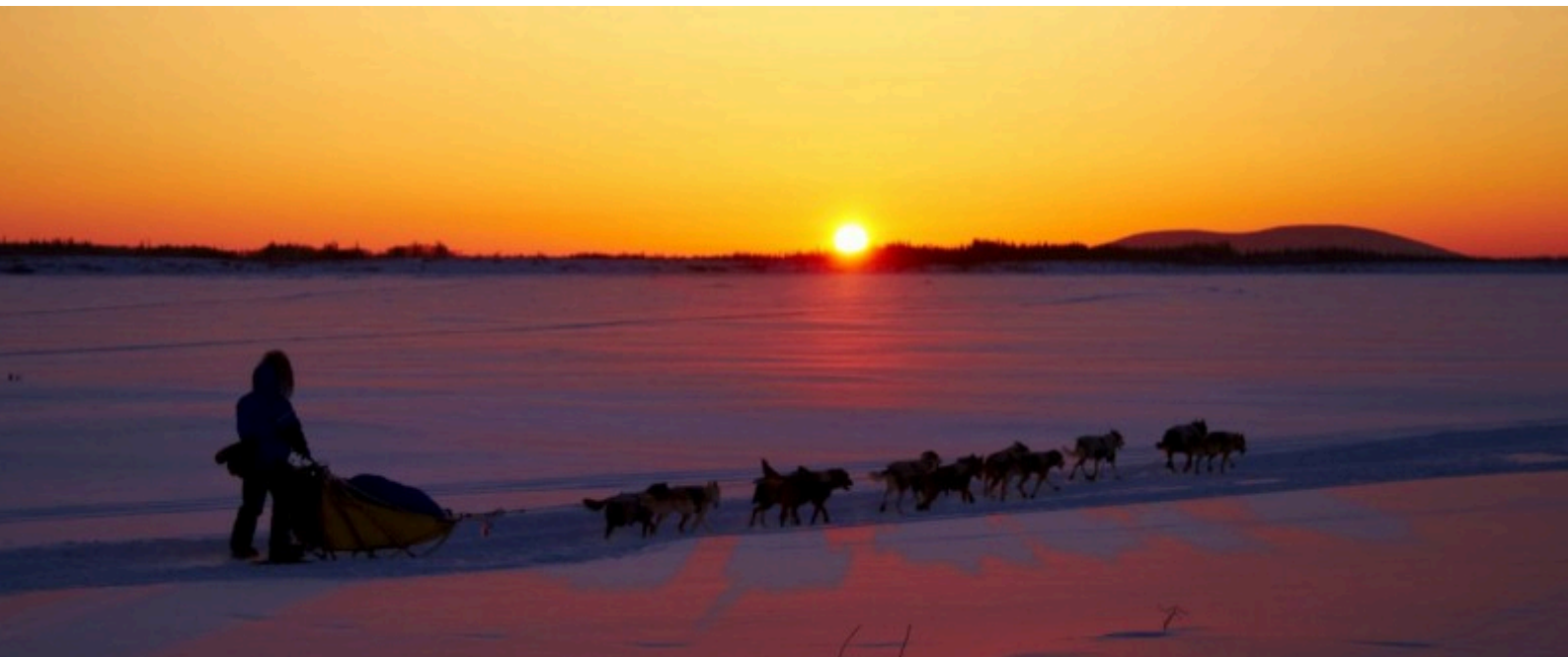




The Spirit of Alaska: Iditarod



HOLIDAY TYPE: Small Group
VISITING:

BROCHURE CODE: 5407
DURATION: 11 nights

In Brief

This eleven-night action-packed tour of Alaska centres on the world-famous Iditarod dog sledding race. Get in and amongst the action and experience dog sledding through the Alaskan Wilderness. Once the race starts, you'll enjoy experiences such as snowshoeing, glacier walks and Aurora hunts.

