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How to Have the Perfect Adventure-packed Trip to Alaska

By [Mark Lakin](#) | Updated on February 26, 2020

PHOTO: COURTESY OF MARK LAKIN

For all its insanely beautiful natural wonders, there's one thing Alaska has that many other rugged places don't: accessibility. Thanks to a direct [United Airlines](#) flight from Newark to Anchorage during the summer, you can get to Alaska in just seven hours. (From September through April there are plenty of short connections, too.) Taking the red eye direct back to Newark via United means that Alaska is now practically one of the most accessible remote destinations on the planet — it can even be visited over a long weekend, allowing you to leave the office on a Thursday afternoon and be back in time for a Monday morning conference call. It's all within the four walls of the U.S., too: No passport, no immunizations required, and, for some, the convenience of TSA Pre-Check. If you fly United's first class, you'll also have the benefit of a full lie-flat seat for resting up before the adventure.

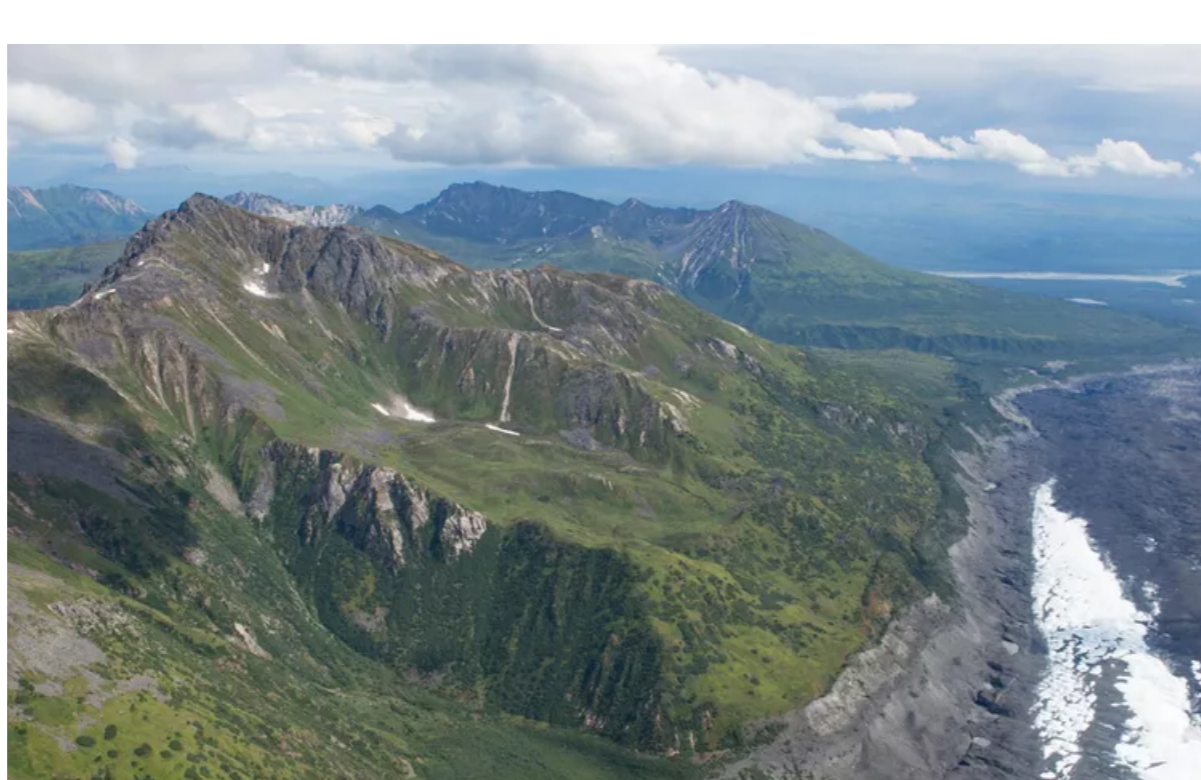


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Where to Stay in Alaska

The [Sheldon Chalet](#) is a property that challenges the notion of exclusivity as we know it. It feels like it's in one of the most remote locations in the world. The chalet is situated within the only five private acres directly on the flanks of Denali National Park — and it's just 10 miles from Denali's crown jewel: the highest peak in North America. The peak of Denali, at 20,310 feet above sea level, is notoriously elusive and hard to see from the base. Those at the chalet, however, are the privileged few who will likely see it from one of the most sumptuous beds I have ever slept in. How could this be possible, you ask? This five-acre anomaly exists as a result of a legendary pilot named Donald Sheldon, arguably Alaska's greatest bush pilot, who used the site commercially in the '50s and was able to successfully secure the epic property through the Homestead Act.

