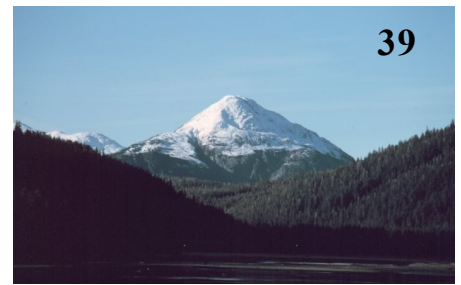


The Alaska Coastline

Alaska Department of Natural Resources,
U.A.A. Research Summary by Eric Larson



Welcome to Alaska's coast!

If you walked one thousand miles a year, it would take thirty-four years to hike Alaska's Shoreline!

Alaska has 6,640 miles of coastline and, including islands, has 33,904 miles of shoreline.

As you walked you would have the chance to meet almost three quarters of the state's population, who choose to live in Alaska's coastal communities. You would, also, see industries like commercial fishing, logging, tourism and oil and gas projects that produce over 80% of the state's economic product.

Your forays into coastal towns would be separated by long stretches of coastline so raw and untamed the pressures of modern-day life would fade and seem almost unreal.

Alaska is the largest peninsula in the Western Hemisphere. The Arctic Ocean borders it on the north and northwest, on the west are the Bering Strait and Sea, and the Pacific Ocean and Gulf of Alaska surround it on the south. Alaska shares an eastern border with Canada which extends for about 1,150 miles along mountains.

Southeast Alaska includes more than 1,000 islands as well as the 16.8-million-acre Tongass National Forest which is the largest forest managed by the U.S. Park Service.

Along the Pacific coast, the shoreline is deeply indented. The Inside Passage, sheltered from the open ocean, is a calm body of water. The coast of the Gulf of Alaska has tides that reach as high as 20 ft. It is buffeted by major storms, and occasionally by tsunamis caused by earthquakes under the ocean.

The current through the Gulf of Alaska is known as the Alaska Current. It flows westward and then, in the eastern Aleutians, turns northward to bring warm water along the western coast of Alaska all the way to Point Barrow.



Alaska Marine Mammals

- Seals2.25 million
- Pacific Walrus200,000-280,000
- Sea Otter100,000-160,000
- Stellar Sea LionUnder 50,000
- Beluga Whale25,000
- Other WhalesA few hundred to several thousand
- Polar BearApproximately 5,000

Alaska Fish

We do not know the exact abundance of many fish and shellfish and the numbers can only be estimated by the commercial fishing numbers. More than half of the U.S. Seafood production is from Alaska waters.

Birds of Alaska

Estimated Population is 445 species, numbering in the millions, many migratory.

ShorebirdsMost, or all of the worldwide populations of a dozen species nest in Alaska.

Seabirds.....An estimated 90% of all U.S. Seabirds nest along Alaska's Coastline.

Raptors.....Alaska is a stronghold for bald eagles; 28 species of raptors are found here.

Landbirds.....262 species found in Alaska; 31 species stay year-round.

Waterfowl.....90 million acres of wetland habitat; hundreds of thousands of migratory waterfowl.

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