Eagle-Eye Tours

Alaska Birding Itinerary

Link: Alaska Birding

Tour Overview

Alaska is famed for its stunning scenery, amazing megafauna, breathtaking birds, and long summer days! Our Alaska birding tour explores a diversity of habitats and ecosystems that dreams are made of. From the productive summer tundra of Nome, to standing on the edge of the the Arctic Ocean in Barrow, the glacial carved fjords of Kenai Fjords National Park, and the stunning spruce and hemlock forests of the Chugach Mountains and Kenai Peninsula, Alaska's beauty is profound.

This tour is a nature-lovers paradise, with chances to see mammals like Grizzly Bear, Moose, Muskox, Orca, Humpback Whale, Caribou, Thinhorn Sheep, Black Bear, Steller's Sea Lion, Harbor Seal, Sea Otter, Brown Lemming and more!

Summer in Alaska attracts breeding birds in the millions and we will travel to some of the best birding locations in not only the state but in the entire country! From Anchorage, to Seward to Nome and Barrow, you will be blown away by an array of unique birds in their beautiful breeding colors.

Birds on this tour include Bald Eagle, Horned and Tufted Puffins, Marbled, Ancient, and Kittlitz's Murrelet, Long-tailed and Harlequin Ducks, Aleutian and Arctic Terns, all four of the Eider species (Steller's, Spectacled, Common and King), all three Jaeger species (Pomarine, Parasitic and Long-tailed), Bristle-thighed Curlew, and Emperor Goose. Other big targets on this tour include Gyrfalcon, Snowy Owl, Arctic Warbler, American Dipper, Rufous Hummingbird, Townsend's Warbler, Northern Wheatear, Bluethroat, Rock and Willow Ptarmigan, White-winged and Red Crossbill, Pine Grosbeak, Slaty-backed Gull, Black-legged Kittiwake, Red-faced Cormorant, and Black-backed Woodpecker. Alaska is in a league of its own, let us show you the best of what it has to offer!

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Anchorage - meet for dinner



Our Alaska birding tour starts at our hotel in Anchorage for a meet and greet and dinner. Night in Anchorage.

Day 2: Fly to Nome



We will have an early morning flight to Nome. Upon arrival we'll take a taxi to our hotel for the next three nights and then head into a van looking for a whole new assemblage of birds! Our first foray on the Seward Peninsula will be down Council Road to the Nome Rivermouth all the way down to Cape Sound. Along the way we'll stop at ponds, bridges, creek crossings and anything that draws our attention. We have a ton of targets in Nome including Emperor Goose, Slaty-backed Gull, Baird's Sandpiper, Red Knot, Northern Wheatear, Eastern Yellow Wagtail, White Wagtail, Hoary Redpoll, and Lapland Longspur to name a few, and we hope to see Red-throated Loon, Pacific Loon, Common Loon and just maybe an Arctic Loon! We'll have dinner and then if and then the long days mean we can head out after dinner if we are keen! Night in Nome.

Day 3: Nome



Breakfast at the hotel, and then load into the vans to spend most of the day in the field! Birding in Nome essentially involves cruising one of the three roads searching, walking and scanning the tundra and sea for birds! Which is exactly what we'll be doing! Depending on road conditions we hope to journey 70 miles inland on the Kougarok Road. Today's primary target is the Bristle-thighed Curlew which requires about a 2-3 mile walk on challenging tundra. However we'll be walking at an easy pace, and along the way we'll look out for Golden Eagle, Gyrfalcon, Tundra Swan, Willow and Rock Ptarmigan, Wandering Tattler, Gray-cheeked Thrush, American and Pacific Golden-Plovers, Arctic Warbler, and Bluethroat! Out on the tundra we'll also keep our eyes peeled for Grizzly Bear which are generally uncommon but would be amazing to see! Lunch will be a picnic style out in the field followed by dinner back in town after a late afternoon arrival. Night in Nome.

Day 4: Nome



Today we are heading northwest of Nome with the Town of Teller as our furthest point. We have many of the same targets as the previous two days. Here we might find American Dipper, Short-eared Owl, Bar-tailed Godwit, Northern Wheatear or any of the three Jaegers! Chances for mammal sightings include Grizzly Bear, Beaver and the prehistoric Muskox! Night in Nome.

Day 5: Nome morning birding - fly back to Anchorage



With our bags packed and stowed at the hotel, we've got the better part of the day to search for any missing targets as we scan the sea, skies and tundra for Black, White-winged and Stegneger's Scoter, Rock Sandpiper, Black Guillemot, Sabine's Gull, Aleutian Tern, and Rusty Blackbird. In the afternoon, we will pick up our bags and head to the airport for our flight to Anchorage. Night in Anchorage.

