

25 Things to Do in Seward, Alaska: A Complete Visitor's Guide



Seward sits at the edge of Kenai Fjords National Park, where mountains, glaciers, and the ocean come together in one of Alaska's most dramatic coastal settings. It is a place where wildlife is everywhere. For example, you can find whales in the water, puffins along the cliffs, and sea otters drifting in quiet coves.

Travelers come to Seward for experiences that are difficult to find anywhere else. Boat tours take you deep into fjords filled with massive tidewater glaciers, while hiking trails lead to panoramic views above Resurrection Bay. The town itself is small, but it serves as a gateway to some of the most unforgettable landscapes in Alaska. Adding this destination makes your [Alaska tour](#) memorable with lasting effects.

What makes Seward stand out is how accessible these experiences are. Within a short distance, you can go from standing on a glacier viewpoint to watching marine

wildlife in open water. Whether you are visiting for a day or staying longer, Seward offers a mix of adventure, scenery, and wildlife that defines coastal Alaska.

Top 25 Things to Do in Seward

Explore glaciers, marine wildlife, coastal trails, and [*unique outdoor Alaskan experiences*](#) in one of the most scenic seaside towns.



Take a Kenai Fjords National Park Cruise

A cruise through Kenai Fjords National Park is the top experience in Seward. Boats travel deep into fjords where massive glaciers meet the ocean, often calving ice into the water. Along the way, you will see humpback whales, orcas, sea lions, puffins, and otters in their natural habitat. The scenery constantly changes, from calm bays to dramatic cliffs and ice-filled inlets. Tours range from half-day to full-day trips, with longer cruises reaching more remote glaciers. It is the easiest way to experience Alaska's coastal wilderness in one trip.

Visit Exit Glacier

Exit Glacier is one of the most accessible glaciers in Alaska, located just a short drive from Seward. A well-maintained road leads to the visitor area, where trails take you closer to the glacier. The lower paths are easy and suitable for most travelers, offering clear views of the ice and surrounding valley. Along the way, markers show how much the glacier has receded over time, giving a real sense of climate change. It is a quick but powerful stop that doesn't require a full-day commitment.

Hike the Harding Icefield Trail

The Harding Icefield Trail is one of the most rewarding hikes in Alaska. Starting near Exit Glacier, the trail climbs steadily through forest, alpine terrain, and rocky slopes before opening up to views of the massive Harding Icefield. The hike is challenging, covering about 8 miles round trip, but the payoff is worth it. At the top, you will see a vast field of ice stretching to the horizon. Wildlife sightings are possible along the way, and the changing landscapes keep the hike interesting from start to finish.

Go Whale Watching in Resurrection Bay

Resurrection Bay is one of the best places in Alaska for whale watching. Tours leave directly from Seward and head into open water where humpback whales, orcas, and other marine life are commonly seen. The bay's calm waters and rich feeding grounds attract a wide range of wildlife, including sea otters, seals, and seabirds. Sightings are frequent, especially in summer months. Most tours are guided, with experts explaining animal behavior and helping spot wildlife, making the experience more engaging and informative.

Explore the Alaska SeaLife Center

The Alaska SeaLife Center is both a public aquarium and a working marine research facility. Visitors can see sea lions, seals, puffins, and other marine species up close while learning about Alaska's ocean ecosystems. The exhibits are well designed and focus on conservation, rescue, and rehabilitation efforts. Large viewing windows and interactive displays make it easy to understand how these animals live and survive in the wild. It is one of the best indoor activities in Seward and adds context to everything you see out on the water.

Kayak in Resurrection Bay

Kayaking in Resurrection Bay offers a quiet, close-up way to experience Seward's coastal scenery. Paddling along the shoreline, you will pass rocky cliffs, small coves, and forested slopes while spotting sea otters, seals, and seabirds. The water is often calm, especially in protected areas, making it suitable for beginners with guided tours available. More experienced paddlers can venture farther to explore remote sections of the bay. It is a slower, more personal way to connect with Alaska's marine environment compared to larger boat tours.

Take a Glacier Landing Helicopter Tour

A helicopter tour with a glacier landing gives you a completely different perspective of Seward's landscape. Flights take off from nearby airstrips and head over mountains, icefields, and deep fjords before landing directly on a glacier. Stepping onto the ice allows you to see crevasses, blue ice formations, and the scale of the glacier up close. The aerial views alone are worth it, revealing areas that are otherwise unreachable. It is one of the most memorable experiences in Seward, combining adventure with unmatched scenery.

