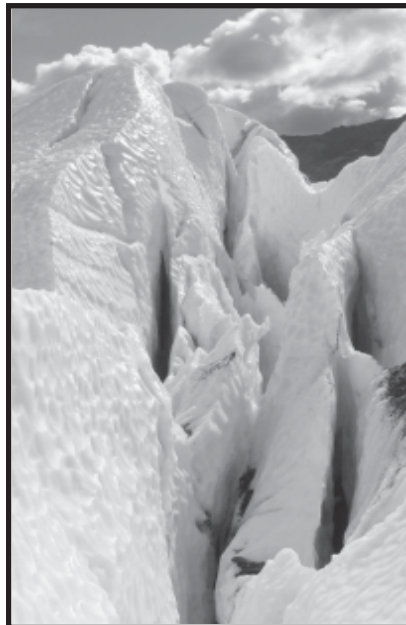


# Arctic Explorer Tour

## INTRODUCTION

The Arctic Circle stirs images of desolation and foreboding, but in truth, it's merely a man-made reference. It does though, cross some of the most beautiful and fascinating lands this planet has to offer. For this journey, it serves as our "equator", dividing the portions of our exploration on both sides, as we cross back and forth to experience the farthest north inhabited regions of our hemisphere. The latitude here is paramount in the way that it has shaped the land and particularly, in the way that it has shaped the people that have done battle with it for eons. The cultures here both indigenous and Western, have all had to conform to the same merciless rules, and their stories are inextricable from the drama that is the Arctic.

This tour without parallel promises a very personal insight into those dramas, from the subsistence-based Inuit peoples, to modern resource extraction, to the scattered wilderness dwellers living the timeless life of centuries past. We will venture to places that each hold a thousand stories guaranteed to spellbind, in that here, nothing is easy. Our exploration leads from the ancient Eskimo culture of Anaktuvuk Pass to the oilfields of Prudhoe Bay to the Yukon Territory's Dawson City, featuring in between the fantastic Dalton and Top Of The World Highways, as well as the tiny historic outposts of Coldfoot and Eagle, and remote Bettles. Part road, river and private air tour, this journey promises a contrast of "Norths", each an intriguing story for you to ponder long afterwards.



**8 Day / 7 Night**

**\$4335/person**

<u>2010 Tour Dates</u>	<u>Code</u>
June 22 - June 29	11A2
June 23 - June 30	11B2
August 2 - August 9	11A3
August 3 - August 10	11B3

## ABBREVIATED AGENDA - NORTHBOUND

**Day 1 Fairbanks - Coldfoot;** Livengood; Dalton Hwy/Haul Road north; Yukon River crossing; Arctic Circle; Kokrine Hills; Arctic Acres Inn, Coldfoot

**Day 2 Coldfoot - Deadhorse;** Wiseman mining community visit; traverse of Brooks Range; cross Atigun Pass; North Slope to Arctic Ocean; Deadhorse work camp "hotel"

**Day 3 Deadhorse - Bettles;** morning tour of Prudhoe Bay Oilfields; stop to "swim" in Arctic Ocean; flight to Anaktuvuk Pass; flight traverse of Brooks Range; airstrip outpost Bettles

**Day 4 Bettles - Fairbanks;** explore Bettles; Koyukuk River walk; flight over Caribou Mountains to Fairbanks; Alaskaland & sternwheeler Nenana; motel

**Day 5 Fairbanks - Eagle;** University of Alaska museum (excellent!); flight to bush community Eagle on Yukon River; exploration; overnight historic cabins

**Day 6 Eagle;** fascinating historical tour of Eagle/Ft. Egbert; optional hike to Eagle bluff; bicycle exploration (or relax!); dinner at Riverside Cafe; overnight historic cabins

**Day 7 Eagle - Dawson City;** Top of the World Highway; Boundary; Canadian Customs (passports required); cross Yukon by Ferry; Midnight Sun Dome; B&B

**Day 8 Dawson - Fairbanks;** Yukon River descent (110 miles) by boat back to Eagle; US Customs; flight to Fairbanks; end of tour

*Notes: Option available to visit Barrow, northernmost city before or after trip; Also, this itinerary operates concurrently with a southbound version, differing only in the order of stops and overnights*

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Trip cost includes all modes of transportation, lodging, meals, equipment and guiding. Additional information and a suggested personal equipment list sent upon deposit. Accommodations range from semi-deluxe to decidedly rustic. A reasonable degree of physical fitness is desirable as this is a trip that traverses great wilderness with optional hiking, though it is not overly strenuous. Passports are required for this tour. Alcoholic beverages and gratuities to the guide not included. Some travel is by small single engine aircraft, with size/weight considerations. Group size is limited to four persons.

