Welcome

You’re invited to embark on the Ultimate North American Road Trip — to Alaska via Alberta, British Columbia and the Yukon. Today the primary routes are paved the entire way. So whether you travel by RV, car or motorcycle and via highway, ferry or both, you will soon add this trip to the list of your life’s most memorable experiences.

So, if this road trip is not on your bucket list, it should be!

Nowhere else on earth can you find such a unique combination of wilderness and culture, geology and history, rugged and civilized, down-home and uptown, which will provide years of stories and photographs and a lifetime of memories.

This publication is designed to explain the primary routes and help you get started on your planning. For more route options, side trips, information, photos, traveler stories and firsthand accounts, visit us online at NorthtoAlaska.com or on Facebook at Travel North to Alaska.
Let the good times roll...

Copper Center (Matt Hage, State of Alaska)

Legend

Rocky Mountain Route

Gold Rush Route

Inside Passage Route

Ferry
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Ultimate Road Trip 2  
Start Planning 10  
Rocky Mountain Route 14  
Gold Rush Route 26  
Inside Passage Route 38  
Planning Resources 49

## Trip Planning Distances

**MILEAGE CHART**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance (miles)</th>
<th>Anchorage</th>
<th>Calgary</th>
<th>Dawson City</th>
<th>Dawson Creek</th>
<th>Edmonton</th>
<th>Fairbanks</th>
<th>Haines</th>
<th>Homer</th>
<th>Prince Rupert</th>
<th>Seattle</th>
<th>Seward</th>
<th>Skagway</th>
<th>Tok</th>
<th>Valdez</th>
<th>Vancouver</th>
<th>Whitehorse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anchorage</td>
<td>2160</td>
<td>2160</td>
<td>2038</td>
<td>1687</td>
<td>1195</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>1195</td>
<td>2286</td>
<td>2174</td>
<td>2435</td>
<td>2038</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>1734</td>
<td>2415</td>
<td>2288</td>
<td>2435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calgary</td>
<td>2160</td>
<td>2160</td>
<td>2038</td>
<td>1687</td>
<td>1195</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>1195</td>
<td>2286</td>
<td>2174</td>
<td>2435</td>
<td>2038</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>1734</td>
<td>2415</td>
<td>2288</td>
<td>2435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawson City</td>
<td>2160</td>
<td>2160</td>
<td>2038</td>
<td>1687</td>
<td>1195</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>1195</td>
<td>2286</td>
<td>2174</td>
<td>2435</td>
<td>2038</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>1734</td>
<td>2415</td>
<td>2288</td>
<td>2435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawson Creek</td>
<td>2160</td>
<td>2160</td>
<td>2038</td>
<td>1687</td>
<td>1195</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>1195</td>
<td>2286</td>
<td>2174</td>
<td>2435</td>
<td>2038</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>1734</td>
<td>2415</td>
<td>2288</td>
<td>2435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edmonton</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>1562</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>1853</td>
<td>1502</td>
<td>2201</td>
<td>906</td>
<td>2101</td>
<td>1359</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>1562</td>
<td>1853</td>
<td>1502</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>1562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairbanks</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>2038</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>1486</td>
<td>1853</td>
<td>653</td>
<td>1001</td>
<td>1132</td>
<td>2162</td>
<td>1359</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>1562</td>
<td>1853</td>
<td>1502</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>1562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haines</td>
<td>775</td>
<td>1687</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>1135</td>
<td>1502</td>
<td>653</td>
<td>1001</td>
<td>1132</td>
<td>2162</td>
<td>1359</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>1562</td>
<td>1853</td>
<td>1502</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>1562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homer</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>2386</td>
<td>741</td>
<td>1834</td>
<td>2201</td>
<td>584</td>
<td>1001</td>
<td>1831</td>
<td>2661</td>
<td>1359</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>1562</td>
<td>1853</td>
<td>1502</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>1562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Rupert</td>
<td>1605</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>1192</td>
<td>706</td>
<td>906</td>
<td>1483</td>
<td>1132</td>
<td>1831</td>
<td>1033</td>
<td>1359</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>1562</td>
<td>1853</td>
<td>1502</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>1562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seattle</td>
<td>2435</td>
<td>738</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>827</td>
<td>923</td>
<td>2313</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>2661</td>
<td>1033</td>
<td>2435</td>
<td>923</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>2661</td>
<td>1033</td>
<td>923</td>
<td>1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seward</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>2286</td>
<td>641</td>
<td>1734</td>
<td>2101</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>901</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>1731</td>
<td>2435</td>
<td>923</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>2661</td>
<td>1033</td>
<td>923</td>
<td>1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skagway</td>
<td>832</td>
<td>1544</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>992</td>
<td>1359</td>
<td>710</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>1058</td>
<td>989</td>
<td>1544</td>
<td>923</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>2661</td>
<td>1033</td>
<td>923</td>
<td>1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tok</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>1832</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>1280</td>
<td>1647</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>554</td>
<td>1277</td>
<td>1832</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>1280</td>
<td>1647</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valdez</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>2086</td>
<td>441</td>
<td>1534</td>
<td>1901</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>701</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>2086</td>
<td>441</td>
<td>1534</td>
<td>1901</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>701</td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>2288</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>728</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>2172</td>
<td>1650</td>
<td>2509</td>
<td>934</td>
<td>2288</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>728</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>1650</td>
<td>2509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitehorse</td>
<td>724</td>
<td>1436</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>884</td>
<td>1251</td>
<td>602</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>881</td>
<td>2288</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>728</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>1650</td>
<td>2509</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

© 2016 The MILEPOST/Morris Communications (themilepost.com)

1 mile = 1.6 kilometers

NorthToAlaska.com | 1
The Ultimate Road Trip

Nothing satisfies the need for freedom and the desire to chart your own course like taking off on a grand adventure, stopping whenever and wherever you want, sharing stories and making new ones while on the road.

In the north, vast expanses of highway unwind to the horizon, surrounded by wilderness so big, so wild it will take your breath away. We call it the Ultimate North American Road Trip, and we think you’ll agree.

In one journey, you will experience some of the most dramatic national, state and provincial parks in the United States and Canada, inhabited by critters you’ve maybe only seen in the media. Moose, caribou, bears, wolves, bald eagles, whales and many other species make their homes in the north country, and you’ll see most – if not all – of them along the way.

This trip is yours for the taking.

Picture PERFECT!

Lions Head, Glenn Highway (Michael DeYoung, State of Alaska)

Writing on Stone Provincial Park (Sabrina Hill, Travel Alberta)
“That was the most wonderful trip we’ve taken, and we want to do it again.” Annette S. – via Facebook
Not just places; People

Amidst the millions of acres of wilderness, you’ll find colorful towns and villages populated by hearty souls with the creativity and spunk it takes to carve a life and a living out of the wilderness and the soul to appreciate it. Their artistic endeavors, indigenous cultures and pioneer stories will add depth to your journey and a few belly laughs to your morning pancakes, no doubt. To top it off, your fellow travelers – the people you meet in the campgrounds, roadhouses, lodges and restaurants along the way – will become your co-conspirators, witnessing the natural marvels and cultural oddities and sharing their own stories.

Sharing stories and making new ones.
"Take your time & do not hurry as then you miss things. Relax."

Gladys S. – via Facebook
“There are many beautiful places... went on that road in winter and summer and it is incredible in either.”

Dorothy W. – via Facebook
Travel in Style

Your style, that is. Whether you drive a car and spend the night in a hotel, motel, lodge or bed and breakfast; ride a motorcycle and pitch a tent or drive an RV and stay in a private campground, you’ll find plenty of options on the road north. You pick the transportation, the route, the pace and the accommodations. We’ve got plenty of suggestions for you, but in the end, the best part of the Ultimate Road Trip is making it your own.

The choice is yours!
“I have done three different routes and driven it five times and I love them all.” Sue E. – via Facebook
Find Your Way

Although there are countless side trips and alternate routes to enrich your journey, this book simplifies the planning by describing three main routes – the Gold Rush Route, the Rocky Mountain Route, and the Inside Passage Route. Your round-trip adventure can easily incorporate elements of all three depending on your interests (you can find many more route options online at NorthtoAlaska.com). Want to follow the trail of hopeful prospectors seeking their fortunes? Experience the rich culture and artistic traditions of the indigenous peoples of the north? Visit as many national and provincial parks as possible?

Whatever your pleasure, now is the time. The lure of the north is as strong today as it was when gold was first discovered in the Klondike in 1896, and there are still plenty of riches left to enjoy.

Join us in Alaska and Canada this year.

