



Alaska Steller Sea Lion Guide

Your Complete Guide to Seeing Alaska's Largest Sea Lion



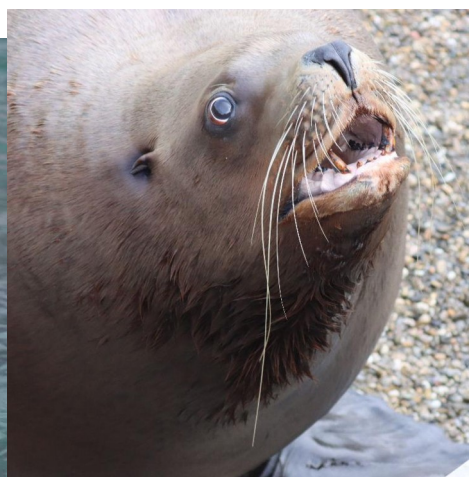
The **Steller sea lion** is the largest member of the eared seal family and one of Alaska's most impressive marine mammals. Often seen lounging on rocky islands, swimming alongside boats, or barking loudly from crowded haul-outs, these massive animals are a common sight along Alaska's coastline.

Named after the German naturalist Georg Wilhelm Steller, who first described them in the 1700s, Steller sea lions are powerful swimmers, skilled hunters, and highly social animals. Their playful behavior and unmistakable barking calls make them one of the highlights of many Alaska wildlife cruises.

Although people sometimes call them "Steller seals," they are actually **sea lions**, not true seals.



Quick Facts



Scientific Name: *Eumetopias jubatus*

Length:

- Males: **9–11 feet**
- Females: **7–9 feet**

Weight:

- Males: **1,200–2,500 pounds**
- Females: **500–800 pounds**

Lifespan:

- 20–30 years

Diet:

- Salmon
- Pollock
- Herring
- Cod
- Squid
- Octopus

Adult males are nearly three times larger than females and are easily recognized by their massive necks and broad shoulders.

📍 Where Can You See Steller Sea Lions?



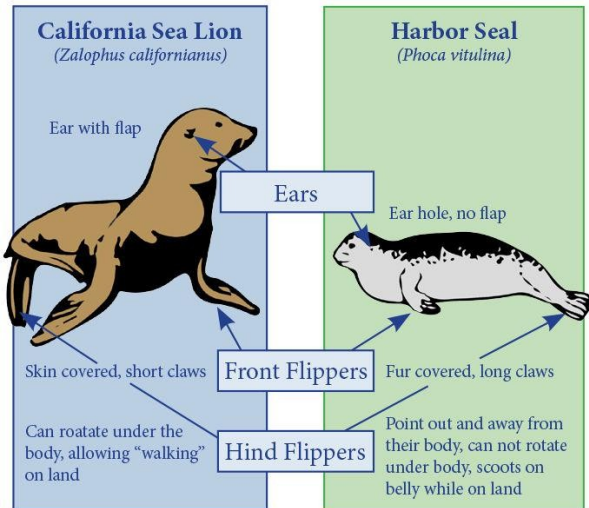
Excellent places to spot Steller sea lions include:

- Kenai Fjords National Park
- Resurrection Bay
- Glacier Bay National Park
- Prince William Sound
- Sitka
- Seward
- Kodiak Island

- Valdez
- Icy Strait

They are commonly found resting on rocky islands, navigation buoys, and offshore reefs known as **haul-outs**.

★ Sea Lion vs. Harbor Seal



Many visitors confuse sea lions with harbor seals, but there are several easy ways to tell them apart.

Steller Sea Lions

- Much larger
- External ear flaps
- Can rotate their rear flippers beneath their body
- Walk surprisingly well on land
- Very vocal with loud barking calls

Harbor Seals

- Smaller
- No visible external ears
- Move by wriggling on land
- Generally much quieter

Once you know what to look for, they're easy to distinguish.



Can You See Steller Sea Lions From a Cruise Ship?

Absolutely!

Sea lions are frequently spotted directly from cruise ships while sailing through:

- Kenai Fjords

- Resurrection Bay
- Glacier Bay
- Prince William Sound
- Icy Strait
- Sitka Sound

Look for groups gathered on rocky outcrops or swimming near the shoreline.

Photography Tips



For the best photographs:

- Use a zoom lens.
 - Photograph groups rather than single animals.
 - Listen for barking—it often helps you locate them before you see them.
 - Include cliffs or mountains in the background for dramatic Alaska scenery.
 - Watch for playful interactions between younger sea lions.
-



Best Time to See Steller Sea Lions

May

Excellent.

June

Outstanding.

Pups begin arriving at breeding colonies.

July

Outstanding.

Large groups gather at haul-outs.

August

Excellent.

Sea lions are active throughout Alaska's coastal waters.

September

Very good.

Many remain before winter weather arrives.



Interesting Behaviors

Steller sea lions are known for:

- Loud barking vocalizations
- Resting in large groups
- Diving hundreds of feet in search of food
- Swimming with remarkable speed and agility
- Males defending breeding territories during summer

Young sea lions are especially playful and can often be seen chasing one another through the water.



What to Bring

Bring:

- ✓ Binoculars
- ✓ Camera
- ✓ Zoom lens
- ✓ Waterproof jacket
- ✓ Sunglasses

Listening can be just as helpful as watching—often you'll hear sea lions before you see them.

★ Premium Travel Group Tip

If your ship slows near a rocky island and you begin hearing loud barking, head outside immediately. There's a good chance you've found a Steller sea lion haul-out. These noisy colonies often provide some of the most entertaining wildlife viewing of the entire cruise.

Continue Exploring Alaska

Continue planning your Alaska adventure with our other guides:

- Alaska Wildlife Guide
 - Harbor Seal Guide
 - Sea Otter Guide
 - Humpback Whale Guide
 - Orca Guide
 - Kenai Fjords National Park Guide
 - Glacier Bay National Park Guide
 - Seward Cruise Port Guide
 - Valdez Cruise Port Guide
 - Kodiak Cruise Port Guide
-

Fun Facts

- Steller sea lions are the **largest sea lions in the world**.
 - Adult males can weigh well over **one ton**.
 - They can dive to depths of **more than 600 feet** while hunting.
 - Unlike true seals, sea lions can rotate their rear flippers and "walk" on land.
 - Their loud barking calls can often be heard long before they're visible.
-

Why Are Steller Sea Lions So Special?

Steller sea lions bring energy and personality to Alaska's coastline. Their enormous size, social behavior, and unmistakable calls make them one of the easiest marine mammals to identify. Whether you're watching a colony stretched across sun-warmed rocks or seeing them dive gracefully beneath the waves, these remarkable animals add excitement to every Alaska wildlife adventure.



Joe's Logbook

One of the easiest ways to know you've found Steller sea lions is with your ears. Before you even see them, you'll often hear a chorus of loud barks echoing across the water.

The first time I watched a group of them hauling out on the rocks, I couldn't believe how big the males were. They're much larger than most people expect, and when several are gathered together, it's an impressive sight.

My advice is to spend a few minutes simply watching their behavior. Some are sleeping, others are barking back and forth, and the younger ones often seem determined to turn everything into a game. They add a lot of life and personality to Alaska's coastline and are always one of my favorite marine wildlife sightings.