Go Fishing for Salmon and Halibut

Seward is one of Alaska's top fishing destinations, especially for salmon and halibut. Charter boats depart from the harbor and take anglers into the rich waters of the Gulf of Alaska, where catches are often large and frequent during peak season. Guides provide all the gear and help with techniques, making it accessible for beginners as well as experienced fishers. The combination of open ocean views and the excitement of reeling in a big catch makes this a standout activity for many visitors.

Walk Along the Seward Waterfront Park

The Seward Waterfront Park stretches along the shoreline, offering open views of the harbor, mountains, and Resurrection Bay. A paved path runs along the water, making it ideal for a relaxed walk at any time of day. You will often see boats coming and going, seabirds overhead, and occasional wildlife near the shore. Informational signs along the way highlight local history and the area's connection to the sea. It is an easy, scenic activity that fits well between tours or at the start and end of your day.

Hike Mount Marathon Trail

The Mount Marathon Trail is one of the most challenging and well-known hikes in Seward. The trail climbs steeply from near sea level to high above the town, gaining elevation quickly through forest and rocky terrain. The effort is demanding, but the views from higher sections overlook Seward, the harbor, and Resurrection Bay. The trail is also famous for the annual Mount Marathon Race, held every summer. It is best suited for experienced hikers looking for a physically demanding climb with rewarding scenery.

Visit Lowell Point

Lowell Point is a quiet coastal area just outside Seward, offering a more secluded experience compared to the main town. The drive itself is scenic, with views of the coastline and surrounding mountains. Once there, visitors can walk along the rocky beach, watch waves roll in, and take in uninterrupted views of Resurrection Bay. It is a great spot for photography, picnics, or simply enjoying the peaceful side of Seward away from busier tourist areas.

Go Wildlife and Bird Watching

Seward is one of the best places in Alaska for wildlife and bird watching. The coastal environment attracts puffins, bald eagles, cormorants, and other seabirds, while marine mammals like sea otters and seals are commonly seen along the shoreline. Guided tours and boat trips increase your chances of spotting a wider range of species, but even casual walks along the coast can offer great sightings. The diversity of wildlife makes this a rewarding activity throughout the year, especially during summer when animal activity is at its peak.

Take a Scenic Train Ride on the Alaska Railroad

A journey on the Alaska Railroad between Seward and Anchorage is considered one of the most scenic train rides in the United States. The route passes through mountains, forests, rivers, and coastal landscapes, offering views that are not accessible by road. Large windows and open viewing platforms allow travelers to fully take in the surroundings. Along the way, it is common to spot wildlife such as moose or bears. The train ride is both a transportation option and a memorable sightseeing experience.

Explore Tonsina Creek Trail

Tonsina Creek Trail is a moderate hike that leads through forested areas to a quiet beach along the coast. The trail is well maintained and less crowded than other

popular hikes in Seward, making it a good choice for those looking for a more peaceful experience. Along the way, hikers pass through dense trees and open areas before reaching the shoreline, where views of mountains and the bay open up. It is a balanced hike with a mix of scenery and manageable effort.



Go Paddleboarding in Calm Coastal Waters

Stand-up paddleboarding offers a relaxed way to explore Seward’s coastline. In calm conditions, especially in protected areas of Resurrection Bay, the water is suitable for beginners. Paddlers can move at their own pace while enjoying views of mountains and watching for wildlife like seals or seabirds. Rentals and guided sessions are available for those new to the activity. It is a quieter alternative to kayaking, ideal for travelers looking for a simple and scenic water experience.

Visit Bear Glacier Lagoon

Bear Glacier Lagoon is one of the most unique and remote places near Seward. Located at the edge of a large glacier, the lagoon is filled with floating icebergs that create a striking landscape. Access typically requires a boat or kayak trip, making it feel more isolated and untouched. Visitors can get close to ice formations while taking in the surrounding mountains and glacier views. It is a less crowded experience compared to other glacier areas, offering a more raw and natural setting.

Go Ice Climbing or Glacier Hiking

For those looking for adventure, glacier hiking and ice climbing provide a hands-on way to experience Alaska's icy landscapes. Guided tours equip visitors with crampons and safety gear before heading onto the ice. You will walk across crevasses, explore ice formations, and learn about how glaciers move and change over time. Ice climbing adds an extra challenge, allowing you to scale vertical sections under expert guidance. These activities are physically demanding but offer a deeper connection to Seward's glacial environment.

Enjoy a Sunset at Resurrection Bay

Sunset in Resurrection Bay creates a calm and scenic end to the day. The light reflects off the water and surrounding mountains, often producing soft colors across the sky. Even during summer, when daylight lasts longer, the late evening hours bring a quieter atmosphere. Popular viewing spots include the waterfront and nearby beaches, where visitors can sit, walk, or simply take in the views. It is a simple experience, but one that captures the natural beauty of Seward.