**Day 1** We'll meet in Fairbanks at 8AM sharp at the Golden North Motel, to begin our journey. We'll immediately set our compass on North, leaving town on the Elliot Highway towards the old mining settlement of Livengood. Our first stop of the morning is the misleadingly named, Arctic Circle Trading Post, (we're not at the Circle yet!) before turning onto the infamous Dalton Highway or, "Haul Road". Just recently opened to private vehicles, this ribbon of rough gravel stretches all the way to Prudhoe Bay and was built in the early 70's to "haul" the ceaseless stream of goods it takes to build and operate the huge industrial facilities of the North Slope Oilfields. Descending from the White Mountains we arrive at the mighty Yukon River sweeping southwestward, just in time for lunch. The vegetation now begins to directly reflect the latitude, the trees looking more like shrubs in the valleys, and the tops of the rounded hills we cross covered only by arctic tundra a few inches high. Traversing the Kokrine Hills, we'll make our first of multiple crossings of the Arctic Circle, meriting of course a stop and a bit of background. With the stark Brooks Range rising in the distance, we'll continue a bit farther to overnight at the outpost of Coldfoot, founded in one of the early gold rushes, but prospering since serving the rush for "black gold". It's a typically arctic outpost, where luxury is defined in more basic terms than elsewhere and where "utilitarian" is not a judgment but a statement of the value of an item needed enough to have been transported to such a remote place.

**Day 2** The road this morning continues to snake northward, climbing the south face of the imposing Brooks Range with the Gates of the Arctic National Park just to the west. A wonderful exploration of the old mining community of Wiseman gives insight into how similarly those of just a few generations ago met the challenges of these parts. Depending on our progress we'll have a picnic lunch in the vicinity of Atigun Pass, a feared piece of road in the winter with its treacherous grades. Highest point on the road system in Alaska at only 4800 feet, you'll swear that you're three times that high from the decidedly alpine environment well above treeline, starkly beautiful in its severity. From here begins our descent onto what is known as the North Slope (use of the term, "the Slope" leaves no doubt in Alaskan conversation as to where), gradually flattening out toward the Arctic Ocean and riddled with small lakes and "pingos" formed by the impermeable permafrost. It is this vast coastal plain that is the destination of many a species of bird migrating from thousands of miles and a hemisphere away, bearing their young in the brief wealth of food that is the flurry of summer. We'll be overnighing not far from the Arctic Ocean in "downtown" Deadhorse, a sprawl of equipment staging areas surrounding the airstrip that serves the oil production installations spread over many miles. Our unique accommodations are an actual mobile seismic exploration "camp" facility --truly memorable.

**Day 3** A tour of a portion of the Prudhoe Bay oilfields cannot help but impress, regardless of what one might predict beforehand. The extent of facilities and the measures taken to battle the unyielding climate, when placed in the perspective of location, is nothing short of amazing. It feels as if visiting a colony on another planet, as all aspects of life here have to be shielded from the outside environment. Tubes connect everything from multitudes of huge processing facilities to the crew quarters, featuring every amenity imaginable to keep morale and sanity healthy during the long winter months. You'll surely want to dip your toe in the Arctic Ocean before lunch . . . Next is pick-up by aircraft for a true cultural shift, traversing the tundra now from above, winging to the southwest and the remote Eskimo village of Anaktuvuk Pass. Situated on the north flanks of the Brooks Range, this natural passage through these formidable mountains has been a corridor for caribou migration since time immemorial, and thus an integral location in the subsistence culture of the indigenous people. Walking about the ancient settlement provides fascinating insight into the blurring of ages, caribou skins drying next to modern snowmachines and sod huts next to the latest in arctic engineering. It's an experience that can't be had from film or print. Back airborne, we complete the traverse of the Brooks by following the John River valley between the magnificent towering peaks of the Gates of the Arctic National Park. Our next landing is in the south foothills, at the remote outpost of Bettles. It's an indescribable dynamic, this community inaccessible by road that serves as the base for thousands of surrounding square miles, with its busy airstrip the center and heartbeat. An after dinner walk to the Koyukuk River shows just how different the south side of the Brooks Range is from the north.