Our Opinion

“ *The Iditarod is renowned as one of the hardest and most exciting dog sledding races in the world, so to see it up close and personal is a wonderfully unique experience. With a raft of winter adventures available in this amazing destination, this is a winter experience like no other.* ”

Jono Archer



What's included?

- **Transfers:** return airport transfers (from Anchorage)
- **Accommodation:** 11 nights double/twin room accommodation with en-suite bathroom
- **Meals:** 11 breakfasts; 5 lunches, 3 dinners
- **Activities:** scenic city tour, meet & greet with Iditarod mushers, Iditarod Mushers' Banquet, small ship cruise into Prince William Sound, Iditarod ceremonial & official start, snowshoeing, husky safari, scenic rail travel from Anchorage to Fairbanks, Fairbanks Ice Art and Exhibition tour, Aurora watch, Chena Hot Springs visit and tour of Ice Museum*, wilderness lodge Aurora watch, glacier hike (order of activities are subject to change)**
- Meet & greet on arrival
- Services of our expert local guides
- **Flights:** Flight from Fairbanks to Anchorage in economy class is included. Please note that international flights are NOT included

***Please note:** any travellers under the age of 18 are not allowed to swim in the outdoor hot pool at Chena Hot Springs, instead they must use the indoor geothermal-heated pool.

**** Please note:** depending on the weather conditions, the official Iditarod starting point may need to be adjusted in order to ensure a safe start for the competitors. If this happens, your tour will be amended accordingly to accommodate the new starting point and the order of activities, transport and accommodation may need to change. The starting line location will be confirmed 1-2 weeks prior to the race.

Trip Overview

The Iditarod is one of the world's greatest dog sledding endurance races, covering over 1000 miles of harsh, yet utterly beautiful terrain. This trip offers you the chance to meet the mushers and enjoy the exhilarating race start, whilst also taking part in some amazing winter adventures and exploring this wonderful state. Combining the start of the Iditarod with some of Alaska's must-do winter attractions makes this an exciting, action-packed tour.

The Iditarod is a world famous feat of endurance and this holiday allows you to meet the people who make it all possible and to mingle with the mushers. You can get a real sense of adventure and take part in trailside activities, but all from a very comfortable perspective.

Starting in Anchorage, you will be taken on a scenic tour of the city, travelling from coast to mountain. You'll then join the Iditarod mushers for their pre-race banquet, which will be filled with sumptuous Alaskan food and captivating tales of races gone by.

You will then head onto the cool waters of Prince William Sound for a small boat cruise into Blackstone Bay, where you will disembark to explore the beach and photograph the glaciers and icebergs that abound. After this, it's time for the ceremonial and official start of the Iditarod, with all sorts of fun and festivities; you'll feel a real connection to the mushers as you watch the enthralling start of the race.

Furthermore, one of the favourite highlights is that you will get to join a dog sledding safari at the kennels of former Iditarod champion, Dallas Seavey. This is a dog sledding session like no other!

Travelling north, you will take the scenic railroad to the city of Fairbanks, which is renowned for its Northern Lights displays. Here you will enjoy a tour of the Ice Art Park and International Ice Art Exhibition and an Aurora watch in the wilderness, as well as a visit to the unique Chena Hot Springs, where you can enjoy a dip in the geothermal pools and keep your eyes peeled for the Aurora in the evening. You'll then head south to Anchorage by plane and finally, your tour will then be capped off with a glacier walk during which you can get up close to one of nature's most marvellous natural wonders.

This tour includes some truly fantastic experiences that provide a wide array of authentic Alaskan winter adventures that really are unparalleled and will no doubt leave you in love with this beautiful northern state.

Image credits: Rebecca Coolidge, Anchorage Convention & Visitors Bureau, State of Alaska - Chris McLennan, State of Alaska - Brian Adams

Agenda

Please note the order of activities is subject to change

DAY
1

FLIGHTS, ARRIVAL AND TRANSFER TO HOTEL

Arriving at Anchorage Airport, you will be given a warm Alaskan welcome and transferred to your charming hotel in downtown Anchorage.

