

2020 OFFICIAL VISITOR GUIDE

MAT-SU VALLEY ALASKA

Explore

Denali, North America's Tallest Peak

Discover

Our History

Trek

On Timeless Glacial Ice

See

Abundant Wildlife

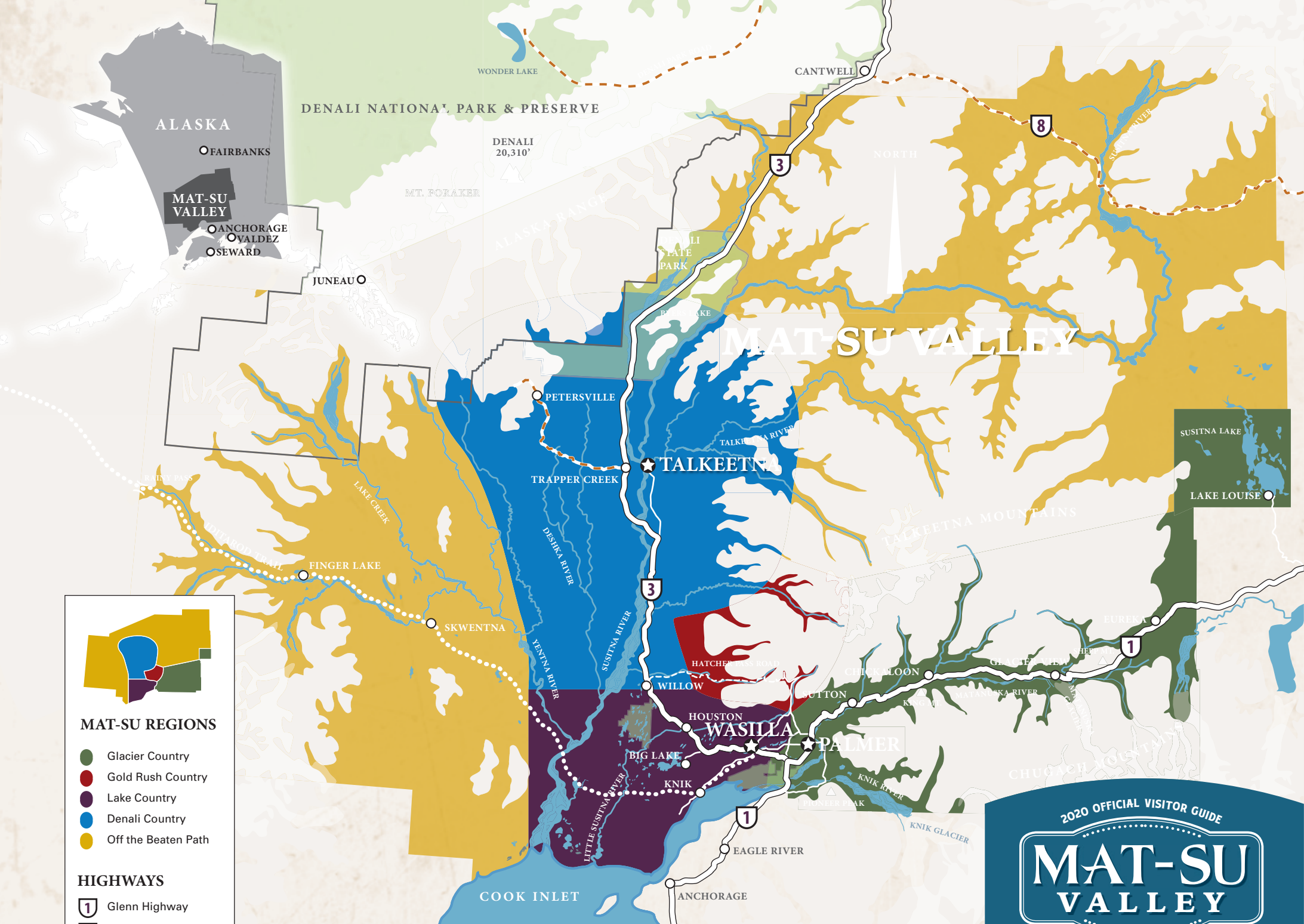
Enjoy

Hundreds Of Miles Of Wilderness Trails

AlaskaVisit.com

Just North of Anchorage All the Way to Denali Park

Denali, 20,310 feet



MAT-SU REGIONS

- Glacier Country
- Gold Rush Country
- Lake Country
- Denali Country
- Off the Beaten Path

HIGHWAYS

- Glenn Highway
- Parks Highway
- Denali Highway

LEGEND

- Regional Center
- Mat-Su townsite
- Primary Highway
- Paved Road
- Unpaved Road
- Iditarod Trail
- Nat'l/State Park

Road Distances mi/km	Anchorage	Wasilla	Palmer	Hatcher Pass**	Lake Louise	Talkeetna	Denali	Fairbanks	Valdez
Anchorage	0	42/68	42/68	60/97	160/260	113/182	237/381	362/583	304/489
Wasilla	42/68	0	10/16*	24/39	131/211	71/114	195/314	320/515	272/438
Palmer	42/68	10/16*	0	20/32	118/190	85/136	208/355	323/520	262/422
Hatcher Pass**	60/97	24/39	20/32	0	136/219	96/153	219/352	334/538	282/454
Lake Louise	160/260	131/211	118/190	136/219	0	203/326	326/525^	481/774^	163/262
Talkeetna	113/182	71/114	85/136	96/153	203/326	0	153/245	278/447	417/670
Denali	237/381	195/314	208/335	219/352	326/525^	153/245	0	125/201	470/756^
Fairbanks	362/583	320/515	323/520	334/538	481/774^	278/447	125/201	0	585/422^
Valdez	304/489	272/438	262/422	282/454	163/262	417/670	470/756^	585/422^	0

2020 OFFICIAL VISITOR GUIDE

MAT-SU VALLEY

ALASKA

The **Mat-Su Valley** is centrally located just **35 miles north of Anchorage**, south of **Denali National Park** and at the **convergence of Alaska's major highways**, truly making "the Valley" **the Heart of Alaska**.

Each region in this guide is identified by a corresponding **color**. Use this map to chart your course to **adventure** and guide you to **exciting activities** throughout the **Mat-Su Valley**.