**Day 4** In the morning we'll walk about "town" and visit the brand new Park Service facility for a wider interpretive perspective before lunch. Again fastening our Cessna seatbelts for the flight back to Fairbanks, we'll

fly over our previous pipeline path north. Late afternoon should allow us a peak at Alaskaland, a "refuge" for some of Fairbank's earlier buildings and homes. It is also home to the SS Nenana, a wonderfully restored steam sternwheeler from the era when there were more than a hundred of these vessels plying the navigable rivers of Alaska and the Yukon, together serving as the backbone for the system of transportation of goods and people into the north for more than half a century. Dinner is on the town with most definitely a goodly amount of daylight left to take a look about the neighborhood. Overnight is at the utilitarian Golden North Motel.

**Day 5** Our flight to Eagle is in the late morning, after a visit to the wonderful museum of the University of Alaska. It's just been refurbished and is universally acclaimed for its variety and depth of exhibits. Then there's lunch and back again to the airport. After about an hour of flying over roadless mountain wilderness, we'll cross a last ridge to see the mighty Yukon below, with a tiny settlement tucked at the base of an imposing bluff. Eagle has long served as the last supply post for the vast upper Yukon valley, providing the earliest miners and current wilderness dwellers with their link to mail delivery, telephones and the rest of the world. Its frontier nature hasn't changed much, as it is still cut off from the rest of the road system during the eight winter months of the year. We'll bunk for the evening in historic cabins overlooking the Yukon. The famous Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen "wintered" in Eagle and spent many an evening playing cards in the main cabin, after arriving in December of 1905 from mushing by dog team from his ship locked in the ice 1000 miles to the north. It was by telegraph from Eagle that he was able to notify the world of his survival, and success in finding the long sought Northwest Passage, after three years with no communication.

**Day 6** After a fascinating morning historic tour of old Eagle and Ft. Egbert we'll wander town and maybe visit a working dog kennel. Long the only winter means of getting around, dog mushing has come back in force, both for "working" (getting wood, trapping, etc.), recreationally and racing. Eagle is truly a unique and unspoiled gem, giving a glimpse into a past way of life that is remarkably still very much part of the present way of doing things in such a remote location. In the afternoon there's the famed and formidable Eagle Bluff to conquer for those with energy to burn, with freetime and bicycles for anyone else. We used to only spend one day in Eagle, but consistent feedback requesting longer was finally heeded --we're sure that you'll understand why. Dinner is at the Riverside Cafe (the only in town) overlooking the Yukon River. The evening is back at the cabins steeped in history, maybe with a little Jack London reading to cement the mood . . .

**Day 7** After an early breakfast we'll load up and head down the road toward Dawson City via the "Top of The World Highway". The road follows magnificent ridgelines with endless views and leaves no question as to the inevitability of its name. After passing through the outpost of Boundary, we'll cross the Canadian border, and then descend into the Yukon River Valley and to the goal of all the Stampeders of the Great Klondike Gold Rush of 1898, Dawson City. Dawson is still a frontier town with plenty of its history evident in the old structures and dirt streets. Late afternoon will be left open to those that would like to explore on their own or get cleaned up before dinner on the town. Lodging will be in a bed and breakfast, after sampling a bit of the nightlife. You may opt for a soak in the hot tub back at the B&B before dinner, which hopefully flat tires have not prevented your guide from joining . . . Dawson's night life carries on, with maybe a visit to Diamond Tooth Gerties in order. The contrast of different Norths will by now be feeling very apparent.

**Day 8** After breakfast we head to the banks of the mighty river to board the M/V Yukon Queen for the 110 mile trip downriver. It's imposingly beautiful country unlike what we've wandered previously. Steeped in its gold rush fame, the river binds it all together as we slide past the ghost town of Fortymile and nameless crumbling cabins before arriving back at Eagle and passing customs. With our now familiar Cessna our transportation back to Fairbanks, the flight itself is a highlight, crossing the White Mountains and descending into the Golden Heart City. It's often clear in the Interior and the views from above drive home the vastness and uniqueness of the arctic. It's a fittingly pensive end to an exploration of remarkable contrasts, beauty, and cultural interchange. Many points and experiences of the last few days will reside long in your mind, and that we guarantee. You may not decide to move to the arctic, but experiencing it can't help but give a slightly changed perspective on our own lives, at whatever latitude that may be.



