

THE SEWARD HIGHWAY

ROAD GUIDE

JOURNEY DEEP INTO ALASKA & OUT OF THIS WORLD

VOLUME

1

SCENIC WONDERS



WELCOME TO THE SEWARD HIGHWAY

ALASKA'S ALL AMERICAN ROAD & SCENIC BYWAY

The Seward Highway is alive with spectacular Alaskan scenery, wildlife, history, and recreational opportunities.

Linking Anchorage and Seward, the highway takes travelers on a 127-mile journey alongside rivers, lakes and a glacial fjord, through rainforests and snowcapped mountain passes, past glaciers and prime wildlife viewing areas, and into stunning beauty all along the way.

A PHOTOGRAPHER'S DREAM

This is the land where sunsets linger for hours. Where whales swim next to the highway. Where moose, bears and eagles compete with grand panoramic vistas for your attention. In this guide you'll find practical tips for spotting, shooting and enjoying all the natural and scenic wonders you'll discover along the Seward Highway.

PHOTO TIPS

STAY UP LATE FOR SUNSET LIGHTING.

You'll get the richest hues on your subject when the sun is low on the horizon. In summer, that could be almost midnight!

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF CLOUDY DAYS.

If clouds obscure the panoramic views, focus on the glaciers; you'll get the richest blues from the ice when it's overcast.

BRING A TELEPHOTO LENS.

A telephoto lets you get close shots and still keep a safe distance away from bears, moose and other wildlife.



Chugach National Forest

A LAND STILL IN THE MAKING

The mighty forces that first created all this majestic scenery are still very much at work today. Glaciers continue to carve away at the mountains. Rivers still cut through valleys. Tectonic plates still collide, occasionally bringing volcanoes, and the earth underfoot, to life. As you drive the highway, you'll see the evidence all around you. Note the geology highlights and interpretive sites in this guide — and be sure to stop at all the pullouts to appreciate nature's handiwork.



ANCHORAGE



Turnagain Arm Trails
• Mile 115.1, 112, 108

Windy Corner
• Mile 106

Bird Ridge
• Mile 102.1

Bird Creek
Campground
• Mile 101.2

Bird Point
Wayside
• Mile 96

Interpretive Pullouts
• Mile 95.3, 94.1, 92.5, 91.5

Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge
• Mile 117

Potter Section House Railroad Museum
• Mile 115

Potter Trailhead
• Mile 115.1

Midlugh Creek State Picnic Area
• Mile 111

Beluga Point
• Mile 110.4

VOLUME 1

SCENIC WONDERS



Portage Earthquake Evidence
• Miles 90-80

Portage Valley
• Mile 78.9

Whittier

Granite Creek Campground • Mile 63

Johnson Pass
• Mile 63.3

Bertha Creek Campground
• Mile 65.5

Turnagain Pass
• Mile 68

Canyon Creek Wayside
• Mile 56.7

Lower Summit Lake
• Mile 47.2

Summit Lake
• Mile 45.5

Trail River Campground
• Mile 24.2

Ptarmigan Creek
Campground
• Mile 23.1

Kenai Lake Overlook
• Mile 22.6

Snow River
• Mile 17.7

Primrose Trail
• Mile 17

Lost Lake Trail
• Mile 5.1

Exit Glacier Road
• Mile 3.7

Resurrection Bay

Turn Off for Sterling Hwy
Alaska Scenic Byway
• Mile 38.3

Jerome Lake Turnout
• Mile 38.3

Tenn Lake
• Mile 37

Primrose Campground
• Mile 17

Exit Glacier Campground

Exit Glacier
(Kenai Fjords Natl. Park Access)

Seward Small Boat Harbor
• Mile 1

Cañes Head
• Mile 0

Seward

Cooper Landing

Hope

Moose Pass

Girdwood

Portage

Whittier

12 MILES



- Chugach National Forest
- Kenai National Wildlife Refuge
- Kenai Fjords National Park
- Crucatch State Park

- Emergency Help
- Public Toilets
- Open W-Round
- Scenic Viewpoint
- Fishing Area
- Camp Site
- Hiking Trail

- Railroad
- Seward Hwy
- Lakes/Rivers
- Trails

WILDLIFE VIEWING

The highway takes you through prime wildlife viewing areas for moose, bear, Dall sheep, eagles, beluga whales, salmon and birds from all over the world. And if you venture by boat just off the highway, you'll discover Alaska's famous marine life, too.