NOTE: Distance figures have been rounded to the nearest m/km. Mileage has been taken from the "2013 Milepost"™
^Via Glenn to Parks Highway *Via Palmer-Wasilla Highway
**Distance to Independence Mine State Historical Park



Hatcher Pass

Trip
Planning

2

Glacier
Country

12

Gold Rush
Country

22

Lake
Country

26

Denali
Country

34

Off The
Beaten Path

44

The Rest
of Alaska

46

Explore “The Valley”

The Matanuska-Susitna Valley encompasses 23,000 square miles of mountains, glaciers, rivers and lakes, and bursts with adventures at every turn in the road. Locals call this region several names – “the Mat-Su Valley” or simply “The Valley” for short. Mat-Su actually is a shortened version of the proper name of the region – Matanuska-Susitna, which represents the two major rivers and valleys that form the region. The Matanuska Valley stretches along the Glenn Highway National Scenic Byway (Highway 1) all the way to Lake Louise. The Parks Highway (Highway 3) takes you north to Denali State Park in the heart of the Susitna Valley. The Valley begins just 35 miles north of Anchorage, making it a convenient destination for a day trip. Better yet, use the Mat-Su as your hub for a Southcentral Alaska adventure. Plan to stay awhile and discover all there is to see and do – you’ll definitely say “Yahoo, Mat-Su!”

Passport to Adventure

While the Mat-Su Valley isn’t labeled as such on many state maps, you can’t miss it. The region is large, diverse and boasts remote wilderness and classic Alaska communities such as Palmer, Wasilla, Big Lake, Houston, Willow, Talkeetna and Glacier View. Each town anchors a distinct region or “country” within the Mat-Su Valley, worth your visit. This guide is organized by those regions, each highlighting a unique geographic draw:

GLACIER COUNTRY – Lake Louise and Matanuska Glacier south to Palmer along the Glenn Highway National Scenic Byway (Hwy. 1), including Chickaloon and Sutton

GOLD RUSH COUNTRY – Includes Hatcher Pass and Independence Mine State Historical Park

LAKE COUNTRY – Wasilla north to Big Lake and Houston along the Parks Highway (Hwy. 3)

DENALI COUNTRY – including Willow, Talkeetna and Denali State Park

OFF THE BEATEN PATH and THE REST OF ALASKA – Begin planning your visit to each of these regions to fill your passport with adventure

Trip Planning

Your Toolkit for Adventure



Nancy Lake Recreation Area

Plan Ahead

In addition to this guide, start your planning at www.AlaskaVisit.com to discover what awaits. The site is packed with information, current events, an informative blog as well as beautiful images of the area. Check out the suggested itineraries section for ideas ranging from day trips from Anchorage to multi-day adventures. When you start planning the details, use our database of member businesses to find the perfect fit for your vacation. Make sure to sign up for the e-newsletter to stay up to date.

You can request a digital version of the visitor guide, so you'll always have it on your computer or tablet. The website is mobile friendly, so you can be connected and just one click away from the most current information.

Connect With Us!

If you want to get a sneak peek at what you'll see, check us out on Instagram – we're [@matsuvalleyak](https://www.instagram.com/matsuvalleyak) – and don't forget to tag your photos with [#yahoomatsu](https://www.instagram.com/yahoomatsu). Visit our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/visitmatsu to keep up with what's going on, and check out www.alaskavisit.com/blog for unique insights on things to see and do, from an Alaskan's perspective. To really get excited, visit our expanded channel on YouTube at www.youtube.com/yahoomatsu, where you'll find videos from every corner of the region.

Websites | Local Chambers of Commerce

palmerchamber.org | wasillachamber.org | biglakechamber.org
willowchamber.org | talkeetnachamber.org

Visitor Information in Every Direction

The Mat-Su Valley, much like Alaska in general, is a big area and can seem overwhelming to first-time visitors. Friendly and helpful resources in every community will help make your trip a success. Stop in and talk with the locals – they can steer you in the right direction.

Along the Glenn Highway, **Alpine Historical Park** at Mile 61.6 has information about the area's rich history, as well as visitor information for the Matanuska Valley. The open-air museum and historical park focuses on the early settlers and the Athabascan cultures in the Sutton and Chickaloon areas.

Location:

Mile 61.6 Glenn Highway,
Sutton

Hours:

Open daily, 9 a.m. to
7 p.m.,
mid-May through
mid-September

Phone:

(907) 745-7000

The **Greater Wasilla Chamber of Commerce** operates a visitor center in the historic train depot, where the Alaska Railroad stops daily in the summer. Stop in even if you aren't on the train for more information about the Wasilla area.

Location:

415 E. Railroad Ave., Wasilla

Hours:

Open Monday, Wednesday,
Thursday and Friday,
9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Phone:

(907) 376-1299

Also in Wasilla, the **Wasilla Museum**, formerly known as the Dorothy Page Museum, doubles as a visitor information center. You can learn about Wasilla's rich history, including touring the actual old townsite, and also get information for your next adventure.

Location:

323 N. Main St., Wasilla

Hours:

Open Tuesday-Friday,
9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Phone:

(907) 373-9071

In Palmer, the **Palmer Visitor Center** and Palmer Museum of History and Art are open year-round. They have a wealth of knowledge about the Colony project and the agricultural history of Palmer. Check out their amazing garden in the summer, featuring Alaska wildflowers and vegetables. There's even a replica of a world-famous giant cabbage.

Location:

723 S. Valley Way, Palmer

Phone:

(907) 746-7668

Hours:

Oct. 1-April 30,
open Wednesday-Friday,
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

May 1-Sept. 30,
open daily 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

In the small community of Talkeetna, there isn't a visitor information center, but an unmanned kiosk at the corner of Spur Road and Main Street (the main intersection) has a wealth of information about area attractions and lodging opportunities. Also, visit www.talkeetnachamber.org for informative trip planning information.

Glacier View has an informational kiosk located at Mile 99 Glenn Hwy., with information about the region near Matanuska Glacier. Learn more about rafting, glacier trekking and helicopter tours, as well as lodging opportunities.

Find Your Next Adventure

There are no interstate highways in Alaska, although three state highways frame the Mat-Su Valley: the Glenn (Highway 1), Parks (Highway 3) and Denali (Highway 8) highways. The Denali Highway is not paved, but the Glenn and Parks are major highways. If you're a do-it-yourself traveler, fly to Anchorage, rent a car or motorhome and drive to the Mat-Su Valley and let the area be your hub for your adventure. Or, if you prefer more guidance, let tour professionals arrange one-day and multi-day tours with transportation included. Find a list on www.alaskavisit.com.



Peters Hills, Petersville

Step Off The Ship And Into Adventure

Choose Mat-Su When You Cruise

The Mat-Su Valley may be miles from the nearest cruise port of call, but it can be a major part of your Alaska cruise vacation. Don't limit yourself to just the coastline when visiting Alaska via a cruise, and add on a land portion – you'll see a whole other side of Alaska! Set aside time before or after your ocean journey to explore Alaska beyond its coastlines. Many companies offer inclusive land tour options to add to your trip, either before you embark or after your cruise. It's also easy to do it yourself with some planning.

The Mat-Su Valley's location is ideal to add a day trip (complete with round-trip transportation), a three-day or even week-long excursion either before or after your Alaska cruise. Take some time and explore Southcentral Alaska, including spectacular views of Denali.

