SSP Studio & Gallery

Exquisite Wildlife & Wilderness Photo Tour Anchorage – Whittier

Self-Guided Instructions (9-10 Hours)

Be sure to download the audio tracks as many areas do NOT have cell coverage.

A 1 Minute Commercial that I made of the things you will see on this trip: https://youtu.be/cVW4vCmJQXg

1. Get on the Seward Hwy and head south and **play Audio 1.**
2. **Mile Post 115:** Leave Anchorage at 8 AM heading south on the Seward Hwy. When you get to Rabbit Creek cutoff the Hwy will dip in elevation to almost sea level. Potter Marsh will be on the left and the Alaska Railroad will be on the right. When you get to the end of the marsh be watching very closely for the ranger station on your right. It is at the end of the marsh. Turn into the second driveway on the right at the ranger station and into the parking lot. Here you will have several things to look at. Walk towards the train. There is a small concrete pad next to the fence on your left. Go to fence and **play Audio 2.**
3. **Mile post 110.5:** Continue on the Seward Hwy to Beluga Point. Pull into the parking lot and play **Audio 3.**
4. **Mile Post 106.5:** There is a large pull-off on the right side of the road. Look for patches of moving snow. Here you will find mountain goats and dall sheep. Often then come down to the road. When finished looking, move to the next step. This step has **NO Audio 4**.
5. **Mile Post 101.5:** There will be an exit on the right side of the road. Take that exit and drive to the parking lot. Go up the stairs and turn to your right. It is a short walk to the end where the views are spectacular. Look for patches of snow in the treetops as the bald eagles love to perch in them. There is no audio with this step. When ready continue down the Seward Hwy. **Play Audio 5.**
6. **Mile Post 90:** There will be the Girdwood exit to the left at a gas station with other stores. On the right side of the road you will see dead trees. **Play Audio 6.**
7. **Mile Post 79:** On the right will be the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center, also known as the AWCC. This has an entrance fee of less than $20 per person. It is worth going through the facility. You get very close to the animals. The best way to enjoy this facility is do NOT walk it, Drive it! There is only one road in and the same road out. Catch all of the animals on the right side of the road and on the way out you will see the other animals on the right. This is a 3 mile loop. You want to enjoy the animals and the rest of the tour. So utilize your time viewing them, not walking the road. At the bear area you will see a metal A-frame sort of structure. That is the entrance to the bear area. There is no parking there, so either drop off the rest of your party or drive just past it to the building on the right. It has the cleanest restrooms in the state. You can walk to the bear areas from there as well. There is **NO Audio 7.**
8. Explorer Glacier: When you leave AWCC, turn to your right and drive about ¼ mile. Turn left onto Portage Glacier Rd going over the railroad tracks. Drive about 2.5 miles and there will be a small pull off on the right side of the road. Most likely there will be a state highway electronic sign to notify traffic. When you park, there is a small path from the parking lot that goes about 80 feet to a emerald green color lake. The salmon will come into this lake. There is also a lot of moose on the other side of the lake including bald eagles. If you look at the mountain and towards the top, you will find Explorer Glacier. Before you leave, walk to the other side of the road and look upstream on the river. There are many picture opportunities at this stop. When you are done, turn to your right and head to Portage Lake. You will drive through a very short tunnel. Very shortly after the tunnel there is a parking lot on the right. Stop there are the views are amazing and you can see 12 glaciers surrounding you. **NO Audio 8.**
9. **To Whittier:** Continue a short distance to the Anton Memorial Tunnel also know as the Whittier Tunnel. It has a round trip toll of $13. You pay just once. To go into Whittier, they open the tunnel on the half hour. And to leave Whitter is on the top of the hour. When you leave the toll booth they will tell you to get in either lanes 1-3. There is a restroom on the right and it is ok to get out of your vehicle and walk around. The Views are good here as well. **Play Audio 9.**
10. **Entering Whittier:** Once you exit the tunnel, drive straight about 1.5 miles. You will see the harbor on your left and the Alaska railroad on your right. Once you pass the railroad drop off area, there will be a road crossing the tracks. Turn right on that road. Continue on that road until you see the road that turns to the 14 story high-rise condo building and turn right. Drive past the condo and onto a dirt road. Drive until it the dirt road dead ends. There will be a trail directly in front of you. Walk about 30 feet up a slight hill and turn to your left. Walk another 30 feet and you will see the outflow of many of the waterfalls in the area. This is a great spot for photos. Don’t miss out on them! When you leave this spot, **play Audio 10**.
11. **Turn right before condo:** Keep driving on that road until the first right. Turn right and drive to the Buckner Building. Stop to take pictures should you wish. Continue driving past the Buckner building and immediately turn right onto the dirt road. Do NOT drive fast as that road can have some very serious potholes that can damage a vehicle if you drive fast. Continue about .5 mile and you will see a parking lot to your left. Pull into the parking lot and **play Audio 11**.
12. **When leaving:** Turn left and drive for the next 2 miles. You will soon drive uphill and once at the top with handrails on the left side of the road, start looking to your left at the massive glacier on the other side of the bay. Stop near the bottom of the hille as it makes for a beautiful photo with trees in the foreground and the glacier in the background. Be sure to use the trees to frame the shot. Continue driving until the road dead ends. Again, use the trees to frame your shots! The views there are anything short of AMAZING!!! **No Audio 12.**
13. **When leaving** the area and heading back into town, you will see some concrete barriers on the left side of the road. Be driving SLOW once you get to the as there will be a hidden waterfall tucked back into the woods at a 45 degree angle to your left. It is the only way you can see it is when heading back into town. It is at Salmon Run 2. It truly makes a great shot. **No Audio 13.**
14. **Continue back on the road** and drive straight until you get to the railroad tracks. Directly across the street and to the right is a wood siding building called the Wild Catch Café. Stop there for a late lunch. They are closed on Mondays. Their halibut and chips are awesome and their salmon burger is to die for. By far this little hole in the wall has the absolute best food in town. It is a bit pricey as their operating cost to do business there is insane. But their fish is caught fresh each day and they get them right off the boats! When I say fresh, they are as fresh as you can get them. After lunch, drive to the end of the harbor with a slight left at the Alaska Marine Highway System into the circle. Walk around and many times you will see gray whales breaching just 100 yards offshore. Feel free to walk around the harbor as it is open to the public. Once you are done head back to the tunnel to catch the next opening on the top of the hour. No audio 14.
15. **Start the return trip to Anchorage:** Once you get to the Girdwood exit, turn right and drive until the road almost dead ends. Turn right on Timberline Road. Drive to the end of the road and park across the street from the houses. There you will see the trailhead to Virgin Creek Waterfall. It is a short 7-minute hike and when the trail splits, take it to the right. It is a very beautiful waterfall and is very popular with the locals. **No Audio 15.**
16. **Once you get back to the main road:** If you turn right you will come to a T in the road. Turn left and it will take you to Alyeska Ski Resort. I highly recommend taking the Tram to the top when the weather is good. The views up there are anything short of amazing. It is very worth the cost of doing it. There is a little museum at the top in the yurt. **No audio 16.**
17. **Leave Alyeska on the road you came in on:** You are now about 45 minutes from Anchorage. Start heading back towards Anchorage and **play Audio 17.**