

Alaska Wildlife Photography Guide

Capture the Wild Beauty of the Last Frontier



Alaska is one of the world's premier wildlife photography destinations. From towering brown bears catching salmon and humpback whales breaching beside glaciers to bald eagles soaring overhead and moose grazing in mountain valleys, every day offers incredible opportunities to capture unforgettable images.

The best part? You don't need to be a professional photographer to come home with amazing memories. Whether you're using a smartphone, a compact camera, or a professional DSLR, understanding a few basic wildlife photography techniques can dramatically improve your photos.

This guide will help you prepare so you're ready when Alaska's wildlife puts on a show.

Why Alaska is a Wildlife Photographer's Dream



Few places offer the diversity of wildlife found in Alaska.

Popular photography subjects include:

- Brown Bears
- Black Bears
- Kodiak Bears
- Moose
- Caribou
- Dall Sheep
- Mountain Goats
- Bald Eagles
- Golden Eagles
- Puffins
- Humpback Whales
- Orcas
- Sea Otters
- Harbor Seals
- Steller Sea Lions

With glaciers, mountains, forests, and coastal scenery as natural backdrops, nearly every wildlife sighting has postcard-worthy potential.



Camera Equipment



You don't need the most expensive equipment to capture beautiful photos.

Smartphone

Great for:

- Scenic landscapes
- Cruise ship views

- Close wildlife
- Family photos

Mirrorless or DSLR Camera

Ideal for:

- Birds
- Bears
- Whales
- Distant wildlife
- Action shots

Recommended Lens

- 70–200mm for general wildlife
 - 100–400mm for cruises
 - 200–600mm for serious wildlife photographers
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Don't Forget Binoculars

Often, binoculars help you locate wildlife before you photograph it.

Many experienced photographers scan with binoculars first, then raise their camera once they've found the subject.



Best Lighting



The best wildlife photos are often taken during:

Early Morning

- Soft light
- Active wildlife
- Beautiful reflections

Evening

- Warm colors
- Dramatic skies
- Excellent animal activity

Midday light can still produce outstanding photos, especially near glaciers where bright ice reflects natural light.

Photographing Bears

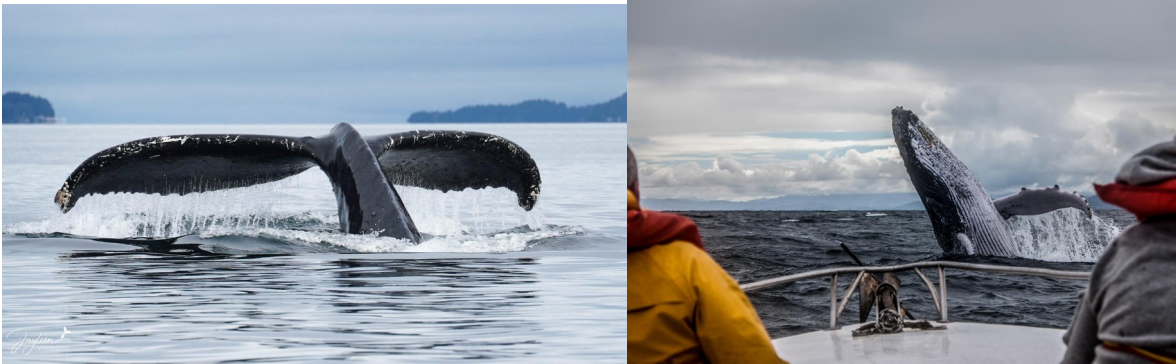


For incredible bear photos:

- Use a telephoto lens.
- Never approach wildlife.
- Include surrounding scenery.
- Focus on behavior, not just portraits.
- Keep your camera ready near salmon streams.

The best photographs often capture bears interacting with their environment.

Photographing Whales



Whales require patience.

Tips include:

- Use burst mode.
- Watch where whales last surfaced.
- Anticipate another appearance.
- Leave space around the whale for dramatic compositions.
- Don't zoom too tightly.

Sometimes the splash tells just as much of the story as the whale itself.

Photographing Birds



Bird photography can be challenging.

Helpful tips:

- Use continuous autofocus.
- Use a fast shutter speed.
- Watch for takeoffs and landings.
- Focus on the eyes.
- Practice tracking birds in flight.



Wildlife Photography from a Cruise Ship

Cruise ships provide excellent photography platforms.

Best viewing locations:

- Open promenade decks
- Upper observation decks
- Forward observation lounges
- Private balconies

Always keep your camera nearby—you never know when wildlife will appear.



Simple Camera Settings

For beginners:

- Burst Mode: ON
- Continuous Autofocus: ON
- Auto ISO: ON
- Image Stabilization: ON
- Fast Shutter Speed for moving wildlife

Modern cameras do an excellent job if you let them.



Smartphone Photography Tips

Today's smartphones can produce excellent Alaska photos.

Tips:

- Tap to focus.
- Clean the lens frequently.
- Use portrait mode for nearby subjects.
- Avoid excessive digital zoom.
- Capture short videos as well as still photos.

Sometimes your favorite memory will come from your phone rather than your camera.

Protect Your Equipment

Bring:

- ✓ Extra batteries
- ✓ Extra memory cards
- ✓ Waterproof backpack
- ✓ Rain cover
- ✓ Lens cleaning cloth
- ✓ Dry bag for excursions

Cold temperatures reduce battery life, so keep spare batteries in a warm pocket.



Respect Wildlife

Great wildlife photographers always put the animals first.

Remember:

- Never feed wildlife.
- Keep a safe distance.
- Stay on designated trails.
- Don't disturb animals for a better photo.
- Let wildlife behave naturally.

The best photographs come from observing—not interfering.



Premium Travel Group Tip

One of the biggest mistakes travelers make is spending the entire trip looking through a camera. Take your photos, then lower the camera and simply enjoy the moment. You'll remember the feeling of watching a whale breach or a bear catch a salmon just as much as the picture itself.



Continue Exploring Alaska

Continue planning your Alaska adventure with our other guides:

- Alaska Wildlife Guide

- Brown Bear Guide
 - Humpback Whale Guide
 - Bald Eagle Guide
 - Kenai Fjords Guide
 - Glacier Bay Guide
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Fun Facts

- Alaska is home to **over 500 species of birds**, making it a paradise for bird photographers.
 - Summer daylight can last **18–20 hours**, giving photographers more time to shoot.
 - Some wildlife excursions are led by professional nature photographers who offer tips during the tour.
 - A polarizing filter can reduce glare on water and make glacier colors appear even more vibrant.
 - Sometimes the most memorable wildlife photo is one that includes the spectacular Alaska landscape along with the animal.
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Why Wildlife Photography is More Than Taking Pictures

Wildlife photography encourages you to slow down, observe, and appreciate Alaska's incredible ecosystems. Every image tells a story—whether it's a puffin returning with a beak full of fish, a humpback whale lifting its tail before a deep dive, or a moose quietly feeding in the early morning light. These moments become lasting memories that allow you to relive your Alaska adventure for years to come.



Joe's Logbook

One of the biggest lessons I've learned is that the best wildlife photographers aren't always the ones with the biggest camera—they're the ones who are ready.

I've seen people miss a whale breach because they were digging through a backpack for their camera, while someone standing nearby captured the moment with a smartphone because it was already in their hand.

My advice is simple: keep your camera close, but don't spend your entire vacation behind the lens. Take the picture, then take a few seconds to simply enjoy what you're seeing. Those moments are why we travel in the first place, and they're often the memories you'll treasure the most long after you've returned home.