Step off the ship, and in just three days, you can:

1. **Experience Denali** – stay in Talkeetna and marvel at the view. The town has a vibe all its own. From Talkeetna, you can flightsee around Denali, take a jet boat trip up the many rivers, raft and hike. The quaint town may be hundreds of miles from the nearest cruise port, but it's a destination you don't want to miss on your land portion.
2. **Walk on a glacier** – you can drive up to Matanuska Glacier and trek on it yourself, or hire a guide for an even better experience. If you are short on time, consider a helicopter tour to Knik Glacier.
3. **Discover our history** – in the core area of Wasilla and Palmer, visit museums, the Musk Ox Farm and the Iditarod headquarters to learn about the region's rich history and culture.





Need More Ideas?

Go to www.alaskavisit.com to see suggested itineraries, a complete calendar of events, blog posts and listings for businesses that can assist your planning. Or call the Mat-Su Convention and Visitors Bureau at (907) 746-5000. We look forward to seeing you in our neck of the woods.

Share Your Experiences

Share your experiences in the Mat-Su Valley with us, long after you've returned home. Stay connected to the places and people you discover during your visit on social media. Tweet at us on Twitter ([@visitmatsu](https://twitter.com/visitmatsu)) or "like" us on Facebook ([Visit Alaska's Mat-Su Valley](https://www.facebook.com/VisitAlaskaMatSuValley)). Follow us on Instagram at [@matsuvallleyak](https://www.instagram.com/matsuvallleyak) and don't forget to hashtag your photos [#yahoomatsu](https://www.instagram.com/yahoomatsu). Get excited about your visit by watching our videos on YouTube ([yahoomatsu](https://www.youtube.com/yahoomatsu)). Finally, check out www.alaskavisit.com/blog to keep up with what's happening in the Mat-Su Valley.



Within an hour's drive of Palmer and Wasilla, you'll find more than 80 lakes that offer rainbow trout, pike and landlocked silver salmon. Within six minutes you can hop to new lakes and catch a different experience: semi-remote lakes, hike-in lakes, drive-to lakes. With this kind of opportunity, the Mat-Su is known as the Stillwater Fishing Capital of Alaska! Of course, true fishermen and women not only enjoy warm summer days, but return for winter ice fishing. Wet your line and get hooked in the Mat-Su. Many lakes are stocked by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, giving you great odds of hooking into a fish.



Knik Glacier

Do It Yourself

Trail Mix— run, bike or hike

The Mat-Su Valley has more than 2,000 miles of trails, making it a hiker's paradise, regardless of your skill level. Pick a destination, distance and degree of difficulty – the possibilities are limitless in all regions of the Mat-Su Valley. Take the family on a gentle, historic railroad trail near Palmer, or hike a ridge surrounding the mining region of Hatcher Pass, with views of the Matanuska Valley below. Explore the alpine wilderness of the Talkeetna Mountains on foot or ATV, or by professional guide service for even more adventure. For amazing views in just an hour, try the Butte just outside of Palmer. Denali State Park has many trails with views of the Alaska Range, including an ADA-accessible trail at Kesugi Ken Campground. You can find trail maps at www.alaskavisit.com/trails.

Hit the water

The Mat-Su Valley is home to countless rivers, lakes, creeks and streams, so whether you like your water swift or still, the Mat-Su has something for everyone. You can rent a canoe or kayak for a serene afternoon on a lake, or help paddle a raft down a river with an expert guide. The Lynx Lake Canoe Trail in Nancy Lake State Recreation Area off the Parks Highway in Willow offers easy portages between lakes, campgrounds and cabins for rent. Farther north in Denali State Park, you can rent canoes at Byers Lake. Lake Louise (off the Glenn Highway) is also a premier destination for water activities. Lake fishing is one of the Mat-Su Valley's best-kept secrets.

Learn about the Locals

The Mat-Su Valley's history is diverse, from a rich Native Alaskan Athabascan culture to gold mining and agriculture. Find out about this diverse history at one of the many museums.

- The Wasilla Museum (formerly known as the Dorothy Page Museum) is a great place to start. Wander through historic buildings and see exhibits that tell stories of the area's past.
- The Museum of Transportation and Industry is filled with relics from Alaska's past, including air planes, railroad cars and vintage automobiles.
- Palmer's agricultural Colony roots are on display at the Palmer Museum of History and Art and the Colony House Museum.
- Take Talkeetna's 16-site historic town walking tour and learn for yourself how the miners and trappers lived. Don't forget the Talkeetna Historical Society Museum or the Walter Harper Talkeetna Ranger Station to learn about Alaska's mountain climbing legends.
- On the Glenn Highway, stop in at the Alpine Historical Park to learn about the Native Alaskan history of the region.

Marvel at North America's Highest Peak

20,310 ft. Denali is a spectacular sight to behold! Heading north on the Parks Highway (Hwy. 3), you'll get your first glimpse of the mountain in Willow. Farther north in Talkeetna, there are many activities focused on Denali. Walk the lakeside trail around Byers Lake or climb to Kesugi or Curry Ridge in Denali State Park for undisturbed vistas of the "High One." Parks Highway pullouts at mileposts 135 and 147 provide safe areas to capture Denali's grandeur. The K'esugi Ken Campground at Mile 135.4, which opened in 2017, offers amazing views of Denali as well. Dramatic aerial views of Denali's lofty summit, flanking glaciers and granite canyons highlight flightseeing trips from Talkeetna. The southern views of Denali are widely considered the best in Alaska.

Scenic Drives

The Mat-Su Valley is filled with gorgeous scenery – just head out on virtually any highway for a spectacular trip filled with mountains on every side.

Head north on the Glenn Highway National Scenic Byway (Hwy. 1) and enjoy the views of the Chugach and Talkeetna mountains, while the Matanuska River frames your drive. Trek on Matanuska Glacier or try an exciting raft trip through Lion's Head rapids, and stop at a local roadhouse for a tasty lunch or cozy overnight stay.

Drive over Hatcher Pass Road to Willow – it opens to traffic around the Fourth of July and stays open until mid-September, weather permitting. Check with Alaska State Parks to confirm the road is open if you are traveling in early summer or late fall. Visit Independence Mine and Willow Creek for a scenic loop of the Susitna Valley. Keep an eye out for the abundant wildlife in the area, including moose and bear.

Petersville Road runs through the rugged mining backcountry of Trapper Creek in Denali Country – watch for wildlife and have your camera ready! This is a rugged drive, so be sure your vehicle is capable of the drive.

Day Trips from Anchorage

Less than an hour's drive north from Anchorage, the Mat-Su Valley is perfectly situated for day trips.

Strike it Rich – head to Hatcher Pass, Independence Mine and the Willow area to see mining's historical influence on the area. Don't forget your gold pan. There are many hiking trails, and the views are spectacular as well.

