



# Across the Wilderness

The world famous Alaska Railroad offers journeys that are awe-inspiring and one of a kind. During one memorable day of our Earth Explore

Adventure we board the famous railway for a journey between Anchorage and Talkeetna. This trip takes us through some of the world's most spectacular scenery that includes remote mountain passes, pristine wilderness, and (weather permitting) views of Denali (Mt. McKinley), the continent's highest point. We



may have a chance to spot moose, grizzly bear, eagles and arctic foxes. One great feature of the train are its dome cars, which provide panoramic views of the mountains, rivers and animals along the way. An unforgettable day.

## Coming soon! Adventure Guides

These are our students' own personal study guides, full of interesting information and interactive materials for use at home and during program preparation sessions. These guides are mailed to all enrolled students in the spring, and are used along with the Naturalist to help students get ready for their Adventure. The Adventure Guide is also a valuable tool that students will use while completing the journal-keeping and writing assignments required for earning academic credit, both on the high school and college levels. For more information on the various academic credit options available for students participating in an Earth Explore Adventure, go online to [earthexplore.com](http://earthexplore.com) and visit the Academic Credit link.



## Did you Know?

During the summertime, the sun rises earlier and sets later in Alaska than in anywhere in the rest of the United States. In fact, the Summer Solstice, which is the day on which the sun is at its highest point in the sky, is practically a state holiday in Alaska. In Anchorage and elsewhere across the state there are special events to celebrate the occasion. The summer solstice falls on June 21st...what the rest of us know as the beginning of summer. In far northern Alaska, the city of Barrow is in sun for more than 80 days straight. And in Fairbanks, sporting events are held at midnight without artificial lights! Even in the southern part of the state the midnight glow in midsummer is bright enough to keep people active while the rest of the U.S. is asleep. In fact, 24 hour golf marathons are popular ways to celebrate the season. Of course in the winter, Alaskans see the other extreme...19 to 20 hours of darkness each day. In the far north, the sun never rises for almost 3 months!



## Alaska SeaLife Center Prepares for Earth Explore

Studying Alaska's amazingly diverse ocean creatures is the highlight of our visit to the SeaLife Center in Seward. Our students not only learn about marine mammals and other creatures of Alaska's offshore waters, but most of our groups take part in a service learning project to help those creatures thrive, and to explore the threat posed by global climate change.

The SeaLife center is not only engaged in education...but in conservation as well. Through its on site research facility, the Center is gathering valuable data on species like the Northern Fur Seal, whose numbers have been dropping steeply due to human activities. The SeaLife center is just steps from the sea, and is rapidly gaining a reputation as the foremost cold-water research and education facility in the United States. When combined with their visit to Kenai Fjords National Park, Earth Explore students will come away with a new appreciation and understanding of the amazing creatures and complex natural systems of the northern oceans.

## Websites to Visit

### Alaska's Ocean Environments

<http://www.alaskasealife.org/>  
Wonderful source for those interested in creatures like whales, marine mammals (seal, walrus, sea lion, sea otter) and other sea creatures of the far north.

### Denali National Park

<http://www.nps.gov/dena>  
Vast Denali National Park is showcased. Tundra, huge animals like the grizzly and moose, and fragile ecosystems.



### Alaskan Cultures

<http://www.alaskanative.net/>  
Learn about native Alaskan cultures at this website of the Alaska Native Heritage Center, which Earth Explore students visit.

### All about Glaciers

<http://nsidc.org/glaciers/story/>  
If you want the inside scoop on glaciers, this is the place. Learn about what makes a glacier form, why some are melting, and how Alaska's tidewater glaciers spawn icebergs. Good background for your trip to Alaska!

### The Aurora Borealis

<http://www.exploratorium.edu/auroras/>  
Alaska is famous for the Northern Lights, or Aurora Borealis. Learn all about what causes auroras, how scientists predict them, and where to see them. Links to lots of great pictures too.

## HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE CREDIT OPPORTUNITIES

### Read all About It!

Besides all of the adventures they will be having, students who participate in the Earth Explore program have the unique opportunity to take something especially valuable from the program...high school or college credit. Because of the number, quality and variety of educational experiences offered, all Earth Explore Adventures have been approved for academic credit. Upon enrollment, all students are given the chance to earn high school level field credit. Students need only complete the required work, mail it in on time, and receive a satisfactory evaluation. All of the necessary forms and instructions are available on the Earth Explore website by following the "Academic Credit" link. To be eligible for college level credit, students must have completed the 7th grade at the time of travel, and do the work described for the course. A link to that course, offered by Eastern Washington University in conjunction with Earth Explore, is available at the "Academic Credit" link on the Earth Explore website.



## Picture-taking Tips



## SET YOUR WATCH- KNOW YOUR ALASKA TIMEZONES

Not only does the sun stay in the sky for 20 hours or more during an Alaskan summer day, but the time zones can be confusing for many travelers. Alaska is so big that it has its own time zone. Alaskan Standard Time is 1 hour behind the West Coast, 2 hours behind the Mountain States, 3 hours behind Central Time, and 4 hours behind the Eastern Time Zone. However, the Aleutian Islands, in the western part of Alaska are actually in the Aleutian-Hawaiian Time Zone, which is one hour further behind the rest of the country. OK, so here's a test. If it's 9PM in Chicago, what time is it in Anchorage? If you guessed 6PM.... you're right on target!

## SPRING NEWSLETTER -PACKED WITH TRAVEL DETAILS

How to pack a suitcase, how to handle spending money, how to make phone calls. These are all important travel details, and they are among the items we cover in our spring edition of *the Naturalist* newsletter. Packed with information that you can use, the spring newsletter will be arriving in your mailbox in late March.



MAKE  
THEM  
COUNT!

We're often asked how to get great pictures like the one to the left. The most important part of good picture taking is to fill the frame with your subject. Also, keep the sun or other light source directly on what you want to showcase. In the case of people, always keep the sun behind your back (if you are taking the picture) and at a slight angle if possible. That way your subjects won't have to squint. And try to avoid shooting when the sun is directly overhead. That leads to deep shadows that make faces look scary! One other tip. Take plenty of batteries. That way you can use your flash indoors, or in areas where the light is dim, or shadows are harsh, to help "fill in" your subject. That can make the difference between a forgettable picture, and one you'd put on a wall or email to friends.

## Stay Organized to Maximize the Fun!

Part of the fun of an Earth Explore trip is learning to handle yourself and your gear responsibly. Before you leave, practice these organizational skills.

- Get up at a set time each morning.
- Pack your day bag for a weekend trip, and try to keep it organized the entire time.
- Load and unload your large duffel (or suitcase) with the items on the packing list until you can do it quickly and easily.
- Devise a plan to organize the spending money you'll need on your Earth Explore trip
- Write out a schedule for your day, dividing it into 30 minute blocks. Try to keep as closely to the schedule as possible.



## Travel Managers keep things organized!

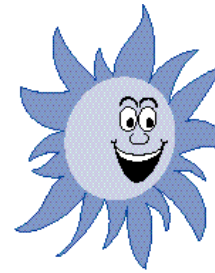
Each Earth Explore group is accompanied by a full time Travel Manager. These professionals coordinate all program logistics like checking in and out of hotels, working with program partners, and keeping the group always on schedule. In addition, the TMs serve as guides on travel days, leading the group in scenic and educational walks, discussions and workshop activities. They are joined at various venues by science and history specialists and resource persons.

### The Aurora Borealis

Alaskan summer days are long. But when darkness finally falls, some visitors have a chance to witness one of nature's finest displays. The Aurora Borealis



happens when charged particles from the sun's "solar wind" compress the earth's magnetic field, forcing energized electrons to travel downward to smash into gas particles high in our atmosphere (the ionosphere). The energy is given off in the glowing displays that light the northern sky. Scientists in Alaska regularly monitor sunspot activity to forecast when the strongest and most visible auroras will occur across the state.



## Travel Weather

Most people traveling to Alaska expect it to be cold year-round. However, weather during the program can be surprisingly warm most of the time.

That's because Alaska has the longest summertime days of any state in the nation. Of course, it can also be cool and wet occasionally, so we always come prepared with a lightweight jacket or waterproof shell. And don't forget the polarfleece jacket. These are indispensable and great for layering, especially during nighttime activities.