Watch Now: The Northern Lights Are Finally Visible Again — Here's How to See Them



The Sheldon Chalet prides itself on the idea of "adventuring in place." The warm, attentive team of hosts are more than aware that this location is so amazing you don't need to go anywhere else to be entertained. As one of a maximum of 10 guests that can occupy the chalet at a time, there is plenty of space and privacy to find your own little slice of heaven to take it all in. Relaxing in hammocks dangling hundreds of feet over a deep glacier below, eating an Alaskan seafood platter with champagne beside a fire on the helicopter deck, letting the deep heat of the sauna penetrate your bones while you look out the window at the massive granite rock faces floating above a sea of white snow — these are the things dreams are made of. And while their seafood platter is indeed spectacular, the world-class private chef will take your taste buds on a journey to far higher heights. Homemade everything down to the breads, from ingredients flown in by helicopter just for you, lead to culinary experiences like decadent glacial picnics on benches hand-carved from snow. The Northern Lights often illuminate the night sky, visible from the piping hot sauna's window that lies beneath the helicopter pad. There are activities for the active set, too: snowshoeing or skiing across glaciers, mountain climbing, rappelling, sledding, and downhill skiing. September through April is Northern Lights season and they're extraordinarily spectacular at the Sheldon Chalet.

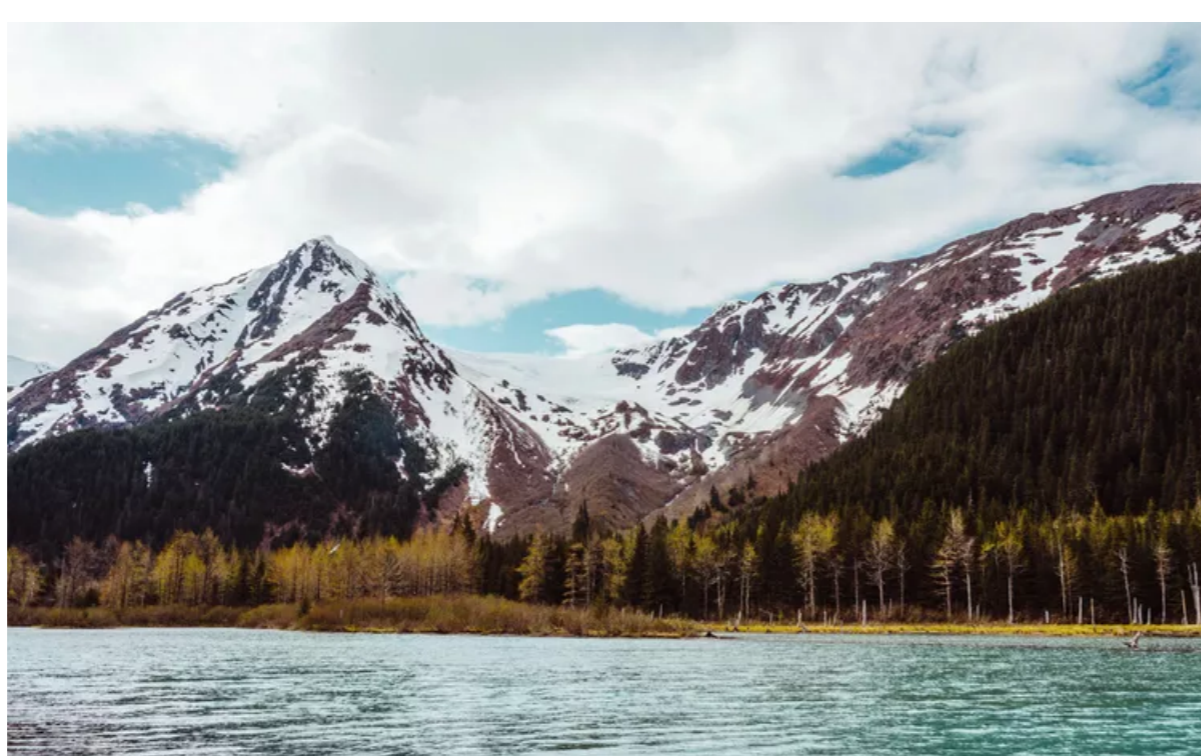


PHOTO: TAYLOR MCINTYRE/TRAVEL + LEISURE

What to Do in Alaska

Seven of the ten largest national parks in the United States are in Alaska alone. [Ultima Thule](#) is one of Alaska's best options to explore them in style. Located 100 miles from the nearest road, guests explore by air in Piper Super Cubs flown by some of the best pilots around, allowing them to reach remote slices of wilderness. Want to fish? While salmon lack the size of, say, giant tuna, river fishing for salmon is a whole lot of fun. Put on [Tordrillo Mountain Lodge](#)'s waterproof waders, saunter through one of the cleanest rivers you will ever see, and you can continuously cast and reel in endless amounts of salmon. All of a sudden fishing will feel like an active sport rather than a passive pastime.

