



# Anchorage & Around

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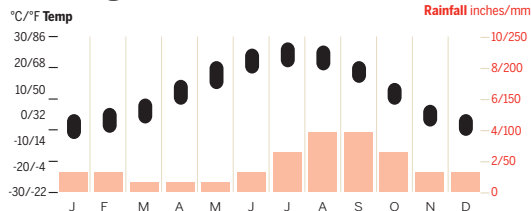
## Why Go?

Once you realize that Anchorage isn't simply a big city on the edge of the wilderness but rather a big city in the wilderness, it starts to make sense. The town manages to mingle hiking trails and traffic jams, small art galleries and Big Oil, like no other city. Among big box stores and mini-malls, there's more than 100 miles of city trails meandering in hidden greenbelts and a creek splitting downtown where anglers line up to catch trophy salmon.

Towering behind the municipality is the nation's third-largest state park, the half-million-acre Chugach. The wilderness is never far, which is why Anchorage's young population (the average age is 32) is an active one. Stay for a few days, explore the cycle trails, patronize the art galleries and dine in Alaska's best restaurants, and you'll understand why half the state's population chooses to live in and around this city.

## When to Go

### Anchorage



**Mar** Anchorage comes alive for the Iditarod Sled Dog Race and Fur Rendezvous Festival.

**May** The weather is nice, and the crowds and high prices are yet to arrive.

**Jul** The best month to see or catch a king salmon in Anchorage's Ship Creek.

## History

Though British explorer Captain James Cook sailed past the site in 1779 in search of the elusive Northwest Passage, and hopeful gold prospectors had been visiting Ship Creek since the 1880s, Anchorage wasn't founded until 1915. That was the year the Alaska Railroad called the area home and the 'Great Anchorage Lot Sale' was held. A tent city of 2000 people popped up in no time.

Anchorage soon became the epicenter for Alaska's fledgling rail, air and highway systems. The Depression-era colonizing of the Matanuska Valley, WWII and the discovery of Cook Inlet oil in the 1950s all added to the explosive growth of these years. Anchorage's population, 8000 before WWII, then jumped to 43,000. After the 1964 Good Friday Earthquake, which dumped more than 100 homes into Knik Arm, the city was rebuilding itself when another opportunity arose: the discovery of a \$10 billion oil reserve in Prudhoe Bay.

Although the Trans-Alaska Pipeline doesn't come within 300 miles of Anchorage, the city took its share of the wealth, growing a further 47% between 1970 and 1976. As the headquarters of various petroleum and service companies, Anchorage still manages to gush with oil money.

This city of stage plays and snowy peaks also has serious pork-barrel power. During the late 1970s, when a barrel of crude oil jumped more than \$20 and Alaska couldn't spend its tax revenue fast enough, Anchorage received the lion's share. It used its political muscle to revitalize downtown Anchorage with the Sullivan Arena, Egan Civic Center and stunning Alaska Center for the Performing Arts.

## Sights

### DOWNTOWN ANCHORAGE

#### Anchorage Museum

MUSEUM

(Map p162; ☎929-9200; [www.anchoragemuseum.org](http://www.anchoragemuseum.org); 625 C St; adult/child \$12/7; ☀9am-6pm; ♿) What was once simply Alaska's best museum is now a world-class facility thanks to a \$106 million expansion of Anchorage's cultural jewel that was completed with much anticipation in 2010. The new West Wing, a four-story, shimmering, mirrored facade, added 80,000 sq ft to what was already the largest museum in the state. Its flagship exhibit is the **Smithsonian Arctic Studies Center** with more than 600 Alaska Native objects – art,

tools, masks and household implements – which was previously housed in Washington DC. It's the largest Alaska Native collection anywhere and it's surrounded by large video screens showing contemporary Native life. Nearby is the **Listening Space** where you can listen to storytellers and natural sounds from Arctic Alaska.

The museum now also contains the **Imaginarium Discovery Center**, a hands-on science center for children that was previously housed in a separate downtown location. On the 1st floor of the original East Wing you will still find the **Art of the North Gallery**, with entire rooms of Alaskan masters Eustace Ziegler and Sydney Laurence. On the 2nd floor, the **Alaska History Gallery** is filled with life-size dioramas that trace 10,000 years of human settlement, from early subsistence villages to modern oil dependency.

There are also galleries devoted to traveling art exhibits, a planetarium and the **Kid-Space Gallery** designed for young children (and their parents) to explore the worlds of art, history and science through hands-on play. Clearly, this is a place where you can spend an entire afternoon.

#### **FREE** Ship Creek Viewing Platform

LOOKOUT

(off Map p162) From mid- to late summer, king, coho and pink salmon spawn up Ship Creek, the historical site of Tanaina Indian fish camps. At the overlook you can cheer on those love-starved fish humping their way toward destiny, and during high tide see the banks lined with anglers trying to hook them in what has to be one of the greatest urban fisheries anywhere in the USA. Follow C St north as it crosses Ship Creek Bridge and then turn right on Whitney Rd. Nearby is the **Bait Shack** (off Map p162; ☎522-3474; [www.thebaitshackak.com](http://www.thebaitshackak.com); 212 N Whitney Rd; ☀6am-10pm) that will rent you the rod, reel, waders and tackle needed to catch a trophy king.

#### Oscar Anderson House

HISTORIC BUILDING

(Map p162; [www.anchoragehistoricproperties.org](http://www.anchoragehistoricproperties.org); 420 M St; adult/child \$5/3; ☀noon-5pm Mon-Wed) Housed in the city's oldest wooden-framed home, this little museum overlooks the delightful Elderberry Park. Anderson was the 18th person to set foot in Anchorage, and he built his house in 1915. Today it's the only home museum in Anchorage, and despite past budget problems it's open June to mid-September as a reminder that there's not a single building in this city a century old.