

Travel to Anchorage and Seward, Alaska – September 2026

In early September this year I made what has become my annual trip to Alaska. There were two things that made the trip this time very different from previous years. First of all, I was still recovering from two spinal surgeries in March which made the 6 hours of travel physically more difficult. Secondly, my ex-wife Marion, who I always looked forward to seeing, passed away at the end of last year. So, it was both a physically demanding trip as well as a very emotional one.

I began the trip by taking Uber to Ontario airport in order to save time and energy, and it was a good decision. Going through TSA security at the airport was a bit of a problem since I now have a long steel screw in my pelvis to stabilize a fracture. I had to undergo a “pat down” since I couldn’t go through the normal metal detector or scanner. The TSA agent was very discreet about the process, but as people walked by, I couldn’t help feeling like they might have thought I was a suspected “terrorist”! After the security checkpoint I spent some time in the Aspire Airport Lounge enjoying the snacks and drinks available. Just as I was about to leave the lounge, a young Hispanic man entered and put down 3 cartons of eggs on a table near me. I was curious, so I asked him about the cartons, and he said they were duck eggs from his mother’s farm in Riverside. Apparently, she had insisted that he must take some eggs home with him to Idaho! By then it was time to board the Alaska Airlines flight to Seattle and then on to Anchorage. There was a 45-minute delay taking off as several bags had to be unloaded and re-scanned. The flight was smooth and a delicious fruit and cheese plate was served for lunch. The pilot made up a lot of time, and we arrived in Seattle only 10 minutes late! Luckily, we arrived at the North Terminal where the connecting flight to Anchorage was just two gates away – very convenient. The flight to Anchorage was also a smooth flight but the heavy cloud cover limited any view of the mountains. Dinner on the flight was a fantastic plate of chicken enchiladas with delicious roasted red peppers, which I had pre-ordered before the flight. Upon arrival in Anchorage, I picked up a rental car from Thrifty and drove to the Wyngate Hotel downtown on Ship Creek where I’ve stayed several times. It’s a nice hotel very close to downtown Anchorage and a lot less expensive than other downtown hotels.

The next morning, I went to the Starbucks Café at Barnes & Noble bookstore for a great ham and cheese croissant, along with a large decaf Americano coffee. While in the bookstore I browsed around and found a fascinating book titled “Myths of Geography – Eight Ways we get the World Wrong”. I was intrigued by the title and discovered a couple of very unusual facts that most people, even geographers, would not think about. Are there really 7 continents? If a continent is defined as a land mass surrounded by ocean, such as Australia or Africa, then why does Europe connect with Asia, or why is North America connected with South America? Or what defines a “nation” – land, culture, a boundary of water or mountains? There were so many fascinating questions like this that are explored in the book. Later I visited the Best Buy store in the Dimond Mall where I was amazed at some of the newest technological “gadgets” that are supposed to “enhance” one’s life. However, I couldn’t figure out how! After another decaf Americano at Starbucks in the mall, I drove out to Potter Marsh on the south edge of the city to see the birds and the migrating salmon in Rabbit Creek. It’s always one of my favorite places to visit when I’m in Anchorage and the view of the Chugach Mountains is always gorgeous. Then I contacted Michael, Marion’s husband, and we arranged to meet for dinner that evening. In the meantime, I discovered the new King Street Brewery where they had a very nice non-alcoholic IPA on tap. By then it was time to meet up with Michael at Studio 100, one of his favorite restaurants. He proceeded to order a host of appetizers, including roasted oysters, Chinese tacos, lamb “lollipops”, and baked Portobello mushrooms. The dishes were excellent and made it a fun way to enjoy dinner. During our conversation, Michael told me he had left Costco to join a high-end auction company as their sales manager, and he was loving the change of work. Over dinner I gave him an 8x10 print of one of my most favorite photos of Marion, one with her sitting on the train on our way to Shropshire in 1975. As Michael looked at the photo, tears came rolling down his cheeks. Even 9 months after her passing he was deeply emotional at seeing the photo. I also felt the sorrow of the moment, and we shared a

number of our favorite stories of life with Marion. This was a time I had been looking forward to sharing with Michael and it brought us even closer together. Three hours later, we bid each other goodnight, and I returned to my hotel.



