

75 YEARS ON THE ALASKA HIGHWAY — EXPLORE AMERICA'S LAST FRONTIER



The Alaska Highway turns 75 years old in 2017, and we're getting the party started with several articles about the road on the Good Sam blog. Check out the posts below for insights into the ultimate bucket-list RV trip.

- **75 Years on the Alaska Highway** explores the history of the famous road, which started off as a massive project by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at the outbreak of World War II.
- **Following the Alcan North to Alaska — a Fun-Filled Itinerary** provides readers with a scenery-rich route from Calgary, British Columbia, and up through the highway's terminus. This is a must-see for folks looking for adventure along with great RV parks.

• **Alaska Highlights — Take the Alcan to Adventure** showcases what RVers can expect at the end of the road. Go fishing in Valdez and explore the gold-rush mecca of Fairbanks. The destination is definitely worth the trip!

Check out RV Parks in Alaska, British Columbia and in the Yukon.

• **7 Tips for Your Alaska Highway Trip** provides advice on planning a journey to the Last Frontier, from optimal travel times to great RV parks.

Keep reading the Good Sam blog to learn more about 75 years on Alaska Highway. Even though it's three months before spring, it's never too early to start planning that trip up north.

75 YEARS ON THE ALASKA HIGHWAY



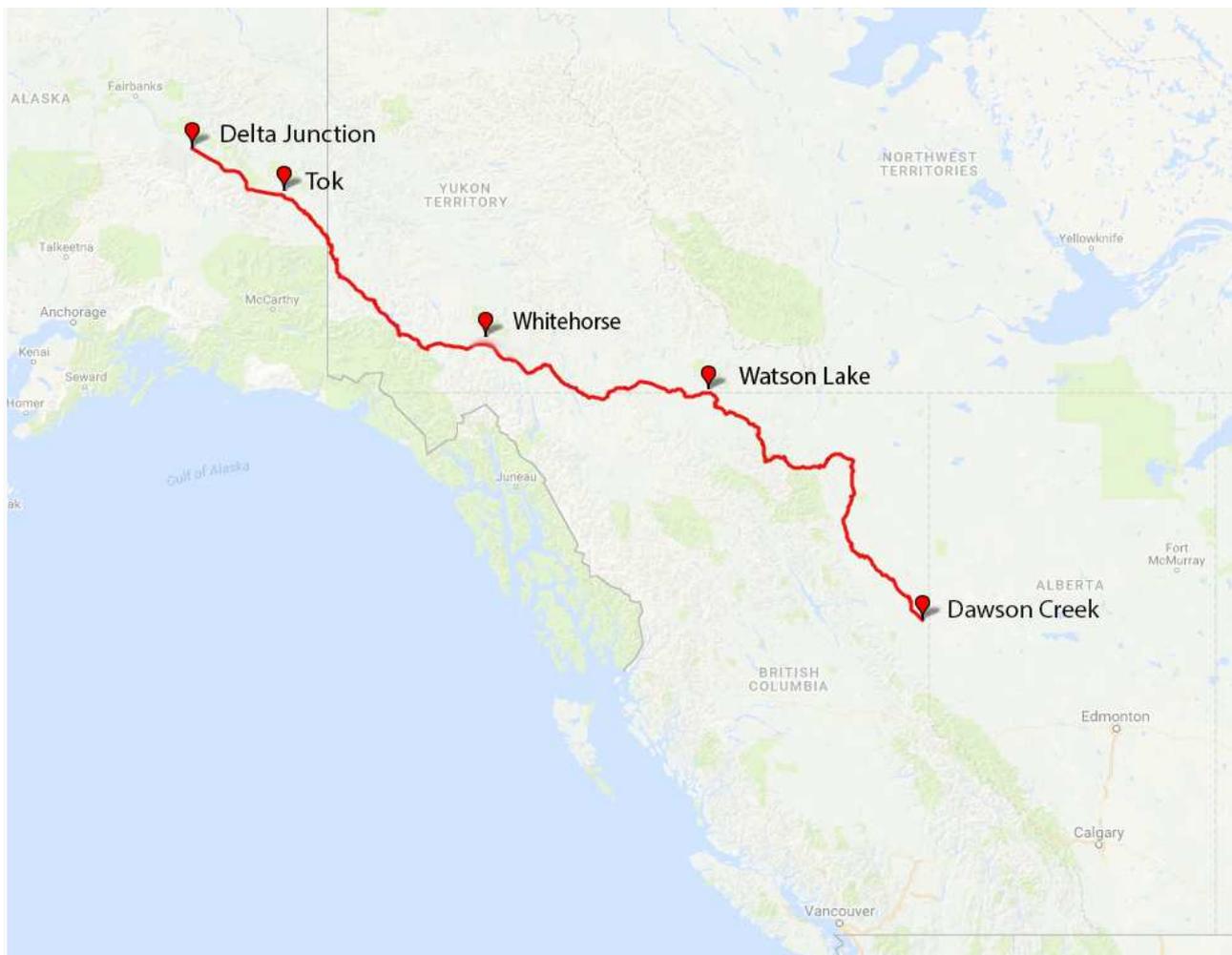
RV the Alaska Highway

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Alaska Highway, the 1,422-mile long ribbon of asphalt that crosses stunning terrain between Dawson Creek, British Columbia, and Delta Junction, Alaska.

For RVers, the so-called AICan (short for the Alaska-Canadian Highway) is the ultimate travel adventure. The mountainous scenery and recreation possibilities along this stretch of highway are unparalleled, and the stops along the way have become iconic. Highlights range from photo ops at Mile-Marker Zero in Dawson Creek to the Signpost Forest, an attraction in Watson Lake, Yukon, that features more than 77,000 signs of hometowns from visitors from across the globe. Other popular attractions along the way include the *SS Klondike* on the Yukon River in Whitehorse. Who could pass up the chance of prospecting for gold around Tok, Alaska? These and several other stops in between bring travelers to the highway again and again.

RV the Alaska Highway Past and Present

Long before RVers cruised along the highway, the corridor bustled with construction vehicles and military trucks. Following the United States' 1941 entry into World War II, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt authorized the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to construct a transportation artery along the rugged, undeveloped region of Northwest Canada to Alaska. The goal: a highway for the deployment of soldiers and supplies to ward off a possible invasion of America from Japan. A massive construction push involving 11,000 troops and costing \$142 million gave birth to a crude roadway in 1942.



