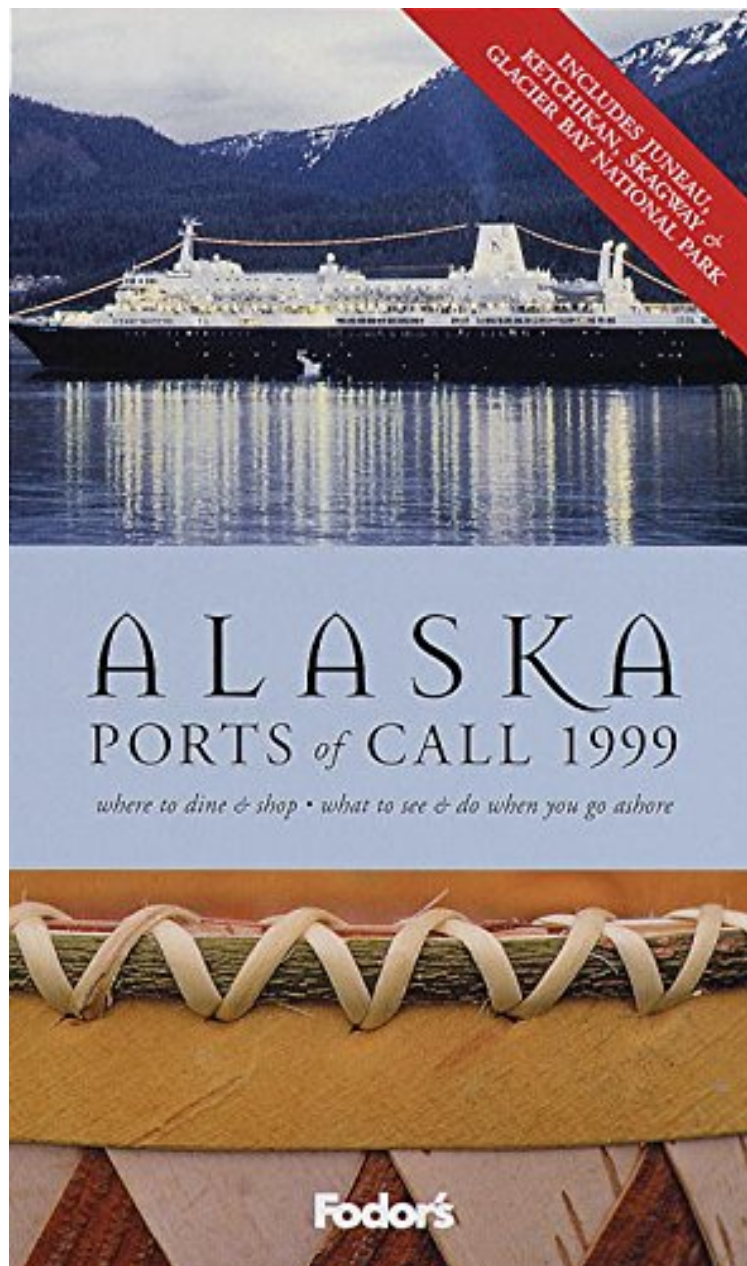


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## Alaska Ports of Call 1999: Glaciers, Totems Gold Rush Towns \* Where to Hike, Fish, Dine Shop When You Go Ashore (Annual)

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before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Alaska Ports of Call 1999: Glaciers, Totems Gold Rush Towns \* Where to Hike, Fish, Dine Shop When You Go Ashore (Annual):

13 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Some worthwhile information, but disappointing. By A Customer  
Within the 130 pages of this book, about 80 describe the ports of call. The rest are the usual information about cruising, ships, and Alaska you'd find in any other book you probably already have. The port information typically lists a few sightseeing, dining, and shopping opportunities for each port. I haven't been to these ports recently enough to know if they're complete. There is a map of each port, locating the referenced establishments. Although the text tells where the ships dock, that location is not usually shown on the map, making it difficult to tell how far away things will be. You can figure this out on the ship, of course, as someone will know where the dock is. Finally, any book with "for 1999" in the title ought to have Internet addresses for Alaska touring info, local information, and individual attractions, tour operators, and the like. There aren't any at all. It does have phone numbers. All in all, I think the AAA TourBook for Alaska has as much information, and it's free to members.

From coming ashore to seeing the sights in 18 ports, Fodor's Alaska Ports of Call tells cruise passengers everything they need to know -- written from a cruiser's point of view. All the essentials for a perfect day in port  
Where ships dock or drop anchor  
The best restaurants, shops, hiking, and fishing -- all easily reached from the pier  
Recommended shore excursions  
Top sights for passengers who want to explore on their own  
14 pages of maps  
Special feature -- a cruise primer  
How to choose the right ship  
How to pick a travel agent  
How to get the best deal on a cruise vacation  
Plus cruise itineraries for the 1999 season