Get Cultured - visit Wasilla and Palmer in an afternoon – you'll see the Iditarod Headquarters, a variety of museums, the Palmer Musk Ox Farm and the Reindeer Farm. Take a farm tour to see Palmer's historical roots, and stop at a local restaurant for an Alaska Grown lunch.

Go Big – as in Denali. North of Wasilla on the Parks Highway, you can visit Talkeetna for an afternoon spent flightseeing, dining, shopping, rafting or just photographing Denali. It's a great way to spend a leisurely afternoon.

Family Vacations

Bring the whole family to the Mat-Su Valley for an exciting, and educational, experience.

Go fossil hunting along the Glenn Highway, gold panning in Hatcher Pass, bird viewing on the Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge, camping and more.

There are endless hiking opportunities for people of all ages and abilities, or rent a canoe and take advantage of Nancy Lake State Recreation Area for exciting outdoor fun. Try Hatcher Pass for a great day trip with lots of views.

Fun for all ages, Friday Flings, Colony Days or the Alaska State Fair are fantastic community celebrations in downtown Palmer. Don't forget about Wasilla's annual Fourth of July parade and picnic.



Knik River Valley

Wildlife and Parks

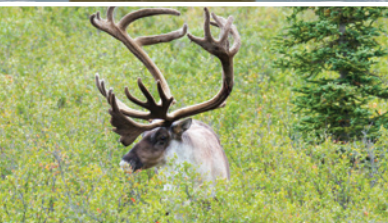
Part of Our Nature

Alaskans flock to the Mat-Su Valley for its many outdoor recreation opportunities. There are several popular and well-established state parks, from Palmer to Denali. The Mat-Su Valley is where Alaskans come to play! Keep an eye out for wildlife and the scores of migrating birds that come here to nest and raise their young. Be safe, and remember to respect the wildlife.



Moose

Winter and spring are good times to spot these large creatures on the Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge. Keep an eye out along the highway, especially near rivers and ponds. Enjoy them from afar – don't try to feed the moose. They are also prominent along the Glenn Highway north to the Sheep Mountain area. Knik River Road off the Old Glenn Highway is another popular spot to view moose.



Caribou

Related to moose and elk, caribou live in the northern and eastern reaches of the Mat-Su Borough. Herds are frequently spotted along the Denali Highway and near Lake Louise, along Hwy. 1.



Bear

Both brown and black bears are found throughout the Mat-Su Valley. Spotting bears is easiest on a flightseeing tour or by hiking off the main road system. They're also found along creeks and streams when the salmon are spawning. Be "bear aware" and carry bear spray. When traveling in the backcountry, be sure to make noise to avoid any potential confrontations.



Birds

From bald eagles and red-tailed hawks to songbirds and swans, a wide variety of birds travel through or spend the year in the Mat-Su. Identify them by their calls or keep an eye to the sky. The Palmer Hay Flats and Rabbit Slough, as well as the University of Alaska agriculture fields on Trunk Road, attract many migratory birds such as cranes and geese in spring. Along the Glenn Highway north, watch for migrating hawks, falcons or other raptors. Download an Alaska Birders Checklist at www.alaskavisit.com.

Denali State Park

(2.5 hours north of Anchorage)

The best views of Denali in all of Alaska can be found in Denali State Park, the smaller and less-crowded area south of the national park entrance. The views from Denali State Park are actually better than in the national park! Stop at the Denali Overlook (MP135.2 Parks Hwy) or hike the trail to Kesugi Ridge for incredible views. The newest campground in Alaska, K'esugi Ken, opened in 2017 and is located at Mile 135.4 Parks Hwy. It features easy hiking trails – some are ADA compliant – that have overlooks with panoramic views of Denali and the Alaska Range. Guided or self-guided nature hikes are available around Byers Lake. There are numerous opportunities for tent and RV camping, as well as kayak rentals.

Palmer Hay Flats State Game Refuge

(35 minutes north of Anchorage)

The gateway to the Mat-Su Valley from Anchorage, this refuge has endless photography and recreation possibilities, including kayaking, canoeing and hiking. Birders, wildflower lovers and outdoor enthusiasts flock to the area. Access hiking trails from the Knik River exit (Reflections Lake) or Cottonwood Creek in Wasilla (Scout Ridge Trail). Reflections Lake also has fantastic recreational opportunities in the winter, with ice skating and cross-country skiing trails.

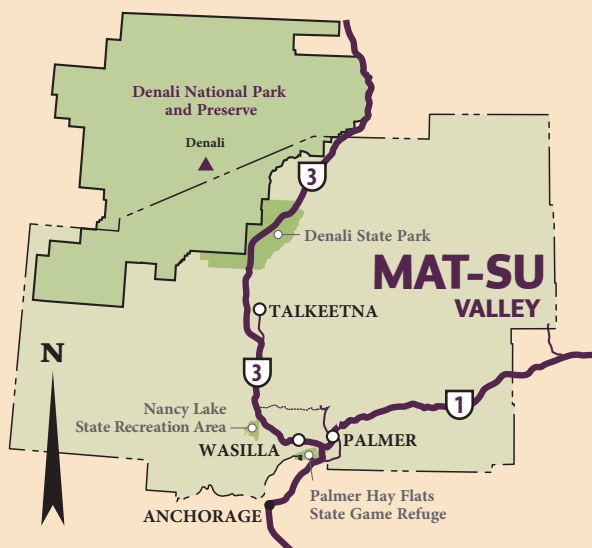
Nancy Lake State Recreation Area

(1.5 hours north of Anchorage)

Near Willow, this network of 130 lakes features camping areas, canoe rentals, and hiking and ski trails. Fish for rainbow trout, arctic char and northern pike. Reserve public-use cabins, available for rent on a nightly basis. Plan ahead and rent your cabin up to six months in advance through the Alaska State Parks' website.

What to Pack

Binoculars | Camera
Bird Guidebook



Other State Recreation Areas include Big Lake (north and south), Finger Lake, Independence Mine and Hatcher Pass, Matanuska Lakes, King Mountain, Lake Louise, Matanuska Glacier, Willow Creek and Summit Lake.

The Mat-Su Valley encompasses an area roughly the size of West Virginia, so plan ahead and spend some time exploring. Take a couple days to explore everything there is to offer.



Knee Deep in Winter Seasonal Celebrations!