Over the decades, both Canada and the United States have overseen the corridor's transition from military to civilian usage, paving its surface for both leisure and commercial traffic. During the warm-weather travel season, motorists enjoy long summer days and stellar views. May and June tend to be less rainy than July, but weather along the AICan is unpredictable.

For many RVers, the highlight of the trip is milepost 1221.8, the U.S. Customs Border Protection Station at Port AICan. Not only is this the crossing between Alaska and Canada, but it's a fantastic photo op in its own right. The highway's terminus at Delta Junction, more than 200 miles to the northeast, opens up even more possibilities. From this town, visitors can hop on the Richardson Highway and head 95 miles north to Fairbanks, home to the annual Midnight Sun Festival and launching pad for adventures near the Arctic Circle to the north and Denali National Park to the south.

Celebrating 75 Years

In the coming months, the towns along the highway will hold celebrations in honor of the AICan's big 75. Check out the Alaska Highway Road Show, a series of exhibits and musical performances that celebrate the major route's passage through Canada. In Dawson Creek, the Peace-Liard Regional Arts Council has launched a 75th Anniversary Song Contest. On the U.S. segment of the highway, the town of Delta Junction has begun planning a series of celebrations, including recognition of the highway's African American laborers.

Start planning your trip today! In the coming weeks, the Good Sam blog will feature articles designed to help you get the most out of your visit to Alaska. We'll also provide helpful tips in making the epic trek north. So buckle up and start celebrating the AICan's 75th birthday.

FOLLOWING THE ALCAN NORTH TO ALASKA—A FUN-FILLED ITINERARY



Mile 0 of the Alaska Highway is in Dawson Creek, British Columbia. Just getting to this starting point, however, is a memorable journey unto itself. The fun-filled itinerary below takes RVers on a journey from Calgary, Alberta, to the AICan's starting point. It then snakes along the AICan all the way to Fairbanks, Alaska, an epic trip that encompasses some of Canada's most amazing attractions.

Taking the long road to Alaska

Drive 2,053.6 miles • 43 hours, 51 minutes



1. Calgary

Starting Point • Entertainment, History, Outdoor Recreation

Although the 1988 Winter Olympics have long come and gone, Calgary's Canada Olympic Park is still operational and open to the public. The sprawling facility hosts summer activities that include mountain biking, zip lining and miniature golf. During July, the Calgary Stampede lives up to its rowdy reputation as the world's largest rodeo. Pedestrians and cyclists will enjoy the city's Peace Bridge (below), which spans the Bow River.

