



# The Bush

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## Best Protected Wilderness Areas

- Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve (p364)
- Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (p360)
- Kobuk Valley National Park (p364)
- Bering Land Bridge National Preserve (p358)

## Best Places for Birdwatching

- Nome (p353)
- St Lawrence Island (p369)
- Bering Land Bridge National Preserve (p358)
- Barrow (p368)

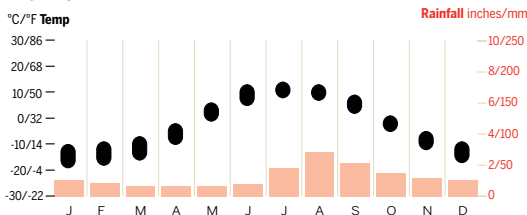
## Why Go?

In a state where unbounded wilderness is the norm, the Bush is like the frontier on the frontier. Towns and townly comforts are few, roads are fewer, and most of the region is accessible only by flying, floating or walking in. Yes, it takes effort to reach the ends of the earth, but the rewards are equal to the task.

In western Alaska, you can head out on extended hikes or wilderness paddles, swagger through Nome's gold-rush saloons or fly into isolated Native villages to meet the people who thrive year-round in this formidable landscape. In Arctic Alaska, explore the mythical vastness of preserves like Gates of the Arctic National Park and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Here the mandate is 'self-discovery,' which may be as much about teaching us our physical limits as about our puny insignificance in the grand scale of nature.

## When to Go

### Nome



**Mar** The Iditarod, the world's most famous dogsled race, concludes in Nome.

**Jun** Barrow Iñupiat celebrate the Nalukataq Festival after the spring's whale harvest.

**Jun–Aug** Enjoy 24-hour sunlight above the Arctic Circle.

## History

The history of the Bush is largely the history of Alaska Natives. By their own accounts, they've been here since the beginning. Archaeologists say it's not been as long as that: perhaps 6000 years for the ancestors of today's Athabascans, and about 3000 years for the Iñupiat, Yupiks and Aleuts. Either way, they've displayed remarkable ingenuity and endurance, thriving

as fishers, hunters and gatherers in an environment few else could even survive in.

Europeans arrived in Alaska in the 1800s, with traders and missionaries setting up shop in numerous communities along the western coast. Whalers entered the Bering Sea around the middle of the century, and soon expanded into the Arctic Ocean. By 1912 they had virtually decimated the bowhead whale population.



## The Bush Highlights

- 1 Traveling up the famed **Dalton Highway** (p360), aka the Haul Rd, to the edge of the world
- 2 Exploring the **Nome highways** (p358) for stunning Arctic scenery and endless hiking and camping opportunities
- 3 Watching the midnight sun in **Barrow** (p368) in

- June and staying for the Nalukataq Festival
- 4 Following caribou herds on a backcountry excursion inside the **Arctic National Wildlife Refuge** (p360)
- 5 Exploring gold-rush history on the beaches, streets and bleak tundra of **Nome** (p353)

- 6 Watching polar bears outside the tiny Arctic village of **Kaktovik** (p360)
- 7 Entering the almost virgin **Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve** (p364) and making your own path across this unblemished wilderness