Talkeetna Winterfest

A month-long celebration that features various activities, including the internationally recognized Talkeetna Bachelor Society Auction & Ball and Wilderness Woman Competition, which is held the first Saturday of December. Community activities held throughout December. (907) 315-8012. www.talkeetnachamber.org

Colony Christmas in Palmer

A “Norman Rockwell”-style Christmas celebration, featuring a tree lighting ceremony, horse-drawn carriage rides, fireworks, a parade of lights and of course, Santa Claus. Held the second weekend in December. (907) 745-2880. www.palmerchamber.org

Willow Winter Carnival

A celebration of winter includes dog sled races, snowmobile racing, arts and crafts, and even outhouse races. Last weekend in January and first weekend in February. (907) 495-6800. www.waco-ak.org

Iron Dog

The world’s longest snowmobile race begins on Big Lake on Feb. 16, 2020. Racers travel all the way to Nome, before turning around and finishing in Fairbanks, a race of more than 2,000 miles. www.irondog.org

Iditarod Trail Invitational

One of the most grueling events in the world, racers depart Knik Lake on March 1, 2020 and head out in the remote wilderness. Snowshoes, bikes or cross-country skis are their only modes of transportation, and the finish line is 350 miles away in McGrath, or 1,000 miles away in Nome. www.iditarodtrailinvitational.com

World Famous Iditarod Sled Dog Race

Known around the world, the Iditarod begins on Willow Lake on March 8, 2020. Racers and their teams of dogs traverse their way to Nome. The restart is family-friendly and a great chance to meet a famous musher. (907) 376-5155. www.iditarod.com

Keep an eye out for business listings that are open year round ☀❄, summer only ☀ and winter only ❄. You’ll be amazed by the number of things to see and do throughout the year.

Looking For Snow?

See a whole new side of Alaska by visiting in the winter. The Mat-Su Valley is an ideal winter destination. An exciting new development in 2019-2020 is the Mat-Su Valley's first-ever lift access ski area, Skeetawak, located in beautiful Hatcher Pass. The ski area is set to open around February 2020 and operate Fridays through Sundays, weather permitting. It features a triple chair lift based at Mile 10.6 Palmer Fishhook Road, on the way up Hatcher Pass. Visit www.skeetawak.com for current conditions, hours and more. The Hatcher Pass area gets some of Southcentral Alaska's best snow and has world-class Nordic skiing trails at Government Peak. Whether you prefer first tracks in fresh powder or groomed trails, the Mat-Su is the place to be.

Removed from city lights, our starry darkness sets the stage for the brilliant colors of the northern lights. From alpenglow sunsets on Denali to the fresh, deep snow covering our lakes and peaks, you'll find yourself inspired and invigorated by a winter visit. A guided snowmobile trip to a local glacier is an unforgettable experience. Plan a trip before it melts.

Winter at Your Fingertips!

For more ideas or updates on the latest trail conditions, check out our website: www.alaskavisit.com. There is a whole section devoted to winter ideas.

Where to go; What to do

Escape the city lights of Anchorage for a view of our spectacular *Northern Lights* in Hatcher Pass, Knik River Valley or Denali State Park. Clear nights, January through April, are best. Dress warm!

Follow the Iditarod - watch the restart on Willow Lake or plan a day trip to an official checkpoint such as Skwentna or Rainy Pass. Cheer on your favorite mushers and their dog teams. Packaged Iditarod tours are available.

Visit a working *sled dog kennel* and find out what it takes to lead a team of huskies. Several Iditarod mushers offer sled tours throughout the year. Enjoy an exhilarating ride in the basket of the sled of an Iditarod champion, or try your hand at leading a team.

Explore our endless fields of snow by renting a snowmobile and picking up a trail map, or for a grand adventure, take a guided snowmobile excursion into *Alaska's backcountry*. No experience necessary. Several guided tours go right up to glaciers.

Glide on the rails of the *Alaska Railroad* and stop in Talkeetna to see Denali's towering alpenglow peak. Rail service is available northbound on Saturdays and southbound on Sundays only during the winter, with some mid-week trains available later in the winter. Combine it with a pie-making class at the famous Talkeetna Roadhouse.

Ice-fish for land-locked salmon, rainbow trout, arctic char and northern pike. Many Mat-Su Valley lakes are stocked throughout the year. Guides have all the gear and the knowledge you need to get started.

Cruise the skies on a flightseeing adventure of Knik Glacier and Chugach State Park, or Denali and the Alaska Range. Many say winter is the best time to see these peaks.

Grab your skis and head to *Hatcher Pass*. Government Peak has a warming chalet to complement the five kilometers of *world-class groomed Nordic trails*. If downhill is your preference, visit Skeetawak, the Mat-Su Valley's first lift access ski area at mile 10.6 on Fishhook Road.

Glacier Country

“Colony-era agriculture roots, towering mountains and accessible glaciers make Glacier Country a ‘must visit’ in the Mat-Su.”



Matanuska Glacier

Glaciers & Giant Veggies

The Matanuska Valley was carved by glaciers thousands of years ago, and their impact remains today. The fine, fertile silt left behind by these receding glaciers, combined with long daylight hours in the summer, makes the area perfect for growing lush hayfields and world-record veggies. The Palmer area is the agricultural hub of Alaska - look for Alaska Grown vegetables! You'll be able to taste the difference – carrots are typically sweeter than those grown in the “Lower 48,” for example.

- In Sutton and Chickaloon, learn about the region's rich Athabascan culture at the Alpine Historical Park.
- In the Glacier View area, explore Matanuska Glacier on a trek or ice climb. Easy to get to, it's Alaska's largest road-accessible glacier. You can do it on your own, or go out with one of the many companies who guide on the glacier – they know the best spots.
- Explore the northern region of Glacier Country by visiting Lake Louise, located halfway between Anchorage and Valdez, just 19 miles off the scenic Glenn Highway. The peaceful lake is a hub of recreational opportunities in both summer and winter. The Nelchina caribou herd migrates through this area each year. Lodges, campgrounds and a public boat launch are available.
- Closer to Palmer, boat, helicopter or take an ATV tour to Knik Glacier. This is only an hour from Anchorage. Stop at a roadside stand or farmers market for fresh organic vegetables, wild honey or dairy products.

Palmer

Just 45 minutes north of Anchorage, this small town takes pride in its agricultural roots while nurturing a contemporary, Alaska “chic.” The downtown area is very walkable and features locally-owned shops and cafes. In 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt sanctioned a relocation program that brought 203 farming families to Palmer from the Midwest. Parcels of land were distributed to the “colonists” by lottery to farm and raise

dairy cattle. Celebrate the anniversary of this historic event in June at Colony Days. Start your stay at the Palmer Visitor Information Center, which has an amazing garden and replicas of those giant vegetables. Pick up a downtown walking map while you're there and tour the original Matanuska Colony. You can rent a headset for a narrated self-guided historical walking tour of the town, or take the guided tour every day at 1 p.m. On Fridays, an open-air market, featuring local artisans and growers, opens across from the center. Just up the street, tour a restored Colony home (circa 1935). And don't forget Palmer's most celebrated attraction, the Alaska State Fair, which takes place Aug. 27 to Sept. 7, 2020.

Farms & Culture

Nine Times Warmer than Wool

Learn about the prehistoric Musk Ox at the Musk Ox Farm near Palmer. Native artists use the precious underwool (qiviut) to make beautiful knitted garments with superior warmth.

