



Kodiak: Alaska's Emerald Isle

Kodiak's brawny bruins have earned their outsized reputation. They are, after all, among the largest bears in the world and their populations throughout this rugged archipelago are robust. But these lands and waters have much more to offer the discriminating wildlife viewer: puffins jockeying for purchase on cliff faces, gray whales rolling in the surf, sea lions grumbling in the harbor and flocks of emperor geese blanketing the wetlands—to name a few.

Visit Kodiak and you'll also come to appreciate how abundant natural resources and a perch on the Pacific Rim have shaped the islands' history. For 1000s of years, the Alutiiq people led a subsistence life here undisturbed by outside influences. Russian colonization began in the 1700's and Kodiak developed into a major center for a thriving fur trade. World War II also left its mark on what is today a prosperous commercial fishing center, one of the top three in the nation.

For more information, contact Discover Kodiak at (907)486-4782, email visit@kodiak.org or visit the website www.kodiak.org. When in Kodiak, stop by the visitor center next to the ferry terminal at 100 Marine Way, Ste. 200.



From the shorebirds of Cordova to the brown bears of Kodiak Island, from the caribou of Cold Bay to the whales of Unalaska, the South Coastal segment of the Alaska Coastal Wildlife Viewing Trail highlights dozens of wildlife viewing sites in and around the communities of Cordova, Valdez, Whittier, Kodiak, Sand Point, Chignik, Cold Bay, False Pass and Unalaska. Pick up community brochures along the coastal trail and check for Alaska's South Coastal Wildlife Viewing Guide in stores and online.



For more information on wildlife viewing across Alaska, visit www.wildlifeviewing.alaska.gov.

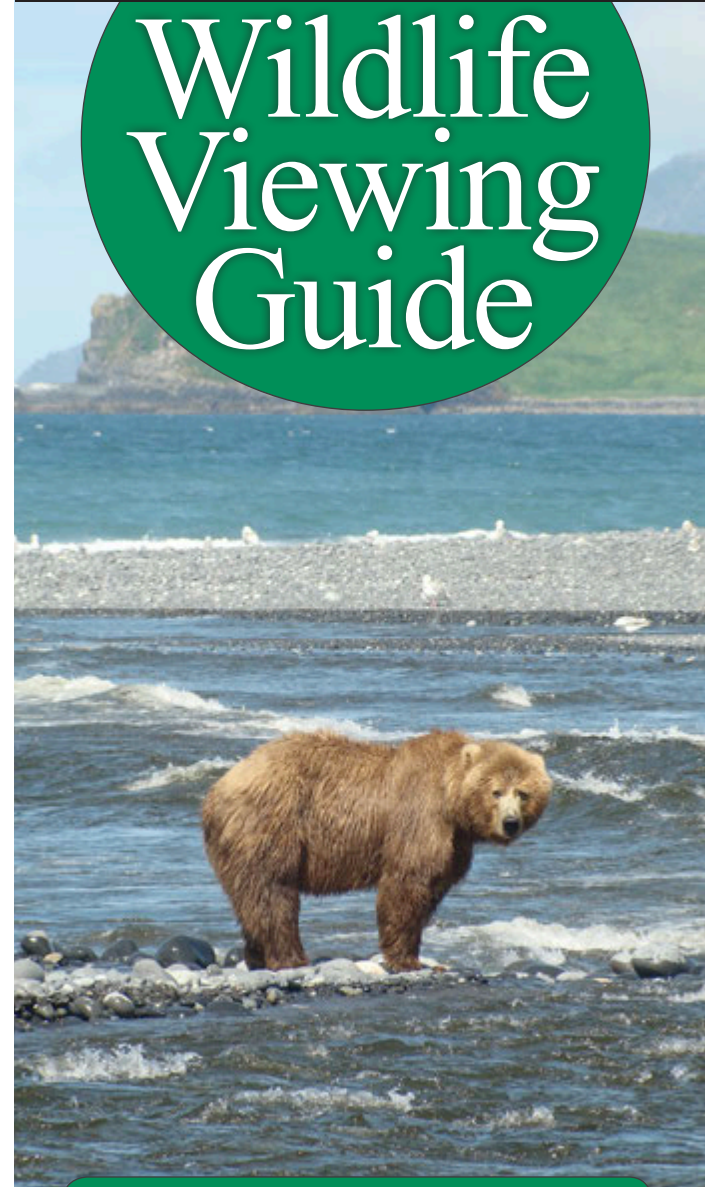


Photos

Bear cover ©Amy Fredette • Puffin ©Marion Owen • Cormorants w/sea lion ©Jeanne Friel
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KODIAK