Take a Photography Tour

Seward is a prime location for photography, with its mix of glaciers, wildlife, and coastal scenery. Guided photography tours help visitors find the best locations and

lighting conditions while offering tips on capturing landscapes and wildlife. Tours may include boat trips, hikes, or roadside stops depending on the focus. Whether you are using a professional camera or a phone, these tours help you make the most of Seward's dramatic and ever-changing scenery.

Visit Miller's Landing

Miller's Landing is a local favorite spot just outside Seward, known for its relaxed atmosphere and access to outdoor activities. It serves as a base for kayaking trips, fishing charters, and beachside camping. Visitors can spend time by the water, enjoy simple meals, or use it as a starting point for exploring nearby areas like Bear Glacier. The setting is casual and less commercial, offering a more local and laid-back experience compared to central Seward.

Go Camping Near Seward

Camping near Seward is one of the best ways to experience Alaska's coastal wilderness. Campgrounds around the area offer sites with views of mountains, forests, and the ocean, creating a peaceful setting away from busy areas. Some locations are easily accessible by road, while others require a short hike or boat access, adding a sense of adventure. Campers often enjoy wildlife sightings, quiet surroundings, and the chance to fully disconnect. With long daylight hours in summer, there is plenty of time to explore during the day and relax by the camp in the evening.

Explore Caines Head State Recreation Area

Caines Head State Recreation Area offers a mix of history, hiking, and coastal scenery. The area can be reached by trail or water taxi and features forest paths, beaches, and historic World War II sites. One of the highlights is Fort McGilvray, where visitors can see old military structures overlooking the coastline. The

combination of natural beauty and history makes this a unique place to explore. It is less crowded than other spots near Seward, giving visitors a more remote and quiet experience.

Attend the Mount Marathon Race (Seasonal)

The Mount Marathon Race is one of the most famous annual [*events in the US*](#), held every Fourth of July in Seward. Runners race up and down Mount Marathon in a challenging course that tests endurance and skill. Even if you are not participating, watching the race is an exciting experience, as the town comes alive with energy and celebration. Visitors gather along the route to cheer on runners and enjoy the festive atmosphere. It is a great way to experience local culture and see how the community comes together for this iconic event.

Take a Water Taxi to Remote Trails

Water taxis in Seward provide access to remote areas that are otherwise difficult to reach by land. From Resurrection Bay, these boats transport visitors across the water to trailheads, beaches, and backcountry locations. It is a convenient option for hikers looking to explore less crowded trails or spend time in more isolated parts of the coastline. The ride itself offers scenic views and occasional wildlife sightings, making the journey just as enjoyable as the destination.

Visit Local Shops and Restaurants in Downtown Seward

Downtown Seward offers a small but inviting mix of local shops, cafés, and restaurants. Visitors can browse for souvenirs, handmade goods, and Alaska-themed items while exploring the walkable streets near the harbor. Restaurants often feature fresh seafood, including salmon and halibut, giving travelers a taste of local flavors. The relaxed atmosphere makes it easy to spend

time here between outdoor activities. It is a simple way to experience the local side of Seward and support small businesses while enjoying the coastal setting.

Best Time to Visit Seward

Seward is a seasonal destination, and timing your visit plays a major role in what you can experience. Located on Alaska's southern coast, the town has a maritime climate, which means cooler temperatures, frequent rain, and changing conditions throughout the year. Most visitors plan their trip between late spring and early fall, when access to outdoor activities and tours is at its peak.



Summer (June to August) is the best time to visit Seward for most travelers. During these months, temperatures range from 50°F to 65°F (10°C-18°C), and daylight lasts well into the evening. This is when glacier cruises into Kenai Fjords National Park operate at full capacity, and wildlife activity is at its highest. Visitors have the best chances of seeing humpback whales, orcas, sea otters, puffins, and other marine life. Hiking trails, kayaking routes, and fishing charters are all fully accessible, making summer ideal for first-time visitors.

Late spring (May) and **early fall (September)** offer a quieter alternative to peak summer. During these shoulder months, crowds are smaller, and prices for accommodations and tours may be lower. Wildlife is still active, and many key activities remain available, though some tours begin to scale back their schedules. Weather can be less predictable, with more rain and cooler temperatures, but the overall experience feels more relaxed.