FOR GREAT WILDLIFE PHOTOS, REMEMBER THESE TIPS:

- Be patient. All good shots come to those who wait.
- Always have your camera at the ready.
- Use a telephoto to shoot larger wildlife from a safe distance.
- For a wildlife-focused driving itinerary, download the "Raven's Earth" and "Whales' View" wildlife guides at www.kenaipeninsula.org/kenai_guide/index.htm.



NOTEWORTHY PLANTS ALONG THE PATH

The general topography of the drive ranges from rocky coastline to subalpine forest to temperate coastal rain forest. Depending on when you visit, you'll encounter colorful fields of Alaskan wildflowers, blueberry-carpeted mountainsides, and various trees alive with the birdlife they support.

! FLOWERY FRIENDS & FOES

In August, the road comes alive with brilliant splashes of fireweed. No scenic Alaska photo would be complete without at least one of these tall, purplish pink stalks in the foreground. The region's not-so-friendly plants include cow parsnip (it contains a phototoxin that can cause blisters if you touch it) and devil's club (barbed stalks can be painful).



Chugach National Forest
Fireweed



Chugach National Forest
Cow Parsnip



Chugach National Forest
Devil's Club

WINTER PHENOMENA

The Seward Highway is open all year round. Winter blankets the land in powdery snow, the shores of Turnagain Arm are piled high with stamukhi (huge ice formations), and the magical aurora borealis occasionally lights up the night sky. Refer to the "Volume 3: Recreation" for more wintertime information.



SCENIC DESCRIPTIONS BY LOCATION

ANCHORAGE COASTAL WILDLIFE REFUGE (POTTER MARSH) • Mile 117

Thousands of migratory birds rest and nest at this 2,300-acre wetland every year. Watch an arctic tern hover like a helicopter then dive into the marsh for a meal. Look for 3-foot long king salmon swimming under the boardwalk. Or photograph swans, grebes and many other birds with the mountains reflected in the water.



POTTER SECTION HOUSE RAILROAD MUSEUM • Mile 115

Long before the road existed, railroad crews lodged here. Historic photos and model railroads on display tell the story. And don't miss the massive, 9-foot-high rotary snowplow behind the house.

POTTER CREEK VIEWPOINT & TRAIL • Mile 115.1

The meadow just off the highway is a great place to spot and learn about moose. The trailhead features expansive views and interpretive signs.

MCHUGH CREEK STATE PICNIC AREA • Mile 111

Follow the upper level boardwalk to interpretive signs, a waterfall and spectacular views.

BELUGA POINT • Mile 110.4

This is a great spot to watch beluga whales chasing salmon up Turnagain Arm, witness the bore tide, or contemplate the mudflats. You can also see the Alaska Range, active volcanoes on the horizon, and beautiful sunsets.

! MUDEFLATS: WONDER & WARNING

The cool thing about the mudflats is that they're actually glacial silt — mountain rock ground to a powder by the glaciers and then deposited into rivers that carry it here. Most of the silt filling this 1,000 foot-deep fjord comes from surrounding rivers. A lot of the silt you see may once have been part of Denali (Mt. McKinley).

Warning! You don't ever want to go out on the mudflats. Similar to quicksand, this glacial mud can suddenly grab and hold the unwary. People caught in this predicament have drowned when the tide rushes in.



! BORE TIDE: A RUSHING WALL OF WATER

A bore tide, or tidal bore, is a large wave up to 6 feet high that rushes into Turnagain Arm. It can travel at 10-15 mph, with such force that it sounds like a train. Various elements affect whether the bore tide will occur and how big it will be. Minus tides, new or full moons and high winds all make for larger bore tides. At Beluga Point, bore tides generally occur about 45 minutes after the predicted Anchorage low tide.



Greger Wright

WINDY CORNER • Mile 106

Here the Dall sheep cling to the mineral laden cliffs. They come amazingly close to the road, making great pictures easy. Please respect the animals and keep your distance.

BIRD POINT WAYSIDE • Mile 96

Here you'll find beluga whales popping out of the sidewalks! Stop here for great views, beaver ponds and interpretive signs (and sculptures) about belugas, beavers, tides, wind-shaped trees and more.

