



Let us help you prepare for your trip to **Alaska!**

Weather

Alaska is a big state, stretching from east to west as wide as the continental U.S., and almost as far from north to south. Consequently, there is not one "Alaskan climate". Weather patterns and climate vary widely depending on where you are going and what time of year it is.

- **Southeast Alaska** tends to be very wet in the Winter from September through January but not especially cold. Average lows through the winter are in the 20's-30's, not unlike a coastal town in Washington State or New England. You will not need to pack as many warm layers for assignments here in the Winter as you would the rest of Alaska.
- In the **interior of Alaska** and on the **North Slope**, temperatures will be much colder in the winter. Average low temperatures through the winter range from -20 to -50 Fahrenheit. The further north you go, the longer it stays dark in the winter months.
- Along the **west coast of Alaska**, fog commonly rolls in throughout the year, and some areas can get very windy. These locations are also very wet, so pack good waterproof boots and gear.
- **Kodiak Island, and the majority of the Aleutian Islands** are very wet and quite cold. Traveling to these places during the Winter can be fraught with travel delays due to weather, but our Operations team and travel agents are very good at finding solutions.

The best way to know what to expect is study the area before you pack for the trip. Go online and look up the weather forecasts and climate history of the specific location you will be working. Pay attention to precipitation, wind, and temperature ranges. If you want some more information or advice, we are always here to help.

Packing Clothes

During the fall, winter or spring in almost any location, you must pack to stay warm, dry, and comfortable. Dressing warm with multiple layers, but not so tight and hot that you sweat. The below list is a great starting point:

- Moisture-wicking base layers (avoid cotton if you may be getting wet)
- Comfortable mid layers to insulate from the cold.
- A good parka or winter jacket as your outer layer in the Winter time.
- Warm moisture-wicking socks, a warm hat, scarf, face protection, warm water-proof gloves, and waterproof insulated boots are all a must.
- Some coastal or island locations are so windy that people will bring ski goggles for when they walk outside in the winter.

When you are at work, dress codes vary but tend to be business casual. Scrubs are always acceptable. In many locations, jeans or khakis are appropriate. Prioritize practicality and comfort when you pack for work. If you are unsure, feel free to ask the Account Executive who helped place you in the assignment.

Cell Phone

If you are working anywhere in Alaska outside the major cities (Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, and Sitka), it is very likely that your cell phone will not have service. Major cell service providers do not have good service in remote Alaska. The best cell coverage by far is provided by GCI, a small cell provider based out of Alaska. If you must take a bush plane, ferry, or helicopter to get to your destination, it is a good sign you might want a GCI phone. Feel free to ask your Account Executive for more information.

- Links to buy a GCI phone, SIM card and phone plans:
 - <https://www.gci.com/mobile/plans/fastphone>
 - <https://www.gci.com/about/store-locations>

Internet

All clinics will have Internet, but it can become spotty due to weather. In some of our more remote areas, Internet in the housing can be unreliable or absent altogether. If you are planning a long assignment in a remote part of Alaska, you may want to bring entertainment like a book you've been wanting to read or some movies you like. Many housing options for Alaska assignments have TV's with DVD players or Internet in the room. If you get a GCI phone for your trip, there are many parts of Alaska where you can get data to your phone and have Internet anywhere that way.

If you are traveling to a remote location, it's also a good idea to come with your cell phone prepared for wi-fi calling and texting. In many villages, you will have access to Internet but may not have cell service.

Packing Food

Alaska truly is the "Last Frontier", and on the frontier, well-stocked grocery stores are a rarity. There are three major cities in Alaska where you will find relatively inexpensive groceries: Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Juneau. If you are going to be flying into a remote village, you will most likely land in one of these hubs before departing. While you are in these cities, we highly recommend stocking up especially on perishables and bringing them with you to your assignment. There are bag limits so ask your Account Executive how many bags you will be allowed or reimbursed if you are unsure.

