Unalaska: An Uncommon Place

In the heart of the Aleutian Islands, discover the natural beauty, rich history and lively seaport that make up Unalaska and the Port of Dutch Harbor.

For 9,000 years or more, the islands have been home to Alaska Native people calling themselves the Unangan. Early Russian explorers, who gave them the name Aleuts, were harbingers of a more complex modern era centered on the Bering Sea’s natural resources and strategic location between continents. The Russian fur trade, the Russian Orthodox Church and action in the North Pacific during World War II all left their mark on the region. Today, this busy Pacific Rim seaport remains a center of global importance for commercial fishing and scientific research.

Opportunities to see wildlife abound. Birds from all over the world, bountiful fish and marine mammals and several interesting land animals inhabit these lands and waters.

For information on tours and lodging, consult the Unalaska, Port of Dutch Harbor Convention and Visitors Bureau. Visit www.unalaska.info or call (907) 581-2673. While visiting Unalaska, stop by the visitor center at 5 Broadway Street.

Land and Water Safety Tips

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Unalaska: An Uncommon Place

For 9,000 years or more, the islands have been home to beauty, rich history and lively seaport that make up Unalaska Island. Port of Dutch Harbor.

Wildlife Viewing Tips

Keep a Low Profile. Enjoy watching animals' natural behaviors but do not to attract their attention with sounds. If your presence is causing an animal to stop feeding or act restless, give it more space. Be especially respectful of nesting and denning areas, rookeries and calving grounds, and critical feeding areas. Also, avoid causing whales to change their behavior; approach no closer than 100 yards.

Time It Right. Dawn and dusk are when many wildlife species are most active. Midday warmth energizes dragonflies and butterflies and creates thermals for eagles and hawks. Low tides expose tidpools and a wealth of food for birds and mammals.

Look for Clues. Tracks, droppings, trails and twigs tell stories of wildlife - what they are eating, where they live and when they passed through. Noticing and reading these clues adds richness to wildlife viewing. Tracking books and workshops will help you learn.

Help Keep Wildlife Wild. Never feed wild animals. This is teaching them to associate people with food, which can lead to trouble (and it’s illegal). Human food can also make animals sick.

Be Considerate of Others. People use and enjoy Alaska’s wildlife in a variety of ways. Respect private property and give hunters, anglers and others plenty of space.

Wildlife Viewing Fun Facts

Winter Birding: The weather may be challenging but winter birding is terrific thanks to the region’s ice-free bays, which attract tremendous numbers of waterfowl and sea ducks, including long-tailed and harlequin ducks and huge flocks of snow geese. The Emperor goose (at right), whose entire world population winters in the Aleutians, and the Steller’s eider are easily seen and photographed from the roadways. On a winter walk around town, you may see a peregrine falcon chasing snow buntings or a rock ptarmigan seeking relief from the deep snows at higher elevations.

Aleutian Mammals, Land and Marine: Scientists believe only three land mammals (besides humans) are native to the region: a collared lemming, a root vole and the red fox. Red and Arctic foxes that were introduced throughout the Aleutians for their fur have decimated seabird populations over the years. Likewise, introduction of ground squirrel, Norway rat and livestock like the gelded wild horses at Summer Bay has also been detrimental to area lands and native species. Marine mammals, on the other hand, are diverse and abundant. Cold, nutrient-rich currents that flow between the Bering Sea and North Pacific feed an explosion of life and productivity. At least 26 marine mammal species and more than 450 fish species, as well as ancient deep-sea corals, are found in Aleutian waters.

Land and Water Safety Tips

Weather Unalaska Island offers many hiking opportunities—and no bears!—but hikers can run into trouble without proper preparation. It’s a common misconception that one can’t get lost in open treeless tundra, however, at 500 feet in elevation a summer fog can move in quickly and blanket the landscape. The fog can hide challenging terrain like cliffs and steep river canyons and it’s easy to become chilled in wet, inclement weather. It’s safest to hike along the coast or follow well marked trails and roads. Summer temperatures average 43°F to 53°F, annual precipitation averages 38 inches and winds are ever present.

Permits Many lands you’ll cross are privately-owned by Ounalashka Corp. Please stop by their offices at 400 Salmon Way to obtain a general access permit.

Tides Whether hiking or boating in coastal areas, stay aware of the changing tides. Free tide books are available at the boat harbor and many local businesses.

Stay Safe! The mountains, trails, islands and waterways of the Alaska Coastal Wildlife Viewing Trail are wild lands. To be safe, take a guided tour or a companion, let someone know your plans and carry spare clothes, a first aid kit and a means of communication for emergencies. You may leave a hiking plan with the Unalaska Public Safety Office (907-581-1235) or a float plan with the Ports and Harbors office (907-581-1254) but please be sure to let them know when you’ve returned safely.
UNALASKA, PORT OF DUTCH HARBOR

Wildlife Viewing Sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Access/Activity</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mt. Ballyhoo</td>
<td>Grasslands, Tundra plants</td>
<td>2 hrs.*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Dutch Harbor Spit</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bunker Hill</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Margaret Bay</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Strawberry Hill</td>
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<td>½ hr.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Summer Bay Road</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 hr. - 1½ day</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Captains Bay</td>
<td></td>
<td>½ day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Pyramid Trail</td>
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<td>½ day</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Unalaska Valley</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Unalaska</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Unalaska Bay</td>
<td></td>
<td>½ day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Humpy Cove</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 day +</td>
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*Estimated travel time includes travel to and from site.