From the Inside Flap  
From coming ashore to seeing the sights in 18 ports, Fodor's Alaska Ports of Call tells cruise passengers everything they need to know -- written from a cruiser's point of view. All the essentials for a perfect day in port  
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How to pick a travel agent  
How to get the best deal on a cruise vacation  
Plus cruise itineraries for the 1999 season  
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Geography alone makes Alaska an ideal cruise destination. On a typical seven-day itinerary, you'll visit up to four ports of call and one or two scenic bays or fjords. And the nature of ship travel is perfectly suited to discovering what Alaska is all about. The natural beauty of Alaska is hard to overstate. As you prepare for your cruise, consider these facts about Alaska's grandeur: The Inside Passage, the traditional route north to Alaska and a favorite among cruise passengers, stretches 1,000 miles from Puget Sound, Washington, in the south to Skagway, Alaska, in the north. From there, the Gulf of Alaska arcs for another 500 miles from east to west. Alaska has thousands of glaciers. Among the most famous ones that cruise passengers visit are LeConte outside Petersburg, the southernmost calving glacier in North America, and Hubbard at Yakutat Bay in the Gulf of Alaska, 6 miles wide and 76 miles long to its source. The Malaspina Glacier, at the entrance to Yakutat Bay, is bigger than the state of Rhode Island. Tongass National Forest, which spans great stretches of the Inside Passage, is the largest national forest in the United States. Wrangell St. Elias National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site east of Anchorage and bordering the Gulf of Alaska, is the largest national park in the United States. Wildlife is everywhere in Alaska. The state has 15 species of whales. Southeast Alaska has more brown bears than the rest of the United States combined. Alaska ranks number one in bald eagles (Florida is number two). On my second cruise to Alaska, our small ship happened upon a couple of sleeping whales, their blue-black bodies barely breaking the surface of the water. The captain cut the engines (so we wouldn't disturb the whales' slumber), and for a good while we just observed their breathing. Not long after, we experienced another Kodak moment: a brown bear foraging on the shoreline. Again, the captain held our position as the bear wandered along the water's edge. When the bear was done, he moved on, as did we. The captain, however, had one more treat in store for us. At a rushing waterfall, he nudged the bow of our small-ship under the gush of water. Raincoat-clad crew members filled pitchers with glacial runoff, and soon we all enjoyed a refreshment of cool mineral water. Such are the simple pleasures of an Alaskan cruise: calving glaciers, sea lions and seals, and sensational sunsets -- at midnight. Bird-watchers will have a field day looking for bald eagles. These birds have long represented courage and power, so it is appropriate that so many bald eagles populate Alaska. In fact, eagles are so numerous you'll have to remind yourself that they remain a threatened species. In addition to glaciers and wildlife, there's an exciting frontier history to discover. Alaska's indigenous people belong to one of four groups: Aleuts, Athabascans, Eskimos, and Northwest Coast Indians. The native Alaskans you are most likely to meet during your cruise are the Tlingit, Haida, or Tsimshian Indians of the Inside Passage. The Tlingit are responsible for Alaska's famous totem carvings. Totem poles tell the story of a great event, identify members of the same clan, and honor great leaders. The best place to see totem poles is Saxman Native Village in Ketchikan, where you'll find my favorite -- the Abraham Lincoln totem pole, with an image of Honest Abe at its top. Northwest Coast Indians are noted for their many artistic skills; totem carvings are just the most celebrated example. Miniature totem reproductions are among the most popular souvenirs in Alaska, but

ceremonial masks, decorative paddles, and woven baskets also make great gifts. Crafts are just one way for cruise passengers to appreciate the local culture. Native Alaskans are often happy to show you around. In Juneau, Ketchikan, and Sitka, you can book a sightseeing tour with a native point of view. Performances of native dance and traditional storytelling entertain visitors in Juneau, Sitka, and Haines. Alaska has a reputation for ruggedness -- both in the land and in its people. As for the latter, the rough-and-tumble character of Alaska's past is best sensed in Ketchikan. Perhaps this has something to do with the city's history, filled with tall tales of miners, loggers, and fisherman. Things are more serene these days, and many Alaskans are given to more spiritual pursuits -- like painting. Galleries that feature the work of local artists are common in all port cities. Seek them out -- a portrait of Alaska is one of the best keepsakes. If, like me, you're an aficionado of Gold-Rush history, choose a cruise that includes a call at Skagway, the gateway to the Klondike a century ago. Today, the town looks much as it did in the early 1900s. The entire downtown area is a National Historic District, part of Klondike Gold Rush National Historic Park. The yellow 1930s touring limousines you see are operated by the Skagway Streetcar Company, which re-creates Martin Itjen's original Skagway sightseeing tour. It's one of the few chances cruise passengers have to venture deep into the mountains. Few establishments evoke the spirit of the frontier like the local saloon, and as a cruise passenger you'll have the opportunity to visit two of Alaska's most famous (depending on your itinerary). Near the cruise ship docks in Skagway is the Red Onion Saloon. To step inside is to return to 1898, when the saloon was founded. In Juneau the Red Dog Saloon has been a favorite local watering hole since early this century. In fact, Wyatt Earp's six-shooter still hangs on wall. It's said he left it here while just passing through. Like Wyatt Earp, you too will just be passing through. But, as you are about to discover, cruising is a great way to see "The Great Land."