Winter (October to April) is the off-season in Seward. Many tours, especially boat cruises and kayaking trips, do not operate due to weather and sea conditions. However, the town takes on a quieter, more local atmosphere. Snow-covered mountains and fewer visitors create a peaceful setting for those looking to experience Seward without crowds. While winter is not ideal for first-time travelers focused on outdoor excursions, it can still be rewarding for those interested in solitude and scenic winter landscapes.

Overall, the best time to visit Seward depends on your priorities. If you want full access to tours and wildlife viewing, summer is the clear choice. If you prefer fewer crowds and a slower pace, the shoulder seasons offer a good balance.

Travel Tips for Visiting Seward

Planning ahead can significantly improve your experience in Seward, especially since many of its top attractions depend on weather, timing, and availability. Understanding how to navigate the town, prepare for conditions, and book activities in advance will help you make the most of your trip.



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- **Be prepared for rain and changing weather:** Seward's coastal climate means rain is possible at any time of year, even during summer. Waterproof jackets, layered clothing, and sturdy shoes are essential. Conditions can shift quickly, especially if you are spending time on the water or hiking at higher elevations.
 - **Book major tours in advance:** Activities such as glacier cruises, kayaking trips, and fishing charters are in high demand during peak season. Tours into Kenai Fjords National Park often sell out days or even weeks ahead. Booking early ensures you secure your preferred schedule and avoid missing key experiences.
 - **Plan your day around longer excursions:** Many of Seward's best activities, especially boat tours, take several hours or even a full day. It is important to structure your itinerary so you have enough time for these experiences without feeling rushed. Trying to fit too much into one day can limit how much you actually enjoy each activity.
 - **Prepare for motion on the water:** While some parts of Resurrection Bay are calm, tours that venture farther out can encounter rougher conditions. If

you are sensitive to motion sickness, consider taking medication in advance or choosing shorter, more protected routes.

- **Getting around Seward:** The downtown area is compact and easy to explore on foot, with shops, restaurants, and the harbor all within walking distance. However, attractions like Exit Glacier and Lowell Point require transportation. Renting a car or using local shuttles gives you more flexibility to explore beyond the town center.
- **Respect wildlife and natural areas:** Seward is home to a wide range of wildlife, both on land and in the water. Always maintain a safe distance from animals and follow local guidelines. Staying on marked trails and avoiding disturbance to natural habitats helps preserve the environment for future visitors.

Conclusion

Seward captures the essence of coastal Alaska with its glaciers, marine wildlife, and dramatic landscapes. It is one of the few [*places in the United States*](#) where you can experience towering icefields, deep fjords, and abundant wildlife within a short distance. Whether you are cruising through Kenai Fjords National Park, hiking above the coastline, or exploring the quiet corners of the bay, every activity offers a direct connection to nature.

What makes Seward especially appealing is how accessible these experiences are. You don't need to travel far to see glaciers, spot wildlife, or enjoy scenic views, marking it among the ideal [*US destinations*](#) for both short visits and longer stays.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Seward Alaska best known for?

Seward is best known for its access to Kenai Fjords National Park, where visitors can experience glacier cruises and see marine wildlife such as whales, sea otters, and puffins.

Is Seward worth visiting?

Yes, Seward is one of the top destinations in Alaska for coastal scenery, glaciers, and wildlife. It offers a combination of outdoor adventure and natural beauty that is difficult to find elsewhere.

How many days should you spend in Seward?

Most travelers spend 2 to 3 days in Seward. This allows enough time to take a glacier cruise, visit Exit Glacier, and explore local hiking trails and attractions.

Can you see glaciers in Seward without a tour?

Yes, Exit Glacier can be reached by road and short hiking trails. However, to see tidewater glaciers up close, a boat tour is required.

When is the best time to visit Seward Alaska?

The best time to visit is from May to September, when weather conditions are more favorable and most tours and activities are fully available.

Can you visit Seward as a day trip from Anchorage?

Yes, Seward can be visited as a day trip from Anchorage, but staying overnight is recommended to fully experience glacier cruises and outdoor activities.

Do you need a car in Seward?

A car is not necessary for exploring downtown, but it is helpful for visiting nearby attractions such as Exit Glacier and surrounding trails.

What wildlife can you see in Seward?

Visitors commonly see whales, sea otters, seals, puffins, bald eagles, and other seabirds, especially during summer months.

Are glacier cruises in Seward worth it?

Yes, glacier cruises are the top experience in Seward. They provide access to remote fjords and glaciers that cannot be reached by land.

Is Seward crowded during summer?

Yes, Seward can be busy during peak summer months, especially when cruise ships arrive. Visiting early in the day or during shoulder seasons can help avoid crowds.