Wildlife Viewing Guide





www.wildlifeviewing.alaska.gov


Alaska Department of Fish and Game


Watch Our Wildlife


Wildlife Viewing Tips

 **Keep a Low Profile.** Enjoy watching animals' natural behaviors and try not to attract their attention with sounds. If your presence is causing an animal to stop feeding or act restless, give it more space. Be especially respectful of nesting and denning areas, rookeries and calving grounds, and critical feeding areas. Also, avoid causing whales to change their behavior; approach no closer than 100 yards.

 **Time it Right.** Dawn and dusk are when many wildlife species are most active. Midday warmth energizes dragonflies and butterflies and creates thermals for eagles and hawks. Low tides expose tidepools and a wealth of food for birds and mammals.

 **Look for Clues.** Tracks, droppings, trails and twigs tell stories of wildlife - what they are eating, where they live and when they passed through. Noticing and reading these clues adds richness to wildlife viewing. Tracking books and workshops will help you learn.

 **Help Keep Wildlife Wild.** Never feed wild animals. Doing so can cause them to associate people with food, which can cause trouble (and it's illegal). Human food can also make animals sick.

 **Be Considerate of Others.** People use and enjoy Alaska's wildlife in a variety of ways. Respect private property and give hunters, anglers and others plenty of space.



Arctic terns migrate 25,000 miles to winter off of Antarctica

Wildlife Viewing Fun Facts

Bears, bats, beavers and more: As the Pleistocene epoch was ending some 12,000 years ago, most of Kodiak Island was covered by ice sheets extending to the mainland. Sea levels were lower too, and brown bears regularly traveled back and forth. But over time, retreating ice and rising waters left the island bears genetically isolated and today they are classified as a unique subspecies. Thanks to Kodiak's abundant resources, they have developed into some of the world's largest bears. Furthermore, they are one of only six land mammals native to the island. The other five are red fox, short-tailed weasel, little brown bat, tundra vole and river otter. Humans have introduced other species that thrive here, like Sitka black-tailed deer (above), Roosevelt elk, mountain goat, muskrat, beaver, snowshoe hare, and arctic ground and red squirrels. Species that were introduced but did not thrive include moose, dall sheep, marten, mink and raccoon.



Whale Fest: Almost the entire population of Eastern Pacific gray whales migrate past Kodiak every spring on their way from mating and calving lagoons in balmy Baja California to feeding grounds in the frigid Bering and Chukchi Seas. Visible from shore or boat, these long distance travelers may be seen passing the island by the thousands. Some remain in local waters through the summer before heading south in autumn. Residents of Kodiak celebrate the whales' spring migration with Whale Fest Kodiak in April. To learn more visit www.whalefestkodiak.com.



Traveling safely in bear country

Make noise (sing, clap, talk) while you travel to reduce your chances of surprising a bear. Be especially alert along noisy streams, in thick brush and when visibility is poor. Always keep your belongings (backpack, food, fish, etc.) with you or in bear-proof storage.

If you see a bear, **stay calm**. If the bear does not notice you, leave quietly, keeping your eyes on the bear. If it does notice you, face the bear, wave your arms and talk to it calmly. If it approaches you, stand your ground.

Never run from a bear. If a bear is surprised at close distance, it may feel threatened and act defensively, especially if it has cubs or food.

If a bear strikes or bites you, lie on your front, protect your face and neck, and remain still. In rare instances, bears may be predatory. Fight back if the attack is prolonged.



