

**Sarett Nature Center
Alaska Natural History Tour
with Wilderness Birding Adventures**

13 Days: July 30th-August 11th, 2018



WBA Leader: Nan Eagleson with assistance from Aaron Lang in Homer

This is a 13 day road-based tour taking in many of the highlights of south central and south coastal, Alaska, including Seward and Homer on the Kenai Peninsula, Chugach State Park in the Anchorage area, and Denali National Park. Sarett Nature Center is happy to once again be working with Wilderness Birding Adventures for this general natural history tour of Alaska.

ITINERARY:

Day 1, July 30: Arrival Day

Our Delta flight 2805 leaves O'Hare at 2:20 pm and arrives in Anchorage at 9:25 pm. A welcome dinner this evening is the only planned activity.



Accommodations: Anchorage area hotel

Day 2, July 31: Anchorage to Seward (130 miles)

Today we depart Anchorage and head south on the Seward Highway, one of the most scenic highways in North America. There are many natural attractions to check out on our drive to the community of Seward and we should have time for a leisurely drive. Immediately after leaving Anchorage the road traces Turnagain Arm of Cook Inlet. We'll scan the waters for beluga whales while we watch for Dall sheep and other wildlife on the steep slopes along the other side of the highway. After leaving the water's edge the road ascends over Turnagain Pass and down to the coastal rainforest community of Seward. We'll finish our day with a visit to the Alaska SeaLife Center, a world-class aquarium and research laboratory.



Accommodations: Best Western, Seward

Day 3, August 1: Boat trip to Kenai Fjords National Park



Leaving from the harbor in Seward we'll take an all-day boat trip out to Kenai Fjords National Park. This is perhaps the most spectacular boat trip in Alaska. It's an excellent trip for encountering marine mammals including Orca and humpback whales, harbor seals and Steller sea lions. On our route, we'll pass active seabird colonies swarming with a variety of birds busily raising young



during Alaska's brief summer. We'll also get up close and personal with the stunning scenery of coastal Alaska. We'll cruise by rocky coastlines where waterfalls crash to the sea, pass several glaciers, and approach at least one glacier where we may experience active calving of ice. Most boat trips out of Seward are small ships catering to 100-150 passengers. On this all-day trip, we'll charter a 43 foot, 15 passenger boat. This small boat experience allows for a more intimate experience with the incredible scenery and wildlife and gives us greater flexibility over our route on the water. Caveat: this trip can be cancelled or shortened, depending upon the weather and seas that day.

Back in Seward, we'll have dinner at a local restaurant. Our hotel is located in downtown Seward near the waterfront. For those interested, there are a number of shops nearby and a scenic walk along the waterfront.

Accommodations: Best Western, Seward

Day 4, August 2: Seward to Homer (168 miles)

The Kenai Peninsula is bisected by towering mountains which separate the coastal rainforests of the eastern Kenai from the drier boreal realm of the west. Today we'll drive from Seward to Homer, traversing the Peninsula and seeing first hand the change in vegetation that accompanies the shift in climate. Our destination today is the town of Homer, set on the north side of Kachemak Bay. Ecologically, Kachemak Bay is fascinating because the line separating the wetter east from the drier west goes right through the bay and Homer is a transition zone between the rainforest and the boreal. Aesthetically, Homer is one of the most picturesque towns in Alaska and abounds with opportunities to explore and experience the nature of south coastal Alaska.

We'll stay in Homer for three nights in comfortable accommodations set right on the beach, offering fantastic views of the water from the rooms and balcony. A short trail to Bishop's beach makes it convenient to take an evening or early morning stroll on your own.

Accommodations: Ocean Shores Motel

Day 5, August 3: Kachemak Bay Natural History Tour

Today we'll take another small boat trip, this time in the relatively protected waters of Kachemak Bay. This four-hour trip will focus on the birds and marine mammals of the bay and get us up close and personal views of the fantastic seabird colonies at Gull Island. Photographic opportunities today will be excellent. We'll have lunch back on dry land on the famous Homer Spit. In the afternoon we'll check out the forests above Homer at the Wynn Nature Center and make a visit to the small but excellent Pratt Museum.



Accommodations: Ocean Shores Motel

Day 6, August 4: Hike on the south side of Kachemak Bay or Optional Bear viewing Across Cook Inlet

There are two options today for guests. The first option will center around a hike on the south side of Kachemak Bay, probably to Grewingk Glacier. After a short water taxi from the Homer Harbor, we'll hike about 3 miles to Grewingk Glacier for excellent views of this glacial lake environment. After a leisurely lunch at the lake, we'll hike about 1.5 miles to our boat pick-up near Halibut Cove. This hike is easy to moderate on good trails and is suitable for most groups. However, depending on the group, the exact hike that we do today may be changed to best fit our group's interests and abilities.

The second option is a fly-in bear viewing trip across Cook Inlet to either Katmai National Park or Lake



Clark National Park. Because of the expense of this trip, we'll arrange it as an optional add-on for those interested. The estimated cost of this activity is \$750/person and includes the scenic flight over and about three hours with bears. This trip would take the place of the aforementioned hike to Grewingk Glacier and **is not included** in the cost of the tour. Please make it known if you are interested in this trip when you sign up for the tour.