A perfect evening...
The Routes are Paved
The roads along all three of the routes outlined in this guide are paved and well maintained, suitable for cars, RVs and motorcycles. Along the way you may encounter sections of older pavement or road construction although delays are usually minimal. Facilities and services along the way are ample. However, some sections are narrow and winding, particularly those traversing high mountain passes.

When to Travel
The easiest time for road travel is from mid-May to early September because more facilities are open for business, more wildlife is out and there is less chance of inclement weather.

Are We There Yet?
How long it will take to complete the trip depends on you. While it’s possible to make the drive in five days we recommend scheduling a week to 10 days each way. With all there is to see and do, you could easily take longer.

Services
There are plenty of gas stations, restaurants and accommodations along the way, approximately 25-50 miles (40-80 km) apart. While the majority are open year-round, some do close during the winter, so it is important to plan accordingly.

Medical Facilities
Emergency medical crews are on duty throughout Canada and Alaska, but response times may be longer in the more remote areas. Most small towns have clinics and the regional hubs have modern hospitals.

Places to Stay
There are many hotels, motels and lodges, particularly in larger cities and towns, but it is advisable to make reservations and to know exactly where each is and how long it will take you to travel from one to the next. If you prefer to sleep under the stars, there are camping areas at both private and public locations, many of which offer full-service RV sites. Reservations are accepted at most and are recommended.

The easiest way to find details on accommodations is by visiting the website of the province, territory or state you will be visiting or order a printed guide using the business reply card on page 25.

TravelAlberta.us
TravelAlaska.com
TravelYukon.com
HelloBC.com

Start Planning! Here are the Basics
What to Pack
Dressing appropriately can be a challenge in this region because the weather changes quickly. In addition, average temperatures vary widely. Generally, expect warm days and cool nights during spring and summer. But when you’re on the move, it is possible to encounter temperatures as high as 95°F (35°C) and as low as 35°F (2°C) within the same 24 hours. The solution? Layering. Wear clothes that can be removed or added as required. And don’t forget to bring rain gear!

What Time is it?
British Columbia and Yukon are in the same time zone as the U.S. West Coast (Pacific time). Alaska is an hour earlier, and Alberta is an hour later.

Conversions
In Canada, fuel is sold by the liter; multiply the cost by a little less than four (3.785) to get the price per U.S. gallon.

Canada also has its own currency which has been close to par with the U.S. dollar in recent years. A quick Internet search will give you the latest exchange rate. Keep in mind that Canadian money includes not only paper bank notes but also coins, known as “loonies” and “toonies,” worth $1 and $2 respectively.

Rules of the Road
Seat belts are required while driving in Alaska and Canada. Drivers must also carry a valid driver’s license and proof of insurance.

Children under the age of 8 must be in a federally approved child safety seat.

Many areas require headlights to be on at all times. Regardless, when driving on the highway, it’s a very good idea to keep your headlights on day and night.

Find tips, stories, photos and maps online!

Official Website: NorthtoAlaska.com
At NorthtoAlaska.com you will find expanded information and links to other resources such as:
• Route guide and photo gallery
• Planning tips
• Things to see and do along the way
• Interactive maps
• Reports from people who’ve made the journey
• Answers to frequently asked questions

Facebook.com/travelnorthtoAlaska
Follow us on Facebook. You will find photos, links, current information from the road and communities along the way. Plus the comments and feedback of fellow travelers.
Traveling Safe
As with any kind of travel, being prepared is important. Make sure you have a general emergency kit with you, and check your car jack, jumper cables and other auto-repair supplies to make sure everything is functioning properly.

If you decide to travel in early spring or late fall, a set of snow tires is not a bad idea. Snow during these seasons is not uncommon and can make for challenging road conditions.

Cell and Internet Service
Cellular service can be intermittent or nonexistent in many remote areas through which the routes pass, although in population centers, you can expect good service. WiFi and Internet access is available at many hotels/motels and campgrounds along the highway, as well as at some visitor centers, libraries and coffee shops/cafes. Before you travel, check with your phone company about roaming or international cell and data plans to avoid unexpected overages. Check rules regarding use of cell phones while driving. Each province/state has its own regulations.

Crossing the Border
All travelers must have a passport, passport card, enhanced driver’s license/identification card or trusted traveler program card (Global Entry, NEXUS, SENTRI or FAST) when crossing the U.S./Canada borders. Children under age 16 can show an original or copy of a birth certificate, a Consular Report of Birth Abroad, a Naturalization Certificate or a Canadian Citizenship Card. Check these websites before traveling: cbp.gov and cbsa-asfc.gc.ca.

Persons under 18 who are not accompanied by both parents must carry a notarized letter from their legal guardian and/or the absent parent granting permission for the child to travel into Canada.

Be prepared to show proof of insurance and vehicle registration or rental papers.

Dogs and cats may be transported through Canada as long as you have proof of current rabies vaccination. A health certificate is also recommended.

You may not be able to enter Canada if you have a criminal record (this includes DUI). However, U.S. citizens may secure
permission to enter by applying for approval of rehabilitation. Learn more about admissibility at canadainternational.gc.ca.

To enter Canada, border control agents may ask you how much money you are carrying.

The amount of money you will need can vary with the circumstances of the visit, how long you will stay and whether you will stay in a hotel or with friends or relatives. If you are entering or leaving Canada with more than $10,000 cash, you must report it to Customs.

**Firearms**

American adults (18+) may take non-prohibited firearms (rifles and shotguns) into Canada for lawful purposes. Firearms must be declared on a special form and a fee of $25 Canadian is charged. Depending on the model, handguns are either banned or require additional paperwork. For more information, call 1-800-731-4000 or visit cfc-cafc.gc.ca. Declaration forms may be downloaded online, and it is a good idea to fill them out before you reach the border. U.S. customs officials will want to see that paperwork on the way back into the U.S. More information can be found at the Customs and Border Patrol website, help.cbp.gov.

The Customs site also has information for Canadians wishing to bring guns into the U.S. to go hunting. They must fill out a form ahead of time and get a hunting license for the state where they are going.

In Alaska, firearms may be carried for personal protection and for hunting with the appropriate state license and tags. A good resource is the Alaska Department of Fish and Game website, adfg.alaska.gov.

Unloaded rifles and shotguns may be sent via USPS with a federal firearms license. Check with your local post office for details. Handguns can be sent via a contract carrier to a licensed dealer. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives has more information at atf.gov. At the home page, search for “shipping handguns FAQ.”

---

**Check for road conditions updates at:**

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yukon:</td>
<td><a href="http://www.yukon511.ca">www.yukon511.ca</a></td>
<td>1-877-456-7623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC:</td>
<td><a href="http://www.drivebc.ca">www.drivebc.ca</a></td>
<td>1-800-550-4997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta:</td>
<td><a href="http://www.511.alberta.ca">www.511.alberta.ca</a></td>
<td>dial 511 (from within Alberta) or 1-855-391-9743 (from outside Alberta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska:</td>
<td><a href="http://511.alaska.gov">http://511.alaska.gov</a></td>
<td>dial 511 (from within Alaska only)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“That was the most wonderful trip we’ve ever taken. Want to do it again.”

Annette — Tampa, FL
The Rocky Mountain Route from Alberta to Alaska via Yukon and the Alaska Highway offers visitors a stretch of road that travels through some of the world’s most wildly beautiful areas, filled with jaw-dropping scenery, wildlife sightings galore and historic communities that hold proudly to their frontier roots.

The route follows an extension of the Rocky Mountains known as the North American Cordillera, which sets the stage for what drivers will see and experience the entire way from Coutts, Alberta to Homer, Alaska. While the Rockies officially end at the Liard River in British Columbia, the cordillera continues all the way through Yukon and Alaska. The natural wealth and dramatic landscapes of this region led to its protection in a series of national, provincial and state parks through which you will travel.
Time Travel
Upon crossing the Montana-Alberta border at the small town of Coutts, you are immediately surrounded by Alberta’s version of the Great Plains. Visit Writing-On-Stone Provincial Park in the Milk River Valley to see North America’s largest concentration of aboriginal rock art – petroglyphs and pictographs – in a place sacred to the Blackfoot for 8,000 years. To commemorate your stop in Milk River, take a photo with one of Canada’s 10 strangest attractions (at least according to MSN Travel Canada) in front of the 36-foot Tyrannosaurus Rex outside the Milk River Travel Information Centre. Jump back millions of years at the Devil’s Coulee Dinosaur & Heritage Museum in the town of Warner and take a tour to hunt for dinosaur eggs.