STAY SAFE!

The mountains, trails, islands and waterways of the Alaska Coastal Wildlife Viewing Trail are wild lands. For safety, take a guided tour or a companion, let someone know your plans and be prepared for emergencies with spare clothes, a first aid kit and a means of communication. Dress appropriately, weather is often cool, wet and windy. Visit the ADF&G web page for more bear safety information: www.alaskabears.alaska.gov

Wildlife Viewing Sites



Just over the bridge from downtown Kodiak, Near Island is an excellent place to see marine and bird life, starting with the **North End Trail**. **1** This easy, varied 1.2 mile (r/t) stroll begins across Near Island Bridge Road at a small parking area on your immediate left. The trail enters dark Sitka spruce forest and winds through brush and berry bushes before reaching a series of small beaches with tide pools and views of town. Look for songbirds like chickadees and warblers in the brush, black oystercatchers on the rocks and sea ducks in the waters.

Past the North End Trail pullout, veer left onto Trident Way and about a quarter-mile down (second drive on left) is the entrance to the **Kodiak Fisheries Research Center** campus and the **Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) regional headquarters**. **2** The center is a state of the art multi-agency research facility where a 3,500 gallon freestanding aquarium is a popular attraction. It also offers marine bird, mammal and fish exhibits, a 19-foot Cuvier's beaked whale skeleton and a touch tank where visitors can handle and examine tide pool creatures like sea stars and anemones. At ADF&G offices next door, research and management staff are engaged in activities stretching down the Aleutian Island Chain. Stop in and learn more about Alaska's fish and wildlife. Further down Trident Way past a sharp curve, the start of **South End Trail** **3** is on the right. Rough in places, this 3 mile (r/t) trail wanders through woods and meadow before opening onto views of Chiniak Bay. Look for pigeon guillemots, horned and tufted puffins, sea otters and occasional killer whales from the south cape in summer.

If you cross the bridge to Near Island and make a right-angle turn instead to stay on Alimaq Drive, you'll come to **St. Herman's Harbor** **4** about a mile and a half down the road. Look for enormous Steller sea lions lolling on a float anchored inside the breakwater. The harbor, known to local residents as "Dog Bay," is also a good place to see cormorants and various sea ducks.



Sea lions snoozing at Dog Bay

In downtown Kodiak, the **Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center** **5** offers a fun, interactive exhibit hall of displays featuring local plants and animals, as well as information about the refuge that encompasses 2/3rds of the island. As you enter, be sure to look up into the graceful contours of a 37-foot gray whale skeleton suspended from the ceiling and visit the balcony for more gray whale information.

In a nearby residential area, **Potato Patch Lake** **6** draws waterfowl, belted kingfishers, warblers, muskrats, river otters and other animals. Visit the viewing platform and interpretive panels at the north end of the lake on Ismailov Street.