Day 6: Drive to Seward and the Kenai Peninsula



Following breakfast we'll begin our beautiful journey towards Seward (2.5 hrs). Along the way, we'll make several stops as we drive by the glorious Chugach Mountains and Turnagin Arm looking for Kenai Peninsula regional specialties! At our first stop in Kincaid Park we'll look for Sandhill Crane, Black-capped Chickadee, Boreal Chickadee, Brown Creeper, Downy Woodpecker, Hairy Woodpecker and the elusive Spruce Grouse. Then we'll bird Potter Marsh where we'll look for Cackling Goose, Arctic Tern, Northern Harrier, Black-billed Magpie, Golden-crowned Sparrow, Rusty Blackbird, an assortment of ducks, and more! After Potter Marsh we'll check out a pullout along the Seward Highway to use the restroom and scan the hillside for Mountain Goat, Black Bears or whatever might be around! Next stop, we'll check out Tern Lake for Trumpeter Swans, Common and Barrow's Goldeneye, Red-necked Grebe, Common Loon, Varied Thrush and White-winged Crossbill. Continuing on for another stop at Bear Creek Weir to look for American Dipper and Steller's Jay, Townsend's Warbler and Pacific Wren! After lunch in Seward we'll explore Lowell Point scanning the water and skies for birds like Harlequin Duck, Surf Scoter, Wandering Tattler, Common Murre, Pigeon Guillemot, Marbled Murrelet, Black-legged Kittiwake, Glaucous-winged Gull, Double-crested Cormorant, Pine Siskin and keep a look out for the White-winged Crossbill in case we haven't seen them yet! We'll spend the rest of the day looking for birds around Seward and enjoying this beautiful coastal town! This should take us into dinner and if folks want to walk around and explore we'll have plenty of daylight left! Night in Seward.

Day 7: Kenai Fjords Wildlife Cruise



Today we'll head out on a 8.5 hour wildlife boat cruise exploring Kenai Fjords National Park. This spectacular full-day outing includes beautiful scenery with rugged cliffs, glaciers, spruce forested islands, and frigid waters that host a plethora of marine life! This is the best chance for us to observe a variety of Alcids and other marine birds like Horned Puffin, Tufted Puffin, Black-legged Kittiwake, Comon Murre, Thick-billed Murre, Black Oystercatcher, Red-faced Cormorant, Kittlitz's Murrelet, Ancient Murrelet, Marbled Murrelet, Rhinoceros Auklet, Parakeet Auklet, Sooty Shearwater, Parasitic Jaeger, Long-tailed Jaeger, Peregrine Falcon, Pigeon Guillemot, Surf Scoter, White-winged Scoter, Black Scoter, Red-breasted Merganser, Red-necked Phalarope, Pacific Loon, Common Loon, Harlequin Duck, and Bald Eagle! As we cruise through the cold, nutrient rich waters we've also got chances to see other epic marine life like Orca, Humpback Whales, Dall's Porpoise, Harbor Seal, Steller Sea Lion, Sea Otter, or Mountain Goat and Black Bear foraging by the coast! Town for dinner and relaxing! Night in Seward.

Day 8: Drive to Anchorage



Today we'll hit some birding spots around Seward, hoping to pick up any of our missing targets like Rufous Hummingbird, Pine Grosbeak, Chestnut-backed Chickadee and Red Crossbill. Then we'll drive back leisurely to Anchorage area with some more birding stops once we arrive. Our agenda includes another visit to Potter Marsh then on to Spenard Crossing to look for a few new species like Canvasback, Redhead, Bufflehead, and Bonaparte's Gull. Then we'll enjoy a nice lunch and head back into the field to explore Westchester Lagoon where we'll be on the lookout for Long-tailed Duck, Semipalmated Plover, Hudsonian Godwit, Surbird, Short-billed Dowitcher, Long-billed Dowitcher, Red-necked Phalarope, Osprey, Merlin, and Bank Swallow. How we do will determine where we go to explore the rest of the day! Dinner and night in Anchorage.

Day 9: Fly to Utqiaġvik (Barrow)



This morning we'll have the opportunity to explore local hotspots around Anchorage with specific effort to look for a couple beautiful woodpeckers, the American Three-Toed and Black-backed Woodpecker. They are both fans of burned areas so we'll head to a recent burn area to see what we can find! We'll also be on the lookout for Olive-sided Flycatcher, White-winged Crossbill and any other forest birds we need! We will have an afternoon flight t to Utqiaġvik (Barrow), the northernmost town in the United States where the sun never sets in the summer. Situated on the edge of the Arctic Ocean, an incredible 320 miles north of the Arctic Circle, we'll spend two and a half days here. Upon arrival we'll check into our hotel, have some food and get situated to head out in our van to explore this birding mecca! Here we have chances at seeing all four Eiders, Yellow-billed Loon and an abundance of shorebirds donning their breeding colors and display behaviors, a sight to behold! Night in Utqiaġvik.