The Wild West
From Warner head north to Lethbridge, the first major city you will encounter en route – a great place to refuel and relax in any of the many parks along the banks of the serpentine Old Man River. Then swing west to the town of Fort Macleod, home of the Fort Museum of the North West Mounted Police, who founded a post here to establish law and order, taming the riotous whiskey and gun trade. Just 11 miles (18 km) north and west, Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump is a UNESCO World Heritage Site that interprets 6,000 years of buffalo-hunting practices of the Plains People. The site is one of the oldest, largest and best preserved of its kind in the world.

From Fort Macleod, head west on the Crowsnest Highway, then north on the Cowboy Trail (Highway 22) through the high ranch country of the foothills. Save your appetite for this leg of the journey – the Cowboy Trail is so named for the western ranch lifestyle of the region, and there’s plenty of good eating in the towns along the way. In Longview, grab a slice of pie at Canadian country music legend Ian Tyson’s Navajo Mug restaurant and pick up jerky at the Longview Jerky shop. In Black Diamond, tour the art galleries and enjoy lunch in an authentic 1950s-style diner complete with a retro candy store. In Cochrane, be sure to grab a cone at MacKay’s Ice Cream and enjoy it while walking the footpaths that line the Bow River as it passes through town. At Cochrane, head west toward Canmore and Banff National Park.
Canadian Rockies National Parks

Banff and Jasper national parks are part of the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks UNESCO World Heritage Site. Banff is the birthplace of Canada’s national parks system, established in 1885. Covering 2,564-square miles (6,641-square km), it is one of the most well-known parks in the world. It shares its northern border with Jasper, the largest of Canada’s mountain parks at a staggering 4,335-square miles (11,228-square km).

Both parks showcase the unparalleled beauty of the Rockies – towering snow-capped peaks, ancient glaciers, dense forests, waterfalls spilling down the mountainsides, rushing rivers and turquoise glacial lakes. And wildlife galore – watch for moose, elk, caribou, mule and white-tailed deer, mountain goats, bighorn sheep, black and grizzly bear and the elusive mountain lions and wolverines.

There are literally thousands of hiking trails – good for walking, cycling, and horseback riding – and waterways for canoeing, fishing and whitewater rafting. There are thousands of campsites as well, but advance reservations are recommended, given the popularity of both parks.

In the midst of this pristine beauty are the townsites of Banff, Lake Louise and Jasper, where you will find all the amenities, with much to see and do including natural hot springs, gondola rides, historic sites and museums, iconic hotels and mountain lodges, fine dining and plenty of shopping for local treasures. All are hubs for year-round outdoor adventures with gear for rent and guided tours at hand.

The Icefields Parkway

Billed by National Geographic as one of the most scenic drives in the world, the Icefields Parkway connects both parks from Lake Louise to the town of Jasper. Along its 144-mile (230-km) length, you will see more than 100 glaciers from the road and some of the tallest peaks in the Rockies. There are many places where you can pull over and follow a hiking trail for even more spectacular views.

DETOUR

Cowboy up in Calgary

If you’re coming through Alberta in July, you’ll want to plan a side trip to Calgary, international gateway city and home to the famed Calgary Stampede, an annual 10-day whoop-up that’s been celebrating Alberta’s western heritage for more than 100 years. While in town, take in Heritage Park Historical Village, Fort Calgary and the Glenbow Museum, all of which capture the area’s storied past. Immerse yourself in the history of the Wild West, from buffalo hunting to bootlegging and beyond.

There are literally thousands of hiking trails – good for walking, cycling, and horseback riding – and waterways for canoeing, fishing and whitewater rafting. There are thousands of campsites as well, but advance reservations are recommended, given the popularity of both parks.

In the midst of this pristine beauty are the townsites of Banff, Lake Louise and Jasper, where you will find all the amenities, with much to see and do including natural hot springs, gondola rides, historic sites and museums, iconic hotels and mountain lodges, fine dining and plenty of shopping for local treasures. All are hubs for year-round outdoor adventures with gear for rent and guided tours at hand.

The Icefields Parkway

Billed by National Geographic as one of the most scenic drives in the world, the Icefields Parkway connects both parks from Lake Louise to the town of Jasper. Along its 144-mile (230-km) length, you will see more than 100 glaciers from the road and some of the tallest peaks in the Rockies. There are many places where you can pull over and follow a hiking trail for even more spectacular views.
If you’re interested in a quicker route to Grande Prairie and on to Mile 0 of the Alaska Highway, consider heading north from Calgary to Grande Prairie via Edmonton. Check out the world-famous West Edmonton Mall, the largest in North America, or join in on one of the many events happening year-round in “Canada’s Festival City.”

**DETOUR**

**EDMONTON, GRANDE PRAIRIE**

If you’re interested in a quicker route to Grande Prairie and on to Mile 0 of the Alaska Highway, consider heading north from Calgary to Grande Prairie via Edmonton. Check out the world-famous West Edmonton Mall, the largest in North America, or join in on one of the many events happening year-round in “Canada’s Festival City.”

**The famed Mile 0 – Start of the Alaska Highway**

The trek from Jasper to Dawson Creek will take about a day, but once you’re there, you’ve arrived! Dawson Creek is the historic Mile 0 of the Alaska Highway, and the town rolls out the red carpet for travelers preparing for the journey. It’s a great place to spend the night, visit the local museums and familiarize yourself.
with the journey ahead – particularly at the Alaska Highway House. Located right next to the Mile 0 signpost in downtown Dawson Creek, the Alaska Highway House tells the story of the highway’s construction through interpretive models, maps, photographs and film.

So just what is that story, anyway? In many ways it’s a very short story: when Pearl Harbor was bombed in December of 1941, the Alaska Highway went from an idea being considered by the Canadian and U.S. governments to an immediate necessity. The U.S. was intent on finding a way to move military equipment and personnel overland to Alaska’s strategic location on the Pacific Ocean to prevent future invasions or attacks like the one at Pearl Harbor. Construction began in March of 1942 and the 1,700-mile (2,720-km) highway was completed in October of the same year. Over the years, improvements and straightening projects have shortened it to 1,387 miles (2,219 km), but either way, covering that distance in just 10 months is one of the most stunning construction feats ever. The highway was also known as the Alaska-Canada Highway, the Alcan and eventually the Alaska Highway, the name by which it is officially known today.

Coming up in 2017, we will celebrate the 75th anniversary of its construction. This history, along with the scenery, combines to make the Alaska Highway one of the highlights of any trip.

Dawson Creek marked the northern end of the railroad back in the 1940s, which made it a perfect headquarters for the southern end of the massive project, and since then the town has been inextricably linked to the Alaska Highway. For a quick look at original highway construction, consider making the 11-mile (18-km) jaunt west on Highway 97 to the Kiskatinaw River Bridge, the only original timber bridge that remains on the highway today.
North of the 58th Parallel
The 58th parallel, an invisible latitudinal line on the globe, has come to denote the far north in countries and regions around the globe. As you venture north of Dawson Creek, you will cross this invisible line and truly find yourself in the north. In the coming miles, you’ll start getting glimpses of what will become familiar scenery as you continue north, including the famous “Drunken Forest,” which consists of small, gnarled black spruce growing at odd angles in unstable, clay-based soil. This section of road is also prime moose-spotting territory – the giant ungulates enjoy slurping tender grasses out of the many bogs and lakes.

If you don’t spot a moose on the road, you’ll surely want to snap a picture with the albino moose on display at the Fort Nelson Heritage Museum on your way through town. This museum is a must-stop for its unusual and eclectic collections. In addition to the taxidermy, the museum features a mannequin in a moose-hide bikini and an impressive collection of antique cars and highway construction equipment. Continue to keep your eyes peeled for wildlife as you mosey up the road. Stone Mountain and the nearby provincial park offer a good chance of spotting Stone sheep picking their way among the tiny ledges and outcroppings. Just north of Stone Mountain, Muncho Lake Provincial Park offers excellent fishing and a breathtaking public camping spot along the long, jade-green lake.

The hot springs at Liard River are without question one of the most popular stops on the Alaska Highway, and for good reason. Soaking in one of the two natural outdoor pools under a starlit sky is magical, particularly after a long day on the road. Get there early if you want to camp in any of the park’s 53 campsites – spots fill up early in the day. A boardwalk leads through a muskeg forest to changing houses and the outdoor pools. The area has been called the “Tropical Valley” because of the way the temperature of the springs influences the local ecology, and some 14 species of orchids grow near the springs.

Watson Lake and the Sign Post Forest
You’ve already seen the “Drunken Forest,” but what the heck is a signpost forest? After thoroughly soaking your bones at Liard River Hot Springs, you’ll soon reach the border with Yukon and the town of Watson Lake, which was an important construction camp for the Alaska Highway.
A U.S. Army soldier started the Watson Lake Sign Post Forest in 1942, and ever since, travelers have been adding signs from their hometowns to the sprawling outdoor “forest.” Today, nearly 80,000 signs from all over the world are on display. The adjacent Alaska Highway Interpretive Centre features photos of highway construction. Travel counselors at the visitor information center will help you make the most of your time in the Yukon and provide the latest information and interesting tips.

