

INCENTIVE INSPIRATION

Amazing Alaska

*The vast American state known as 'The Last Frontier'
has plenty to offer incentive planners* By Mark Williams

Fragile beauty Global warming has led Mendenhall Glacier to retreat: today it stands at just 13 miles long

This year Alaska celebrates the 60th anniversary of becoming a US state, shortly before Hawaii. Originally sold to America by Russia in 1867 for \$7.2 million, it became known as 'The Last Frontier' because of its distance from the other US states and the wild, snowy landscape.

Anchorage is the largest and best connected city in Alaska, with direct flights to numerous other national and international cities.

JOURNEY

Denali National Park & Preserve is home to Denali, also known as Mount McKinley, America's highest peak, along with lots of wildlife and outdoor pursuits among its six million acres of land. It's open for adventure all year round, whether you want to see snowy peaks or rolling fields that disappear over the horizon.

Mendenhall Glacier is 13 miles long and part of the Tongass National Forest near Juneau. Get your walking boots on and follow one of the hiking trails that wind their way around the terrain, or you could even hop in a kayak at the right time of year.

Husky sledding is the only way to get around if you want to have an authentic glacier experience to

Gold rush Mining for gold has been a major industry in Alaska since the 19th century

Into the wild Denali National Park is home to wolf packs, caribou and even grizzly bears

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remember. There's a bit more to it than stepping onto your sled and shouting "Mush!" But experienced guides will have you gliding across the snow in no time. There are plenty of locations around Alaska to indulge in some husky sledding, from Skagway to Anchorage and Denali.

DISCOVER

The Klondike Gold Rush started in 1896, and suddenly Alaska was thought of as a place to get rich: 100,000 prospectors headed there during the next three years, looking for the shiny precious metal. Nowadays, that kind of mining is done by machines, but you can take a day tour out into the

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wilderness with the right equipment. Fingers crossed gold awaits in them there hills.

The Northern Lights are visible in northern Alaska between mid-September and late April. Anchorage is probably a little too far south for a good chance of spotting Aurora Borealis, but Fairbanks in the north is a much better bet. The Northern Alaska Tour Company runs trips out of Fairbanks to some spots with the best visibility.

EAT & DRINK

Reindeer hot dogs are made from Alaskan caribou, not Rudolph, so you don't have to worry about explaining that one to the kids when you get home. It can be loaded up with all the same extras and condiments as a regular hot dog and is an excellent way to give your delegates a taste of Alaska on the go if you've got a full day's itinerary lined up.

Salmon is a welcome by product of lots of coastline. Do you want chinook salmon, sockeye



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Winter warmer Hot dogs are made from Alaskan caribou (reindeer)

Cook's voyages Hotel Captain Cook boasts an impressive Cook-inspired art collection

JACK BONNEY

salmon, coho, pink or chum? Those are the five types you'll find in North American waters, but you can also add masu and amago to your list if you include those found in Asian waters.

Akutaq (also known as Eskimo Ice Cream) was developed by the indigenous people of Alaska, using reindeer fat, seal oil, fresh snow and berries such as blueberries, cloudberry and cranberries. The ingredients are whipped together to get air into the mixture that cools into foam. Traditionally, Akutaq was used by hunters and travellers as it would stay cold on a long journey, as well as being served at celebrations such as weddings.

Midnight Sun Brewing Company is no Johnny-come-lately arrival to the burgeoning craft beer scene. It has been producing beer and ales for thirsty Alaskans since 1995. They brew 40 different beers from Sockeye Red to Kodiak Brown at their Anchorage HQ. The perfect accompaniment to a reindeer hot dog!

SLEEP

Hotel Captain Cook in Anchorage is a Preferred Hotel with 546 guest rooms, in addition to 14 meeting and conference rooms, from the library to the 836-square-metre ballroom. The Crow's Nest restaurant offers fine dining with panoramic views of the city. There's also English pub Fletcher's for a more casual food and drink vibe and the Whale's Tail for cocktails and small plates.

Sheraton Anchorage Hotel and Spa is in the heart of the city, only a 10-minute walk from both the Egan Convention Center and the Anchorage



The high life The ultimate escape, Sheldon Chalet can only be accessed via helicopter



Museum. The Howard Rock Ballroom can hold 850 guests in a banquet-style setup and in total there are 13 meeting rooms of varying sizes. Jade Restaurant serves steak and seafood, while Ptarmigan Lounge will whip you up a cocktail in the evening.

Sheldon Chalet is as much a feat of engineering as it is a place to stay. Perched high on a glacier in Denali National Park, it can only be accessed by helicopter (landing on the chalet's own helipad), making it the ultimate getaway for those wanting to leave the distractions of the real world behind. The views in every direction from the chalet are something to behold and you might even see the Northern Lights. It has capacity for 10 people at a time within its hexagonal walls.



Easy access The Sheraton Anchorage Hotel and Spa is the perfect central location for your guests

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SEE

The Aurora Ice Museum in Fairbanks is the world's largest year-round ice environment, created from 1,000 tonnes of ice and snow. Wrap up warm because the temperature inside is a constant -7°C, but the museum offers free parkas to borrow while you wander around. You can even try an Appletini served in an ice glass from the bar.

Flightseeing is a great way to see as much of Alaska as you possibly can and get an idea of how vast some of its national parks really are. You can take off from Anchorage and see the magnificent mountains from above as you climb into the sky and head to Denali National Park, the Kenai Peninsula or the Chugach Mountains. Finding a pilot shouldn't be difficult either, as Alaska has around six times as many pilots per capita as the rest of the USA.

Whale watching is sure to please any delegate who's seen a David Attenborough documentary or two. Major Marine Tours organise cruises into Kenai Fjords National Park for some of the best whale watching in Alaska. Whether it's Orca, Humpback or Gray whales you're after, a sighting of one of the planet's largest mammals is guaranteed to be an unforgettable experience.



Full glory Flightseeing is the best way to truly capture the vast beauty of the Alaskan National

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Ice house The Aurora Ice Museum is constructed from 1,000 tonnes of snow