**Notes:**
- **Mt. Ballyhoo:** overlooking the Port of Dutch Harbor, subalpine vegetation is slowly reclaiming the remnants of World War II-era Fort Schwatka. Amidst the ruins of concrete bunkers and gun-mounts, wind-tossed purple lupine, blue bell and tall grasses harbor gray-crowned rosy finches, snow buntings and Lapland longspurs. The views from atop are spectacular on a clear day. Beyond the entry into Broad Bay and Mukshin Valley are the glacial slopes and steaming fumarole of Mukshin Volcano. You can access the top of Mt. Ballyhoo (elev. 1,634 ft) two ways. A hiking trail just off to the right along a dirt road just past the airport. Further north off Ballyhoo Road, is Unalaska Drive: a steep, winding gravel road. Watch your footing at the top, the cliffs edges are loose and eroding, and be careful around abandoned buildings, which are full of nails and hidden holes. This former army outpost is a National Historic Area and jointly managed by the National Park Service and Umnakaska Corporation.

- **Ballyhoo Road:** continues past ferry and shipping docks and a marine salvage yard to end at the Dutch Harbor Spit where part of the commercial fishing fleet ties up. An old road bed beyond a gate continues as a pleasant walking trail to the end of the spit, providing access to excellent birding and beachcombing. This is a prime winter location for Steller’s eiders and emperor geese and a good place to see resident rock sandpipers, sea lions and rafts of sea otters.

- **An easier climb than Mt. Ballyhoo and also covered with WWII relics, Bunker Hill:** (elev. 421 ft) is located on the South America-shaped land mass at the southern end of Amaknak Island. Park along Airport Beach Road and hike the coastal gravel road at the base of the hill to look for sealike birds or cormorants, marble murrelets, pigeon guillemots and oystercatchers. You may see red foxes, harbor seals and harbor porpoises too. The trail to the top begins near the Carl E. Moses boat harbor and winds up the back side of the hill. Watch out for bold eagles nesting on the hillside. They can be territorial and have been known to dive at passers-by. From the trail, look over to the mouth of Captains Bay where humpback whales often gather to feed on rich concentrations of tiny crustaceans and small schooling fish.

- **Tucked behind the hotel and city museum is a small bay that’s a hot spot for birders and jumping with salmon:** Look for salmon spawning, ducks dabbling. One of the area’s few (elev. 421 ft) is located on the hillside behind East Point. A hiking trail juts off to the right along a dirt road just past the airport. Further north off Ballyhoo Road, is Unalaska Drive: a steep, winding gravel road. Watch your footing at the top, the cliffs edges are loose and eroding, and be careful around abandoned buildings, which are full of nails and hidden holes. This former army outpost is a National Historic Area and jointly managed by the National Park Service and Umnakaska Corporation.

- **Pyramid Trail:** begins about a mile down Captains Bay Road and follows a near 3-mile circuit around Pyramid Peak. You will cross rolling uplands that are breeding grounds for such birds as Lapland longspurs, rock ptarmigan and rock and least sandpipers. Sit awhile in the tundra and marvel at the profusion of wildflowers, mosses, berries and grasses around you. Salmonberries are abundant through August and ripe blueberries into October. You may opt to climb Pyramid Peak or drop down into Unalaska Valley.

- **From town:** consider a hike or rent or borrow a bike or car to explore beautiful Unalaska Valley at the head of Unalaska Lake. Hike old road beds through berry patches and upland vegetation. If you are driving, you may continue up the valley along Overland Drive. The road climbs steep switchbacks before it levels out along a scenic drive that passes several trailheads then drops down into Summer Bay. Look carefully for the tiny Kamchatka rhododendron or the delicate lady’s slipper. You may see sandpipers or the Aleutian song sparrow perched on a Putchky flower. Overland Drive is closed in winter.

- Join the many local residents who enjoy a stroll around old Unalaska. Look for salmon spawning, ducks dabbling and diving, and people fishing along the creek. Follow the beach road back down town and check for bald eagles perched on the Russian Orthodox crosses of the Cathedral of the Holy Ascension. A hike out Bayview Avenue towards the landfill is sure to yield shorebird and marine life sightings.

- Explore areas of spectacular beauty and abundant wildlife on a marine tour of Unalaska Bay. Delicate waterfalls cascade from emerald green cliffs that are home to tens of thousands of nesting seabirds like puffins, litle, Murres, guillemots, jaegers and murres. Unalaska Bay whales feed in Unalaska Bay in July and August before migrating to calving grounds in Hawaii. Steller sea lions and sea otters are common. Drift past moist, mossy sea caves, picnic on a beach or circumnavigate Hog Island to look for nesting gulls and help patches that draw porpoises, whales and otters. If your tour takes you outside Unalaska Bay, it may be long and rough—and even weathered out certain times of year—but the rewards are great. A trip to Chelan Banks or the Baby Islands may yield Laycan, black-footed and short-tailed albatrosses, the coveted whiskered auklet, or clouds of shearwaters, petrels, fulmars, and gulls in a spectacular feeding frenzy. Humphack, orca and minke whales, as well as Pacific white-sided dolphins, ply the waters while sea lions haul out on rock beaches.

- If timing and weather are right, consider an air-taxi flight to the village of Akutan and ride the twice-monthly ferry back to Unalaska. Look for whales, sea lion haul-outs and clouds of seabirds feeding along the way. Your flight may take you directly over the Baby Islands.