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If you want to up the adrenaline, make use of Tordrillo's helicopters. In the winter, their capable pilots access some of the best heli-skiing runs for the types of skiers who win gold medals in the Olympics. In the summer, these same heli pilots can take you heli rafting, heli mountain biking, or best of all, heli climbing at Tordrillo's new [Via Ferrata](#), a newly installed 1,200-foot track of cable-and-wire steps drilled into a vertical granite rock face sitting high above the 28-mile-long Triumvirate Glacier. (I was the sixth person to ever climb it.) Being tethered to the cable cord at all times makes mountain climbing safe and accessible for even a first-time climber with a moderate level of fitness. Or you can stay at the lodge itself and enjoy waterskiing, wake surfing, tubing, swimming, soaking in the hot tub, or shooting powerful shotguns at clay discs. Other lodges like [Winterlake Lodge](#) really push the limits of culinary excellence, while [Tutka Bay Lodge](#) is the perfect home base to see those brown bears fishing for salmon during the annual salmon run.

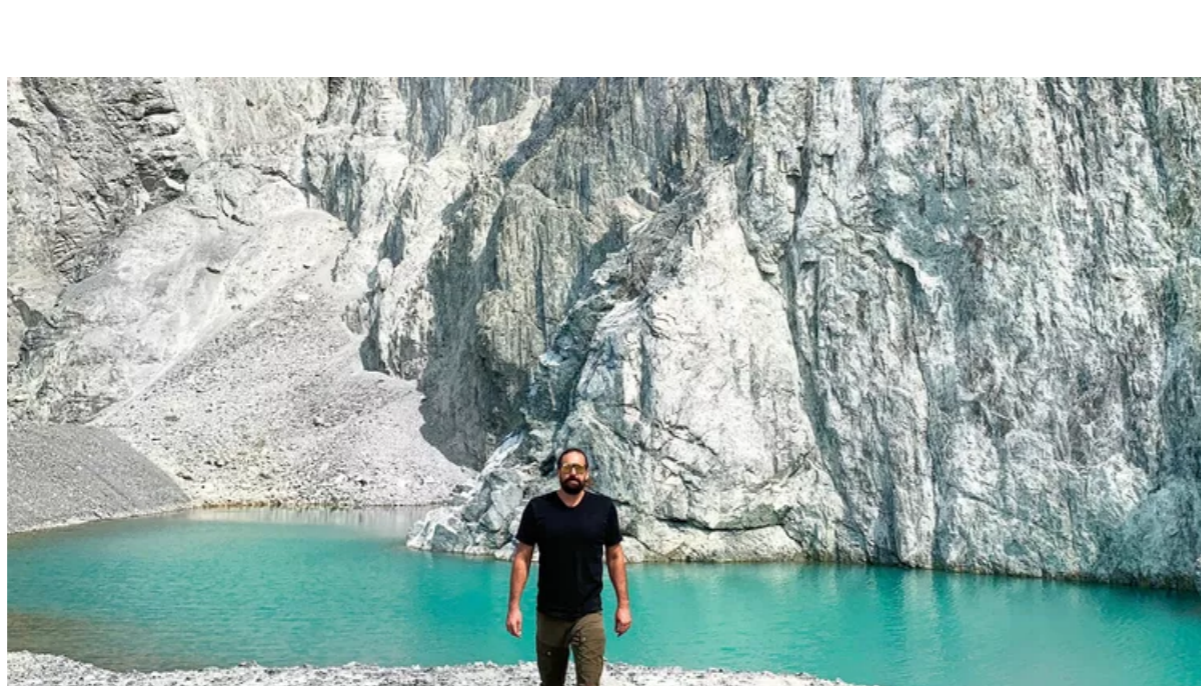


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How to Plan a Trip to Alaska

My travel agency [The Legacy Untold](#) creates bespoke trips for people to see the best of the best in experiential travel: hot air balloon rides over the Great Migration in Africa, scuba diving down to the seafloor to look for your own conflict-free diamond, taking a private jet to the South Pole, sitting with a 17th generation katana sword sharpener in Japan, and learning from a master how to sharpen the world's finest blade. Everything I offer to my travelers, I personally test out first. Every once in a while I come across something so unique, so special, and so exclusive that from the moment I arrive, I know I've found them gold yet again. Alaska is a wild and wonderful wilderness that I took my breath away over and over. While the luxury lodges in Alaska are still few and far between, so are the travelers to these lodges. It allows you to feel that in that seven-hour direct flight from NYC, you may as well have just landed in Antarctica.

To book your trip, contact Mark Lakin, [The Legacy Untold](#), ml@thelegacyuntold.com, +1-646-580-3026. Lodges start at \$1,500 per person, per night.