Some villages in Alaska will have a convenience store which may carry basic canned food items but these stores will be limited and expensive as everything must be flown in. You will save money and eat better if you stock up before departing. There is a Fred Meyer in both Fairbanks and Anchorage that offer Bush Orders. You can order on-line and they will ship to your location. Please note that these shipments go by air and your delivery may be delayed so use caution when ordering perishables this way. You will save money by purchasing supplies in a major city and shipping to your work location *even if you are not reimbursed for the baggage*.

Here are some links to grocery stores for your reference:

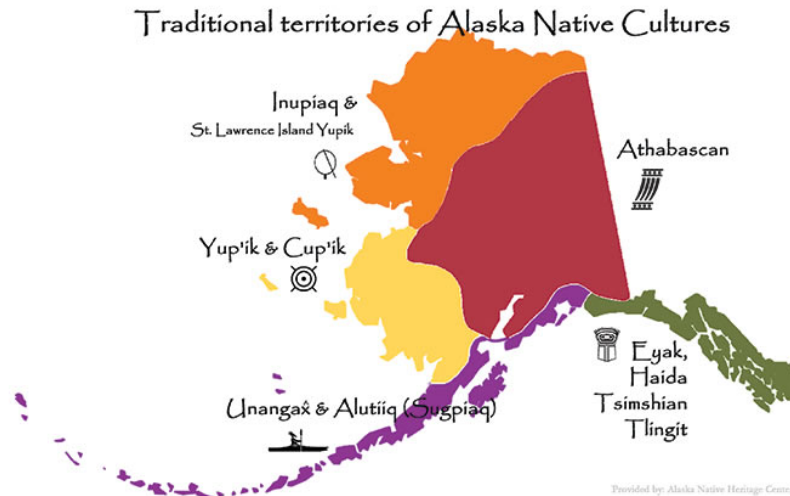
- Fred Meyer, Anchorage
 - https://www.fredmeyer.com/stores/details/701/00011?cid=loc_70100011_gmb
- Costco, Anchorage
 - <https://www.costco.com/warehouse-locations/anchorage-AK-63.html>
- Fred Meyer, Fairbanks
 - <https://www.fredmeyer.com/stores/details/701/00485>
- Fred Meyer, Juneau
 - <https://www.fredmeyer.com/stores/details/701/00158>

Alcohol

Many tribal communities in Alaska have restrictions on alcohol. You may be working in a "dry" village, where there is a total prohibition on alcohol. You may be in a "damp" community where there are heavy restrictions on alcohol sales. In many cases, it is illegal for you to bring alcohol with you into the village. Be mindful of this when you travel to Alaska and look up the local laws before attempting to purchase or transport alcohol.

Alaska Native Culture

There are many distinct Native cultures. If you go into your assignment with an openness to that culture and willingness to learn, you will have a very rich experience. If you see the map below, you can very roughly group these tribes and cultures into five major groups: the Inuit (Eskimo), Athabascan, Yupik, Aleuts, and the Tlingit. There are many tribes completely distinct from those five major groups, but this is a good starting point. When you take an assignment in Alaska, it will be worth your effort to spend some time studying the specific peoples who inhabit the location where you will be working.



The Alaska Native experience is different from the Native American experience in the lower 48 in a number of ways. One significant difference is there are almost no "Indian Reservations" in Alaska, the only official reservation being in Metlakatla on the Southeast corner of the state. Congress passed the ANSCA in 1971 and it operated as a settlement for land claims (and use of Native land) in Alaska, extinguishing any reservations that existed. Alaska Natives live throughout the state, and share the land their ancestors lived in. Because of this, Alaska Native culture is central to the vast majority of communities in the state.

English is the primary language in Alaska, so you shouldn't run into a language barrier. It will be rare even to find village elders who do not speak English. Thankfully, there have been successful recent efforts to revitalize the tribal languages with the Alaska Native children of this generation to keep those languages alive.

A final word on Alaska Native culture, it is very important to the communities you work in, and very important to WMS, that Alaska Native cultures are treated with value and respect. These are very tight-knit communities, and you are a part of that community while you are there. Many of our providers have made lasting friendships with the Alaska Native people in the community. We have received pictures from providers of hunting ceremonies they took part in, and many other great cultural experiences. If you go into these communities with an open mind and open heart, you will not regret it.