Yukon ho!
The Yukon has inspired more than a few writers and poets over the years to sing its praises, and you’ll soon see why: wide-open wilderness populated by far more caribou, moose, bears, sheep and wolves than humans; fascinating First Nations and gold rush history; natural phenomena like the northern lights and the summer’s midnight sun; and countless mountains still waiting for their first ascents.

Just a short drive beyond Watson Lake, you’ll cross the Continental Divide, which divides two of the largest drainage systems in North America, the Yukon River and Mackenzie River watersheds. Here, they can be observed flowing in different directions.

From the Alaska Highway, you’ll soon start seeing the numerous lakes and rivers that form the headwaters of the Yukon River. In Teslin, be sure to check out the Teslin Tlingit Heritage Centre, which tells the story of the Teslin Tlingit people through carved totem poles, ornamental clan regalia and other interpretive displays.
Whitehorse: Yukon’s capital city

The city of Whitehorse was born during the Klondike Gold Rush, and although the site had long been a First Nations fishing site, its modern character is unmistakably linked to its role as a transportation hub and supply center during the gold rush. There’s a lot more to Whitehorse than its past, though: the Yukon Beringia Interpretive Centre tells the story of the last ice age with a full-size woolly mammoth skeleton and other artifacts, while the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre offers visitors an opportunity to experience the cultural and artistic traditions of the local Kwanlin Dün First Nation. Whitehorse’s accessible wilderness also makes it the perfect base for a half- or full-day excursion. You’ll be charmed by the surprising sophistication of such an isolated little city and by the warmth and humor of the locals. Be sure to grab a beer at the Yukon Brewing Co. and a snack at one of the excellent local bakeries and restaurants. On the way out of town, consider a stop at Takhini Hot Springs for a soak in the outdoor pool.

Kluane National Park and Reserve

Heading west, the next major destination is Kluane National Park and Reserve, just west of Haines Junction. The Kluane National Park and Haines Junction visitor centers are open daily and offer information about camping, hiking, boating and other recreation. In the same building, the Da Ku Cultural Centre provides information on the Champagne and Aishihik First Nation. Before leaving town, commemorate your visit with a photo in front of the Haines Junction Village Monument, or “the muffin,” as Yukoners...
jokingly call it due to its unusual shape. The monument sits at the corner where the Alaska Highway intersects with the main village road and features sculptures of local wildlife.

Once you’re geared up, get ready to be dumbstruck as you approach Kluane Lake, the largest lake in the Yukon. Ringed by rugged, windswept mountains and tinged a deep blue, the lake is a great spot for fishing and boating. Camping is available along the park, and many visitors take advantage of flightseeing tours to get a bird’s-eye view of Canada’s highest peak, Mount Logan, as well as the largest non-polar ice field in the world. The communities of Burwash Landing and Destruction Bay are located along the highway, which traces the lake’s southern edge. The small but fascinating Kluane Museum of Natural History in Burwash Landing is definitely worth a stop. About 30 miles (48 km) past Burwash, a viewpoint of the Icefields Ranges provides an excellent vantage on nine of the 16 highest peaks in Canada, which are part of the St. Elias Mountains. If you like to fish, consider stopping at one of the several lakeside campgrounds in the park. Here, trout reach epic proportions while bison graze nearby.

Beaver Creek is the last stop before you reach the Canada-U.S. border and your ultimate destination: Alaska!

Alaska: The Last Frontier
You made it! Crossing the border into Alaska may in some ways feel like the end of the journey, but tons of excitement still lies ahead. The first community you’ll encounter is Tok, which is the highway gateway to the rest of the state. Be sure to stop in at the Tok Mainstreet Visitor’s Center and browse the selection of brochures and pamphlets from all over the state and begin plotting all the adventures you’ll have in the coming days. While you’re at the visitor’s center, be sure to pick up a copy of the brochure called “Fishing in the Upper Tanana Valley” for a guide to the best places to drop a line in the area. Tok is known for its excellent fishing.

From Tok, you’ll head west toward Glennallen via what’s known as the “Tok Cutoff.” Between Tok and Glennallen, you’ll be treated to spectacular views of the Wrangell Mountains as you traverse the northern border of the largest national park in the United States – Wrangell-St. Elias National Park. The park is accessible via the Nabesna Road near the small town...
of Slana. At Glennallen, fuel up and prepare for a stunning trek across Southcentral Alaska.

**A landscape carved by glaciers**

Heading southwest along the Glenn Highway, the black-spruce forest, tundra and lake country near Glennallen give way to the jagged peaks of the Chugach Mountains to the south. Several scenic viewpoints along the highway provide stunning photo opportunities, but perhaps the most scenic area on the highway is at Matanuska Glacier, which tumbles out of the mountains just shy of the highway. As you approach the glacier, Sheep Mountain juts skyward, its sharp, colorful peak dotted with bright white Dall sheep. You will then come face-to-face with the imposing Lions Head Mountain, a formerly volcanic cone that sits right alongside the highway.

A few miles farther is a turnoff where visitors can walk right up to the Matanuska Glacier, and guided treks are available on the ice itself. Camping is available at nearby Matanuska Glacier State Recreation Site. As you continue down the road, you’ll be following the powerful Matanuska River, which flows from the glacier between the Chugach and Talkeetna mountains.

**Palmer and the colonists**

As you continue west toward Alaska’s most populated region, you’ll reach the town of Palmer, which has one of the most unique founding stories in Alaska. In the aftermath of the Great Depression as farmers in the Midwest were struggling, President Roosevelt’s New Deal established the Matanuska Colony at Palmer and relocated 203 families to Alaska to farm the area. Families were given 40-acre tracts and had to carve farms out of the soil, clearing trees and brush by hand. Today many of those same families are still in the area and many farms remain, providing an unusual visual juxtaposition of hay fields, farmland and bright red barns backing up to towering mountains. The local Colony House Museum is a great place to get a taste for life in the colony. Speaking of tastes, be sure to stop at a local farmer’s market or look for locally grown produce on restaurant menus – Alaska’s near-constant
summer daylight produces ideal growing conditions and delicious veggies. Heading south, you’ll soon reach the outskirts of Anchorage, Alaska’s largest city. For more on Anchorage, see page 37.

**Turnagain Arm**

Heading out of Anchorage, you’ll pass through the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge. Keep an eye out for beautiful white tundra swans and other migratory birds, beaver, moose and fish in the waters of the marsh. As you head south along Turnagain Arm, you’ll be treated to what may be the most beautiful stretch of road in Alaska. Designated an All-American Road by the National Scenic Byways program for its spectacular scenery, the Seward Highway links Anchorage to the Kenai Peninsula. Along the drive south, you’ll wind along the coast of Turnagain Arm, which is characterized by the jagged coastal mountains and extreme tides that reveal wide swaths of tidal flats. The highway was carved out of the mountains on the eastern side of the arm, and on the high cliff walls directly above the highway, mountain goats are frequently spotted picking their way along impossibly narrow cliffs. In late summer, beluga whales can be seen chasing silver salmon in the waters of Turnagain Arm. For one of the best views of the Arm, turn off the highway at the relaxed little ski town of Girdwood, and take the tram to the top of Mount Alyeska at Alaska’s largest alpine ski resort. The road continues south and curves around the end of Turnagain Arm before climbing into the Kenai Mountains. Continue west at the intersection with the Sterling Highway to the famous Kenai Peninsula, Alaska’s fishing and outdoors mecca and a favorite place for locals to spend summer weekends.

**Welcome to the Kenai**

In summer, the Kenai Peninsula hums with activity. The legendary annual sockeye and king salmon runs bring thousands of anglers to the area. Dozens of guides and charter operators are available to help visitors land monstrous fish – no fish tales required! Communities like Cooper Landing, Sterling, Kenai and Soldotna are all great places to connect with a guide, spend the night and eat freshly prepared local seafood. If fishing isn’t your bag, the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge offers camping and hiking options. The peninsula narrows as you approach the town of Homer, a charming little town on the shores of Kachemak Bay.