Accommodations: Ocean Shores Motel

Day 7, August 5: Homer to Anchorage (230 miles)

Today's drive will take us back to Anchorage where we'll spend two nights. We'll break up the drive with a few stops en route and will probably arrive in Anchorage in the late afternoon.

Accommodations: Anchorage area hotel

Day 8, August 6: Anchorage, the Eagle River Nature Center, and Chugach State Park

Today we'll head to the Eagle River Nature Center north of Anchorage. This nature center is a non-profit organization that provides education and interpretation facilities, programs, and resources in Chugach State Park. We'll visit the center and walk along their beautiful and well-maintained trails. The center is located at the head of Eagle River valley, about a 40-minute drive from Anchorage city center. On our way back to Anchorage, we'll check out a higher elevation access road into Chugach State Park for a great view of the area. If the skies are clear we'll be able to see Denali and other peaks in the Alaska range.

Accommodations: Anchorage area hotel



Day 9, August 7: Anchorage to Denali National Park (235 miles)

We'll travel from Anchorage to our accommodations near the park entrance at Denali National Park where we'll spend three nights. If skies are clear, there are multiple opportunities to view Denali along the road today.

Accommodations: McKinley Creekside Cabins

Day 10, August 8: Denali National Park Shuttle Bus Tour

Today we'll explore Denali National Park via their shuttle bus system. Denali is the most popular destination in Alaska and the park manages the huge influx of visitors each summer by limiting vehicle traffic along the park road. Private vehicle traffic is restricted in the park; shuttle buses and tour buses are the primary way to travel the 90-mile park road and are the only vehicles allowed past the first 12 miles. Our bus trip into the park today makes frequent stops along the way to observe the rich diversity of large mammals that make the park famous. On this trip, there is a good chance to see grizzly bears, caribou, moose, Dall sheep, and, with luck, a wolf. If the skies are clear we will see Denali, the highest mountain in North America at 20,320 feet.

Accommodations: McKinley Creekside Cabins



Day 11, August 9: The Denali Area

Today our leader, Nan Eagleson, will show us a few of her favorite spots around the park area. Nan has lived year-round at Denali Park for more than 20 years. It is literally her back and front yard. Today will be a relaxing day checking out the forests and tundra in the area with at least one short hike.

Accommodations: McKinley Creekside Cabins

Day 12, August 10: Denali to Anchorage (235 miles)

Today we'll have a leisurely morning before our return drive to Anchorage. If we arrive in Anchorage on time and there is interest, the Anchorage Museum is excellent and we could schedule a visit.

Accommodations: Anchorage hotel

Day 13, August 11: Departure for Home

Our Delta flight 728 leaves Anchorage at 5:40 am. We are scheduled to be back to O'Hare at 5:02 pm where Sarett vans will bring us back to Michigan.

Cost: \$6825 per person based on double occupancy. Single supplement is \$1200. (Unless a single room is specifically requested all participants will be assigned a suitable roommate. If no roommate is available, a single room will be provided and the participant will be charged the single supplement.)

The tour price includes: Sarett Nature Center naturalist, Dianne Braybrook and WBA guide(s); airfare from O'Hare to/from Anchorage. Transportation to/from O'Hare Airport, lodging for 12 nights; airport transfers on day 1 and day 13; a welcome dinner on the first night; picnic lunches throughout; all ground transportation and water taxis; entrance fees at the Alaska SeaLife Center, Pratt Museum, Denali National Park, and Wynn and Eagle River Nature Centers; boat trip in Kenai Fjords National Park; boat trip in Kachemak Bay; entrance fee and shuttle bus in Denali National Park.

Not included in tour price: dinners (except for the welcome dinner) and breakfasts; optional bear viewing on day 6; entrance fee to Anchorage Museum; alcoholic beverages, phone calls, laundry, and other items of personal nature. Additional costs incurred due to factors beyond the control of Sarett Nature Center or Wilderness Birding Adventures will be the participants' responsibility (e.g. lodging, meals, etc. associated with weather delays, sickness, strikes, evacuations, political crises, etc.).

Deposit: Initial deposit of \$1000.00 will secure your place on this trip. This trip is limited to 12 participants. Since space is limited, send in your deposit today! If you need to cancel, and we can fill your spot, we will gladly refund your deposit (less \$50). Trip insurance is always highly recommended.
Deposit of \$2000 is due March 1, 2018
Deposit of \$2000 is due April 15, 2018
Final payment is due June 1, 2018 If you cancel after June 1, only amounts recoverable (less \$50) can be refunded. Trip insurance is highly recommended.

Sarett will be sending out pre-trip information. If you have questions, please call Dianne at 927-4832 or dianneb@sarett.com

Responsibility: It is clearly understood that Sarett Nature Center will provide interpretive services on this trip and is in no way whatsoever responsible for the operations of the airlines, local agents and other transportation companies. The Sarett Nature Center shall not be liable for any injuries, damages, losses, accidents, expenses, delays or irregularities which are beyond their control. Nor can they accept responsibility for unexpected transport delays and changes resulting from strikes, and other causes, nor liability for additional expenses or loss of time incurred by tour participants resulting therefrom. On advancement of deposit to Sarett Nature center, the depositor agrees to be bound by the terms and conditions here mentioned. Sarett Nature center naturalists reserve the right to adjust the itinerary due to weather conditions, wildlife sightings, road conditions, and etc. We want to make the best possible and safest adventure.