

# ALASKA VISITOR VOLUME

Summer 2023 & Winter 2023-24



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# Visitor Volume: Summer 2023

## Total Volume

An estimated 2.65 million out-of-state visitors traveled to Alaska in summer 2023, 65% of whom were cruise visitors, 32% were air visitors, and 3% were highway/ferry visitors.

**Table 1. Alaska Visitor Volume, Summer 2023, by Transportation Market**

Transportation Market	# of Visitors	% of Total
Cruise visitors	1,719,000	65%
Air visitors	852,500	32%
Highway/ferry visitors	77,100	3%
<b>Total visitors</b>	<b>2,648,600</b>	<b>100%</b>

Note: Cruise passengers traveling in the “winter” months of April and October are included.

The total visitor volume of 2,648,600 represents a 20% increase from pre-COVID total of 2,213,000 in summer 2019. The increase is largely attributable to a 29% growth in cruise passenger volume. Air visitors grew by 8%, while highway/ferry visitors fell by 15% over the same time period. The share of cruise passengers grew from 60% to 65%, while the share of air visitors fell from 36% to 32%, and the share of highway/ferry visitors fell from 4% to 3%.

**Table 2. Alaska Visitor Volume, Summers 2019 and 2023, by Transportation Market**

Transportation Market	Summer 2019	Summer 2023	% Change
Cruise visitors	1,331,600	1,719,000	+29%
Air visitors	790,900	852,500	+8%
Highway/ferry visitors	90,500	77,100	-15%
<b>Total visitors</b>	<b>2,213,000</b>	<b>2,648,600</b>	<b>+20%</b>

## Cruise Visitors

Three-quarters of 2023 cruise passengers (76%) were on round-trip itineraries, while the remaining 24% were on cross-gulf itineraries, sailing between Whittier or Seward and ports outside of Alaska, mostly Seattle and Vancouver. The ratio of round-trip to cross-gulf passengers has shifted since 2019, when 68% of passengers were on round-trip itineraries.

**Table 3. Alaska Cruise Passenger Volume, 2023 By Cruise Type**

Cruise Type	# Passengers	% of Total
Round-trip passengers	1,304,000	76%
Cross-gulf passengers	415,000	24%
<b>Total passengers</b>	<b>1,719,000</b>	<b>100%</b>

Sources: Cruise Line Agencies of Alaska and non-CLAA lines.

Eleven Alaska ports received at least 10,000 cruise passengers in 2023, with three ports receiving the bulk of volume: Juneau (97%), Ketchikan (87%), and Skagway (70%).

**Table 4. Alaska Cruise Passenger Volume, 2023, by Port (>10,000 pax)**

Port	# Passengers	% of Total Volume
Juneau	1,669,500	97%
Ketchikan	1,497,200	87%
Skagway	1,195,100	70%
Glacier Bay	677,100	39%
Sitka	588,400	34%
Icy Strait Point	484,200	28%
Whittier	223,500	13%
Seward	191,500	11%
Haines	73,200	4%
Valdez	44,900	3%
Wrangell	23,000	1%
Kodiak	12,600	1%

Sources: Cruise Line Agencies of Alaska and non-CLAA lines.

## Air Visitors

Air visitor volume is largely based on passenger enplanements for flights exiting the state. Air exits are measured in terms of five major airports, an “other airports” category, and international. In summer 2023, 73% of visitor air exits were attributable to Anchorage; 11% to Fairbanks; 7% to Juneau; 4% to Ketchikan; 3% to Sitka, and 1% to other. (These exits include some cruise passengers.) Visitor exits via international flights represented 1% of total air exits.

Note that “visitor exits” are not equivalent to the “air visitor market,” which is adjusted to account for cruise passengers exiting via air as well as highway/ferry visitors who exit the state via air.

**Table 5. Air Visitor Exits Share by Airport, Summer 2023**

Airport	% of Total
Anchorage	73
Fairbanks	11
Juneau	7
Ketchikan	4
Sitka	3
Other	1
International	1

Sources: Airports and airlines; MRG estimates.

## Highway/Ferry Visitors

An estimated 77,100 visitors entered and/or exited Alaska via highway or ferry in summer 2023. The main component of highway/ferry visitors are highway travelers in personal vehicles. The Klondike Highway (outside of Skagway) is the most common border crossing for these travelers, representing 42% of all personal vehicle crossings, followed by Alaska Highway (at Beaver Creek) at 36%, Haines Highway at 14%, and Top of the World at 7%.

Ferry represented only 3% of highway/ferry visitor exits (and 0.1% of statewide visitor exits); the loss of Prince Rupert as a port of call and the decline in sailings has severely limited ridership in recent years.

**Table 6. Highway Personal Vehicle Crossings Share by Border, Summer 2023**

Border	% of Total
Klondike Highway	42
Alaska Highway	36
Haines Highway	14
Top of the World Highway	7

Sources: Department of Homeland Security; MRG estimates.