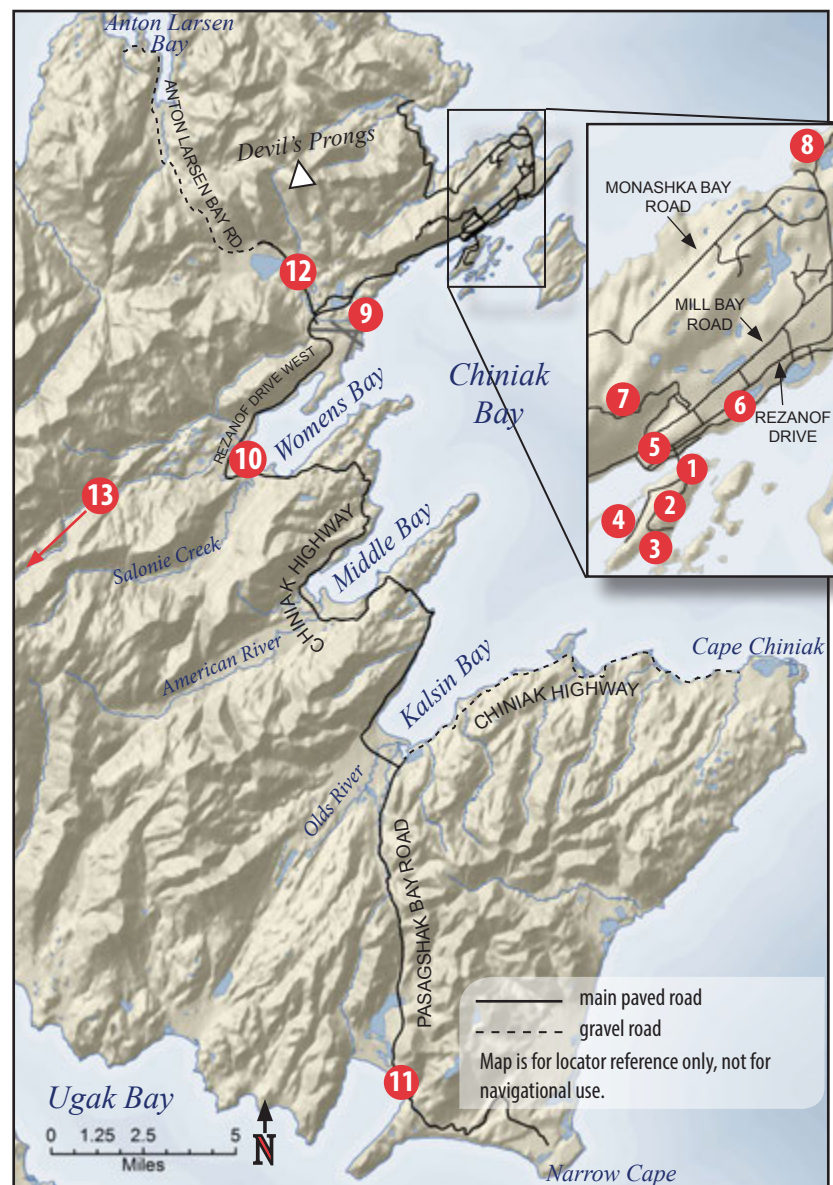
Excellent views and bright carpets of tiny alpine flowers can be found atop **Pillar Mountain** **7** (elev. 1,200 ft). To the east is Chiniak Bay and nearby islands, to the west is the island's interior. Look northwest for mountain goats on rocky outcroppings called Devil's Prongs. Drive to the mountain top on a well-maintained gravel road or leave your vehicle at the quarry pullout halfway up and hike. A trail (2.5 miles r/t) begins a short way up on the left near overhead utility wires.

Just 3.5 miles from town, the 182-acre **Fort Abercrombie State Historical Park** **8** offers World War II bunkers, surf-pounded cliffs, spruce forest, wildflower meadows and a robust network of well-marked trails. Views from the rugged cliffs stretch far over the North Pacific Ocean. Look for songbirds among the meadow flowers or find a trail down to the rocky beaches for some excellent tidepooling and a closer look at many seabirds. A two-mile bike path that begins near town follows the road to the park.

1. North End Trail		1 – 2 hrs*
2. Kodiak Fisheries RC and ADF&G		½ – 2 hrs
3. South End Trail		1 – 2 hrs
4. St. Herman's Harbor		½ – 1 hr
5. KNWR Visitor Center		½ – 1 hr
6. Potato Patch Lake		½ – 2 hrs
7. Pillar Mountain		1 hr – half day
8. Fort Abercrombie State Historical Park		half day
9. Buskin River State Recreation Site		half day
10. Womens Bay		half day
11. Pasagshak Bay		full day
12. Anton Larsen Bay Road		full day
13. Frazer Falls		half day

- Camping
- Hiking Trails
- Interpretive Signs
- Wheelchair Accessible

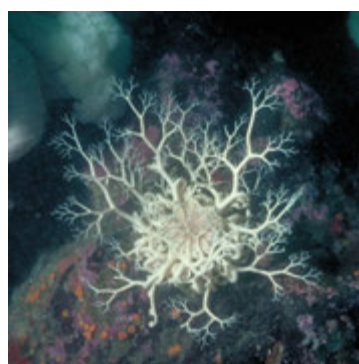
* Estimated times include travel and visit.



