Alaska Wildland Adventures

ALASKA BIRDING ADVENTURE
DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY

Exclusive to this tour:

Late May is a phenomenal time for birding in Alaska, as resident species are joined by a massive wave of nesting migrants.

- Species Count: Guests can realistically expect to see and hear between 80 and 100 different bird species across the peninsula's diverse boreal forest, river canyon, wetland and marine environments included in this nature tour. *Migration time can be variable and sometimes yields rarities. We will try to maximize the species we can find and may pivot between birding locations based on group interest and target species.*
- eBird Tracking: The trip's daily sightings will be meticulously tracked and compiled using eBird checklists, which will be shared with all guests at the conclusion of the journey as a digital trip log.
- Throughout this entire journey throughout Alaska's Kenai Peninsula, guests will be accompanied by a professional, local birding guide, ensuring expert eyes and deep regional knowledge.

Day 1: Meet your Trip Leader and fellow travelers this morning in Anchorage. Today, we'll explore the city's premier birding hotspots, including notable stops at Westchester Lagoon, Potter Marsh and a few of our other favorite birding destinations. As we head south along the scenic Turnagain Arm and onto the Kenai Peninsula, we will continue birding along the way, making key stops at diverse coastal, marsh, and forest habitats.

After an engaging day in nature, we'll travel through the beautiful snowcapped mountains of the Chugach National Forest to our Kenai Riverside Lodge. Upon arrival at the lodge, enjoy a tour of the grounds before being shown to your private cabin. At dinner, learn more about our lodge operations and the specific details of tomorrow's activities. Overnight at Kenai Riverside Lodge. **(L, D)** *(Included meals are noted: B=breakfast; L=lunch; D=dinner. Complimentary snacks and non-alcoholic beverages included each day).*

Day One Highlight Species: Migratory waterfowl, Red-throated Loon, Pacific Loon, Horned & Red-necked Grebes and early arriving warblers.

Day 2: From our launch site on the Kenai River, gear up for a scenic raft trip into the heart of the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. On this class II, casual stretch of river, we'll be able to access stunning backcountry sights and protected wilderness areas.

Nearly two million acres in size, Kenai National Wildlife Refuge is characterized by its diverse habitats and wildlife. In fact, the Refuge is considered by many visitors to represent Alaska in miniature. The dense vegetation on the banks of the river provides excellent habitat for moose. The biggest bull moose can be 7 ½ feet tall at the shoulders, weigh 1800 lbs. and have antlers that span more than 6 feet.

Along the river during our raft trip, scan for moose, bald eagles and an array of other bird species, along with salmon. Have your binoculars ready! A delicious picnic lunch will be served along the river or on the shore of Skilak Lake.

Late afternoon, arrive at our boat-in only Kenai Backcountry Lodge, a unique, historic in holding. The Lodge utilizes a simple but effective hydroelectric power system to provide water and electricity, reducing the need for fossil fueled power.

Appetizers and dinner welcome us in the main lodge, followed by evening activities. Relax in the outdoor gazebo or enjoy a casual stroll along an established nature path. Overnight at Kenai Backcountry Lodge **(B, L, D)**

Highlight Species: Harlequin Duck, American Dipper, Bald Eagle, Common & Red-breasted Mergansers, Barrow's Goldeneye, and nesting gulls.

Day 3: Spend a full day exploring some of our favorite birding spots inside Kenai National Wildlife Refuge and along Skilak Lake road. Today's mix of water and backcountry road adventuring offers a fantastic cross-section of lake and boreal forest birding.

Return to Kenai Riverside Lodge for a relaxing evening, with dinner. Overnight Kenai Riverside Lodge. **(B, L, D)**

Highlight Species: Common & Pacific Loons, various gulls, Tree & Violet-green Swallows, Red-necked Grebe, Spotted Sandpiper, Boreal warblers, sparrows, Arctic Terns and Greater/Lesser Yellowlegs.

Day 4: After a great breakfast in the main lodge, embark on a full day dedicated to exploring the rich estuaries, river mouths and flats of Alaska's western Kenai Peninsula. We'll make a special stop at the mouth of the Kasilof River – which is a crucial stopover for migrating shorebirds and gulls – as well visits to wetland habitats and coastal vantage points, ideal sites for staging flocks. We'll return to our home away from home for dinner and overnight at Kenai Riverside Lodge. **(B, L, D)**

Highlight Species: Arctic-bound shorebirds - a variety of migrating sandpipers, plovers, dowitchers, godwits, and much more!