The airport is only a short drive from the centre, but nevertheless, you will be treated to some incredible sights as you marvel at the snow-topped mountains and sea that surround Anchorage.

Your hotel is ideally situated right in the heart of Anchorage and only a short walk from the Iditarod

start line. The city is awash with restaurants, cafés and bars and you can find some incredible food, such as Alaskan king crab and beautiful seafood platters, so why not explore the streets tonight and enjoy the atmosphere of this vibrant northern town.

Please note that winter clothing is not included during your trip, however, it is recommended and if you would like to rent clothing prior to your arrival, we can provide you with contact details for an outfitter that can offer this service.

Included Meals: None

DAY
2

SCENIC CITY TOUR AND EVENING MUSHERS' BANQUET

After enjoying breakfast at the hotel, your morning is free to explore Anchorage as you see fit. The city is home to some incredible visitor attractions, such as the Alaska Native Heritage Centre and the Alaska Museum, which are both packed with wonderful artefacts and stories covering the indigenous population of Alaska through to the gold mining era and modern day.

Pop into one of the cosy cafés and bakeries and sample some Alaskan delights that will warm you up for the day ahead. Alternatively, if you would like to enjoy the beautiful scenery that surrounds the city, only a short walk from your door is the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail, which is a beautiful paved path that wraps along the coast and offers you incredible views of the sea and mountains beyond.

This afternoon you will be picked up from your hotel at approximately 2 pm for a two-hour scenic city tour. You will travel to Ship Creek, Bootlegger's Cove and Earthquake Park to learn about the fascinating history of Anchorage and Alaska. You'll also get to see Lake Hood, the busiest seaplane base in the world, with planes using skis in the winter and water floats in the summer. Following this, it's on to the Chugach Mountains for a fabulous view of Anchorage and the surrounding wilderness before heading back for this evening's entertainment.

Your group will head straight to the Musher Meet & Greet event, which will give you the chance to meet with the Iditarod mushers and learn about their time on the trails and their plans for the race ahead. Following this, you will then join the Iditarod Mushers' Banquet, where you will enjoy a hearty dinner while watching the race entrants draw for their starting bib number. These experiences really give you a sense of connection to this race.

Return transfers to your hotel are included.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY
3

GLACIER CRUISE INTO PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND

Following breakfast at the hotel, you will be picked up for your journey south today.

Travelling along the coastal inlet known as Turnagain Arm, you will get to see some of the most spectacular mountains in Alaska. Steep, snow covered hills and peaks tumble into the icy sea, which

is home to beluga whales and countless bald eagles. This highway is one of the most scenic roads in Alaska, so the journey is sure to amaze you.

Travelling to the seaside town of Whittier, you will board a small ship and head out into the cool waters of Prince William Sound for a 3.5 hour cruise. Bordered by mountains and glaciers, the sound is home to hundreds of islands with beautiful shingle bays and tree-studded outcrops, as well as a huge variety of wildlife.

Prince William Sound contains 150 glaciers, including 17 tidewater glaciers, which are known for dramatically calving huge chunks of ice into the water below. During the cruise into Blackstone Bay, you will sail towards one of these tidewater glaciers to marvel at the gigantic wall of ice and hopefully witness a calving, as the ice crashes into the sea with an enormous crack.

Your vessel will beach at Blackstone Bay (weather permitting) where you will have some time to explore and enjoy the unbelievably stunning surroundings that you are in. A packed lunch will be served on board.

After enjoying the beauty of Prince William Sound, you will be driven back to Anchorage with plenty of chances to stop and enjoy the scenic viewpoints along the way.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY
4

IDITAROD CEREMONIAL START

Today is the ceremonial start of the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race, right in the heart of downtown Anchorage. After breakfast at the hotel, we suggest making your way to the starting point on 4th Avenue, which is only a short walk away from your hotel. The race starts at 10am, but it's good to get there early to secure a spot!