## ***Client Pre-Trip Information*** ***8-Day Arctic Explorer Tour***

### ***Accessibility/Fitness***

This trip does not require a high level of fitness nor does it include camping. It is though an itinerary that does spend time outdoors in a potentially inclement environment, traversing truly remote lands, and a true sense of adventure and flexibility are a must. At least a moderate level of fitness is certainly desirable, as not to preclude the many options that can add tremendously to the overall experience, such as the numerous short hikes. Considerable travel is by six seat single-engine aircraft, with weight and size limitations for both passengers and luggage. The itinerary features travel through and to very remote places with few standard amenities. Your reward is an experience unavailable anywhere else.

### ***Luggage/Clothing***

No specialized equipment is needed beyond your personal clothing (see separate Trip Packing List). Clothing should be comfortable, limited to two to three changes for the trip (laundry available in Eagle), and when layered be warm to 30 degrees Fahrenheit with wind always a possibility. Polypropylene is a favorite of many that live and work in these environments full time, and is great from long underwear to fleece jackets. Dress at our destinations and in the North in general, varies from the very casual to the extremely so. Footwear must of course be comfortable and designed for walking. Rain gear is a must and should be of the two piece suit variety with either hat or hood, doubling as a outer shell/wind suit. A light hat and gloves are also recommended. All clothing and personal items are EXTREMELY limited in volume due to our small aircraft transportation. This means a total MAXIMUM volume of not more than two grocery sacks (3 cubic feet total) per person. Luggage must be soft-sided (duffle bag preferable) and will require redistribution into stuff sacks (provided) for the air segments. Extra luggage can usually be left in Fairbanks or Anchorage during the trip. A small daypack works well in the van for cameras, water bottle, and miscellaneous items, as well as for hikes.

### ***Accommodations/Meals***

Our lodging ranges from log cabins to bed & breakfasts to very utilitarian "hotels", common in the remote North. The lodging in Eagle utilizes a central bathhouse separate from the cabins, and some of the hotels have only communal, single sex bathrooms. All are very comfortable, and often the only option in some of the remote destinations. Amenities vary from place to place, with luxury only in the eyes of the beholder. Dining is in local restaurants, with the food usually quite good though often with a somewhat limited selection of menu items. Alcoholic beverages not included.

### ***Legal Requirements***

**Passports:** As this trip crosses the US/Canada border, a valid Passport is now necessary even for US citizens. Minor children must also have a passport, as well as written notarized parental permission unless both parents are present.

### ***Pre/Post-Trip Lodging/Trip Addons***

Many types of lodging are available in Anchorage and Fairbanks as are independent extensions before or after your trip with us. Facilities fill up very early during the summer season. Please advise us of your interests well in advance so that we are able to guarantee suitable accommodations. If you need suggestions for other things to do, just let us know.

### ***Miscellaneous***

**Money:** Though most everything is included in the overall price, purchases for souvenirs, alcoholic beverages etc, can be made with either cash, traveler's checks in US Dollars, or, accepted in most places but not all, credit card. **Traveler's Insurance:** is strongly recommended, as the season is very short and our cancellation policy is necessarily quite strict. Ask us for recommendations. **Emergencies:** A trip list of the individual accommodation addresses and emergency phone numbers with the specific dates when you will be there is sent prior to trip departure. As some places are quite remote, the best way to be reached while on the trip, is through the Adventure Alaska office in Hope. Smoking is not permitted in the vans and nearly all lodging facilities in Alaska are non-smoking. Cell phone use is prohibited in the van (rarely work anyway!). Gratuities to your guide not included.

### ***Suggested Reading***

Each client's appreciation will be immeasurably heightened by gaining some background beforehand of Alaska and the areas of our travels. A wide selection of books and information is available from Alaska Geographic: 810 E 9th Ave, Anchorage, AK 99501; (866) 257-2757; [www.alaskageographic.org](http://www.alaskageographic.org) and also from our local bookseller, Title Wave Books, in Anchorage - [www.wavebooks.com](http://www.wavebooks.com); 907-278-9283