## Visitor Volume: Winter 2023-24

An estimated 398,000 visitors traveled to Alaska between October 2023 and April 2024, with nearly all (97%) exiting the state via air.

**Table 7. Alaska Visitor Volume, Winter 2023-24**

Exit Mode	# of Visitors	% of Total
Air visitors	387,500	97%
Highway/ferry visitors	10,500	3%
<b>Total visitors</b>	<b>398,000</b>	<b>100%</b>

Note: Cruise passengers traveling in the “winter” months of April and October are excluded.

Winter visitor volume increased an estimated 23% between 2018-19 and 2023-24. Air visitors increased by 25%, while highway/ferry visitors decreased by 21%.

**Table 8. Alaska Visitor Volume, Winters 2018-19 and 2023-24, by Exit Mode**

Exit Mode	Winter 2018-19	Winter 2023-24	% Change
Air visitors	309,700	387,500	+25%
Highway/ferry visitors	13,300	10,500	-21%
<b>Total visitors</b>	<b>323,000</b>	<b>398,000</b>	<b>+23%</b>

# Visitor Volume: Full Year 2023-24

An estimated 3.05 million visitors traveled to Alaska during the 12-month period of May 2023 and April 2024. Nearly nine out of ten visitors (87%) arrived in the summer months, while 13% arrived in the winter months.

**Table 9. Alaska Visitor Volume, Full Year 2023-24, by Season**

Season	# of Visitors	% of Total
Summer 2023 visitors	2,648,600	87%
Winter 2023-24 visitors	398,000	13%
<b>Total 2023-24 visitors</b>	<b>3,046,600</b>	<b>100%</b>

Note: Cruise passengers traveling in the “winter” months of April and October are included in the summer total.

Over half of annual travelers (56%) were cruise ship passengers, while 41% were air visitors, and 3% were highway/ferry visitors. The share represented by cruise ship passengers increased from 53% in the last 12-month period studied (2018-19) to 56% in 2023-24.

**Table 10. Full Year Visitor Volume, by Transportation Market**

Transportation Market	# of Visitors	% of Total
Cruise visitors	1,719,000	56%
Air visitors	1,240,000	41%
Highway/ferry visitors	87,600	3%
<b>Total visitors</b>	<b>3,046,600</b>	<b>100%</b>

The most recent 12-month period of 2023-24 saw an estimated 20% more visitors than the pre-COVID period of 2018-19. Most of the change was attributable to a 29% increase in cruise volume. Air visitors increased by 13%, while highway/ferry visitors fell by 16%.

**Table 11. Alaska Visitor Volume, Full Year 2018-19 and 2023-24**

Transportation Market	2018-19	2023-24	% Change
Cruise visitors	1,331,600	1,719,000	+29%
Air visitors	1,100,600	1,240,000	+13%
Highway/ferry visitors	103,800	87,600	-16%
<b>Total visitors</b>	<b>2,536,000</b>	<b>3,046,600</b>	<b>+20%</b>

# Indicators

The following indicators help illustrate how the most recent summer and winter seasons fared compared to the previous year in terms of tax revenues, fishing/hunting license sales, and hotel statistics.

## Summer 2023

Bed tax revenues in summer 2023 were up in all six communities measured, with Railbelt communities seeing higher increases (between 11% and 17%) than Southeast communities (between 2% and 7%). Anchorage vehicle tax revenues were down by 1%, while RV rental tax revenues were down by 17%. Note that changes in tax revenues can reflect changes in rates as well as volume.

Non-resident sportfishing/hunting license sales were up by 1%. (While this reflects full year and not summer-only sales, nearly all non-resident license sales occur in the summer months.)

According to hotel statistics provided by STR, Anchorage showed the highest occupancy in 2023 among the three largest markets at 84%, followed by Fairbanks at 80% and Juneau at 76%. Compared to summer 2022, occupancy was about the same for Anchorage (up by 0.8%), and down slightly for Fairbanks and Juneau (by 3%).

Average daily rates (ADR) were highest in Anchorage (\$249) followed by Juneau (\$226) and Fairbanks (\$215). Compared to the previous summer, ADRs were up by between 10% and 13% in the three communities.

**Table 12. Tax and Hotel Indicators, Summers 2022 vs. 2023**

		% Change
<b>Bed Tax Revenues</b>		
Anchorage		+11%
Fairbanks		+11%
Denali		+17%
Juneau		+4%
Sitka		+2%
Ketchikan (City)		+7%
<b>Anchorage Vehicle Tax Revenues</b>		
Vehicle		-1%
RV		-17%
<b>Sportfishing/Hunting Licenses</b>		
Total sales to non-residents		+1%
<b>Hotel Occupancy</b>		
Anchorage	84%	+0.8%
Fairbanks	80%	-3.1%
Juneau	76%	-3.4%
<b>Hotel ADR (Average Daily Rate)</b>		
Anchorage	\$249	+10.1%
Fairbanks	\$215	+13.2%
Juneau	\$226	+9.7%

Sources: Municipality of Anchorage, Explore Fairbanks; City and Borough of Juneau, City of Ketchikan, City and Borough of Sitka, Denali Borough, Alaska Department of Fish & Game, STR.