Days 10 - 11: Utqiaġvik (Barrow)



Targets during our time in Utqiaġvik include Snow Goose, Long-tailed Duck, American Golden-Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, Red Knot, Sanderling, Dunlin, Baird's Sandpiper, White-rumped Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Stilt Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Western Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitcher, Wilson's Snipe, Red-necked Phalarope, Red Phalarope, Pomarine Jaeger, Parasitic Jaeger, Long-tailed Jaeger. We'll also look out for Snowy Owl, Glaucous Gull, Black Guillemot, Blackpoll Warbler, and the abundant Snow Bunting in its gorgeous breeding colors! We may even get lucky and see a Polar Bear (rare) or Walrus (rare). Nights in Utqiaġvik.

Day 12: Morning bird in Utqiaġvik, fly to Anchorage (evening flight)



Today we'll head down another road in search of what the tundra and sea have to offer us! We'll bird most of the day, and then collect our bags from the hotel and head to the airport to catch our early evening flight back to Anchorage. Night in Anchorage.

Day 13: Departure

Our Alaska birding tour ends today. Breakfast is available at the hotel, but you can leave anytime today to catch flights home after our incredible Alaskan birding adventure!

What to Expect

Overview

Alaska Birding is a moderately paced birding tour. You can expect some early mornings and long days in the field.

Food

We generally have breakfast at the hotel before we head out for the day. We often take a picnic lunch in the field, but will occasionally stop at a restaurant for lunch. Dinner is usually at the lodge or a nearby restaurant. Each evening after dinner we compile the day's checklist, review the day's activities, birds, mammals and other observations, and plan the next day's activities.

Accommodation

All of our accommodations will be at comfortable, clean and delightful lodgings. Even remote places like Nome and Barrow have great places to stay!

Walking

Our days will be a mix of driving and walking. One of our longest walking days will be in Nome hiking 3-5 km (2-3 miles) on uneven, hilly, challenging tundra. The rest of the days will be much more relaxed, we may easily walk 3-5 km (2-3 miles) or more, but it will be on well established trails, wooden boardwalks, roads, or sidewalks. All of our walks will be at a slow to moderate pace with many breaks.

Rubber boots are mandatory for our time in Nome and Barrow as we may walk on wet soggy tundra to get better looks of birds or scan the edges of ponds and spits for elusive birds. They are easy to store under the seat of the van and you can slip into them easily when you need them.

Driving

We will be using rented vans to transport ourselves around Anchorage and Seward, these will be comfortable and modern passenger vans. In Barrow we will also travel in rented vans, while in Nome this will be in rented SUV's, however these will likely be older and well-used, but these vehicles will still be safe and get us to where we need to go! In Nome and Barrow we'll be in and out of the vehicle as we make forays to scan the tundra, or drive to hotspots.

Climate

The weather in Alaska is highly variable, it could easily be sunny one day and rainy, drizzly or overcast the next. So pack for extremely variable weather. Temps from -7 to +7° C (20° – 45° F) in Nome and Barrow to temps in between 10 – 20° C (50° – 80°F) in Anchorage and Seward. High-quality rain gear, rubber boots and plenty of warm layers and gloves are required!

Boat Trips

We take an 8.5 hour boat trip on a vessel with 60 person capacity. The boat is comfortable with lots of covered seating. There are bathrooms on board, as well as snacks and beverages.

This cruise is not wheelchair accessible and not suitable for guests with limited mobility, or for those

who are prone to seasickness since it travels through the open Gulf of Alaska.

Insurance

Emergency medical insurance is mandatory for this tour due to its remote location and the potentially high cost of emergency evacuation. Trip interruption insurance is also mandatory because weather-related flight delays and cancellations are possible. We strongly recommend trip cancellation insurance to protect your investment if you need to cancel before departure.

What's Included

Tour Price Includes

• All accommodation (Good, comfortable)
• Internal flights (Anchorage to Nome return, Anchorage to Utqiaġvik return)
• All meals & soft drinks
• Ground transportation (passenger vans)
• Kenai Fjords National Park boat ride
• All park, conservation and entrance fees
• 4 - 8 participants with one leader, 9 - 10 participants with two leaders

Tour Price Does Not Include

• Flights to and from start/ end location
• Mandatory emergency medical and trip interruption insurance
• Items of a personal nature
• Alcoholic beverages