Marion on the train to Shropshire - 1975

The next morning as I got out of bed, I realized the day was 25 years after “9-11”, a tragedy no one has forgotten, and I reflected back to that day when I first learned about it as I was sitting at my office desk. It’s a memory I will never forget! After a quick shower I headed to Starbucks again for a ham and cheese croissant. Then I decided to make a visit to Arctic Valley on the north edge of town where I often went cross-country skiing when I lived in Anchorage. The skies were mostly sunny and the trees beginning to shine in their fall colors. The area hadn’t changed all that much since then, but the ski area had grown in size.

After taking some photos I headed for the Eagle River Nature Reserve further north. There were several families with their dogs hiking the trails as I wandered along the river to a place where beavers had constructed a large dam creating a lake, and the reflections of the mountains were gorgeous.



Arctic Valley



Eagle River Nature Reserve



Beaver dam lake – Eagle River Nature Reserve

From Eagle River I drove a short distance north to the Eklutna Village tribal cemetery, now a State Historical site. The tiny village surrounded the cemetery, and the gravesites were beautifully decorated in classic style of the Russian Orthodox faith.



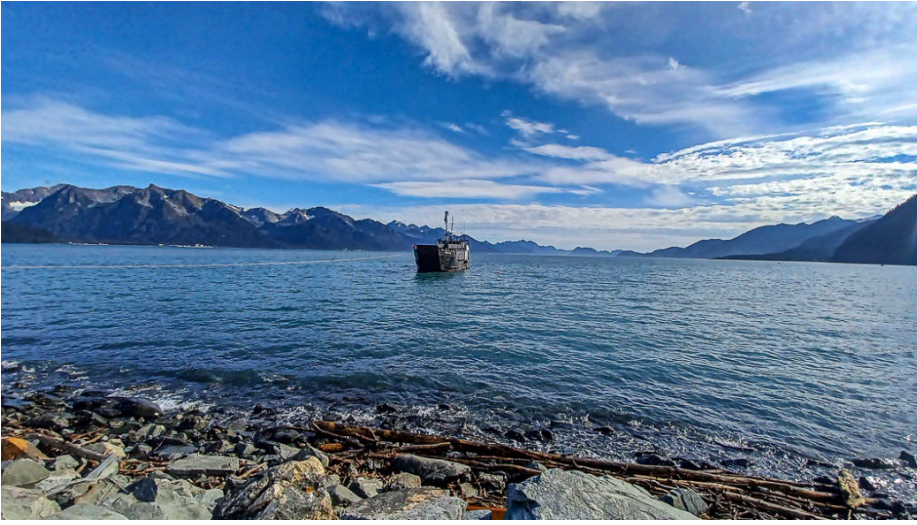
Eklutna village church and cemetery

I walked around the site taking photos before heading back to Anchorage where I had lunch at F-Street Station, one of my favorites, for a delicious meal of halibut and chips! Later in the afternoon I drove to Point Woronzof next to the airport and watched as the tide came into Cook Inlet. By then clouds had moved into the area, so the view of the mountains of the Alaska Range on the far side of the inlet was obscured, unfortunately because this place has one of the best views of the massive mountain range.

Back in the city that evening I decided to have dinner at the Glacier Brewhouse where I ordered a bowl of seafood chowder, the best in all of Alaska. As I sat at the bar, I noticed many of the young servers were speaking a different language and obviously from outside the US. I suspected they were from Serbia, working for the summer in Alaska. So, I asked one of the young women and sure enough they were all from Serbia and loving their time in Alaska.

The next morning, as I bent down to tie my shoes, I felt a sudden sharp pain in my lower back as if I had strained a muscle. And regrettably, it was later to haunt me upon my return home. After breakfast in the hotel, I decided to drive down to Seward for the weekend. Under partly cloudy skies the fall colors were beautiful, especially in the Turnagain Pass area. After a pleasant three-hour drive on some newly paved highways, I arrived in the small town of Seward. As I drove through the town, I noticed a lot of tourists who had arrived aboard a Viking Cruise Lines ship docked in the harbor. Looking for a place to stay for the night I spotted the Edgewater Hotel downtown overlooking the mountains surrounding Resurrection Bay.





