

CLIA DESTINATION FACTSHEET

ALASKA AND WEST COAST USA



10 REASONS TO CRUISE HERE

Animal magic – Alaska runs alive with wildlife, notably roaming bears, wolves, caribou and bald eagles, while the North Pacific’s fertile waters offer rich whale-watching with orca, humpback and many other species, plus sea otters, sealions and spawning salmon.

Adrenalin adventures – flight-seeing trips, zip-wire thrills, glacier-hikes and whale-watching are bucket-list experiences, along with white-water rafting, dog-sledding and wildlife-spotting outings.

Natural spectacles – Alaska is known as America’s Last Frontier and its vast wilderness (six times larger than the UK) packs an impressive punch with snow-topped mountains, glaciers and national parks.

Cultural heritage – a colourful mix of the state’s indigenous people, known as Alaskan natives; the Gold Rush and its logging history brought to life in tourist lumberjack shows; and Russian influences from when Alaska was a Russian colony until 1867.

Glaciers a-go-go – there are around 100,000, though only 650 or so are named. Glacier Bay National Park has several ice floes that reach the sea, with Margerie Glacier being one of them. Other notables include Hubbard Glacier, Mendenhall Glacier and Sawyer Glaciers.

Wildlife draws – black bears catching salmon at Neets Bay (from Ketchikan), salmon sport-fishing, wildlife-spotting and whale-watching, plus Sitka’s Alaska Raptor Centre for injured birds.

Alaskan hot-spots – state capital Juneau is the jumping off point for the Tongass National Forest; Sitka was founded by Russian fur traders and was the capital of Russian Alaska; Skagway is the gateway to Gold Rush territory.

Island hideaways – discover Pacific archipelagos with cruises through Puget Sound to the little-known San Juan Islands just north of Seattle, and the Haida Gwaii islands, off the coast of British Columbia, known as Canada’s Galapagos isles.

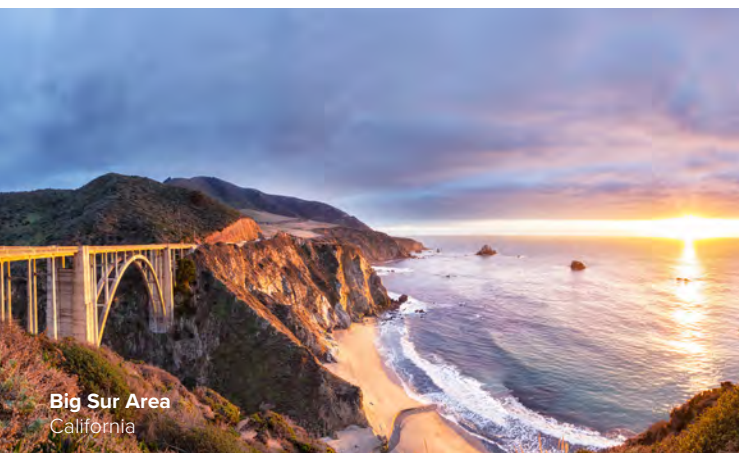
California dreamin’ – climb the steep streets of San Francisco, admire the stately surroundings of the so-called American Riviera town of Santa Barbara and the wild, rolling Big Sur coastline around Monterey.

Mexican waves – cruise the Sea of Cortez, off the coast of Mexico’s Baja California, known as the world’s aquarium thanks to its amazing array of marine life with calving whales, sealions and thousands of rays that fly over the waves.

BEST TIME TO GO/WEATHER

The Alaska cruise season runs from May to September when summer temperatures can range from 15-25 degree Celsius. The further north you go, the cooler temperatures will be. The state is known for its rainy conditions, though May is said to be relatively dry, with the weather becoming rainier as the summer progresses. In August, the chance of rain is said to be just over 50 per cent.

The US West Coast enjoys mild winters and warm summers, while the Mexican Riviera has a year-round warm tropical climate, with only a few degrees difference between the hot humid months of July and August, when temperatures can reach more than 30 degrees Celsius, to the cooler months of December and January when they hover in the high 20s. During summer, while hurricanes and storms along the West Coast of North America are rare, they can occasionally strike. The Eastern Pacific hurricane season runs from May to the end of November.