**Homer – land’s end**

Homer is the western terminus of the U.S. road system and land’s end is at the tip of the Homer Spit, a four-mile (6-km) stretch of land that reaches into Kachemak Bay. The gravel beaches of the spit are a great place to pitch a tent or park an RV, and at the end of the spit, dozens of local businesses and restaurants that cater to visitors are clustered along boardwalks. In all directions, the ocean, mountains and glaciers dominate the horizon. Local fishermen can be seen headed out for a day’s work catching halibut, salmon and other species, leading to Homer’s tongue-in-cheek designation as “a drinking town with a fishing problem.” Homer is one of Alaska’s most artistic communities, and several local galleries line Homer’s main drag, Pioneer Avenue. For a truly unique experience, consider taking a ferry ride across the bay to nearby Halibut Cove for dinner and a visit to the community that has no roads. Houses are built onto the slopes of a small island in the bay and connected by boardwalks. The locals get around in their boats – there’s even a boat-in espresso stand!
“Love every mile of the trip. I’ve taken it several times & will do so again.”

Ruthanne T. – via Facebook

Gold Rush Route

Must See

Vancouver’s Chinatown 28
Barkerville Historic Town 28
Yukon River 32
Pioneer Park 35
Denali 35

Fairbanks (Michael DeYoung, State of Alaska)
The Gold Rush Route will take you from one of Canada’s largest cities to some of the least populated places in North America, all while enjoying views of mountains, glaciers and wildlife. After traversing through central British Columbia along the Cassiar Highway, you will follow the trail of hopeful prospectors to the epicenter of the Klondike Gold Rush in Dawson City, Yukon, before crossing into Alaska and heading north to Fairbanks and on to Denali National Park and Anchorage.
Vancouver
Your journey begins in one of the most diverse, vibrant and exciting cities in the world – Vancouver. Don’t take our word for it: Numerous magazines and business organizations have given the city high marks over the years for its quality of life, access to green spaces and other urban amenities. Visitors will get a taste for what makes Vancouver so well liked at places like Granville Island – an urban oasis with a legendary public market, restaurants, art galleries and family friendly attractions – and Stanley Park, the nearly 1,000-acre rain forest park overlooking Vancouver’s harbor and the Strait of Georgia. You’ll quickly notice the city’s diversity as you stroll downtown, and after hearing multiple languages spoken, you probably won’t be surprised to learn that more than 50 percent of the city’s residents aren’t native English speakers. In fact, Vancouver has one of the largest Chinese populations outside China, and the city’s Chinatown neighborhood is a wonderful place to explore stores, restaurants and apothecaries. A stop at the Fraser River Discovery Center in New Westminster ties Gold Rush history to the modern success of Vancouver, and prepares you for the journey up the Fraser Canyon.

Fraser Canyon north to Barkerville
As you drive out of Vancouver, you’ll pass through the Fraser Valley and then head north. You’ll be passing through communities like Yale, Lytton, Lillooet, Cache Creek, Clinton, 100 Mile House, 150 Mile House, Williams Lake and Quesnel, which all played a central role in the Cariboo Gold Rush in the mid-1800s. Originally established as roadhouses on the Cariboo Wagon Road, the communities retain their gold rush character while offering modern visitors plenty of recreation options and opportunities to relive the historic past.
As you’re absorbing all the gold rush history that lies along this route, you won’t want to overlook an equally fascinating and much older history that sits side-by-side with the pickaxes and sluice boxes – that of the First Nations cultures of the area. Located about 25 miles (40 km) north of Hope as you enter Fraser Canyon, one such site, Tuckkwiowhum Heritage Interpretive Village, features guided tours of a traditional village site customary to the Nlaka’pamux culture. The interpretive village features summer lodges, a smoke house, food caches, a sweat lodge, earth ovens and traditional storytelling in a pit house.

As you continue north, the communities you’ll encounter each display their gold rush past through a variety of museums and interpretive sites, and for those with an interest in how the West was explored and settled, this is rich territory. Get a flavor at Historic Hat Creek Ranch, which catered to miners, pack-train operators, stagecoaches and wagon trains heading north.

If you’re passing through in late June, be sure to experience the Williams Lake Stampede in Williams Lake, a legendary rodeo event that spans several days during Canada Day weekend. Make sure to leave time for a side trip to Barkerville Historic Town to experience British Columbia during the gold rush era of the late 1800s. Barkerville is British Columbia’s largest historic site and features over one hundred buildings and attractions maintained to represent the town’s heyday during the Cariboo Gold Rush. Go back in time at the old-time saloon or go back to school in the renovated schoolhouse. The Theatre Royal presents live theater multiple times per day that depicts life and history in Barkerville. One of the more unusual and interesting exhibits features the Chinese immigrants that came to Barkerville to work in the mines and run businesses. On the way east of Quesnel, stop in at Knott’s Crafts and Candy – a dizzying emporium of treats that is a favorite of highway travelers.
Prince George
Heading north from Quesnel, your next stop is Prince George, the largest city in northern British Columbia and a great place to refuel and restock before continuing on toward the Cassiar Highway. As you enter town, you’ll be greeted by “Mr. PG,” a giant, smiling log statue that represents the welcoming nature of this timber town. Here, you’ll begin heading west back toward the Coast Mountains through lake-studded country heavily populated by moose and deer. The lakes and waterways in the area provide ample opportunity to fish and boat, or are just a great place for a midday picnic lunch. Along the way, consider a side trip to Fort St. James to see one of Canada’s National Historic Sites, a former Hudson’s Bay Company trading post and one of the oldest remaining original European settlements in British Columbia. Fort St. James is located on the shores of Stuart Lake and can be reached from Vanderhoof.

Further down the road, the charming Alpine-themed town of Smithers is a great place to stop for an afternoon or overnight. The nature-loving local residents, who refer to themselves as “Smithereens,” enjoy nearby Babine Mountains Provincial Park for hiking, wildlife viewing and winter sports. The downtown area offers dozens of restaurants and a few hotels while the beautiful, mountainous setting makes Smithers a delightful find en route to the start of the Cassiar Highway.

Welcome to the beautiful Cassiar Highway
The Cassiar Highway, also known as Highway 37, branches north from Highway 16 about 70 miles (112 km) west of Smithers. Sometimes known as the Stewart-Cassiar Highway, it stretches 450 miles (720 km) to southern Yukon Territory. Along the way, travelers will enjoy up-close viewing opportunities for black and grizzly bears, moose and dozens of other wildlife species. The highway was built section by section throughout the 1900s to connect resource-rich northern B.C. to markets for various commodities. The highway has been continuously upgraded and today it is fully paved.

DETOUR
Prince Rupert
Right where the Cassiar Highway begins, a tempting diversion beckons: the drive to Prince Rupert, B.C. is a 150-mile (240-km) detour north along Highway 16, which offers stunning coastal scenery en route to convenient connections to the Alaska and B.C. ferry systems.
Two-nation vacation: Stewart, B.C. and Hyder, Alaska

As you revel in the gorgeous scenery along the Cassiar Highway, keep an eye out for the turnoff to Stewart, B.C. and Hyder, Alaska. It’s a short side trip and well worth the time. Situated at the head of Portland Canal, one of the largest fjords in the world, the two communities straddle the international border and are essentially one town. Although both are tiny and isolated, they remain extremely popular with visitors for several reasons, including the remarkably accessible and beautiful ice field and glaciers in the area and the opportunity to watch black and grizzly bears feasting on salmon at Fish Creek. The turnoff for Stewart/Hyder is just north of Meziadin Lake Provincial Park, itself a great place to spot bears and a favorite camping area along the highway.

After heading back to the Cassiar, you’ll be entering what’s known as the Iskut/Tatogga area and the gateway to Stikine Country, Spatsizi Plateau Wilderness Provincial Park, Mount Edziza Provincial Park, the “Grand Canyon” of the Stikine and the Upper Stikine River en route to Dease Lake.

Dease Lake and the “Grand Canyon” of the Stikine

The small town of Dease Lake sits astride a pass separating the basins of the Dease River and the Tanzilla, a tributary of the Stikine River, at the Continental Divide. From Dease Lake, visitors can fish, hike or canoe in the area. For those in cars or on motorcycles, consider a side trip on the gravel road that follows Telegraph Creek to the “Grand Canyon” of the Stikine River for exceptional views. (Steep grades on the road make the trip prohibitive for RVs.)

Dease Lake is your last stop in British Columbia before crossing the border into Yukon, where the Cassiar intersects with the Alaska Highway just west of Watson Lake. For more on the section of the highway between Watson Lake and Whitehorse see pages 20-22.

On the trail of the Klondike Gold Rush

From Whitehorse, you’ll be following the trail of the thousands of prospectors who...
streamed north to Dawson City back in 1897–98. Of course, those early explorers didn’t have the benefit of a highway and had to heft their loads overland and by river, but the modern North Klondike Highway roughly traces the same route. The name of the first major destination along the way may sound familiar: Lake Laberge was made famous in the legendary poem of those early gold rush days, “The Cremation of Sam McGee” by Robert Service.