Resurrection Bay, Seward



Downtown & Mt Marathon

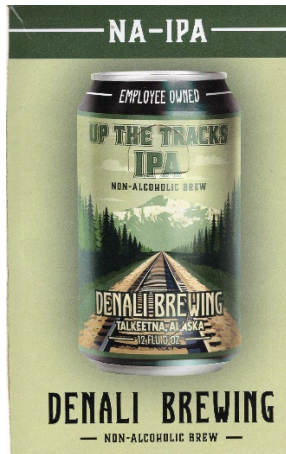
As I checked into the hotel, I was surprised to find out that the hotel would be closing the next day for the season. The room had a balcony with a nice view of the bay, but the AC had been turned on, and it was really chilly. When I went to turn up the thermostat I found there was no heat. I told the front desk clerk and 15 minutes later a man showed up to fix the heating unit, so all was well. I spent a couple of hours walking around the small town taking photos of the mountains and the bay.



Shoreline Park, Seward

Then I stopped at the Breeze Inn Bar overlooking the harbor for a beer. At one point, as I sat at the bar, a man near me ordered a “Seward Burger and Fries”, a specialty of the bar. When his order arrived, I couldn’t believe the size of the burger. It was enormous with 3 huge patties of beef topped with enough lettuce, tomatoes, pickles and Cole slaw to make a salad! And believe it or not, the guy finished every bit of it, plus the mountain of fries, before I finished my beer! Following the beer at the bar I walked down to the harbor to take some photos of the fishing boats and the Viking cruise ship. Since it was around time for dinner, I chose to go to nearby Ray’s Restaurant overlooking the harbor. The place was crowded with tourists from the cruise ship, but I managed to find an open seat at the bar. The bartender highly recommended the king

crab cakes and they were outstanding. As I enjoyed the crab cakes, I noticed a woman at the bar eating her dinner while talking to a friend via a video call on her phone. Every so often she would suddenly hold up a bite from her dinner to show her friend as they continued their phone conversation, which I thought was a bit weird! Later that evening, I sat on my balcony and watched people strolling by on the shoreline trail while I enjoyed a bottle of “Up the Tracks IPA” from the Denali Brewery in Talkeetna.

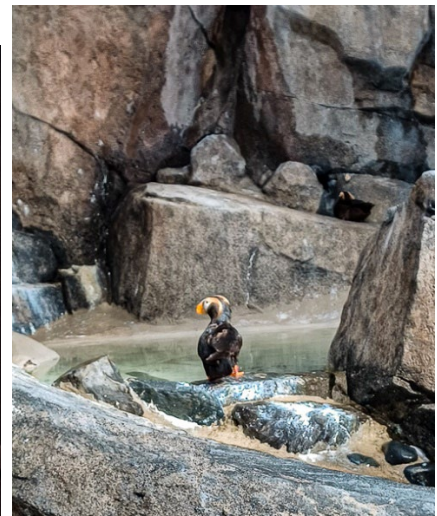


Viking Cruise Ship

After a ham and cheese croissant from Starbucks Café in the Safeway store the next morning, I visited the Alaska SeaLife Aquarium on the shore on Resurrection Bay. Though it's a small aquarium, it has a fascinating collection of sea life from all parts of Alaska, along with excellent information about each of the species. Of particular interest were the Sea Lions that were very active as they “entertained” the kids that had their noses pressed to the glass. It was fun to watch the Sea Lions passing very close to the kids and the excitement that they created.



Alaska SeaLife Center



Tufted Puffin

I spent a couple of hours checking out all the fascinating exhibits before walking across the street to the Seward Brewing Company bar for a local brew. Before leaving Seward, I made a visit to the Exit Glacier Visitors Center, part of the Kenai Fjords National Park. When I saw the glacier, it was obvious that it had retreated significantly, even from the last time I saw it in 1982. Still, it was an impressive view. The glacier

begins its journey in the Harding Icefield as it slowly moves down the steep Kenai Mountains toward the Resurrection River on the north edge of town.



