The mountains, trails, islands and waterways of the Tongass National Forest.

Engine plane. Lace up your hiking boots and plunge into the Tongass National Forest. For information on tours and special wildlife viewing experiences, visit the Alaska Coastal Wildlife Viewing Trail.

Ketchikan: Gateway to Wildlife Viewing

Stand on the planks of historic Creek Street and watch salmon make their annual struggle upstream. Take a boat tour amid the sheer cliffs, submarine fjords and abundant wildlife of Misty Fjords National Monument. Fly to some of the best bear viewing in Alaska in a single-engine plane. Lace up your hiking boots and plunge into the Tongass National Forest. Ketchikan is known as “Alaska’s First City,” because it is the first Alaska port of entry for boats and planes coming from the Lower 48 and Canada. Ketchikan’s range of activities and wildlife viewing experiences make it an excellent introduction to Alaska’s wildlife as well — from bears to birds, Creek Street to Fish Creek, by boat and by plane.

For information on tours and lodging, consult the Ketchikan Visitors’ Bureau. Visit their website at www.visit-ketchikan.com or call 1-800-770-3300. In Ketchikan, stop by the Visitor’s Information Center on Front Street or call (907) 225-6166.

Ketchikan is known as “Alaska’s First City,” because it is the first Alaska port of entry for boats and planes coming from the Lower 48 and Canada. Ketchikan’s range of activities and wildlife viewing experiences make it an excellent introduction to Alaska’s wildlife as well — from bears to birds, Creek Street to Fish Creek, by boat and by plane.

For information on tours and lodging, consult the Ketchikan Visitors’ Bureau. Visit their website at www.visit-ketchikan.com or call 1-800-770-3300. In Ketchikan, stop by the Visitor’s Information Center on Front Street or call (907) 225-6166.

The mountains, trails, islands and waterways of the Tongass National Forest.

Engine plane. Lace up your hiking boots and plunge into the Tongass National Forest. For information on tours and special wildlife viewing experiences, visit the Alaska Coastal Wildlife Viewing Trail.

Ketchikan: Gateway to Wildlife Viewing

Stand on the planks of historic Creek Street and watch salmon make their annual struggle upstream. Take a boat tour amid the sheer cliffs, submarine fjords and abundant wildlife of Misty Fjords National Monument. Fly to some of the best bear viewing in Alaska in a single-engine plane. Lace up your hiking boots and plunge into the Tongass National Forest. Ketchikan is known as “Alaska’s First City,” because it is the first Alaska port of entry for boats and planes coming from the Lower 48 and Canada. Ketchikan’s range of activities and wildlife viewing experiences make it an excellent introduction to Alaska’s wildlife as well — from bears to birds, Creek Street to Fish Creek, by boat and by plane.

For information on tours and lodging, consult the Ketchikan Visitors’ Bureau. Visit their website at www.visit-ketchikan.com or call 1-800-770-3300. In Ketchikan, stop by the Visitor’s Information Center on Front Street or call (907) 225-6166.
Birds

Creek Street to Fish Creek, by boat and by plane.

Ketchikan

The Lower 48 and Canada. Ketchikan's range of activities is matched only by its scenic beauty. Ketchikan is known as "Alaska's First City," because it is the first Alaska port of entry for boats and planes coming from the Tongass National Forest.

Engine plane. Lace up your hiking boots and plunge into the mountains, trails, islands and waterways of Misty Fjords National Monument.

Fly to some of the best bear viewing in Alaska in a single-engine plane. Take a boat tour amid the sheer cliffs, sublime fjords and abundant wildlife of Misty Fjords National Monument.

Stand on the planks of historic Creek Street and watch the Alaska Coastal Wildlife Viewing Trail are wild the Alaska Coastal Wildlife Viewing Trail is a 10.5-mile trail that winds through the Tongass National Forest. For safety, take a guided tour or take a companion, let someone know your plans and be prepared for emergencies with spare clothing, a first aid kit and a means of communication. Visit the Alaska State Parks' Staying Safe web page for details: www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/safety.

Although martens are suited for nocturnal foraging, they are occasionally seen during the day just before stormy weather or immediately following a fresh snowfall.