Immediately after joining the North Klondike Highway en route to Dawson City, keep an eye out for the turnoff to Takhini Hot Springs for a fun and relaxing stop. As you continue north, communities like Carmacks and Pelly Crossing have their own boom-and-bust stories, and local historical and cultural sites giving travelers the opportunity to explore those communities. Be sure to get a photo at Five Finger Rapids en route to Dawson City, where the Yukon River is split into five channels by four large rock spires.

About 40 miles (64 km) before Dawson City, watch for the Dempster Highway turnoff to Tombstone Territorial Park, one of Yukon’s most spectacular wilderness areas.

Dawson City and the Klondike Gold Rush

For a short time right after the first gold strike in the Klondike, Dawson City was a town of 40,000 people – the largest city north of San Francisco and west of Winnipeg. Its boom days are still evident in the elaborate, false-fronted buildings that line its streets and the wooden boardwalks that serve as sidewalks. Its 2,000 residents still include placer miners, dog mushers and other frontier characters, and its local attractions are a great way to immerse yourself in the gold rush days. Saloons like Diamond Tooth Gertie’s Gambling Hall and museums like the Jack London Museum
wonderfully recreate this chapter in U.S. and Canadian history. Or, chat with the locals and embark on a modern day tour to find out why Dawson still attracts residents with an adventurous spirit. A trip to the gold fields is a must, to understand history and get a glimpse of modern day mining in the area, as well as a drive to the top of the Dome Road to take in the view of Dawson City and the coming together of the Yukon and Klondike rivers.

From Dawson City, you’ll take a short, free car ferry across the Yukon River and continue on the Top of the World Highway about 70 miles (112 km) before crossing into Alaska. The highway runs across ridge tops and provides spectacular views of rolling hills and distant mountain ranges.

**Alaska’s Fortymile Country**

Shortly after crossing the border, you will reach the Taylor Highway, a narrow gravel road that is maintained only in summer.

Taking the Taylor Highway south will lead you to the small town of Chicken in what’s known as the Fortymile Country, a mining district that played a central role in Alaska’s gold rush era. Legend has it that the town is called Chicken because the miners who settled it wanted to name it after the plentiful Ptarmigan in the area, but none of them knew how to spell it. The community still doesn’t take itself too

---

**DETOUR**

**Dempster Highway**

Adventurous travelers seeking some of the most beautiful and remote wilderness in North America can find it along the Dempster Highway, Canada’s first all-weather road to cross the Arctic Circle. The 457-mile (731-km), two-lane gravel road begins just east of Dawson City, Yukon, and ends at Inuvik, Northwest Territories. The trip includes two ferry crossings.

Bring a sense of adventure and an extra spare tire for this trip! The only gas stations along the road are at the Eagle Plains Hotel, located about halfway through the trip, and at Fort McPherson and Inuvik. Before heading up the highway, drop by the Northwest Territories Visitor Centre on Front Street in Dawson City for the latest road conditions and help in planning your trip.
seriously, and a stop is well worth the time. Check out the Pedro Gold Dredge and get a bite to eat before getting back on the road.

At Tetlin Junction, you’ll reach the Alaska Highway and head north toward Interior Alaska’s gold rush epicenter, Fairbanks. The landscape of eastern Interior Alaska is much like that in neighboring Yukon – boreal forest and rolling hills, rivers, lakes and bogs where moose lazily chew on grasses. Keep an eye out for bison grazing along the roadway as you approach Delta Junction. These prehistoric-looking beasts were once native to the area and a herd was later successfully reintroduced.

**Delta Junction: The End of the Alaska Highway**

Delta Junction is located at the end of the famous Alaska Highway. Delta Junction was chosen as the terminus due to its proximity to several nearby military airfields, including Fort Greely, a short distance from town. In 2017, Alaska and Canada will celebrate the 75th anniversary of construction of the highway. Before leaving town, look for the “End of the Alaska Highway” sign.

Between Delta Junction and Fairbanks, you’ll pass several small fishing holes along the road, with signage visible indicating stocked lakes. Before entering Fairbanks, Alaska’s second-largest city, be sure to take some time in North Pole, where it’s Christmas all year. Santa Claus Lane, Kris Kringle Road and candy-striped light poles are just the beginning. The Santa Claus House, a toy store and local institution, and its 42-foot fiberglass Santa statue are must-sees.

**Alaska’s “Golden Heart”**

Fairbanks is known as the Golden Heart City, and the slogan holds multiple meanings. It refers both to the city’s gold rush history and its warm and welcoming residents. An Italian immigrant named Felix Pedro discovered gold in Fairbanks in 1902. Business interests in the area sent runners to Dawson City to spread the word that new claims were available around
Fairbanks, and soon prospectors poured into the area. Today, Fairbanks’ Pioneer Park preserves much of this history as well as displaying information on modern gold mining, as the industry is still alive and well in the area. Visitors also enjoy a visit to Gold Dredge No. 8, a National Engineering Landmark that once extracted millions of ounces of gold from the frozen ground. Other fun things to do in Fairbanks include soaking at nearby Chena Hot Springs, a stern-wheeler ride on the Chena River as it winds through town, golfing at midnight under the summer sun or dining out on the deck of one of several riverfront restaurants. You also won’t want to miss the Museum of the North on the campus of the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and the Morris Thompson Cultural Center in downtown Fairbanks. Spending several days is well warranted, and hotels, public and private camping, bed and breakfasts and other options are plentiful.

From Fairbanks, you’ll head south toward one of Alaska’s most popular visitor destinations – Denali National Park and Preserve.

“The High One,” Denali
In the local Athabascan language Denali, means “The High One,” and it is! At 20,310 feet, it is the tallest mountain in North America. The mountain sits in the midst of 6 million acres of unspoiled wilderness.

DETOUR

Dalton Highway
Want to cross the Arctic Circle and see the Brooks Range? The drive up the Dalton Highway, also known as the “Haul Road,” is one of the most rugged and remote in North America, and takes you from Fairbanks all the way to Alaska’s northern coastline, through millions of acres of wilderness lands. But be prepared: the 414-mile (662-km) road is mostly gravel, with very limited facilities. And remember: the “Ice Road Truckers” have the right of way! The Bureau of Land Management has more details at blm.gov. At the home page, search for “Dalton Highway.”
where bears, wolves, caribou, Dall sheep, moose, fox, bald eagles and many other species reside. No trip to Denali is complete without taking one of the daily wilderness bus tours run by the National Park Service. Other options include rafting the Nenana River, hiking, ranger-led tours or a visit to the park’s sled dog kennel.

To truly appreciate the beauty and scale of the mountain, though, you may need to see it from the air. Head south to the quirky little town of Talkeetna, the primary jumping off point for mountain climbers preparing to scale Denali. Said to be the inspiration for the fictional town of Cicely in the popular TV series “Northern Exposure,” the town has a long aviation history, and several companies offer flights over and around the mountain for an up-close and humbling view of its immense size.

As you continue south toward Anchorage, the boreal forest and wide valleys of Interior Alaska give way to dramatic coastal mountains and towering spruce trees.

About 40 minutes north of Anchorage you will reach Wasilla, the commercial center of Alaska’s fastest growing region. Take a quick detour down Knik-Goose Bay Road to visit the headquarters of the famed Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race, which offers dog cart rides daily during the summer months.

“If you haven’t done Alaska - you haven’t lived.”
Maria L. – via Facebook
Anchorage

Anchorage, Alaska’s largest city, is home to nearly 300,000 people. For those who live here, the city combines the best of both worlds – urban amenities and easy access to unparalleled wilderness. Located on the shores of Cook Inlet and at the head of Turnagain Arm, the city is flanked to the east by the Chugach Mountains, Chugach State Park and Chugach National Forest, the second-largest national forest in the country. Hundreds of miles of pedestrian and biking trails network the city, including the popular Tony Knowles Coastal Trail. The Anchorage Museum and the Alaska Native Heritage Center are world-class facilities showcasing historical and cultural artifacts from around the state. Downtown Anchorage offers upscale dining that leans heavily on Alaska’s fresh, wild seafood bounty, while brewpubs and outdoor stands selling reindeer hot dogs round out the culinary scene.

From Anchorage, you can reach virtually anywhere in the state. Many of Alaska’s communities are reachable only by air, and Anchorage is the state’s main air hub. From here, the possibilities are endless!
"The scenery is beautiful between here and there, if you take your time and enjoy it. We had to hurry once and I won't do that again. Six weeks is not long enough."

Mary D. – via Facebook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Must See</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parliament Buildings</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creek Street</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mendenhall Glacier</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Pass and Yukon Route Railroad</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chilkoot Trail</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince William Sound</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Carmanah Walbran Provincial Park, Vancouver Island (JF Bergeron, Destination BC)
The Inside Passage Route glides quietly past the dense spruce forests of the British Columbia coastline, and along the shores of Alaska’s Inside Passage, a fleet of ferries carries passengers and vehicles along what is known as a marine highway – an interconnected network of communities accessible by sea.

