

So you want
to see a
Kodiak bear...



Bear Viewing Etiquette

Practicing proper bear viewing etiquette will improve the quality of your experience and leave minimal impact on the animals and their habitat. Whether you are a fisherman, photographer, or a bear viewer, following a few simple rules will prevent your enthusiasm from inadvertently becoming harassment. Displaying courtesy in bear country is a vital aspect of your visit.

Learn as much as you can about bears, their needs, and their behavior before you go into the field.

Simple rules to follow are:

- Select the viewing spot with care.
Choose an open viewing area.
Avoid bedding areas and vegetation that reduces visibility.
A slightly elevated site is preferred.
Avoid travel corridors and bear feeding areas.
- Be alert to your surroundings.
- Watch for bear travel routes, sign and tracks.
- Human movement should be consistent and predictable.
Move slowly, pause often, and look around.
Stay with the group.
- Don't let bears learn that people are a source of food. Be responsible with your food, garbage and fish, especially in or near the viewing area.
Feeding wild animals is unwise and forbidden by State law.
- Photographers should use telephoto lenses, as getting too close for that perfect shot will stress the bears.
- Maintain quiet while entering and leaving the viewing area.
- Eliminate excess noise.
- **Avoid situations of close approach or poor visibility that can lead to surprise encounters.**
Be aware of wind direction, as bears trust their sense of smell.
- Special caution should be taken around sows with cubs and bears protecting a food source.
Bears can react explosively to anything they perceive as a threat.
- Overnight camping should not take place in the immediate bear viewing area or in high traffic areas.
- Self-guided viewers should get advice from local professionals concerning accepted bear viewing behavior.
- If the bear reacts to your presence, evaluate the situation. Are you too close?
- Be respectful of other humans using the area, whether they be sport fishermen, photographers, hikers, or viewers.
- Recognize that animals other than bears and plant life deserve your courtesy and stewardship.
- Practice good personal hygiene by not smoking and properly disposing of items such as toilet paper.
- Follow the advice of your guide, and don't press for special privileges.
- Leave the viewing area in good shape for the next users.
- Egress from the area is as important as how you get there. Be safe and cautious.

Although bear viewing is often referred to as a "non-consumptive use," every human visit to bear country has an impact on bears and their habitat. Some bears are seen by multiple viewers, causing potentially cumulative stress.

Be aware of the lasting effects of your viewing experience:

- On the bears and the habitat
- On the people who will go there after you
- On the message you take to others

This brochure is intended to be an introduction to bear viewing. It is important to learn as much as you can before your trip. Recommended sources of information are:

Bear Facts (brochure), for specific information on bear encounters
Living in Harmony with Bears (brochure)

These brochures and additional literature are available at the following locations:

Alaska Department of Fish & Game
907-486-1880 or www.state.ak.us/adfg/wildlife
Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge
907-486-2600 or www.r7.fws.gov/nwr/kodiak
Kodiak Island Convention & Visitor's Bureau
907-486-4782 or 800-789-4782 or www.kodiak.org
for information on guides, air and water transportation, and lodges.

Created by KUBS,
Kodiak Unified Bear Subcommittee
of the Kodiak Fish & Game Advisory Board



So you want to see a Kodiak bear...

Many people come to Alaska to see the wildlife, and seeing a bear in the wild is often at the top of the list. Bears are intelligent animals with complex characteristics. Observing them in their natural surroundings is a rewarding and exhilarating experience, but they are as wild as their Alaska home. Like the weather here, wildlife viewing can be dangerous if you go unprepared.

You are a privileged visitor in the bears' environment. Educated decisions can help you create a safe visit for both you and the bear. Your bear viewing experience begins when you make the decision to visit Kodiak. Carefully considered choices such as where you will go, how you can get there, and guiding options will enhance your visit.

Bears and people are different in the way they perceive and react to their worlds. To humanize a bear is disrespectful, misguided, and can lead to inappropriate, sometimes dangerous, interactions.



The Kodiak experience

While you are a guest in bear country, be aware that your surroundings also include other animals, plants and the terrain. The complete Kodiak experience allows you to learn about bear behavior and natural history, and share the outdoors with wildlife. As you visit bears in their home, treat them with respect and you will come away with a fuller understanding of their daily world.

Maintaining quality bear habitat and minimizing human impact on bears is a high priority for those of us who live in the Kodiak Archipelago. Kodiak has the world's largest bears and the highest population densities in the world because we have learned to co-exist with the animals without intruding.

Most human habitation on the Kodiak islands is within two miles of the ocean, with very few roads. From forested mountains to vast treeless terrain to sculpted coastlines, immense uninhabited areas offer a variety of habitats for wild animals. Many people dream of a visit to the unspoiled and natural environment of the Kodiak Island area. Keeping that environment pristine is essential not only for the bears but also for present and future human visitors and residents.

Planning your visit

The success of your Kodiak bear viewing expedition cannot be measured by how many bears you see or how close you can get to the bears, but by the quality of the experience. Planning ahead will help create an unforgettable trip.

Bear viewing opportunities are best from late May to early October. Depending upon the success of the berry crop and the fish runs, bears will move among food sources throughout the season, making them viewable at different times and in a variety of locations.

Depending on your time, budget, physical abilities, and priorities, there are a variety of opportunities to see bears in the Kodiak Island area. The options usually involve air or water transportation to remote viewing sites or lodges. It is uncommon to see a bear along the Kodiak road system because they are more shy and less numerous than those in remote areas.

Remote viewing opportunities include guided half-day fly-in tours, unguided or independent camping, charter boat or lodge-based viewing, and multi-day guided back-country trekking.

Unless you are experienced and comfortable in bear country, it is advisable to go with a professional guide.

To optimize your experience and avoid getting too close to bears, good binoculars/optics and appropriate camera gear are recommended.

Physical comfort will add to your Kodiak experience, so keep that in mind when selecting your clothing and foot gear. Dressing in layers will help you stay warm and allow temperature adjustments. Kodiak weather is often wet and can be cool, even in summer, so take along waterproof clothing and footwear. Bug nets or other insect protection is also advised. Plan to spend enough time in Kodiak to counter unexpected weather delays.