Kenai Fjords National Park – Exit Glacier in the distance

By then it was time to start the return to Anchorage. Passing through the small village of Moose Pass I spotted a very nice mural painted on the side of the elementary school that fit beautifully with the name of the village. When I came to Trail Lake, I took a photo of a float plane docked on the lake with a gorgeous view of the mountains behind.

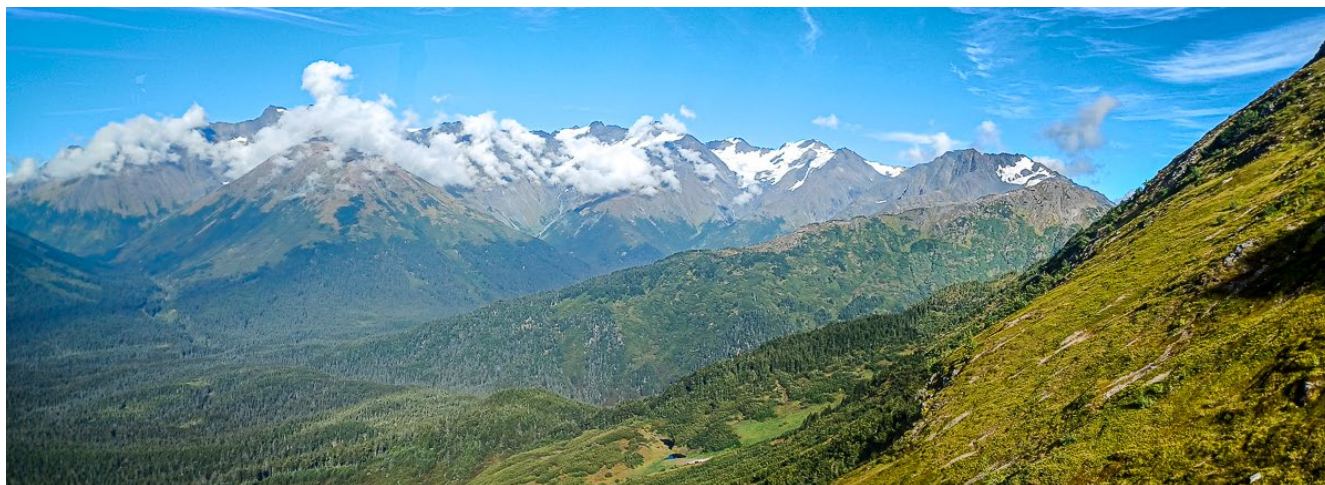


Moose Pass school



Trail Lake

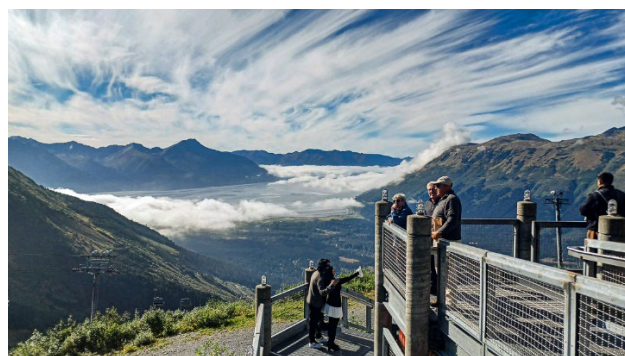
Since the sky was clearing, I decided to stop at Girdwood and check out the tram to the top of Alyeska mountain. It was a good decision that gave me some incredible views of the glaciers surrounding the valley from the lodge at the summit. I noticed that one of the ski lifts had been outfitted to carry bicycles and their riders up to the top of the mountain where they would be able to ride their bikes down the steep trails. I believe many ski areas are catering to the cross-country bikers during the summer now. I joined a number of people in the bar where I had a cold pint of King Street IPA as I looked out at the mountains and valley below. It was a great place to relax and take in the gorgeous scenery.



