

Anchorage, Alaska



Anchorage currently has an estimated population of just over 300,000 residents. Anchorage is located in the south-central portion of Alaska at the terminus of the Cook Inlet on a peninsula formed by the Knik Arm to the north and the Turnagain Arm to the south. The city limits span 1,961.1 square miles (5,079.2 km²) which encompass the urban core, a joint military base, several outlying communities and almost all of Chugach State Park. Anchorage has been named an All-America City four times, in 1956, 1965, 1985, and 2002, by the National Civic League. It has also been named by Kiplinger as the most tax-friendly city in the United States.

In the early days of the development of the Alaska Railroad, the mouth of Ship Creek was chosen as the site from which the emerging Alaska Railroad would turn north and head for Fairbanks, Alaska. Because of the construction of the Alaska Railroad, Anchorage started out as a tent city in 1915 and on Nov. 23, 1920 Anchorage was incorporated and has never looked back. Anchorage became the hub of the Alaska Railroad and from the 1930's through the 1950's experienced massive growth because of its railroad roots. At the outbreak of World War II, Alaska and especially Anchorage was recognized for its strategic location. As a result, a massive military buildup took place in South Central Alaska and is present to this day. The Army built Fort Richardson and the Airforce built Elmendorf Airforce Base. Today, these two bases which sit side by side, are under one command and is known as JBER (Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson)

The March 27, 1964 earthquake with a magnitude of 9.2 showed the world the true, resilient attitude of the City of Anchorage. With a lot of resolve and hard work, Anchorage came back even stronger. In 1968 ARCO discovered a huge amount of oil in Prudhoe Bay on the North Slope of Alaska and Anchorage exploded in population. Because of this, present day Anchorage is the hub of Alaska, becoming the center of Alaska's banking, medical services, shopping, transportation, education, entertainment and communications. Today the Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport is the world's third busiest airport for cargo traffic. Anchorage is home to four colleges/universities - University of Alaska Anchorage, Alaska Pacific University, Charter College and Wayland Baptist University. There are six major hospitals in Anchorage to include Providence Alaska Medical Center, Elmendorf AFB Hospital, Northstar Hospital, St. Elias Specialty Hospital, Alaska Regional Hospital, and the Alaska Native Medical Center which also includes a teaching center for the University of Washington.



Eagle River, Alaska (99577)

Eagle River is a community about ten miles north of downtown Anchorage with a growing population of over 22,000. In 1975 the Municipality of Anchorage and the Greater Anchorage Area Borough unified to form the Anchorage Borough. It was at that time both Eagle River and Chugiak were annexed into the Municipality of Anchorage. The Eagle River area is one of the most beautiful settings in all of Alaska with the Chugach Mountains on three sides and the JBER military base and the Cook Inlet on its west side. The two high schools that serve this area are Eagle River and Chugiak. Because of its close proximity to JBER, Eagle River is often the first choice for those military families choosing to live off base. The school that serves this area ranks among the best schools in the Anchorage Borough. Additionally, the University of Alaska Anchorage has an educational branch located in Eagle River, plus there is a local Bible college. Eagle River has hosted both the World Junior Ice Hockey Championships and the Arctic Winter Games. There is an abundance of world class ski and walking trails in the area and many other outdoor, year round events to be enjoyed. The Bear Paw Festival is hosted by the Eagle River community in July and has evolved into one of the biggest cultural events in all of the Anchorage area. Some of the better known subdivisions in this area would include Eagle River Heights, Eagle Glenn, Town Park, Parkview Terrace, Eaglewood, Powder Reserve, Powder Ridge, River Park, Lake Ridge Terrace, Eagle Crossing, North Slope, Eagles Nest and Eagleridge.