The street has been lined with snow, ready for today's celebrations. You can enjoy the exhilarating and somewhat whacky Running of the Reindeer in which brave locals try to out run herds of reindeer as they stampede down the high street – an amazing sight to witness!

Wrapped up in the organised chaos of the race, you can then watch the sled dogs and their mushers racing down the street in this surreal, yet wonderful experience.

After this, why not head to the Alaska Native Heritage Centre to watch the vibrant annual dancing and drumming demonstration. The centre is located out of town, however, a free shuttle is available from the nearby Visitors' Centre and it is well worth a visit.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY
5

IDITAROD OFFICIAL START AND TRAILSIDE SNOWSHOEING

After yesterday's fun and games, today is the official start of the Iditarod. Following breakfast, you

will be picked up from your hotel at approximately 9:30 am and transferred north to Willow Lake with freshly baked scones and hot chocolate to keep you warm. Your knowledgeable guide will regale you with stories of the Iditarod, as well as explain the various race rules and guidelines so that you are ready for the official start.

Upon arrival, our local guides will have set up a race tent where you can relax and enjoy the day ahead. Hot drinks and food are available all day in the tent and you also have the option to head out on snowshoes and explore the race starting area and trail, which is a definite, must-do activity in our opinion.

Watch the mushers and their team of dogs as they set off into the wilderness, wrapped up and fully loaded with supplies, ready for the next few days of endurance. It is a truly unique moment to be a part of and no doubt it will be a memory that you will cherish forever.

After watching the mushers head out into the frozen landscape beyond, you will travel back to Anchorage where you will arrive at approximately 7 pm. The evening is free for you to sample more of Anchorage's restaurants and cafés.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY
6

HUSKY SAFARI

After enjoying another breakfast in the hotel, you will travel north to Talkeetna, right in the heart of dog mushing country, where you will get to experience a true Alaskan winter adventure.

Regarded as Alaska's official sport, dog sledding is ingrained in the Alaskan way of life and it is a wonderful spectacle to behold and even better to experience. You will be taken to the dog kennels of the renowned Iditarod champion Dallas Seavey, where you will get to meet the eager dogs and take part in a gear demonstration and Q&A session with an experienced dog musher. Lunch will be served prior to arriving at the kennels.

The dogs that you will be using today will be a mixture of retired racing dogs and younger dogs in training to become future Iditarod champions. You will have the amazing opportunity to ride the runners of the sled behind a team of dogs who can't wait to get on the trail. You will ride two people per sled, enjoying a 40-60 minute sledding tour in the heart of the Alaskan winter wilderness. There will be a break for photos and a chance to switch drivers. If you'd prefer to be driven by a guide, this can also be arranged.

After experiencing the thrill of the trails, you will be taken back to your hotel in Anchorage, returning at approximately 6:30 pm. You will then have the evening free to enjoy as you see fit, so why not head out to sample some more authentic Alaskan cuisine and revel in today's excitement.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY
7

RAILROAD TO FAIRBANKS

The time has come today for you to leave Anchorage and head to Alaska's northern city of Fairbanks. You will be picked up this morning and transferred to the rail station for your journey north. The train will leave Anchorage at 8:30 am (check-in at 7:30 am) and you will arrive in Fairbanks at approximately 8 pm. Breakfast, lunch and dinner onboard are included today.

The railroad is one of the most scenic routes that you are likely to ever travel, starting from the urban centre of Anchorage and slowly winding through the foothills of the Alaska Range. The train will take you past Denali National Park, home to the mighty Mount Denali, winding back and forth over the many rivers and canyons that are dotted throughout the region. Keep your eyes open for moose, caribou and Arctic fox as you journey through the dramatic landscape.