View of the Seven Glaciers from the summit of Mt Alyeska



Cocktails with a scenic view



Looking down the Turnagain Arm

Soon it was time to take the tram back down to the Alyeska Hotel below and head for Anchorage where I checked into the Lakefront Hotel on Lake Hood next to Ted Stevens International Airport. That evening I went down to the “Fancy Moose Bar” in the hotel for a delicious dinner of my favorite halibut and chips, along with a Twisted Creek IPA. My server was a lovely young lady who I was convinced was from Croatia by her accent, and sure enough, I was right. She was one of several servers working in Alaska for the summer. She was very interested in the fact that I had travelled to Croatia on business several times, especially to the Mediterranean seaside town of Split. As the sun was setting across Lake Hood, I retired to my room for the night since I had to be up early in the morning for the flight back to Ontario.

At the airport the next morning, I found many more shops and restaurants than when I was there last year. I picked up a decaf Americano at one of the kiosks and sat down to wait for boarding of the flight to begin.



Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport



The sky was overcast as we departed Anchorage and it followed us almost all the way to Seattle. The breakfast of scrambled eggs, hickory smoked bacon, hash brown potatoes, yogurt and fresh fruit that I had preordered was delicious and prepared me for the rest of the day. I couldn't help watching the young woman sitting next to me as she worked on a picture by “dabbing” different colored felt tip pens on a sheet of paper covered with small dots, all labeled with one of five different letters, each representing a specific color. Slowly a lovely picture emerged when she finished “coloring” it. She told me it was a painting technique called “stippling”, also known as “dot art”. It was fascinating to watch her. Meanwhile I also spent time watching a program on the entertainment system titled “What is the Internet”, and I found out things I never knew – fascinating!

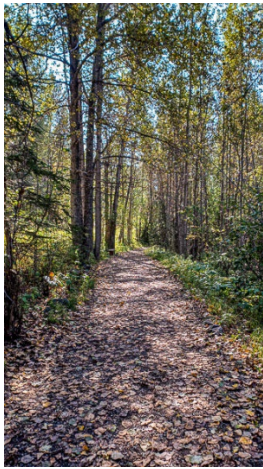
When we arrived at SeaTac Airport, I had enough time for a great non-alcoholic IPA at the “Pioneer Tavern” in the airport before boarding the plane to Ontario. On departure from SeaTac, we had a beautiful view of Mt Rainier and Mt Adams before the clouds moved in. I enjoyed the lunch of Santa Fe chicken salad, along with a gin tonic as we made our way south over Oregon and northern California. Upon arriving at Ontario, I chose to take Uber again and my driver Doris was delighted that I had chosen to take Uber for the ride home because it was near the end of her day and she also lived in Redlands, so we were both going home!

I was glad that I made the trip to Anchorage despite the circumstances surrounding it. Michael and I keep in touch more often now and I really value our friendship. I think I'll still be making the trips to Alaska though they won't feel quite the same anymore. Rest in Peace my love!