If you like the idea of getting on and off when you please, staying for a few hours or several days in each port of call, taking your RV, car or motorcycle with you, and meeting and sharing stories with your fellow travelers, read on to learn how you can incorporate this unique route into your Ultimate North American Road Trip.
British Columbia’s island and coast culture

Your journey along the coasts of British Columbia and Alaska begins in Vancouver, one of Canada’s largest and most diverse cities, steeped in maritime and First Nations culture. (To read more about Vancouver, see page 28.) From the city of Vancouver, you’ll take a short ferry trip across the Strait of Georgia to Victoria on Vancouver Island. The Tsawwassen ferry terminal for BC Ferries is located just south of Richmond, a suburb of Vancouver.

Victoria is British Columbia’s capital city and one of the oldest cities in the Pacific Northwest. Named for Great Britain’s Queen Victoria, evidence of the British era and role in the city’s founding is easily seen in its buildings, famous gardens and pedestrian amenities. Two of the most notable architectural landmarks are the British Columbia Parliament Buildings, completed in 1897, and the Empress Hotel, built in 1908 and still serving high tea each afternoon.

From Victoria, spend a day or two enjoying the drive north to catch your ferry in Port Hardy, at the island’s northern tip. Along the way, you’ll encounter rocky beaches, moss-laden spruce trees towering overhead, jagged coastal mountains and the crisp, clean ocean air. Places like Qualicum Beach and Hornby Island are wonderful beachcombing, hiking and kayaking destinations along the way, and towns like Nanaimo and Courtenay offer lots of quaint shops and restaurants. The totem poles in Duncan and the U’mista Cultural Centre in Alert Bay offer a glimpse into Aboriginal culture. Stop in Telegraph Cove for whale watching and bear viewing. As you venture farther north on the island, you get a sense of what the entire island must have once looked like – dense forests, lakes, streams and waterfalls.

Port Hardy to Prince Rupert

In Port Hardy, you’ll board BC Ferries for the voyage to Prince Rupert, a 15-hour sailing that typically leaves early in the morning and reaches Prince Rupert in the evening. Prince Rupert is situated along the Inside Passage, and its landscape is typical of the region – tall coastal mountains, islands, ocean, rain forest, and a charming small boat harbor and downtown. Check out the shops in the Cow Bay district and visit any of several excellent local museums, including the Museum of Northern British Columbia, the Kwinitsa Railway Museum and the North Pacific Cannery, a Parks Canada-designated National Historic Site. Prince Rupert is also a popular place to take a bear viewing tour; several local tour companies offer these excursions. A lucky few will spot one
of the region’s rare Kermode bears, which are black bears with a genetic mutation that renders them completely white, although they are not albinos. Known as “spirit bears” to the local First Nations people, the bears are thought to have survived due to the indigenous peoples’ reverence for them.

From Prince Rupert, the sailing to Ketchikan is just six hours aboard an Alaska Marine Highway System ferry.

Alaska’s First City – Ketchikan
Welcome to Alaska’s First City! Based on your mode of transportation, this name is easy to understand – Ketchikan is the first place you reach in Alaska when traveling by ferry (or cruise ship). This former gold camp and logging town embraces its history and heritage in a number of visitor-friendly sites. Among the must-sees are Creek Street, a boardwalk pedestrian “street” situated on pilings above Ketchikan Creek. Creek Street is lined with art galleries, restaurants and shops along with Dolly’s House Museum, which pays homage to the “gold rush girls” who earned their livings at the former brothel during the late 1800s. Totem Bight State Park features 14 large totem poles and an intricately decorated Tlingit clan house situated along the coast, and Saxman Native Village south of town offers visitors the opportunity to watch Tlingit artisans at work carving totem poles, among other cultural attractions. The wild and raucous Great Alaskan Lumberjack Show showcases acrobatic skills and athleticism and gives audiences a chance to take part. In the mountains and along the coasts, hiking trails abound, and opportunities to fish for salmon and other species are also plentiful. Ketchikan has both public and private campgrounds and plenty of hotels and other accommodations and could easily hold your interest for several days.
Stikine River Country
Famed American naturalist and the father of the National Park Service John Muir first set foot in Alaska during a visit to Wrangell in 1879. At the time, the town wasn’t much to speak of – a former fur trade center that had been abandoned and was, at the time, a gateway for prospectors to the gold that lay up the nearby Stikine River. Nonetheless, Muir was enchanted by characteristics that still exist today – lush forests, coastal mountains and beaches strewn with garnets and decorated with Tlingit-carved petroglyphs. One of the most popular options for visitors is to take a jet-boat ride up the Stikine River to Anan Wildlife Observatory, where black and brown bears can be seen together feasting on salmon in the streams. Tlingit heritage is also on display at Chief Shakes Island, which features a replica Tlingit clan house and several totem poles.

As you head north from Wrangell toward your next port of call, Petersburg, you’ll transit the Wrangell Narrows, a unique experience for ferry passengers in the Inside Passage. The 22-mile (35-km) narrows separates Mitkof and Kupreanof islands and is marked with more than 60 navigational aids. The passage is too narrow to accommodate large cruise ships. It’s an excellent place to look for wildlife onshore as the ferry charts its careful course through the narrows.

Little Norway
On a standard northbound itinerary, your next stop will be Petersburg, Alaska’s “Little Norway.” Located on Mitkof Island and home to many commercial fishing families of Norwegian descent, you’ll see signs of the local culture all over town, with Norwegian flags hanging from light poles and the traditional Norwegian decorative painting, rosmaling, visible on signs. Petersburg is an excellent place to connect with a guide for a charter fishing adventure or to go whale watching. Hiking, kayaking and beachcombing are also popular.

Alaska’s Capital City
From Petersburg, your next stop is Alaska’s capital city, Juneau. Juneau is a well-developed destination and there are tons of things to do here, from outdoor adventures to cultural facilities, restaurants, theater and shopping. Downtown Juneau, with its colorfully painted Victorian homes and historic storefronts, is a popular place for visitors to wander, checking out museums, art galleries and other shops. Overhead, the Mount Roberts Tram climbs to the top of Mount Roberts for spectacular views. Fishing guides, whale watching excursions, kayak rentals and all manner of other tours can be arranged through vendors in the downtown area. No visit to Juneau is complete without a trip to Mendenhall Glacier, which can be reached by private vehicle or on a tour and is just
13 miles (21 km) from downtown. One of the most accessible glaciers in Alaska, the Mendenhall Glacier spills out of the Juneau Icefield and into iceberg-studded Mendenhall Lake. For a taste of Juneau’s history, stop by the Alaskan Brewing Company’s tasting room to sample its iconic Alaskan Amber, which was developed based on a recipe from early gold prospectors.

As the only capital city in the country not accessible by highway, your arrival by ferry makes you just like one of the locals. During the school year, kids in Inside Passage schools travel by ferry to play sports against other communities, and people in smaller towns take the ferry to Juneau for shopping, doctor’s appointments and to visit family. You’ll find a wide range of accommodation options, including RV parks, spread throughout Juneau and nearby Douglas Island.

**Sitka**

From Juneau, consider a side trip by ferry or air to Sitka, the town where the U.S. took possession of Alaska from Russia in 1867. Other attractions include Sitka National Historical Park and close-up views of eagles and other birds at the Alaska Raptor Center.

**Haines**

From Juneau, it’s just a short ride up Lynn Canal to Haines, known for its huge fall concentrations of bald eagles, which gather to feast on a late run of salmon in the Chilkat River. Haines is one of the Inside Passage’s sunnier spots, and offers great hiking, boating, camping and fishing. Its small, charming downtown and historic Fort Seward offer a taste of the town’s history. Fort Seward was the last of a handful of military bases built in Alaska during the gold rush, and is now a national historic site. Haines’ historic cemetery offers an interesting perspective on the town’s first non-Native residents. Headstones dating to the late 1800s tell the story of young men who lived hard and died young. Also not to be missed is the Hammer Museum, a quirky little tribute to one of man’s most useful tools. The proprietor has more than 1,500 hammers on display, dating from ancient to modern times, and even a Tlingit war hammer found in the building’s crawl space as he was shoring up the foundation before opening in 2002.