A popular fishing and picnic spot, the **Buskin River State Recreation Site** **9** is also a good place to look for wildlife. The river's healthy coho and sockeye salmon runs make it one of the most productive fisheries on the road system, attracting brown bears, harbor seals and abundant bird life. Try early morning birding from the platform near the picnic shelter or hike the river and beach along a trail that begins at the end of the parking lot and winds down to the ocean. Once part of a World War II army post, old military roads that wind through spruce forest on the park's north end now serve as hiking and biking trails.

Eight miles south of town at the foot of Old Womens Mountain is **Womens Bay**, **10** the first of three large bays along this section of Chiniak Highway. This shallow bay, part of the Alaska Maritime NWR, is considered one of the best birding spots on the road system, thanks to its rich tidelands and broad vistas. Scan for Arctic and Aleutian terns, sandpipers, gulls and bald eagles. Between October and April, hundreds of emperor geese winter in the bay along with northern pintails, mallards and mergansers. Bears frequent the salmon spawning streams and beaches in late summer. Highway traffic is fast-moving, and stopping on the roadway is strictly prohibited. Park only in designated sites. Middle Bay and Kalsin Bay also provide good habitat for resident and migratory waterfowl and shorebirds. You may see whales feeding in Kalsin Bay, bears grazing on sedge in lush wetlands and mountain goats perched high above on Kalsin Ridge. Stop for a picnic at Mayflower Beach and watch for sea lions, sea otters and seabirds in these protected waters or continue on to Cape Chiniak, a prime spot to watch for migrating gray whales.

A road trip to **Pasagshak Bay** **11** (about 39 miles from downtown) and beyond will give you a new perspective on Kodiak with its expansive largely treeless terrain and rocky capes. Gray whale cows and calves migrate past from spring into early July. These bottom feeders may be seen rolling in the shallow surf where they suck up mouthfuls of mud containing their primary food, small crustaceans called amphipods. Non-breeding whales frequent these waters



Basket sea star

in winter too. Watch for cattle, horses and bison along the road. Migrating shorebirds are abundant along beaches and lagoons. Use binoculars to scan the bay for Steller's eiders, long-tailed and harlequin ducks, and scoters. The uplands harbor raptors like peregrine falcons, short-eared owls and northern harriers.

Anton Larsen Bay Road, **12** a scenic, nearly 12-mile gravel road, climbs to a treeless pass before descending to its namesake bay. Just 1.5 miles from the turnoff is a good place to view a local salmon run throughout the summer. Turn just before Buskin River Bridge #7 and drive about 200 yards to the road's end where spawning sockeye pool at a fish weir before entering Buskin Lake. The bay road continues on to Anton Larsen Pass, rich in songbird and snipe habitat. Look for foxes and Sitka black-tail deer along the road and mountain goats on ridge tops. The bay's protected waters are excellent for kayaking. Horned and tufted puffins and parakeet auklets nest on islands near the mouth and sea otters, harbor seals and Steller sea lions are often seen in the bay.

Flight-seeing tours out of Kodiak offer wildlife viewing off the beaten path, though weather often dictates the route and final destination. Several local air services offer trips to bear viewing hotspots at Frazer Falls, Karluk Lake or the Katmai Coast. At **Frazer Falls**, **13** in the heart of the Kodiak refuge, bears congregate to feast on spawning salmon milling near a fish ladder built to assist their return to the lake. Visitors watch the bears from a hillside overlooking the weir. On the return flight, your pilot will likely point out mountain goats, Sitka black-tailed deer, whales and more bears.

Marine tours from kayak to large cabin cruiser are an attractive option for viewing marine life. Most boat charters go to Chiniak and Marmot bays. Check with the visitor center about air and marine tours or remote lodges, public use cabins, state parks and the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge for the more adventurous wildlife viewers. Also, ask at the center or in stores about purchasing a map and detailed guide to Kodiak hiking and birding locations.