Photo Gallery



View of Anchorage from Arctic Valley



Eagle River Nature Reserve



Memorial Totem



Beaver Dam Lake - Eagle River Nature Reserve



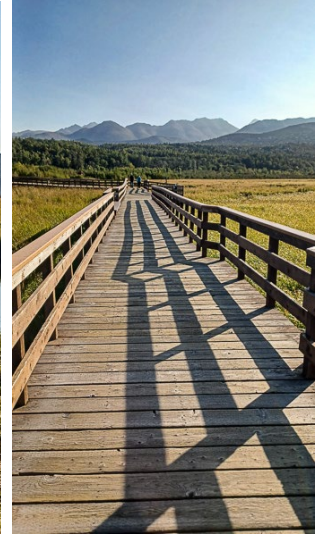
Eagle River



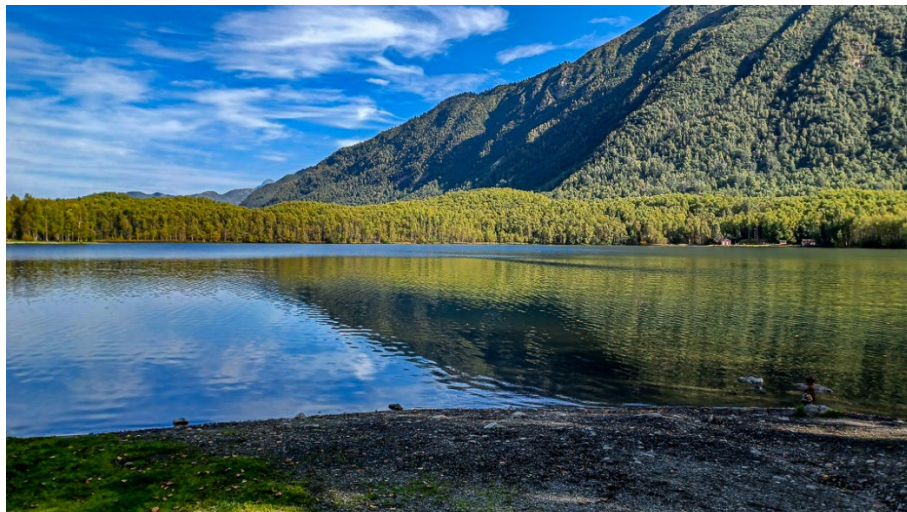
Eklutna Village church and cemetery



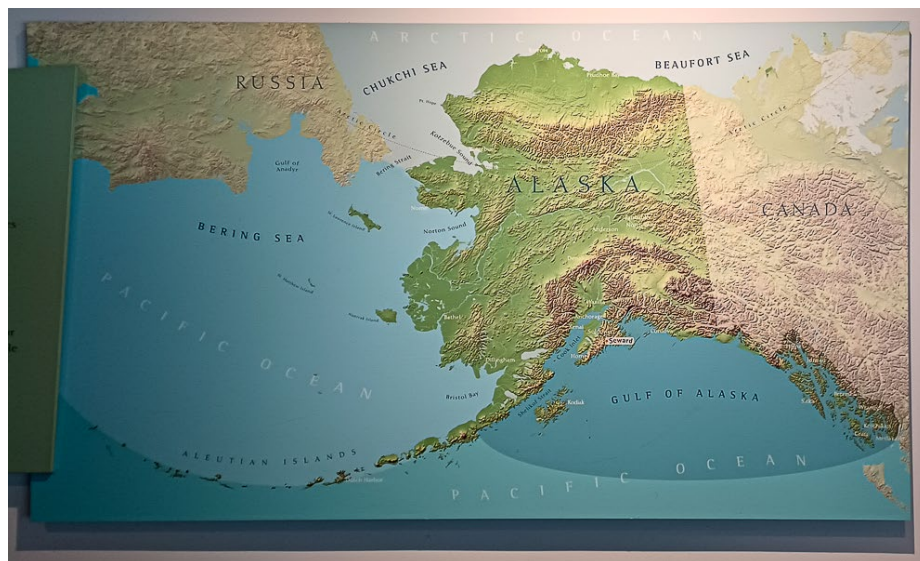
Potter Marsh



Potter Marsh



Mirror Lake State Park



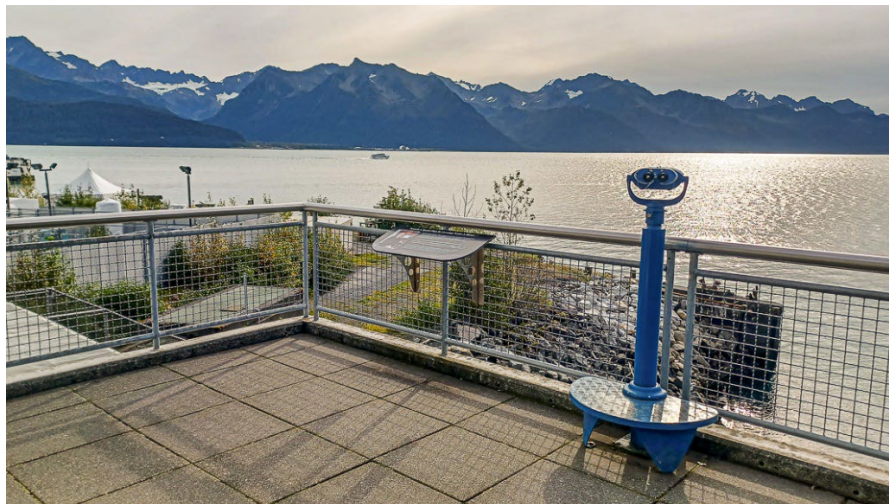
Alaska SeaLife Center



Starfish



Seabird Exhibit



View of Resurrection Bay from Alaska SeaLife Center