A rich Athabascan culture

The Chickaloon Native Village is a rich Ahtna Athabascan tribe in Sutton, along the Matanuska River on the Glenn Highway. The tribe has occupied the area for 10,000 years; their culture and traditional way of life has been unwavering. In the Ahtna language, Chickaloon means "the river with the two logs across it." Stop at Alpine Historical Park to learn more about the history.

Pick Your Own

A feast for the eyes and taste buds – Alaska's freshest produce! Wasilla farmers market is held every Wednesday at the west end of the Iditapark complex. Palmer's Friday Flings market runs every Friday from late May to the end of August, across from the Palmer Visitors Center. Visit alaskavisit.com for market and u-pick farm locations and hours.

Alaska-sized veggies

Imagine a 138-pound giant cabbage, a 20-pound cucumber or a 65-pound cantaloupe. Amazing! These are just a few of the world records set at the Alaska State Fair. See the real thing as the huge veggies are weighed-in at the fair in late August. World records are routinely broke for all types of vegetables.



Pioneer Peak

Where to go; What to do

Interested in agriculture? Tour Palmer's backcountry roads to see working farms or sample locally grown products at one of Palmer's restaurants. Guided farm tours are also available. The downtown area has a feel all its own, and you can spend an afternoon visiting the quaint shops and restaurants, many of which serve Alaska Grown products on their menus. With three microbreweries, downtown Palmer is also a great place for a brewery tour.

Visit the Palmer Museum and spend time in their amazing garden. Learn about the historic Matanuska Colonist project.

Hike, bike or ATV one of the many trails that begin just off the Glenn Highway; loop through miles of wilderness.



Glacier Country Adventures

Glenn Highway National Scenic Byway	1	One of three national scenic byways in Alaska.
Reflections Lake & Palmer Hay Flats Game Refuge	2	Easy hike around the lake; moose and migratory bird views.
Knik Glacier & Knik River Valley	3	Try a boat ride, helicopter trip, ATV adventure, horseback tour, or airplane flight over the glacier. Just an hour from Anchorage.
Alaska State Fair	4	Aug. 27–Sept. 7, 2020. Giant Cabbage Weigh-off and other giant vegetable displays, food, entertainment, fireworks and more.
Golf Courses	5	Fore! Golf courses in Palmer boast mountain views at affordable rates.
Palmer Visitor Information Center Museum of History and Art	6	Great starting point for visitor information, Colony history, gardens and guided tours.
Musk Ox Farm and Reindeer Farm	7	See prehistoric animals on guided tours through the farm, museum and gift shop. These farms are a few miles apart, but worth the trip to see both.
Alpine Historical Park	8	Learn about the area’s coal mining history, and the Ahtna Athabaskan culture. Located at Mile 61.6 of the Glenn Hwy.
Raft the Matanuska or Knik Rivers	9	Guided Class IV whitewater rafting or leisure floats on scenic stretches.
Matanuska Glacier	10	Mile 101, Glenn Hwy. Drive right up to Alaska’s largest road-accessible glacier. Easy guided treks and ice climbing.
Lake Louise	11	Excellent lake fishing, winter recreation and hiking opportunities. Off the Glenn Hwy. at Mile 159.8.



Don't miss the Alaska State Fair

Alaska's largest event, the Alaska State Fair, takes place in Palmer every August to early September. It's 12 days of fun, food and excitement, and there is something for every visitor.

The fair runs Aug. 27-Sept. 7, 2020 and is the best place to see giant vegetables for which the Palmer area is so famous. There are "weigh-off" competitions for pumpkins and cabbages at the fair, and they bring them in on giant pallets to be weighed in an arena, in front of the audience. In 2019, a record 2,051 pound pumpkin was entered.

In addition to the giant vegetables, the Alaska State Fair features numerous exhibits, cultural celebrations, concerts, live performances and much more – you'll want to plan to stay an extra day to take it all in.

PALMER

ATTRACTION OR EVENT

Alaska Horse Adventures ☀️❄️📱
18810 E Walling Road, Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 229-4445 akhorseadventures@gmail.com



Alaska State Fair ☀️📱📺📷
2075 Glenn Highway, Palmer, AK 99645
(800) 850-3247 (907) 745-4827 info@alaskastatefair.org
www.alaskastatefair.org
The Alaska State Fair is a non-stop, 12-day party for all Alaskans, with nightly concerts featuring some of the nation's hottest entertainers; world-famous, record-breaking giant vegetables; menus overflowing with the freshest Alaska Grown ingredients; shopping for unique, only-in-Alaska arts and crafts; and lots of attractions free with Fair admission!

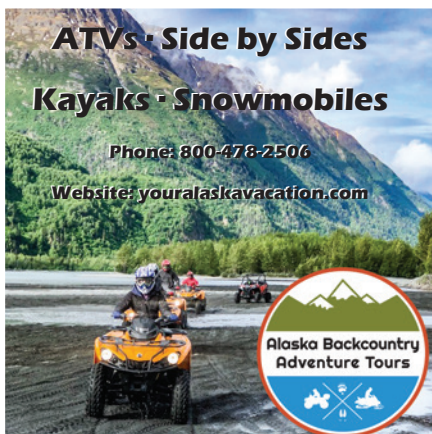
Palmer Museum of History and Art & Visitor Center ☀️❄️
723 S. Valley Way, Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 746-7668 vic@paltermuseum.org

Pioneer Peak Farm ☀️❄️📱
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1890 Glenn Highway, Palmer, AK 99645
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noisygoosecafe.com



Palmer City Alehouse
320 Dahlia Street, Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 746-2537 steve@palmeralehouse.com



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Mat-Su Convention & Visitors Bureau

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SUTTON

ATTRACTION OR EVENT



61.6 Glenn Hwy, Sutton (907) 745-7000
www.alpinehistoricalpark.org

Alpine Historical Park
PO Box 266, Sutton, AK 99674
(907) 745-7000
alpinehistoricalpark.org



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VISITOR CENTER/CHAMBER/GOV'T AGENCY

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MATANUSKA GLACIER AREA

ATTRACTION OR EVENT

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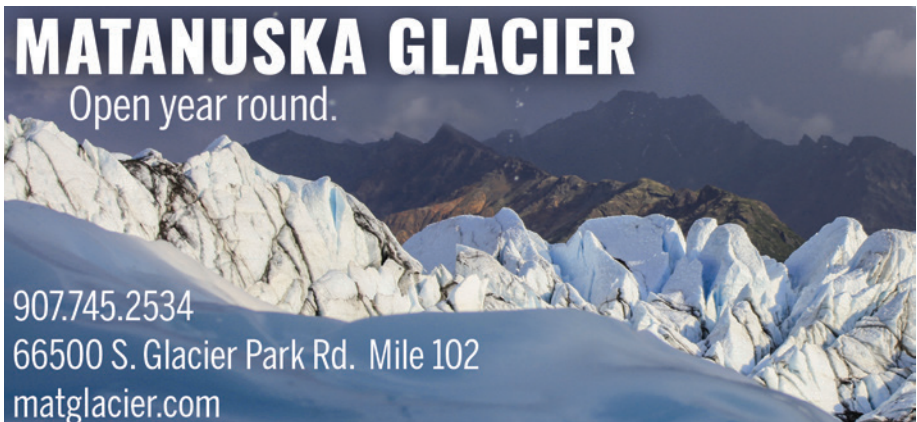


