

Top Ten Unique Facts About Alaska

By Kyra Cundall

10 – Alaska is the largest state.

Alaska is 586,412 square miles. It is bigger than Texas, California, and Montana combined!

9 – Much of Alaska can only be reached by boat or plane.

Parts of Alaska are very isolated, even today. Some places can only be reached by boat, plane, or helicopter because of mountains, glaciers, and major bodies of water.

8 – More than 3,000 rivers and over 3 million lakes cover the landscape of Alaska.

Three thousand rivers flow with ice melt from tall mountains and glaciers. The third longest river in the United States is the famous Yukon River, which is almost 2,000 miles long. Alaska is also home to over 3 million lakes. The largest lake is over 1,000 square miles—Lake Iliamna.

7 – More than 70 potentially active volcanoes can be found in Alaska.

The most recent volcanic eruption took place in 1912, when the Novarupta volcano erupted. The valley created by its volcanic flow is now the Katmai National Park. Alaska is also known for its earthquakes. Each year Alaska has approximately 5,000 earthquakes.

6 – Beautiful glaciers make up 5% of the state.

Alaska has an estimated 100,000 glaciers, ranging from tiny cirque glaciers to huge valley glaciers. There are more active glaciers and ice fields in Alaska than in the rest of the inhabited world. The largest glacier is the Malaspina, at 850 square miles.

5 – Alaska is known for its harsh winters.

Alaska has the lowest temperatures in the United States for every month except July and August. The lowest recorded temperature was -80 degrees F in Prospect Creek in January of 1971. Despite these low temperatures, Alaska has been known to experience high temperatures during the summer months. During the summer, average daytime temperatures throughout the state range from the 60s to the 90s.

4 – Alaska is home of the famous Iditarod dog sled race.

Dog sleds have been, and still are, a practical means of travel through the more rugged parts of the Alaskan wilderness. Every March, Alaska hosts the famous Iditarod dog sled race. It is the longest dog sled race in the world, with mushers traveling a distance of about 1200 miles.

3 – Gold is the Alaska state mineral.

Gold is the Alaska state mineral, since it has played such a huge part in Alaska's history. The gold rush of the 1890s gave many communities in Alaska their start. Today, major gold mining efforts in Alaska continue.

2 – In Alaska you can view a stunning light show—the northern lights!

The aurora borealis, or northern lights, is a rare phenomenon that causes tall green curtains of light to appear across the night sky. These curtains of light ripple and sway, fold and unfold, then suddenly disappear, only to re-form in a new shape minutes later. The light display is caused by solar flares,

which cast out electrically charged particles into the earth's atmosphere. When these particles hit the atmosphere, they begin to glow, which causes the beautiful lights in the sky.

1 – Alaska is known as the “land of the midnight sun.”

Since Alaska is located so far north, the angle of the earth causes the days to be drastically extended in the summer and shortened in the winter. In the summer, the North Pole is angled toward the sun, so Alaska has summer days that will last all through the night. In the winter, the North Pole is angled away from the sun. This causes winter nights in Alaska to be particularly long. In Northern Alaska, there is no daylight at all for 64 days!

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