Drawings of Starfish by school children



Resurrection Bay – View from Downtown Seward



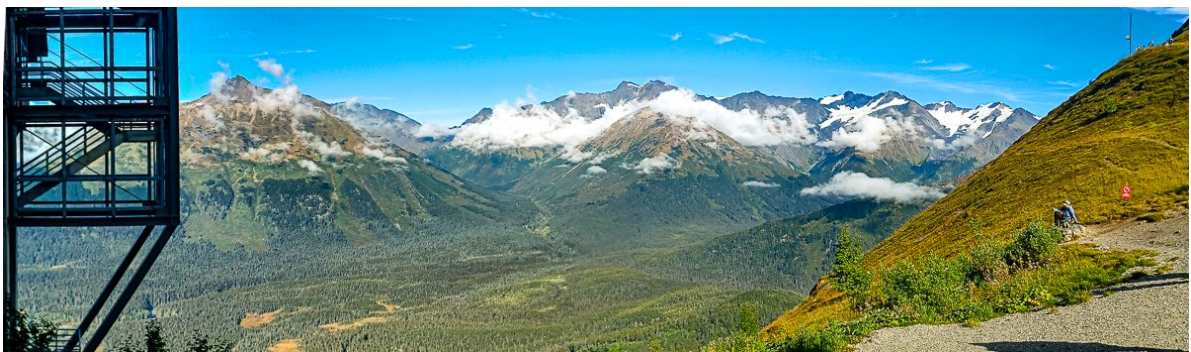
Original start of Iditarod Trail



Where to rent a Kayak



Memorial to the designer of the Alaska State Flag



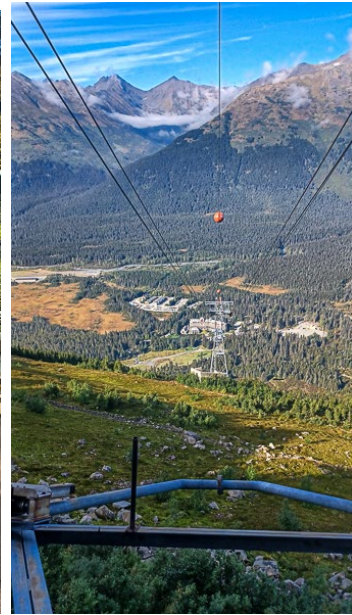
Seven Glaciers from Mt Alyeska



Looking up to Mt Alyeska



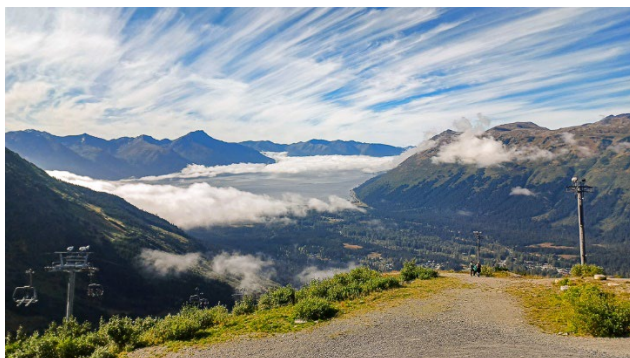
Boarding the tram



Looking down from Mt Alyeska



Mt Alyeska Ski Area Map



View of Turnagain Arm



Clouds of an approaching storm