Note: Not all hotel properties participate in STR reporting; 78% of Anchorage properties, 72% of Fairbanks properties, and 66% of Juneau properties contributed data.

## Winter 2023-24

Bed tax revenues increased the most in Fairbanks (13%) when comparing the winter of 2023-24 with the previous season. Anchorage also saw a strong increase at 9%, while Juneau and Sitka saw smaller gains (5% and 4%, respectively). Only Ketchikan showed a loss, of 9%. Vehicle tax revenues were down by 13%, while RV tax revenues were down by 28%.

Hotel occupancy ranged between 53% in Juneau to 60% in Anchorage to 62% in Fairbanks. Compared to the previous season, occupancy was up slightly in Anchorage (+2%), and down slightly in Fairbanks (-3%) and Juneau (-4%). ADRs were fairly consistent across the three largest markets: \$151 in Anchorage, \$148 in Fairbanks, and \$146 in Juneau. ADRs saw a big increase in Fairbanks (+12%), also growing by 6% in Anchorage and 2% in Juneau.

**Table 13. Tax and Hotel Indicators,  
Winters 2022-23 vs. 2023-24**

		% Change
<b>Bed Tax Revenues</b>		
Anchorage		+9%
Fairbanks		+13%
Juneau		+5%
Sitka		+4%
Ketchikan (City)		-9%
<b>Anchorage Vehicle Tax Revenues</b>		
Vehicle		-13%
RV		-28%
<b>Hotel Occupancy</b>		
Anchorage	60%	+1.8%
Fairbanks	62%	-3.4%
Juneau	53%	-4.4%
<b>Hotel ADR (Average Daily Rate)</b>		
Anchorage	\$151	+6.3%
Fairbanks	\$148	+12.3%
Juneau	\$146	+1.9%

Sources: Municipality of Anchorage, Explore Fairbanks; City and Borough of Juneau, City of Ketchikan, City and Borough of Sitka, Alaska Department of Fish & Game, STR.

Note: Not all hotel properties participate in STR reporting; 78% of Anchorage properties, 72% of Fairbanks properties, and 66% of Juneau properties contributed data.



# Methodology

The study team collected traffic data for Alaska’s major “points of exits”, by month and location:

- **AIR:** Enplaning passengers at five major airports (ANC, FAI, JNU, KTN, SIT) who were on outbound flights i.e., flights exiting the state. A fifth “other airports” category covered passengers flying out of smaller airports where outbound flights occur (WRG, PTB, YAK, CDV).
- **CRUISE:** Cruise passengers, counted both in total and as passengers exiting the state (sailing southbound, both on round-trip and cross-gulf itineraries).
- **FERRY:** Ferry passengers disembarking at Bellingham.
- **HIGHWAY:** Highway travelers crossing the border into the U.S. from Canada at four border stations. For purposes of this visitor volume estimates, “entries” into Alaska are assumed to be equivalent to “exits.” Bus passenger crossings at the Skagway border are adjusted to reflect the large number of cruise passengers that cross the border on shore excursions.

A visitor “ratio” was applied to each of the above exit modes and locations to arrive at the visitor volume. Ratios are largely based on 2019 ratios<sup>1</sup> with some adjustments made for population changes

in the five airport hub communities. The highway ratio reflects “last exit” visitors, who are not planning to re-enter Alaska.

Visitor volume by exit mode was adjusted for “transportation market” in the following ways:

- **AIR:** Cruise passengers exiting the state via air were removed, as were visitors who entered via highway or ferry but exited by air.
- **CRUISE:** The cruise total includes all visitors who traveled by cruise ship in Alaska, whether they were on a round-trip cruise; cross-gulf cruise (flying one way and cruising one-way); or an in-state cruise (small cruise ships starting and ending their cruise in Alaska, whose passengers fly both in and out of the state). Note that all cruise passengers are included in the “summer” total, even though a small percentage travel in April or October.
- **HIGHWAY/FERRY:** Highway/ferry exits were combined, then adjusted upwards slightly to account for travelers who enter the state by highway or ferry, then exit by air.

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<sup>1</sup> 2019 ratios were mostly based on 2016 ratios which resulted from nearly 50,000 “tallies” conducted at airports and on the highway. Some adjustments were made

between 2017 and 2019 to reflect the increasing number of cross-gulf cruise passengers flying out of the Anchorage and Fairbanks airports.

## Sources

### CRUISE VISITORS

- Cruise Line Agencies of Alaska (CLAA)
- Non-CLAA lines (UnCruise, Alaskan Dream, American Cruise Line)

### AIR VISITORS

- Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) for Anchorage and Fairbanks enplanements
- Alaska Air for outbound enplanements by airport
- Delta Air for Ketchikan and Sitka enplanements
- Juneau Airport for Delta enplanements

### HIGHWAY/FERRY VISITORS

- Alaska Marine Highway System
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection

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