RECOMMENDED STOPOVERS

Bow RiversEdge Campground – Cochrane, AB – (403) 932-4675



2. Jasper

254.5 miles, 5 hours, 35 minutes • History, Nature, Outdoor Recreation

Jasper National Park is one of Canada's most popular attractions, but the small town that sits at the park's entrance has lots of charms of its own. Check out Pyramid Lake (below) near town, a popular spot for picnicking and boating. Nearby Patricia Lake inside Jasper National Park was the site of a secret World War II aircraft carrier experiment. Also in town is the Jasper Visitor Centre and the boarding point of the Jasper Skytram, Canada's longest and highest aerial tram.



RECOMMENDED STOPOVERS

Hinton/Jasper KOA – Hinton, AB – (888) 562-4714

3. Grande Prairie

251.7 miles, 5 hours, 21 minutes • History, Nature, Outdoor Recreation, Sports

Known as “Swan City” because of its position near the migratory route of trumpeter swans, Grand Prairie has plenty of biking and walking paths, some of which span the circumference of nearby Crystal Lake. Additional attractions include the lovely Dunes Golf and Winter Club just south of town and Jurassic World, one of the world’s most abundant dinosaur bone beds and site of the recently launched Phillip J. Currie Dinosaur Museum.

RECOMMENDED STOPOVERS

Camp Tamarack RV Park – Grande Prairie, AB – (877) 532-9998

Grande Prairie Regional Tourism Association – Grande Prairie, AB – (866) 202-2202

4. Dawson Creek

83.9 miles, 1 hour, 54 minutes • Entertainment, History

At the very start of the Alaska Highway (Mile 0, to be exact), the little town of Dawson Creek is a popular stopping-off point for travelers making the journey north. The downtown area features a number of cultural attractions, including the Dawson Creek Art Gallery in a repurposed granary, a pioneer museum, a railroad museum and the Alaska Highway House, which recounts the story of the construction of the famous highway.



5. Watson Lake

601.4 miles, 12 hours, 44 minutes • Nature, Quirky

An interesting break from the region’s numerous tree-filled woodlands, Watson Lake offers its own kind of timberland: a Sign Post Forest (above) that features some 77,000 signs with the names of places from across the planet. Most of these signs have been contributed by visitors. Other attractions include the Northern Lights Space and Science Centre, which features simulated versions of the Northern Lights in the summer months.

6. Whitehorse

273 miles, 6 hours, 3 minutes • Entertainment, History, Nature, Sports

The capital of Yukon and the province's largest city, Whitehorse has earned the title of Canada's "Wilderness City" because of its beautiful natural surroundings dominated by mountains and lakes. The little city also has plenty of festivals throughout the year, including the Adäka Cultural Festival, which focuses on the arts and traditions of the region's First Nations people and the Yukon Quest, a 1,000-mile dogsled race between Yukon and Alaska.

7. Fairbanks

589.1 miles, 12 hours, 14 minutes • History, Nature, Outdoor Recreation

You've made it! Fairbanks is the end of your journey to Alaska, but only the beginning of a host of adventures, including Denali National Park and Preserve, the Chena River State Recreation Area and several local museums. Visit during June to enjoy the Midnight Sun Festival.

ALASKA HIGHLIGHTS—TAKE THE ALCA TO ADVENTURE



The Alaska Highway is just the start of the adventure. Once in Alaska, a host of recreational opportunities greet visitors. Here are just a few of the fun things to do in America's Last Frontier.

Fairbanks : The Heart of Adventure

With the midnight summer sun shining nearly 24 hours a day, Fairbanks is bursting with energy and things to do. Pan for gold, float the Chena River, mingle with reindeer, cool off in an ice museum, take a refreshing hike, look for wildlife, or be inspired by art galleries, museums and historic sites.



During the aurora season, August 21 – April 21, you have a great chance to see the shimmering light of the aurora borealis along with other activities and events unveiled during the winter.

Fairbanks is the gateway to Denali, Interior and Arctic Alaska. Denali National Park is two hours away; the Arctic Circle is a six-hour drive; villages without road access, refuges and parks are a short flight away.

Make the Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center your first stop in Fairbanks. Not only beautiful but informative, the Center has brochures, maps, free Wi-Fi and telephone, and local walking and driving tours. Serving as the regional visitor facility, the friendly and knowledgeable staff can answer all your questions. The free 9,000-square foot exhibit hall features outstanding displays and dioramas showcasing Interior Alaska's people, wildlife, landscapes and seasons. Enjoy free films and programs on Alaska's natural and cultural history. The Center also has an artisan's workshop, a planning area for outdoor excursions and an Alaska Geographic Store.

Once a gold rush boomtown, now called the "Golden Heart City," visitors find Fairbanks inviting, engaging and awe-inspiring-the hear of the last frontier.

For more information, check out [Explore Fairbanks](#).