INTERPRETIVE PULLOUTS

• Mile 95.3, 94.1, 92.5, 91.5

These are great spots to bask in glacier views...and ponder the fact that if you were standing here 10,000 years ago, you wouldn't see anything — because you'd be under 3,000 feet of glacial ice. Interpretive signs share more about everything from gold rush history to hooligan fishing and more.



Chugach National Forest

GIRDWOOD HIGHWAY JCT.

• Mile 90

Girdwood is a ski town and home to Mt. Alyeska. A tram takes you up to a viewing deck for breathtaking, panoramic views. From here you can also hike on a glacier, go berry picking, or jump off the mountain (strapped to your paragliding guide).

PORTAGE EARTHQUAKE EVIDENCE • Mile 90 - 80

Skeleton trees rising out of the marsh are ghosts of the 1964 Good Friday Earthquake. The mighty quake shook the entire region, dropping the land here by 6-12 feet. High tides then flooded the area with salt water, killing the trees. The community of Portage, once home to 50-100 residents, was hit hard. All that's left along the highway is a deteriorating, half-submerged building and a rusting truck.

ALASKA WILDLIFE CONSERVATION CENTER • Mile 79

For up-close and guaranteed wildlife viewing, this is the place. The center provides refuge for orphaned, injured, and ill animals — and gives visitors unparalleled opportunities to see brown bears, caribou, moose, musk oxen and many other Alaskan wildlife. www.alaskawildlife.org

PORTAGE GLACIER HIGHWAY JCT. • Mile 78

A 5-mile drive up this road leads to Portage Lake, Begich, Boggs Visitor Center, and boat access to Portage Glacier. The visitor center was built upon the terminal moraine left behind by Portage Glacier not so long ago (1914). Inside you'll find award-winning exhibits, a film, and information services. Outside, you may see icebergs floating in the lake. The glacier itself has retreated out of view, but an hour-long boat tour can take you to it. Further up the valley, you can drive through the 2.5-mile long mountain (toll) tunnel to Whittier, the gateway to Prince William Sound.



Chugach National Forest

TURNAGAIN PASS • Mile 68

The drive through Turnagain Pass (elevation approx. 1000 feet) takes you through a giant U-shaped glacier valley. Look for glacial moraines (low mounds) scattered in the flats south of the rest stop. In summer, the place is alive with brilliant wildflower displays. In winter, the slopes are crawling with backcountry skiers to the east and snowmachiners to the west.

CANYON CREEK WAYSIDE • Mile 56.7

Overlooking the confluence of Sixmile and Canyon creeks, this wayside features expansive views, interpretive signs, and a paved walking/biking trail down to the water.

HOPE JUNCTION • Mile 56.4

Along the 16-mile Hope Highway, you'll travel through an evergreen forest with intermittent views of Sixmile Creek and Turnagain Arm.

LOWER SUMMIT LAKE VIEWPOINT • Mile 47.2

Here you'll find great shots of lush fields of wildflowers and mountain reflections.

SUMMIT LAKE • Mile 45.5

Standing on the water's edge, you can soak in views of the surrounding alpine vista.

JEROME LAKE TURNOUT • Mile 38.3

This scenic little spot is a hideaway for rainbow trout and Dolly Varden. Throw in a line or just enjoy the view and the interpretive signs.



Chugach National Forest



Chugach National Forest

STERLING HIGHWAY • Mile 37.7

The “Combat Fishing” is a sight to see as anglers stand shoulder-to-shoulder during the salmon runs along the Kenai River. There’s also quieter fishing and scenic rafting available on this gorgeous river, starting at Cooper Landing.

TERN LAKE • Mile 37

A great place to spot birds and wildlife, this spot features an accessible viewing platform, interpretive signs and a majestic scene begging for a photo.

TRAIL LAKES FISH HATCHERY • Mile 32.4

Learn about the hatchery program with informational displays inside and outside the facility. Tours may be available.

KENAI LAKE OVERLOOK • Mile 22.6

This turquoise beauty is over 23 miles long and sits at 436 feet. A sign here explains how glaciers are responsible for its color.

SNOW RIVER • Mile 17.7

This river is prone to outbursts. It’s fed by the glacier meltwater from above, which is often impounded by ice dams. As these dams melt, they can suddenly give way — and release a tremendous “outburst flood” into the river. This can ultimately raise the level of the 23-mile long Kenai Lake by as much as three feet.