Arriving into Fairbanks, your hotel shuttle will be waiting to pick you up and transfer you to downtown Fairbanks. For the next three nights, you will be staying at the Springhill Suites in Fairbanks, which lies on the banks of the Chena River and is ideally situated to enjoy this vibrant city.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY
8

FREE DAY AND AURORA WATCH

After breakfast at your hotel, today you have the day free to explore Fairbanks. This exciting northern town has plenty of cafés and restaurants to enjoy, as well as several visitor attractions, such as the Fairbanks Community Museum and the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Centre, which are filled with cultural artefacts and enthralling displays.

We recommend an early dinner tonight because you will be picked up at approximately 6:45 pm from your hotel and taken to Fairbanks' Ice Art Park and International Exhibition. The park is filled with expertly crafted sculptures and interactive displays and you will be taken on a guided tour of this fascinating place. Hot drinks will be provided during the tour and you will have some free time to stroll through this enchanting winter wonderland on your own.

Following this, you will be taken to a remote location in the Alaskan wilderness in search of the Northern Lights. The area around Fairbanks is prime Aurora territory, so hopefully, you will be in luck tonight and they will make an appearance. You will return to Fairbanks at approximately 2-3am, following your evening's Aurora watch.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY
9

CHENA HOT SPRINGS, ICE MUSEUM TOUR AND AURORA WATCH

Today has been left as another free day for you to rest and relax after a busy few days exploring Alaska and chasing the Northern Lights.

Why not have a leisurely morning and then spend the rest of the day exploring the city? Or perhaps try out some more local cafes and restaurants - one of the locals' favourite spots for lunch is "Lunch" which is just across the Chena River and within walking distance of the hotel; they even serve their

own organic coffee which is roasted on-site.

At approximately 2:45 pm, you will be picked up from your hotel and taken to Chena Hot Springs, situated in the hills that surround Fairbanks. Whilst here, you will visit the Ice Museum, complete with fully-functioning Ice Bar. The ice sculptures are expertly crafted and beautifully presented, making this a truly magical experience to behold.

Following this, you'll have some free time to enjoy the hot springs at your leisure, so don't forget to pack your swimming clothes so that you can bathe in the glorious waters, surrounded by deep, crisp snow.

You'll then head for dinner at a nearby restaurant, before venturing out for another night of Aurora watching at a wilderness lodge. Hopefully you'll catch sight of the incredible Northern Lights at this prime location. You will return to Fairbanks at approximately 2-3am. Please note that the wilderness lodge can accommodate up to 60 people for Aurora watching.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY
10

FLIGHT TO ANCHORAGE

Today you will say farewell to Fairbanks as you are transferred to the airport via the hotel's free shuttle for your journey south to Anchorage.

Arriving into Anchorage at approximately 3pm, you will be met at the airport and transferred to your downtown hotel.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY
11

GLACIER WALK

After breakfast in your hotel, you will be picked up and transferred to the amazing Matanuska Glacier. Spanning 27 miles, this meandering, gigantic sea of ice is simply stunning to see and it is incredibly easy to access.

Arriving in the glorious Matanuska Valley, you will spend approximately two hours on and around the glacier with your expert guide leading the way and showing you the hidden gems of the glacier, such as the blue meltwater pools and sheer walls of ice.

Walking on the ice is obviously a slippery task, which is why you will be equipped with a helmet, walking stick and crampons for your shoes, which should keep you nice and stable. Please be sure to bring some sturdy footwear along, as well as an extra pair of socks for when you are finished.

Snacks and water are provided during this tour and afterwards, you will stop for lunch at a viewpoint overlooking the glacier. You will then be taken back to your hotel in Anchorage where you can head out to enjoy a final Alaskan meal in one of the many nearby restaurants and reminisce on the days gone

by and your action-packed tour of beautiful Alaska.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY
12

DEPARTURE

Sadly the time has come to wave goodbye to Alaska. You will be picked up from your hotel and transferred to the airport for your flight home. Alternatively, if you would like to extend your time, please see our '[Personalise](#)' section for further information.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Personalise this tour

Our pick



Extend your stay in Anchorage

If you would like to spend more time in Anchorage, then you have the option to extend your stay at The Voyager Inn. With a wealth of activities to do in and around the city, we can help you to further explore this spectacular region.