### Average July Weather

City	High	Sunlight
Anchorage	65	20 hours
Seward	62	19 hours

### Pack for the Weather!

In Alaska, we will likely experience some temperatures in the 70s and some in the 40s. It will rain some days, and be sunny on others. That's why our Alaska Adventure packing list is heavy on items that can be layered. Because unlike a heavy jacket, layers can be removed as the weather changes, without leaving you too cold, or too warm. In Alaska we always know that whatever the weather is right now...it will probably be different soon!

### How Much Luggage?



We ask students and Leaders to limit their luggage to *1 checked piece, and 1 carry-on in a day bag*. The limits are necessary due to luggage capacities on the motorcoach, and to insure no participant is overly burdened by excess gear during the program. Remember, since all students and Leaders must transport their own bags from hotel to motorcoach (and back), it is always best to pack lightly! We recommend that students and Leaders use a soft-sided duffel (preferably with wheels) for their larger piece, and a small day-pack for their smaller piece.

## what to bring? Earth Explore Packing List

### For boys and girls

#### Clothing

- Light hiking boots-1 pair
- Running shoes/sneakers-1pair
- Fleece jacket-1
- Waterproof windbreaker with hood-1
- Pants-Denim-2 pair
- Pants-Khaki-1 pair
- Sweatpants-1pair
- Shorts-cotton-2-3 pair
- Hiking socks-heavy cotton-2pair
- Other socks-4 pair
- Underwear-5-6 pair
- Long-sleeved shirt-3-4
- Short-sleeved shirt-2
- Travel cap-1 (supplied by EE)

Pajama/sleepshirt-1-2

Swimsuit-1

Sandals/Tevas/flips

#### Toiletries Kit

Toothbrush with case-1

Toothpaste-1

Shampoo-1

Soap with case-1

Hygiene products

Small towel-1

#### Personal Gear (in daybag)

Sunglasses-1

Sunscreen-1 SPF 25

Sunblock-1 SPF 45

Lip balm-1

Camera-1

Extra camera batteries

Extra memory card

Bandana or handkerchief-1

Ziplock bags-10 (for organizing)

Field Journal-1 (supplied by EE)

Pencil-2

Phone cards-2-30 minute

Water bottle-1

Credentials-1 (supplied by EE)

Optional-small flashlight

Optional-small binoculars

### Common Sense Packing Tips

- Pack outfits that can be layered.
- Pack clothes that can be combined in many different ways.
- Pack lots of cottons and neutral colors like khaki.
- Instead of one heavy coat, bring polarfleece and sweatshirts that can be layered.

## ABOUT EARTH EXPLORE

Earth Explore was founded in 1995. We are a specialized company dedicated to providing the very finest combination of adventure, fun, and outdoor education. Due to the content of our programs, students chosen to participate can earn academic credit, both at the high school and college levels. Our staff and our partner organizations make all of the educational and travel arrangements and work with the airlines, hotels and motorcoach companies directly. That way we can be assured of the highest quality experience for our students and our teachers.

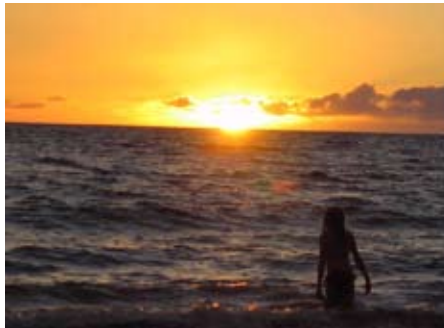
Earth Explore and the not for profit Earth Explore Foundation limit participation on each of our Adventures each summer to ensure program content meets the highest standards. Our expert on site partners design the educational program content to our exacting standards. As such each Earth Explore program is unique and the experiences and educational activities cannot be duplicated.

## THE EARTH EXPLORE FOUNDATION

The Earth Explore Foundation's mission is to provide young people access to exciting educational experiences in the natural world. This mission guides the activities undertaken on Earth Explore's Adventure programs. Each student is encouraged to extend his or her own personal horizons, while gaining a better understanding of the natural world, its cultures and complex and interrelated systems.

## CAN A FRIEND PARTICIPATE?

As spring approaches, this is a question that we hear often in the National Office. The answer is yes, in most cases. There must be space in the local group, the friend must be between the ages of 10 and 14, and he or she must be approved by the Leaders. The best way to find out for sure is to have the friend's parents call the National Office. We'll be happy to fill them in!



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