EXIT GLACIER ROAD JUNCTION • Mile 3.5

This 9-mile road takes you within a half-mile of the face of Exit Glacier. Signposts mark the retreat of the glacier since 1790. From the visitor center, take the easy, paved interpretive trail right up to the face of this towering river of ice. It’s the most accessible glacier in the region.

SEWARD SMALL BOAT HARBOR • Mile 1

In summer this place is hopping with flying fillet knives, eager anglers and excited glacier cruise passengers. This is your gateway to Resurrection Bay and the Kenai Fjords, home to whales, sea lions, puffins, sea otters and all manner of marine wildlife. Tour operators, fishing charters and the Kenai Fjords National Park Visitor Center are all located here.



Greger Wright

ALASKA SEALIFE CENTER • Mile 0

Touted as Alaska’s “windows to the sea,” this popular visitor attraction is both a public aquarium and an ocean wildlife rescue, rehabilitation and research center. Exhibits immerse visitors in Alaskan marine ecosystems and provide opportunities to watch animals in naturalistic habitats.



Chugach National Forest

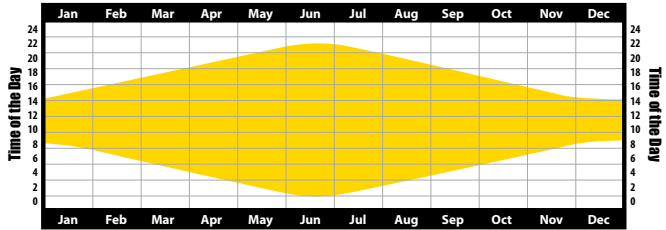
TIPS TO HELP YOU STAY SAFE & ENJOY THE DRIVE:

- Pull over often so you can relax and enjoy the views.
- Drive with lights on at all times, day or night (it's the law).
- Let others pass — by law, if you have five vehicles behind you, you must pull off the road (in a safe place) and let them pass.
- Don't count on your cell phone. Mountains make cell service spotty, which means help may not be readily available should your vehicle have trouble. Be prepared.
- Watch for frost heaves. Seasonal freezing and thawing causes unexpected (and unmarked) bumps or breaks in the pavement.



DAYLIGHT HOURS

This region is blessed with long summer days, with nearly 24 hours of daylight in June, and lingering winter sunsets that make for gorgeous photographs.



HELPFUL RESOURCES

EMERGENCY

Alaska State Troopers: 911 or (907) 269-5511

ROAD CONDITIONS

Call 511 or visit <http://511.alaska.gov>

LOCAL VISITOR CENTERS

Anchorage CVB 907-276-4118 www.anchorage.net

Begich, Boggs Visitor Center 907-783-2326

www.fs.fed.us/r10/chugach/chugach_pages/bbvc/bbvc.htm

Girdwood Chamber of Commerce www.girdwoodchamber.com

Whittier Chamber of Commerce www.whittieralaskachamber.org/

Hope Chamber of Commerce www.advenalaska.com/hope/

Cooper Landing Chamber & CVB 907-595-8888 www.cooperlandingchamber.com

Moose Pass Chamber & CVB 907-288-3111 www.moosepassalaska.com

Seward Chamber of Commerce, CVB 907-224-8051 www.seward.com

RECREATION INFORMATION

Alaska Department of Fish & Game: (907) 465-4100 www.adfg.state.ak.us

Alaska Public Lands Information Center (Anchorage): (907) 271-2737

Chugach National Forest: (907) 743-9500

Chugach State Park: (907) 269-8400

Public Information Center (Anchorage): (907) 269-8400

US Forest Service: (907) 743-9500 U.S. Forest Service

USDA Forest Service Glacier Ranger District: Girdwood (907) 783-3242

USDA Forest Service Seward Ranger District: Seward (907) 224-3374

WEATHER CONDITIONS

Alaska Weather Information: 1-800-472-0391 or (907) 266-5145

Avalanche Information Center: www.cnfaic.org

National Weather Service: www.arh.noaa.gov

OTHER SEWARD HIGHWAY GUIDES INCLUDE:

Volume 2: Communities

Volume 3: Recreation

Volume 4: History & Culture



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