Kings of the Mountain: Specialized hoof structures and long-shaggy coats allow goats to thrive in mountainous areas, which provide these high climbers with relative safety from predators like wolves and bears. Goats give birth to a single offspring, called a kid, in May or June. A kid is able to keep up with its mother just a few hours after birth. Look for kids among small groups of nannies throughout the summer.

Pole to Pole: Many totem poles are important tools in Alaska Native culture for telling stories that have been passed down for generations. These works of art also provide the opportunity to do a different kind of wildlife viewing. Wildlife plays a central role in many Alaska Native stories, and most totems have wildlife – including ravens, eagles, killer whales, bears, frogs, sea lions and beavers – carved into them. See how many different species you can find while looking at the poles in Ketchikan. Totem Bight State Park and the nearby village of Saxman are two good spots to view totem poles.

Humming Along: Hummingbirds play an important role in the food chain of Southeast Alaska – as not prey, but as an important pollinator of wild blueberries. glue to it calmly. If it approaches you, stand your ground. If you see a bear, stay calm. If the bear strikes or bites you, lie on your back, cross your arms and legs, and cover your head with your hands. If it does not notice you, quietly leave, keeping your eyes on the bear. Never run from a bear. If a bear is surprised at close distance, it may feel threatened and act defensively, especially if it has cubs or food. Stand your ground! If the bear strikes or bites you, lie on your front, protect your face and neck and remain still. In rare instances, bears may be predatory. Fight back if the attack is prolonged.
Ketchikan Creek flows through Downtown Ketchikan and fills with spawning salmon each July and August. The planks of Ketchikan’s famous Creek Street are a good spot to watch salmon swim upstream. Ketchikan Creek eventually passes by the Deer Mountain Tribal Hatchery, a working salmon hatchery with daily tours in the summer. The Southeast Alaska Discovery Center is one of four Alaska Public Lands Information Centers, which are run as joint ventures between a variety of public entities to provide visitors with “one-stop shops” for information about Alaska’s public lands. The center has exhibits and interactive displays on the wildlife, habitats, Native cultures and modern industries of Southeast Alaska. There are also wildlife watching opportunities; use the center’s spotting scope to see the ridgelines above town for mountain goats, or spend a few minutes watching the live broadcast of spawning salmon from an underwater camera in Ketchikan Creek. The Southeast Alaska Discovery Center is at the corner of Mill and Main Streets.

The waters of Misty Fjords National Monument are a prime feeding area for humpback whales, Steller sea lions and harbor seals. Look for pigeon guillemots, marbled murrelets (very common) and surf scoters as well. Sitka black-tailed deer and brown and black bears occasionally emerge from the forest to look for food on the beaches, and may be spotted with binoculars. Bald eagles nest in the trees along the shoreline. Mountain goats patrol the ridgelines, visible either through binoculars or from the window of a floatplane. Boat and plane tours venture into Misty Fjords throughout the summer. Guided kayak trips are also available for those with the time and resources. Experienced kayakers looking for a personal, extended excursion can rent kayaks in town and be dropped off by a boat tour. Check with the Visitor’s Bureau for information on tours and kayak rentals. USDA Forest Service cabins within Misty Fjords are also available (see details below).

The Ward Lake Recreation area encompasses a network of trails that offer a variety of wildlife watching experiences. The flat and easy 1.3-mile Ward Lake Trail circles Ward Lake through spruce-hemlock forest. Look and listen for red-breasted sapsuckers, winter wrens and yeseyes and hooded mergansers on the lake in the winter. Barred, northern saw-whet and northern pygmy-owls have been spotted here, and western screech-owls reside at the area’s Signal Creek Campground. Owls are more often heard than seen, and are more active at night than during the day. Fall and early winter is the best time to look for owls at Ward Lake. The Ward Creek, Perseverance, and Salvage trails start at or near the lake and plunge deeper into the Tongass National Forest, where the chance to see Sitka black-tailed deer or black bears increases. Stand on one of the viewing platforms on the Ward Creek Trail to watch pink and chum salmon spawn from late July through mid-September. Ward Lake is found on Revilla Road. Follow the North Tongass Highway and watch for the Revilla Road sign at mile 4.5 of the Tongass Highway.