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Gold Rush Country

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Hatcher Pass



Hatcher Pass

Just 1.5 hours from Anchorage, Hatcher Pass is a locals’ favorite. The area is home to Independence Mine State Historical Park, but also features a wealth of year-round multi-use trails and limitless alpine terrain. Hike, bike or snowmobile. Some hot spots include Reed Lakes, Craigie Creek, Gold Mint and Gold Cord trails. The area offers world-class hiking with breathtaking views of the valley below. With the headwaters of the Little Susitna River originating here, avid kayakers will find the excitement of Class V whitewater appealing.

Winter sports enthusiasts flock to Hatcher Pass. The winter of 2019-2020 features the inaugural season at Skeetawk, the Mat-Su Valley’s first-ever lift access downhill skiing area. The Government Peak Recreation Area, at the base of Hatcher Pass, offers 6.5 kilometers of Nordic skiing trails designed by a former Olympian. Snowmobiling is permitted in designated areas and is very popular west of the pass.



Independence Mine

Once a bustling mining camp, Independence Mine is now on the National Register of Historic Places. You can wander amid the preserved ruins. Independence Mine covers 271 acres and includes restored structures and interpretive displays connected by easily accessible, paved walking paths. The visitor center museum (formerly the mine manager's home) is open and provides daily tours of the Park from mid- to late-June through early September.



Gold Fever!

Gold played a pivotal role in establishing many of Alaska's communities, including Hatcher Pass. One of the first discoveries in the Mat-Su happened in 1896 by Robert Lee Hatcher. In 1941, with 83 mining claims, the Alaska-Pacific Consolidated Mining Co. was the largest producer in the mining district, employing more than 200 workers, opening nearly a dozen miles of tunnels, and producing more than 34,000 ounces of gold. Today you can catch a glimpse of what mining was like at the Independence Mine State Historical Park located in Hatcher Pass. Grab your gold pan and see if you have the same luck.



Where to go; What to do

Pick blueberries in the alpine fields or photograph spectacular wildflowers. Berry picking is at its peak in late summer and early fall.

Deep snow and treeless slopes provide perfect terrain for backcountry winter enthusiasts on both sides of Hatcher Pass. The northern lights are best viewed here.

Explore abandoned buildings and machinery from a 200-worker camp and gold mining operation, one of Alaska's biggest gold producers until World War II.



Gold Rush Country Adventures

Little Susitna River	1	Along Hatcher Pass Road from Mile 7-15. Watch for wildlife and pan for gold.
Archangel Valley/ Reed Lakes	2	Mile 16 Hatcher Pass Road. Hiking, mountain biking, rock climbing and winter sports.
Lodges	3	Premium meals, lodging, seasonal amenities, event venues.
Independence Mine State Historical Park	4	Gold! Mile 18 Hatcher Pass Road. Open daily mid June-Sept. Guided tours available in the summer – call Visitor Information Center at (907) 745-2827.
Summit Lake Recreation Area	5	Mile 19 Hatcher Pass Road. Berry picking, ridgetop hiking. Pass road opens around July 4th until first snow.
Summer Recreation		Hiking, berry picking, recreational gold panning, mountain biking.
Winter Recreation		Cross-country and backcountry skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing, snowmobiling and sledding.



Summit Lake, Hatcher Pass

Mat-Su Events 2020

Markets, Festivals, Races, Celebrations

Farmer's Markets

Wasilla/Houston/Willow/Talkeetna/Palmer

Purchase Alaska Grown produce, flowers and crafts at one of the Valley's weekly markets throughout the summer months, including Friday Flings in downtown Palmer.



Gunsight Mountain Hawkwatch

Glenn Highway, Glacier View area
Mid- to late-April, Mile 120 Glenn Highway.

matsubirders.org

Houston Founder's Day

Live band, free barbecue, fireworks and more. Third Saturday in August annually (Aug. 15, 2020).

(907) 892-6869

Palmer Colony Days

A festival honoring the 1935 Colonists who started the Matanuska farming community. Events include a car rally, parade, craft fairs, farmers market, carnival rides, fun run, parade and live entertainment. Second weekend in June annually (June 12-14, 2020).

(907) 745-2880

www.palmerchamber.org

Visit www.AlaskaVisit.com for all current events.

Alaska State Fair

Alaska's largest event combines delicious food booths, legendary giant vegetables and nonstop entertainment for the whole family. Twelve days of fair fun, Aug. 27-Sept. 7, 2020.

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Location: Mile 10.6 Hatcher Pass Road



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Lake Country

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Lake Lucille

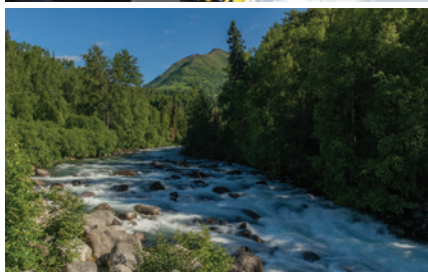


Wasilla

Nestled between Lake Lucille and Wasilla Lake, Wasilla is a bustling community that is home to the world-famous Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race headquarters.

Wasilla is the largest city in the Mat-Su Valley and is a hub of commerce, as a variety of national and local retailers can be found. Fresh produce is available weekly at a farmers market.

Wasilla was originally founded to be a supply crossroads for gold mines at Willow Creek Mining District. The Alaska Railroad built lines through the town to Fairbanks in 1917, providing an immediate “boom” to the area. Today, Wasilla remains one of the fastest-growing communities in Alaska.



Where to go; What to do

Learn about the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race and take a dog sled ride at Iditarod Trail Headquarters.

Step back in time at the Wasilla Museum, where some of the original townsite has been restored.

The Museum of Alaska Transportation & Industry is filled with exhibits, planes, railroad cars and vintage automobiles.

Big Lake

With 67 miles of shoreline, the size of this lake is downright remarkable. Big Lake is a local favorite because of its many recreational opportunities, both in summer and winter. Boating, fishing and riding personal watercraft highlight summer activities. In the winter, the frozen lake allows for Alaska activities such as snowmobiling, dog mushing and cross-country skiing. Terrific views north, east and west toward the towering Alaska and Talkeetna ranges abound. Camp under the midnight sun or stay and dine at one of several area lodges and bed-and-breakfasts.