Day 5: Bid farewell to the Kenai Riverside Lodge and travel by van to the beautiful seaside town of Seward. Board a small ship bound for Kenai Fjords National Park – home to an array of glaciers and marine wildlife like whales, Steller sea lions, sea otters, puffins and more! A half-day marine wildlife and glacier cruise will allow us to explore the rugged coastline. Enjoy lunch in front of a tidewater glacier before arriving at our exclusive lodge destination: Kenai Fjords Glacier Lodge.

Nestled in a protected tidal lagoon area, the Glacier Lodge offers stunning views of Pedersen Glacier and miles of pristine beachfront for combing. This afternoon, meet your guides for a tour of the lodge and group canoe paddle in Pedersen Lagoon. Our local naturalists will further enhance your understanding of the bird life in this unique area of the world. Enjoy dinner and evening presentations. Overnight at Kenai Fjords Glacier Lodge. **(B, L, D)**

Highlight Species: Tufted & Horned Puffins, Common & Thick-billed Murres, Rhinoceros & Parakeet Auklets, Ancient Murrelets, and Red-faced Cormorants.

Days 6 - 7: For the next two days, enjoy a deep dive into the coastal and pelagic birding of Kenai Fjords National Park, combining trail exploration with an extensive marine tour.

In the spirit of adventure and to take advantage of tidal and weather patterns, guides will discuss specific nature outings and options with our group each morning. During Days 6 & 7, we've arranged for birding around nature loop trails as well as extended boat touring inside Kenai Fjords National Park, accessing more remote locales such as the Chiswell Islands and Northwestern Fjords. Guests will also have the opportunity to sign up for half day and full day guided kayaking, hiking, canoeing or simply relaxing at the lodge. Curious sea otters and seals frequent the lagoon, just steps from the main lodge deck. In a nearby meadow, we can sometimes glimpse bears and other wildlife from a safe distance. Our natural history library offers amazing resources and interesting reads – cozy up with a good book and let your worries drift out with the tide!

Please note: our commitment to guest safety is first and foremost; occasionally, weather conditions delay or interrupt boat service, and the sequencing of the activity days on Day 6 and 7 may be adjusted accordingly to best follow the originally planned itinerary.

Upon return to the main lodge each day, share stories from your day's adventure with other travelers over dinner. Overnight Kenai Fjords Glacier Lodge. (**B, L, D)**

Highlight Species: Marbled & Kittlitz's Murrelets, Black Oystercatchers, temperate rainforest warblers, thrushes, and sparrows.

Day 8: Savor another morning in the wilds of Kenai Fjords National Park. A morning outing allows for another opportunity to kayak, canoe, hike or beach comb for a half-day before boarding our boat for the return wildlife cruise to Seward.

Along the way, photograph the sheer cliff walls teeming with birds, plants and other vegetation and scan for more marine wildlife. Upon arrival in Seward, we'll provide your short transfer to the rail depot, where you'll board the historic Alaska Railroad's first-class GoldStar cars for comfortable sightseeing back to Anchorage. This deluxe train trip features confirmed seating in the dome cars for enhanced wilderness and wildlife viewing; dinner and a few special goodies are included with your GoldStar service, and the onboard service staff will assist you with your dining options. You'll arrive at the downtown Anchorage depot by 10:15 p.m. Taxis are located directly outside the rail terminal and are easy to access. Although transfers to the airport or local hotels are not included, some hotels include courtesy shuttle service from the rail depot to their property. **(B, L, D)**

Departure: Arrive at the Anchorage train station by 10:15 p.m. on the last day of your journey. See the "Alaska Travel Information" section of your Trip Planning Booklet for recommended lodging. If you choose to fly home this night, we suggest you book a flight that departs after 1:00 a.m. the following day in case of possible transportation delays.

Note: *We do not expect any major changes from this schedule. However, in the spirit of adventure, we allow our itinerary to remain flexible so that we may take advantage of spontaneous events.*