The Brown Mountain Road is a well-maintained 4½-mile gravel road that gradually ascends from sea level to just below alpine. Look for blue grouse along the road and from the roadside pullouts. Sitka black-tailed deer and black bears come to the alpine in spring and summer to feed on emerging plants. The Brown Mountain Road ends at the Dude Mountain Trail. This steep one-mile trail ascends 1,200 feet to the 2,846-foot peak of Dude Mountain, and provides additional wildlife viewing chances and good vistas along the way. Look and listen for willow ptarmigan, Alaska’s state bird, as the trail ascends into the alpine. The turnoff for the Brown Mountain Road is on Revilla Road, five miles from the junction with the North Tongas Highway (see previous site for directions). The Lunch Falls Loop Trail at Settlers Cove State Park passes Lunch Creek before circling through spruce-hemlock forest. Pink salmon spawn in Lunch Creek during August. Stand on the bridge near the park area for best viewing. The Lunch Creek Trail follows Lunch Creek for 3½ miles, providing additional wildlife viewing opportunities. Look for black bears and Sitka black-tailed deer on either trail throughout the summer.

The Deer Mountain Trail passes over Lunch Creek before continuing through spruce-hemlock forest. Pink salmon spawn in Lunch Creek during August. Stand on the bridge near the park area for best viewing. The Lunch Creek Trail follows Lunch Creek for 3½ miles, providing additional wildlife viewing opportunities. Look for black bears and Sitka black-tailed deer on either trail throughout the summer. Rocky beaches in the park overlook Clover Passage and Behm Canal. Scan the waters for marbled murrelets, harbor seals and Steller sea lions year-round, and rafts of hundreds of sea birds between October and March. The Lunch Falls Loop Trail is wheelchair accessible to the bridge over Lunch Creek, then continues on a single-plank boardwalk system. Settlers Cove State Park is 18½ miles north of Ketchikan at the end of the North Tongass Highway.

Hyder is a small community 86 air miles east of Ketchikan. Between mid-July and September, nearby Fish Creek has large pink and chum salmon runs, which attract black and brown bears, river otters, mink and bald eagles. A USDA Forest Service viewing platform is open daily between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m., enabling wildlife viewers to watch the bears and other wildlife safely. Contact the Ketchikan Ranger District at 907-225-2148 for more information on Fish Creek, including details about permits and best times to visit. Hyder is also popular with birds working to build their Alaska bed lists. Birds found in and near Hyder that are rare in the rest of Southeast Alaska include magnolia warblers, northern rough-winged swallows, western kingbird, black swifts and the American crow. Day tours to Hyder are offered from Ketchikan, and car rentals and accommoda-
tions are available in Hyder for those interested in a longer stay. Hyder is one of three Southeast Alaskan communities connected to the North American highway system, just across the border from Stewart, British Columbia.

The Deer Mountain Trail passes through spruce-hemlock forest before ascending 3,000 feet into the alpine. Look for mountain goats from the trail, especially with binoculars. Listen for the soft clucking and hooting of blue grouse and willow ptarmigan while hiking in the alpine. Sitka black-tailed deer and black bears come to higher elevations in the spring and early summer to feed on early-season plants. Look for bears and deer at lower elevations on the trail throughout the summer. The trailhead for the Deer Mountain Trail is near the end of Ketchikan Lakes Road at the east edge of downtown. This is a challenging trail and should only be attempted by fit and experienced hikers.

Looking for more? Flights depart from Ketchikan to remote bear viewing sites at Margaret Creek and Neats Bay when salmon are running. Check with the Visitor’s Bureau for information. Or consider a remote getaway at one of the remote and rustic USDA Forest Service cabins scattered throughout the Ketchikan area. Check with the Ketchikan Ranger District at 907-225-2148 for information on rentals and tips for seeing wildlife near cabins, or go to www.reserveusa.com to browse available cabins. Cabins rent for $25–45 a night, and have a stove for heat and bunk beds.