Alaska Halibut and Salmon Fishing Charters In Ninilchik

If you want to enjoy the best of Alaska's fishing with the finest fishing outfitter, you have found the right place. Since 1992, Afishunt Charters has offered premium Alaska fishing charters for halibut and salmon and has become famous for legendary customer service, outstanding equipment and

reasonable prices. With seven boats, the company spans the entire Kenai Peninsula, the heart of Alaska's prime fishing grounds. Choose giant halibut in Cook Inlet, big king salmon in the Kasilof or Kenai Rivers, and more!

Afishunt can provide the widest variety of fishing experiences for you and your group. Whether you want a single day of ocean fishing for barn-door halibut, or a weeklong package including ocean, river and fly-in excursions, Afishunt "can do" for you.

The company now has four ocean boats plying the waters, including the largest 10-person boats in Ninilchik. Enjoy a serene drift boat trip on the Kasilof River in one of our three drift boats, or take a powerboat trip on the world famous Kenai River for Junker king salmon.

Be sure to visit the specials page for the latest Single Trip and Package Deals. Make your Reservation on our Reservations Page.

For more information, check out [Afishunt Charters](#).



Prince William Sound Glacier & Wildlife Cruises

From Fairbanks, take the Richardson highway down to Valdez, where outstanding fishing and scenery await adventurers.

The Stephens family and staff have been operating in Prince William Sound out of Valdez since 1971. Our captains have an average of 25 years of experience, and all of our staff are Alaskan residents anxious to share the culture, land and wildlife that make us proud to call Prince William Sound our home.

Spectacular Glaciers

With multiple departures daily, Stan Stephens Cruises offers travelers the chance to choose their ideal tour of eastern Prince William Sound. Columbia Glacier, south central Alaska's largest tidewater glacier, is featured on our 6 1/2 hour tour. Our 9 1/2 hour cruise features Meares Glacier, an advancing and very actively calving glacier.

Complete Tours Featuring Glaciers, Wildlife and History

Stan Stephens Cruises offer more than just a glacier cruise — operators take the time to share ALL of Prince William Sound! With Stan Stephens Cruises, you can see amazing wildlife; whales, sea lions, puffins, seals, sea otters, eagles, goats, bears and more. Stan Stephens Cruises will inform you

with stories about the history of the area. Topics include Alaskan Natives indigenous to the Sound, gold & copper mining, commercial fishing, the 1964 Alaskan Earthquake and the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. Learn about the historical events surrounding the 1989 oil spill, and it's aftermath.

Superior Comfort and Service during your Cruise

On board a Stan Stephens Cruise, you will receive the best customer service available on a day cruise in Alaska. All tours include complimentary meals, coffee, tea and lemonade. Also, a small snack bar is found on each vessel. You will enjoy your meal with gusto because the waters of eastern Prince William Sound are known as some of the calmest in Alaska.

If your travel in Alaska includes a visit to Valdez, consider a glacier and wildlife cruise of beautiful Prince William Sound!

7 TIPS FOR YOUR ALASKA HIGHWAY TRIP



Crossing 1,422 miles of rugged terrain, the Alaska Highway is unlike any road trip that you'll experience. Long distances between towns, wide stretches of daylight during summer and unpredictable weather pose unique challenges to even the most seasoned RVers.

With this in mind, it's important to be prepared. The following tips will help you make the trip north without a hitch.

- **Fueling.** It's recommended that you "drive on the top half of your tank." Plan for stretches of 100 to 150 miles without fuel stops, and fill 'er up whenever you get the chance.

- **Keep your camera handy.** The scenery along the highway is stunning. Stay on the alert for wildlife sightings along the way.
- **Pay more at the pump.** Expect higher fuel prices, especially in the more remote stretches of the road.
- **Fun in numbers.** Prefer to travel with like-minded adventurers? Fantasy RV Tours offers a [Good Sam members-only caravan](#) to Alaska that starts in Washington state.
- **Watching the weather.** The northern part of the Alaska Highway begins thawing in late May, and the weather turns cold again in September. Summers along the highway are stunning, with daylight extending past most folks' bedtimes (make sure that your windows have appropriate shading for bright summer nights). Don't be surprised by rainstorms at the height of summer. Pack clothes for rain and chilly weather just in case.
- **Road conditions.** Today's paved Alaska Highway looks nothing like the rugged road of the 1940s, but it's a good idea to stay abreast of changing driving conditions. Travel with a [GPS navigation system](#) that informs you of potential traffic problems and construction delays. You can also consult road report phone numbers, websites and weather cams that show stretches of the road so that you can look ahead (see below). Be aware that cellular reception may be spotty in some areas.