where few predators can follow, making the high alpine terrain their perfect home.

If you're cruising Alaska's Inside Passage or exploring the mountains by land, keep your binoculars handy—you may spot these amazing animals high above the treeline.



Quick Facts



Scientific Name: *Oreamnos americanus*

Height:

- About **3 to 3½ feet** at the shoulder

Weight:

- Males (Billies): **200–300 pounds**
- Females (Nannies): **125–180 pounds**

Lifespan:

- 12–15 years in the wild

Diet:

- Grasses
- Mosses
- Lichens
- Shrubs
- Wildflowers
- Alpine vegetation

Both males and females grow black, slightly curved horns that continue growing throughout their lives.



Where Can You See Mountain Goats?



Mountain goats live in steep alpine terrain throughout Southcentral and Southeast Alaska.

Some of the best places to spot them include:

- Skagway
- Glacier Bay National Park
- Seward
- Kenai Fjords National Park
- Prince William Sound
- Haines
- Valdez
- Along the Klondike Highway
- Portions of Denali National Park

They are often seen high on rocky cliffs where few other animals can survive.

★ Why Are They Such Amazing Climbers?



Mountain goats are perfectly designed for life on steep mountainsides.

Their adaptations include:

- Split hooves that grip uneven rock
- Soft rubber-like foot pads for traction
- Powerful shoulder muscles
- Exceptional balance
- Incredible agility

They can easily climb slopes that would challenge experienced rock climbers.

👶 Kids (Baby Mountain Goats)



Baby mountain goats are called **kids**.

Most are born during:

Late May through early June

Within just a few hours of birth, kids are already climbing rocky terrain alongside their mothers.

Watching young goats navigate steep cliffs is one of Alaska's most remarkable wildlife sights.

Can You See Mountain Goats on an Alaska Cruise?



Absolutely!

Mountain goats are one of the few large mammals that are regularly spotted directly from cruise ships.

Some of the best opportunities occur while cruising through:

- Glacier Bay National Park
- College Fjord
- Hubbard Glacier
- Tracy Arm
- Endicott Arm
- Prince William Sound

Always scan the rocky mountainsides with binoculars.



Photography Tips



Mountain goats are often far away, so preparation helps.

For the best photos:

- Bring binoculars.
- Use a telephoto lens (300mm or longer if possible).
- Scan ridgelines and cliffs carefully.
- Look for bright white shapes against dark rock.
- Be patient—they often remain still for long periods.

Sometimes the challenge is finding them before taking the photo!



Best Time to See Mountain Goats

May

Excellent.

Fresh vegetation attracts goats to lower elevations.

June

Outstanding.

Kids are often visible with their mothers.

July

Excellent.

Goats remain active throughout alpine meadows.

August

Excellent.

Wildflowers bloom across mountain slopes.

September

Very good.

Goats begin preparing for winter.



Interesting Behaviors

Mountain goats are fascinating to observe.

They often:

- Rest on narrow cliff ledges
- Travel in small groups
- Climb nearly vertical rock faces
- Lick mineral deposits from exposed rock
- Feed during the cooler parts of the day

They prefer escaping danger by climbing rather than running.



What to Bring

Bring:

- ✓ Binoculars
- ✓ Camera
- ✓ Telephoto lens
- ✓ Sunglasses
- ✓ Waterproof jacket
- ✓ Patience

Mountain goats are easier to spot when you take time to scan the mountains carefully.



Premium Travel Group Tip

Mountain goats are almost always seen at higher elevations, so don't spend all your time watching the water. Every time your ship enters a fjord or passes beneath towering cliffs, look upward. Those small white dots high on the mountainside are often mountain goats, and once you spot one, you'll usually begin finding more.



Continue Exploring Alaska

Continue planning your Alaska adventure with our other guides:

- Alaska Wildlife Guide
 - Brown Bear Guide
 - Black Bear Guide
 - Kodiak Bear Guide
 - Moose Guide
 - Bald Eagle Guide
 - Dall Sheep Guide (*future guide*)
 - Glacier Bay National Park Guide
 - Kenai Fjords National Park Guide
 - Skagway Cruise Port Guide
 - Haines Cruise Port Guide
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Fun Facts

- Mountain goats can leap **up to 12 feet** in a single bound.
 - Their hooves act like built-in climbing shoes, gripping smooth rock surfaces.
 - Their thick white coat helps protect them from Alaska's harsh winters.
 - During the summer, they shed large patches of their winter coat.
 - Despite their name, mountain goats are actually more closely related to **antelopes** than to domestic goats.
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Why Are Mountain Goats So Special?

Mountain goats are among Alaska's most impressive wildlife species because they thrive in places that seem impossible to reach. Watching one calmly stand on a narrow cliff while surrounded by towering peaks and glaciers is a reminder of just how perfectly adapted wildlife can be to its environment. Their agility, resilience, and breathtaking habitat make every sighting unforgettable.



Joe's Logbook

Mountain goats have a way of making you stop and stare. The first challenge is usually finding them! Someone on the ship points toward the mountains and says, "There's one!" At first, all you see is a tiny white speck. Then you raise your binoculars, and suddenly you realize you're looking at a mountain goat standing on a cliff that doesn't seem possible.

One thing I've learned is to always look **up**. So many people spend their time scanning the water for whales that they miss the incredible wildlife living high above the shoreline. Every time your ship enters a fjord or passes a glacier, take a few moments to study the rocky slopes.

Seeing a mountain goat effortlessly climb terrain that would challenge even the best human climbers is one of those uniquely Alaskan moments that reminds you just how extraordinary nature can be.