

For Immediate Release
January 17, 2018



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TRENDING: Spike in traveler interest in Alaska sparks massive Travel EXPO presence
Insider tips, cruises, expeditions, stars of Discovery Channel's *Alaska: The Last Frontier* highlighted

Columbus, OHIO – Visitors will have an unparalleled opportunity to learn about Alaska and book the trip of a lifetime at the Great Vacations Travel EXPO, presented by AAA, Feb. 8-10 at the Ohio Expo Center. Among the world's top travel companies and destinations filling Kasich Hall, representatives from Alaska destinations will bring travelers the best travel packages, experiences and EXPO-only deals from the nation's 49th state.

Travel to Alaska has increased [26 percent](#) since 2010. A rise in cruise ship arrivals contributed 4 percent to the surge in the past year alone. [AAA Travel](#) named Anchorage its third most-booked summer travel destination, with Fairbanks following at a close No. 7. Alaska is easier than ever to get to, especially as Alaska Airlines just [announced](#) new, nonstop Columbus to Seattle service. Travelers cite their desire for an up-close look at arctic wildlife, such as humpback and killer whales, bear, sea lions, seals, bald eagles and other species, as their No. 1 reason for visiting. They are also drawn by the gorgeous vistas and the fast decline of glowing blue glaciers, as well as scenic fjords, coves, mountains and waterfalls.

According to Jack Bonney, director of content for Visit Anchorage, greater access, along with new tours, trips and attractions are behind the booming interest in Alaska.

"There are loads of new direct flights, cruise options, large, new hotels and fresh museum exhibits," said Bonney. "Those add to the experiences that have always made visitors go 'wow.' So many travelers don't realize until they arrive in Anchorage just how close we are to the state's wildlife and park lands. Some 1,500 moose actually live *within* Anchorage -- a city of 300,000 people."

Bonney added that even after 20 years in Anchorage, he is still in awe of the majesty of Alaska's glaciers.

"There is nothing like the sight and sound of a tidewater glacier calving. You can motor right up to the face of that wall of ice, cut the boat engine and hear incredible pops, cracks and rumbling as the ice shifts and huge frozen masses crash into the water below. It's truly spectacular."

Alaska offers travelers never-ending exotic experiences that don't require a passport or international travel. While planning a trip to such a vast place can appear daunting, experienced representatives from AAA Travel, cruise lines, Juneau and Anchorage will be on hand to help EXPO guests arrange their perfect Alaska trip on the spot. From an immersion in Native cultures at the Alaskan Native Heritage Center, to a Salmon Berry tour, exhibits from the Smithsonian on polar bears and walrus or a visit to the new flora, fauna, geology and history exhibit that opens in early summer at the Public Lands Office in Anchorage, Alaska will wow couples, groups of friends and entire families. As one of the few remaining unspoiled places in the U.S., Alaska embodies adventure and exploration with a booming tourism industry; that means there's no better time to plan a trip to The Last Frontier.

Special guests will tap that upswing in interest in Alaskan journeys. Eivin and Eve Kilcher, co-stars of Discovery Channel's popular show *Alaska: The Last Frontier*, will appear on the AAA Travel Stage, presented by Royal Caribbean. Taking the stage at 2 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 9 and 1 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 10, the Kilchers will offer insider tips and share stories about Alaskan travel, their homesteading lifestyle and their show. They'll also answer questions and meet one-on-one with guests for photos and autographs.

In fact, EXPO attendees will be able to dive into everything Alaska has to offer through multiple presentations. Tia Froehle of Visit Anchorage will unveil common myths about traveling to The Last Frontier on Sunday, Feb. 10 at noon. Onstage Alaska, presented by Holland America, entertains while giving travelers an insider's guide to Alaska hotspots and must-sees on Saturday, Feb. 9 at 11 a.m.

The Great Vacations Travel EXPO, presented by AAA, opens Friday, Feb. 8 and runs through Sunday, Feb. 10, at the Ohio Expo Center. Hours are Friday: Noon to 7 p.m.; Saturday: 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.; and Sunday: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tickets are \$8 at the door or at any AAA Ohio Auto Club store. AAA members who show their AAA card receive 50 percent off admission. Children ages 16 and under are admitted at no charge. Additional event details are available at AAAGreatVacations.com.

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