At this point it’s shorter to drive north on the Haines Highway to the Alaska Highway, but you’ll miss historic Skagway and Yukon’s capital, Whitehorse. Instead, consider getting back on the ferry and be prepared to relive the heady days of the Kondike Gold Rush!
Skagway

Skagway was the point where ships carrying eager prospectors from Seattle landed and made final provisions for their trek north into Canada’s Yukon and the Klondike gold fields. Skagway ballooned into a giant boomtown and home to plenty of crime, graft and vice. The entire downtown area is part of the Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, and several National Park Service-managed museums and facilities offer historical insight through photos, films and artifacts. Take a ride on the narrow-gauge White Pass & Yukon Route railroad, built in 1898 and now designated as an International Historic Civil Engineering Landmark due to the improbably narrow and steep route its builders carved out of the mountainside in their quest for gold. The head of the famous Chilkoot Trail, which miners hiked into the Yukon before the railroad was built, is at nearby Dyea. Formerly a rival community and just as boisterous, Dyea is now a ghost town some say is haunted by the souls of those killed in an April 3, 1898 avalanche on the trail. All 52 of the Slide Cemetery’s grave markers chillingly bear the same date of death.

Your ferry travel ends (for now) in Skagway, from which you’ll take the Klondike Highway into the Yukon. Along the way, you’ll be treated to dramatic scenery as you climb through the mountains and over White Pass. After crossing the U.S.-Canadian border, you’ll pass briefly through British Columbia before reaching Yukon and the picturesque village of Carcross. Spend some time visiting its numerous attractions and enjoy the beautiful scenery before heading on to Whitehorse.
From Whitehorse, you’ll head west on the Alaska Highway toward Alaska and the communities of Tok and Glennallen. For more on Whitehorse and this section of the drive, please see pages 22-24.

Richardson Highway Scenic Byway
From Glennallen, this route leads you back toward the sea via the Richardson Highway, a National Scenic Byway and a stunner in all directions. Leaving Glennallen, you will immediately notice 12,000-foot Mount Drum and 16,000-foot Mount Sanford on the horizon – both harbingers of the scenery to come. The Richardson Highway is Alaska’s oldest highway, and was originally nothing more than a wagon route connecting Valdez at its south end to Eagle, near the Canadian border in Interior Alaska. The trail was established to provide an “All-American” route to the gold fields of the Klondike, and it later became the chosen path for a telegraph line to Interior Alaska as well. Today, it’s well maintained with wide shoulders and passing lanes and is paralleled much of the way by the trans-Alaska oil pipeline, which you will see occasionally from the road as it makes its way to the shipping terminal across Valdez Bay from town.

DETOUR

McCarthy/Kennecott
To experience Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, turn off on the Edgerton Highway and head east, passing through the farming community of Kenny Lake until you reach the historic railroad town of Chitina. Cross the Copper River Bridge to reach the gravel McCarthy Road. Continue down the roughly 60 slow-going miles (96 km) to the road’s end, at the Kennicott River. A pedestrian bridge provides access to the funky little hamlet of McCarthy. The town is five miles (8 km) from the former Kennecott Copper Mine, where guides will lead you through the restored mill building to learn about the amazing effort undertaken in the early 1900s to extract the area’s rich copper resources. Shuttles from the bridge to McCarthy and the mine are available.
Just south of Glennallen, the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve Visitor Center invites you to experience the nation’s largest national park. At 13.2 million acres, the park is larger than the country of Switzerland, and together with three other U.S. and Canadian parks – Kluane National Park, Tatshenshini-Alsek Provincial Park and Glacier Bay National Park – it is part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site that makes up the largest chunk of protected land in the world. The visitor center will help get you acquainted should you choose to adventure into the park, which sits to the east of the highway. The easiest access to the park is via the Edgerton Highway, which branches off the Richardson Highway about 30 miles (48 km) south of Glennallen.

A landscape formed by rivers and ice
One of the most striking spots on the Richardson Highway is at Worthington Glacier State Recreation Site. Near the top of Thompson Pass, Worthington Glacier spills out of the mountains and nearly reaches the roadway. Parking and picnic areas make this an absolutely breathtaking backdrop for photos or a lunch break. Just after cresting the pass and beginning your descent toward Valdez, you’ll pass Blueberry Lake State Recreation Site,
another great spot to stop for photos or even spend the night. At the bottom of the pass, you’ll find yourself in Keystone Canyon. The highway parallels the Lowe River, which thunders through the narrow canyon’s 300-foot, moss-covered walls. Bridal Veil Falls and Horsetail Falls spill over the canyon walls and further feed the river, offering spectacular photos, rain or shine. (Rafting excursions through the canyon can be booked in town.) Beyond the canyon, the landscape opens up and the river fans out over a wide gravel bed dominated by gigantic spruce trees.

Valdez
Valdez is known as Alaska’s Little Switzerland. Snow-capped mountains, glaciers, verdant hillsides and Valdez Bay surround this small town that sees an average of more than 300 inches of snow each winter. Valdez is the terminus of the trans-Alaska pipeline. It is also the gateway to Prince William Sound, and local tour boat operators take visitors out for day cruises in the sound to spot wildlife like orcas, humpback whales, seals, sea lions, otters and sea birds along with tidewater glaciers calving into the ocean. Kayaking and sport fishing for salmon and halibut are also popular pursuits, and guides and tour companies are readily available, particularly near the town’s small boat harbor. While you’re in Valdez, be sure to visit the recently updated Valdez Museum and Historical Archive and its Remembering Old Valdez Exhibit, which features a painstakingly rendered scale model of the former Valdez town site, which was completely destroyed by the tsunami that followed the 1964 Good Friday Earthquake.

Valdez is a port of call on the Alaska ferry system. Ferries connect Valdez to Prince William Sound communities including Cordova and Whittier, just 60 miles (96 km) south of Anchorage.

Alternate Route
All Aboard!
The Alaska Marine Highway
As an alternative, you can begin your trip at the southern terminus of Alaska’s state-run ferry system in Bellingham, located in the far northwest corner of Washington state not far from the Canadian border. The route is so spectacular that it has been designated a National Scenic Byway and All-American Road. The sailing from Bellingham to Ketchikan takes about a day and a half.

The scenery never quits!
Lake O’Hara, Yoho National Park (Carrie Cole, Destination BC)
Free planning resources for your Ultimate North American Road Trip
Additional detailed information on accommodations, campgrounds, activities, attractions and costs can be found by visiting the websites below or by requesting these free guides using the reply card on page 25.

Alaska
The Last Frontier, the Great North and the highway’s end – Alaska is your final destination and a place so magical it leaves a lasting impression on all who see it. This free guide provides expanded information on visiting Alaska and will help you discover the people, places and events that make Alaska such an extraordinary destination. TravelAlaska.com

Alberta
From digging for dinosaur fossils to experiencing cowboy culture, Alberta has a vacation for every traveler. This helpful planning guide will help connect you with information on experiences available throughout the province. Order today to plan your Alberta getaway! TravelAlberta.us

British Columbia
Want to uncover British Columbia’s hidden treasures? This planner features breathtaking photography and valuable information on activities, attractions and special events. Discover the mountains, vineyards, lakes and trails of the Kootenay Rockies and Thompson Okanagan in the featured Circle Route itineraries. HelloBC.com

Yukon
The Yukon Vacation Planner features regional sections with details on each part of this remarkable country, and a Scenic Drives section to help you get around. Accommodations, visitor services, campground information, lists of events and maps are also included to help make your Yukon vacation a reality. TravelYukon.com

Get your free planners today!
Simply remove the reply card on page 25, fill it out and mail it in.
Free Guides

Free planning resources for your Ultimate North American Road Trip
Additional detailed information on accommodations, campgrounds, activities, attractions and costs can be found by visiting the websites below or by requesting these free guides using the reply card on page 25.

Alaska
The Last Frontier, the Great North and the highway’s end – Alaska is your final destination and a place so magical it leaves a lasting impression on all who see it. This free guide provides expanded information on visiting Alaska and will help you discover the people, places and events that make Alaska such an extraordinary destination. TravelAlaska.com

Alberta
From digging for dinosaur fossils to experiencing cowboy culture, Alberta has a vacation for every traveler. This helpful planning guide will help connect you with information on experiences available throughout the province. Order today to plan your Alberta getaway! TravelAlberta.us

British Columbia
Want to uncover British Columbia’s hidden treasures? This planner features breathtaking photography and valuable information on activities, attractions and special events. Discover the mountains, vineyards, lakes and trails of the Kootenay Rockies and Thompson Okanagan in the featured Circle Route itineraries. HelloBC.com

Yukon
The Yukon Vacation Planner features regional sections with details on each part of this remarkable country and a Scenic Drives section to help you get around. Accommodations, visitor services, campground information, lists of events and maps are also included to help make your Yukon vacation a reality. TravelYukon.com

Get your free planners today!
Simply remove the reply card on page 25, fill it out and mail it in.