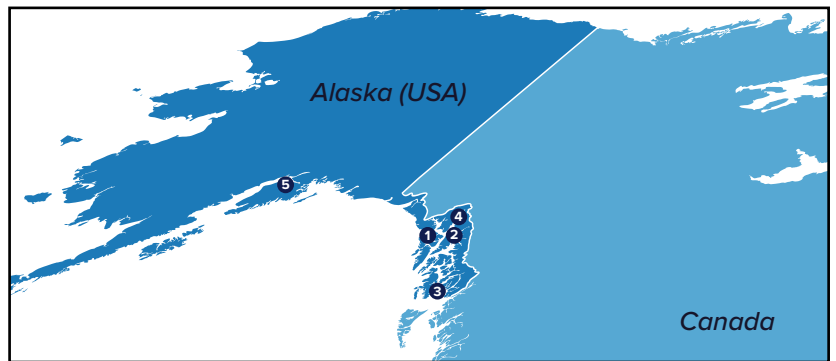
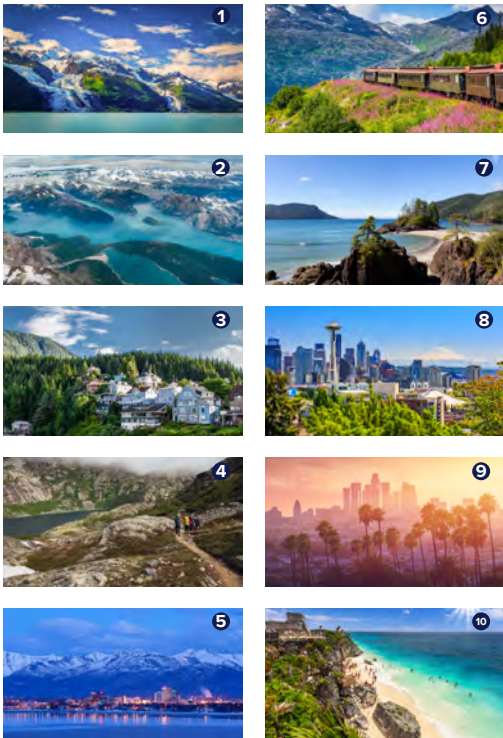


Big Sur Area
California

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10 KEY ATTRACTIONS



1. Glacier Bay National Park – covering a mind-boggling 3.3 million acres along Alaska’s Inside Passage, it brims with mountains, glaciers and rainforest along craggy coastlines and deep fjords offering a plethora of natural wonders.

2. Juneau – Alaska’s state capital, only accessible by air or sea, is a bustling hub of tourist shops and gateway to natural wonders including the Juneau Icefield and Mendenhall Glacier plus the Tongass National Forest

3. Ketchikan – famous for numerous totem poles signifying its links to Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian native tribes; history of logging and fishing; and its reputation as one of America’s rainiest cities. Gateway to the Misty Fjords explored on floatplane trips.

4. Gold Rush territory – hark back to the Klondike Gold Rush of the 1890s, with trips from Skagway to the route taken by prospectors along the Chilkoot Trail or ride the Yukon Route Railroad through the historic White Pass.

5. Anchorage – Alaska’s largest city, but its backdrop of mountain peaks is a reminder of the wilderness beyond. Cruises start or end here, or at the town of Seward 125 miles away, or the hamlet of Whittier 65 miles distant.

6. Rocky Mountaineer train – ride the railroad across Canada on this famous train that weaves between snowy peaks and glacial lakes. Journeys start and finish in Vancouver, making this a perfect add-on to Alaska cruises from the city.

7. Canadian coast – the lively cosmopolitan vibe of Vancouver contrasts with the cosy homespun charm of Victoria on Vancouver Island – with both Canadian cities mainstays of Alaskan cruise itineraries.

8. Seattle – as the home of Starbucks, this buzzing West Coast hub is famous for its coffee house culture, along with foodie delights at picturesque Pike Place Market and sky-high views from the Space Needle.

9. Los Angeles & San Diego – cruise the boulevards of Los Angeles and savour the showbiz feel of Hollywood or chill amid the laidback surfer vibe of San Diego with its string of beaches and world-famous zoo.

10. Mexican Riviera – resorts including Ensenada, Cabo San Lucas, Mazatlan and Manzanillo offer balmy beaches, beautiful scenery, and exciting water sports, with impressive seafood cuisine and good shopping too.

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Denali National Park

10 THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO:

Stay in a wilderness lodge – some cruise lines have their own rustic properties in Alaska’s Denali National Park that can be slotted on to sailings, offering immersive wilderness stays along with a range of active excursions.

Dig deep for adventure – such bucket list experiences don’t come cheap with some excursions running into hundreds of pounds, so weigh up which ones are worth it and budget accordingly.

Short stops in Victoria – if you want to visit this Canadian city, study the itinerary as some sailings from US ports stop here for only two or three hours, often at night, as a technical stop to meet US cabotage laws, making it impossible to go ashore for any meaningful time.

Add a city stay – Alaska and US West Coast cruises lend themselves to cruise-and-stay options as departure cities include Seattle, Vancouver, Anchorage, San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Get set for rain or shine – Alaskan weather is famously unpredictable and the state is renowned for having more than its fair share of rain, making it one of the wettest spots in the USA, though it can be hot and sunny too.

Size is everything – large ships follow similar itineraries through the Inside Passage and Gulf of Alaska, but smaller vessels sail to smaller bays, focusing more on natural surroundings and wildlife, calling at small towns rather than larger ports.

Bring the right gear – Alaska’s changeable conditions call for a versatile wardrobe to cope with chilly or hot temperatures with lots of layers, waterproofs and walking shoes for any hiking trips. It’s worth packing binoculars too.

Plan ahead – with such a tempting line-up of activities and adventures in Alaska, pre-planning is essential as excursions can get booked up early, so if there are particular tours that appeal, reserve them before departure.

Pick your best time – Alaska’s season runs from May to September, though there are specific times for bird and whale migrations and salmon spawning. The best months to visit Mexico’s Sea of Cortez to spot migratory whales are January to April.

Beware the crowds – pick the start or end of the Alaska season if you want to share the ports with fewer tourists. In the Mexican Riviera, avoid the Spring Break season around Easter when college students descend en masse for partying galore.