Houston

Located on the banks of the Little Susitna River along the Parks Highway, this colorful town offers a gentle river to float with great salmon fishing. In the winter, come back and give a snowmobile or sled dog tour a go to feel the crisp air as you zip through the countryside blanketed with pristine snow.

Local Tip

There are a number of public-use cabins available for rent through the Alaska State Parks. These remote cabins are rustic but offer a true Alaska experience in the outdoors. Some are walk-in accessible, while others you can rent a canoe to access them. Don't delay, though – they rent up to six months in advance online. www.alaskastateparks.org



Lake Country Adventures

Wasilla Area Lakes	1	Fish, ride personal watercraft and bird-watch at Lake Lucille, Wasilla Lake and more just off the Parks Hwy.
Wasilla Museum	2	Variety of exhibits showcasing the area's trading post history and original town buildings. Self-guided tours available.
Iditarod Headquarters	3	Mile 2.2 Knik-Goose Bay Rd. Museum, gift shop, summer dog sled rides.
Museum of Transportation & Industry	4	Home to Alaska's transportation and industrial relics. Airplanes, trains, steam engines and more.
Big Lake	5	Haven for boating and snowmobiling - year-round recreation. Campgrounds and lodging available.
Knik Museum & Townsite	6	Mile 13.9 Knik-Goose Bay Rd. Built in 1910, is now a museum and holds the Musher's Hall of Fame.
Little Su River & Lakes	7	Excellent salmon fishing in the summer and ice fishing in the winter.
Susitna River Drainage	8	King and silver salmon fishing. Guided fishing trips available. Canoeing and camping.
Golfing	9	Enjoy spectacular views and Alaska's best putting greens.



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The Susitna River drainage has several small creeks and tributaries that are easily accessible via the Parks Highway (Hwy. 3) and feature salmon as well as rainbow trout, grayling and pike. At many of these places, you can walk right up to a fishing hole. Spirited silver salmon run strong in the drainage in mid- to late- summer. In the fall, rainbow trout fishing is exceptional. Make sure you check local regulations before heading out, and purchase a fishing license. Use the chart below to gauge when the fish will be running.

FISHING CHART

APRIL MAY JUNE JULY AUGUST SEPTEMBER



A blooming industry

The Mat-Su Valley is home to a blooming new industry – peony farming. Alaska flowers are in high demand both domestically and internationally because they bloom later in the season than in the Lower 48, so they are hitting their peak during the typical wedding season. Fresh Mat-Su Valley peonies are available at farmers markets, and many farms sell them directly. www.alaskapeonies.org

WASILLA

ATTRACTION OR EVENT

Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race
2100 S. Knik-Goose Bay Rd, Wasilla, AK 99654
(907) 376-5155 x-108



Museum of Alaska Transportation & Industry
3800 W. Museum Drive, Wasilla, AK 99654
(907) 376-1211 mati@mtaonline.net



Wasilla Museum & Visitor Center
391 N. Main Street, Wasilla, AK 99654
(907) 373-9071 museum@ci.wasilla.ak.us
www.cityofwasilla.com/museum



Wasilla-Knik Historical Society
300 N. Boundary Street, Wasilla, AK 99654
(907) 376-7755 wkhsociety@yahoo.com
Visit the old Knik Townsite and Museum along the Iditarod Trail, Mile 13.9 Knik Goose Bay Road. Open 1-6 pm Wed-Sun, all summer, off season by appointment. While in Wasilla, visit the historic Herring-Teeland-Mead-Building at 405 E Herring, now home to Krazy Moose Subs. Stroll the Farmers' Market on Wednesdays in the west end of Iditapark, Weber Drive and Nelson.



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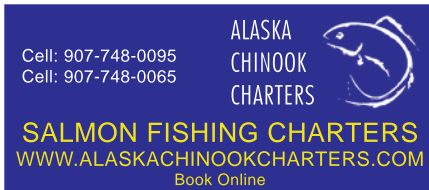
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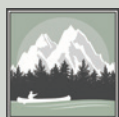
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Talkeetna

Talkeetna has a unique vibe all its own. This small town is the staging area for the more than 1,000 climbers who attempt to climb Denali each spring. On average, only 50 percent of them make the summit. In May and June, you can spot climbers milling around town or having breakfast at Talkeetna Roadhouse. The first successful summit of Denali was June 7, 1913 by a party led by Hudson Stuck. Alaska Native Walter Harper became the first to reach the summit in that party, and the Walter Harper Talkeetna Ranger Station bears his name today. They ascended via the Muldrow Glacier route, which is still a popular route. Located at the confluence of three major rivers, Talkeetna keeps its mining history alive with renovated miners' cabins used as lodging,



Denali Country Adventures

Nancy Lake Recreation Area	1	Mile 67.2 Parks Hwy. 130 interconnected lakes. Lynx Lake Canoe Trail. Link to canoe rental information at www.alaskavisit.com .
Dog Sledding	2	Mush your own team of huskies, ride the runners or sit in the sled.
Talkeetna Historic District	3	Historic walking tour – museum, log cabins, school, roadhouse, inn and other mining-era structures dating to 1916. Food, tours, lodging and shopping. Year-round Alaska Railroad stop.
Petersville Road	4	Mile 114.8 Parks Hwy. 35-mile road has great biking, hiking, and fishing.
Susitna, Chulitna, Talkeetna Rivers	5	Boat, camp, fish and explore these glacial rivers. Guided tours, rafting and fishing available.
Denali State Park	6	See Denali and visit the Veterans Memorial, or stay at the K'esugi Ken Campground. Camping, kayaking, fishing and nature walks. Access to Kesugi and Curry Ridge trailheads.
Denali	7	Flightsee the Alaska Range and view glaciers, sheer rock faces, rivers and wildlife.

shops and restaurants. Here you'll find one of Alaska's top breweries, a number of great restaurants and shops that sell goods made by local artists.

The rivers also lend to a multitude of activities such as guided river rafting, boat tours and sport fishing. The Alaska Railroad stops daily in the summer and weekly in winter. Spend a day perusing the many shops that feature local artisans. Flightseeing trips around Denali are spectacular, and depart from Talkeetna daily.

Trapper Creek/Petersville

Petersville Road extends nearly 35 miles from Trapper Creek into the Dutch Hills, offering spectacular views of Denali. The rugged, scenic gravel road is ideal for mountain biking or snowmobiling in the winter. (In the summer, 4-wheel drive vehicles are recommended after the first 10 miles.)

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Walter Harper Ranger Station

The Walter Harper Talkeetna Ranger Station is a great place for families looking to learn about the Denali mountaineering history. A free 30-minutes video details how climbers try to reach the summit of Denali. The station features expedition flags from around the world.



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(907) 235-7740



Kenai Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center
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(907) 283-1991 info@visitkenai.com



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(907) 835-2984 info@valdezalaska.org



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Ketchikan Visitors Bureau
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(800) 770-3300 (907) 225-6166 info@visit-ketchikan.com



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Time and Temperature

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