Girdwood, Alaska (99587)



The community of Girdwood is a small Alaskan town that sits amongst a lush, green forest and is surrounded by the majestic mountain peaks of the Chugach Mountain Range. There is easy access to Anchorage which is just 36 miles to the north. Originally named Glacier City, later its name was changed to Girdwood. Gold was what first brought people into the area at the turn of the century. Girdwood acted as a supply camp for the huge influx of placer gold miners with claims on the creeks that feed into the Turnagain Arm. Further development of Girdwood was spurred by railroad construction that began in 1915 by the federal government.

The potential for a ski resort in the Girdwood area was always present. Girdwood boasts a huge average annual snow fall, has ideal winter conditions and access to mountain terrain with a number of slope conditions suitable to a wide range of skiers. In 1954 this potential was realized and put to action when 11 local men formed the Alyeska Ski Corporation. They began making the dream come true and in 1960 the first chairlift and day lodge was built.

Girdwood has been re-shaped many times but no more than on Good Friday, 1964. Disaster struck Girdwood when a magnitude 9.2 earthquake dropped the coastal edges along Turnagain Arm by 8 to 10 feet and substantially undermined the original town site. As a consequence, the town site of Girdwood was moved two and a half miles further up the valley to its present location on Hightower Road, at the foot of Mount Alyeska. Today, Girdwood/Alyeska Ski Resort has evolved into a world class ski resort attracting world class skiers from all over the world and rated as one of North America's top ten ski destinations.

Palmer, Alaska – (99645)

Palmer is the borough seat of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough and is the breadbasket of Alaska, producing an abundance of vegetables, fruits and grains. As of the 2010 census, the population of the city was 5,937. Born at the height of the Great Depression as a component of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal relief program, the Southcentral Alaska town of Palmer is the result of one of the country's greatest social experiments.

Today, the city of Palmer is a bedroom community to Anchorage, about 35 miles to the south. But at the time of its establishment, the mission was to transplant 200 struggling farming families from the Midwest to Alaska where they would create and cultivate a new agricultural economy. In 1935, down-on-their-luck families stepped off the Alaska Railroad in Palmer to begin a new life. The Matanuska Valley is noted for its rich soil and long growing seasons; great for cool-weather grains and vegetables. Today, Palmer hosts the Alaska State Fair which is always a great hit.

The farmers' perseverance and sacrifice has paid off, and the city of Palmer is a great example of the Alaskan Spirit. Today the Mat-Su Valley is Alaska's breadbasket, producing 75 percent of the state's total agricultural output. Palmer is famed for its 90-pound cabbages, seven-pound turnips and other monster root vegetables, the result of the midnight sun that shines up to 20 hours a day during the summer. Just a short distance north you find scenic Hatcher Pass and the historic Independence Mine State Park and breathe taking views of the Talkeetna Mountains and several glaciers.



Wasilla, Alaska – (99654)



Wasilla came into existence because of the Alaska Rail Road. Its geographic location dictated that it was the ideal hub to service the many gold mining activities in the Alaska, Talkeetna and Chugiak Mountains. With placer (hydraulic) and hard rock gold mining underway in this area since 1907, Wasilla prospered and became known as the gateway to the extensive gold mining activity in South Central Alaska. With the exception of the latter part of WWII, this was a very active mining area between 1909 and 1950. Incomplete records indicate at least 623,874 ounces of gold worth nearly \$18 million dollars were produced at a time when gold was valued between 20-35 dollars an ounce. Over the years, at least 50 mines and prospects have operated in this area and at the current time, there are still a few active.

Wasilla is located about 45 miles north of Anchorage and was incorporated in 1973. The current city resident population is right around 9,500 with a conservatively estimated population of more than 100,000 in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough is now rated as the second largest populated area in the State of Alaska only second to the Anchorage Borough. Wasilla experienced major growth from the 1970s and 80s because of the Alaska oil boom and pipeline development and by 1984 Wasilla had again become the commercial heart of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, and for a brief time was noted as the fastest growing city of its size in the United States. One additional claim to fame – the headquarters for the Iditarod – “The Last Great Race on Earth” is located just north of Wasilla.

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