Price is based on two adults sharing a standard double or twin room. Other options are available and will incur a supplement. Please ask our Travel Experts for a quotation.

Image credit: Voyager Inn

Included Accommodation

Voyager Inn (Nights: 1-6,10-11)



The Voyager Inn is ideally situated in the heart of downtown Anchorage, close to several visitor attractions, as well as a variety of exciting restaurants and cafés. It is also only a five minute walk from the beautiful coastline of the Cook Inlet, which is home to beluga whales and bald eagles. The hotel is warm and welcoming and has been recently remodelled to a modern standard, offering a great base to enjoy the city of Anchorage and its surrounding area.

Hotel facilities

- Guests of the hotel receive free access to the Hotel Captain Cook's Athletic Club, featuring a gym, swimming pool and Jacuzzi. The hotel is a two minute walk from the Voyager Inn
- Unlike other hotels and lodges in Alaska, guests can enjoy a full, complimentary breakfast each morning
- On-site laundry facilities are available for guests to use and are payable locally
- Free Wi-Fi is available throughout

DELUXE ROOM

These rooms include a king size bed or two queen beds and feature a kitchenette with a microwave and mini-fridge. All rooms have an en-suite bathroom with bath or shower, as well as a TV, hairdryer and coffee machine.

Image credits: Voyager Inn

Springhill Suites (Nights: 7-9)



The Springhill Suites are operated by Marriott and are perfectly situated in the middle of downtown Fairbanks, close to restaurants, museums and shops and next to the enchanting Chena River, which winds through the city. With 140 guest rooms, this hotel is one of the largest in Fairbanks, but it offers some of the best quality accommodation available and provides a great base from which to explore the city.

Hotel facilities

- Guests can enjoy the indoor pool and gym area free of charge
- Breakfast is included for guests each day
- A free shuttle service is also available for transfers to and from the rail station and airport
- Lavelle's Bistro is conveniently located on the main level and offers authentic Alaskan cuisine
- An on-site laundry service is available and payable locally
- Free Wi-Fi is available throughout the hotel
- There is a cash machine in the lobby area

STANDARD SUITE

Each standard suite room includes either one king or two double beds, an en-suite bathroom with bath or shower, as well as a TV, telephone, kitchenette with mini-fridge and microwave and a desk workspace area with an armchair or sofa. Rooms also include air-conditioning and coffee/tea-making facilities.

Image credits: Springhill Suites

The Specifics

Holiday group size (approximate)

Approximately 2 - 16 people

Group Size

We always try to provide an approximation of the group size you can expect to be with for the duration of each of our holidays. It may be that you are joined by others for parts of your holiday (such as transfers and particular activities) but the above number reflects those you can normally expect to be with from beginning to end. If group size is something which is particularly important to you, please speak to our Travel Experts and they can suggest the best holidays for you.

Tailor-made holiday group sizes will vary for all activities as will the group size for any additional activities you book.

Minimum Numbers Required For A Holiday To Operate

Our full booking terms and conditions can be found on our website: <https://www.artisantravel.co.uk/booking-conditions>

Minimum and maximum age

If a specific minimum age applies to this holiday, it can be found in the Key Facts box on the holiday Overview page.

Unless otherwise stated in the in the Key Facts box on the holiday Overview page, the minimum age for participation in an Artisan holiday is typically 8 years old (there may be younger children in some destinations who have booked with other companies). If an adult-only environment is important to you, then please contact our Travel Experts and they will advise on the best dates and destinations for you. If you are looking for a holiday designed specifically for families then please see our sister company www.activitiesabroad.com

Itinerary amendments

The order of activities listed in this agenda is provided for guidance only, your final and detailed itinerary will be provided either with your final travel documents (which are uploaded into your online account around a week prior to departure) or upon arrival.

Terms and Conditions

Our full booking terms and conditions can be found on our website: <https://www.artisantravel.co.uk/booking-conditions>