

The Highs and Lows of Alaska's Tourism

Tourism is Alaska's second largest private-sector employer, accounting for one in eight private-sector jobs. It is also Alaska's fastest-growing industry.

Most of Alaska's visitors are from the United States (87%), with 9% from Canada and about 4% from other countries. The majority of Alaska summer visitors come for pleasure. During the fall/winter season, business and convention travel is the primary trip purpose. Another significant visitor segment includes those who are coming to Alaska to visit family and friends.

Despite the current challenges, a visit to Alaska continues to be the fulfillment of a life-long dream for many travelers. The state's beauty, wilderness and wildlife continue to attract visitors. Known for its fishing, Alaska has some of the most original and exquisite fishing experiences. In a time of uncertainty and concern for safety, Alaska has an opportunity to capitalize on the perception that Alaska is a safe place to visit and an exotic alternative to traveling abroad. While infrastructure and transportation challenges exist throughout the state, abundant resources are available for communities and business to develop cultural tourism, ecotourism, wildlife viewing, adventure tourism, and sportfishing.

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Significant opportunities exist statewide to expand tourism during the winter. Winter visitors are drawn by the Northern Lights, particularly in Fairbanks and the Interior. Aurora viewing is accompanied by dog sled tours, skeet shooting, cross-country and downhill skiing, snow machining, ice-skating, ice fishing and other winter activities. Rural Alaska remains the frontier in tourism, however, rural Alaska often lacks staff and resources necessary to prepare for and attract tourism development.

As the volume of visitors grows, maintaining the quality of the "Alaska experience" at prime Alaska attractions is a key issue facing the visitor industry. The state and the industry recognize this concern and, through long-term planning efforts, are working to improve the visitor infrastructure and develop new attractions.

The need for adequate tourism marketing funds to keep Alaska competitive in the global travel market continues to be a major concern for the industry.



40,000 Employed in Tourism

Tourism industry employs 40,000 people in Alaska, about 15 percent of the state's work force, and brings nearly \$2 billion into the economy each year.

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