





BACK: The summer solstice sunset over Lena Cove. FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: A totem pole in the city center reminds visitors of the local culture. An ice cream cone from Chilkat Cove. King salmon filets sizzle at the Taku Glacier Lodge salmon bake.

Juneau, Alaska

Start Planning Your Summertime
Getaway to Alaska's Scenic State Capital

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Alaska, known as the last frontier state, has been settled for quite some time, but there is still plenty to discover—especially in the capital city of Juneau, where glaciers, wildlife, gold, and mountains are all waiting for exploration. Located in the panhandle of Southeast Alaska, the city is home to just over 30,000 residents year-round, but it sees nearly one million visitors every summer, when stores and museums are open, tour companies are operating, and the weather is at its best. Although it's not technically an island, Juneau is isolated from the rest of Alaska's mainland by waterways and rugged terrain, making it accessible only by plane, cruise ships, and local ferries, not cars.

Once you arrive, learn more about the city's history with a visit to one or more of the local museums. Visit the Alaska State Museum, Juneau-Douglas City Museum, or the Last Chance Mining Museum and Historical Park. The mining museum is just outside the city center in the woods, requiring a beautiful nature hike to get there. If you're intrigued by what you learn, schedule a gold-panning excursion of your own.

Although the forty-ninth state is rich with stories of the past, today's focus is all about outdoor activities. The area's diverse landscape is an outdoor enthusiast's paradise that offers

activities for every experience level. There are more than 250 miles of hiking trails, including wheelchair-accessible paths; the popular three-mile Perseverance Trail; and the more strenuous West Glacier Trail, which leads to the ice caves. The caves are located inside the Mendenhall Glacier, so it's cold, wet, and slippery, but the glowing blue environment makes up for any discomfort. Adventure at your own risk or with a guide. Because of the changing nature of the glacier, it's not recommended to enter the caves.

Juneau is home to several large glaciers that can all be seen by air, but the Mendenhall is the most accessible, and the most visited. Car, bus, or shuttle will get you to the visitors' center, from which you can take an abbreviated walking tour. There are also helicopter rides that will land you directly on the glacier, where you can enjoy a walking tour and even sip fresh glacier water.

Continue exploring and see the sights while zip lining, whale watching, kayaking in the Gastineau Channel and Mendenhall Lake, or taking the Mount Roberts Tramway. For a comprehensive Alaskan experience (views, food, activity, and wildlife), go on the Taku Glacier Lodge Flight and Feast Tour. The three-hour experience includes an aerial journey in a floatplane whose



OPPOSITE: Cruise ships bring the majority of visitors to Juneau every summer. Here, they dock in the Gastineau Channel. THIS PAGE, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: The meal at the Take Glacier Lodge Flight and Feast includes homemade coleslaw, biscuits, beans, baked apples, and grilled king salmon. The city streets are lined with historical buildings that house restaurants and artisan galleries among other businesses. A tour helicopter departs the Mendenhall Glacier.

destination is a remote, rustic lodge once home to pioneer woman Mary Joyce, who munched from Juneau to Fairbanks in the 1930s. While there, you can take nature walks, soak in the up-close view of the Taku Glacier, and eat an amazing meal of freshly caught king salmon, homemade side dishes, and drinks cooled by chunks of floating glacier pieces.

Salmon is abundant in Juneau, and so is the opportunity to fish. Schedule a trip with a guide or purchase an affordable weeklong license and go solo. Beware, bald eagles might steal your catch; the protected birds are everywhere, as are ravens (both birds are meaningful in Alaskan Native culture). Other wildlife around town includes the more-elusive bears and moose. If you want to have a better chance at safely viewing wildlife, rent a car during your stay. The city center is compact, but if you're there for more than a couple of days, a car (or car service) is recommended.

After you work up an appetite from adventuring, sample some of the local eats. Slurp crab chowder from the famed Tracy's King Crab Shack (featured on the television show *Top Chef*), or walk next door to one of the other food carts specializing in regional reindeer sausage. Hangar on the Wharf offers tasty pub food, drinks, and a picturesque view of the Gastineau Channel. If you're a beer connoisseur, don't miss the Alaskan Brewing Company.

For an alternative to the town's standard seafood fare, try one

of the walk-up counters or carts offering foreign cuisine. Pel' Meni, a late-night spot, is bare-bones and has no menu because it serves only one thing: pelmeni, which are Russian potato or

Weather Permitting

Even if your travels to Juneau take place during the summer, prepare for the possibility of rain and pack plenty of layers; the weather changes quickly in this waterfront city.

meat dumplings. Have cash in hand and specify your selection right away to avoid looking like a flummoxed tourist.

Satisfy a sweet tooth at one of Juneau's old-fashioned dessert shops. On a hot summer day, head down to Chilkat Cove, where they scoop rich ice cream into embossed sugar cones that resemble totem poles—as if ice cream could get any cooler. Start a morning or finish a meal with a visit to Heritage Coffee Roasting Co., Juneau's hometown roaster and the oldest privately-owned coffee roasting company in Alaska.

For souvenirs, you'll find stores with T-shirts and tchotchkes, but be sure to also visit the many local galleries or the bead shops (such as Peer Amid Beads) that feature handmade jewelry, carvings, and other artwork by Alaskan locals and natives. Whether it's through a souvenir or an experience, you can still find treasures in Juneau. ■