

Boat Company FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)

What kind of clothes do I bring? Will I need to 'dress' for dinner?

We are very casual aboard – comfort rules throughout Alaska – you can leave your sequins and tight collars at home. Please see our “What to pack” list for suggestions but the emphasis is on layers – because the weather can be variable.

Do I really need rubber boots and rain gear?

South East Alaska – the Inside Passage – is a temperate rain forest where rain is possible year-round. A lightweight waterproof shell and rain-pants, layered over your pants, shirt and jacket or sweater, will ensure your comfort during the many onshore activities we offer. A light daypack will hold excess layers as you shed them during the course of your activities.

In the wilderness areas you'll be visiting, there are almost no docks and few manicured trails. When you go ashore to hike and fish the crew will bring you in by skiff as close to the beach as is safe, but you may have to step over the side and 'slosh' the last few feet up onto the beach. For this reason, we recommend rubber boots that reach at least half way up your calf. Many guests beach walk or hike in their boots as well, but if you prefer, you may bring hiking boots or sturdy shoes, change into them on the beach, and leave your boots with the skiff for the return trip.

Trip insurance – is it worth the extra cost?

You've spent a lot of time and effort planning a wonderful trip to Alaska. Unforeseen circumstances could spoil your 'once-in-a-lifetime' adventure. Travel insurance can cover a number of contingencies:

- An illness or family emergency forcing you to cancel before departure but after the Boat Company refund date (12/31)
- A flight delay or cancellation en route which causes you to literally 'miss the boat' (float-plane charters typically run \$750)
- Lost luggage - or even late luggage that 'misses the boat'
- Emergency medical evacuation in a wilderness area - probably the most expensive circumstance your regular insurance may not cover – leaving you or your loved ones liable for thousands of dollars. InsureMyTrip.com offers a convenient quote calculator and links to a number of providers. We also include a list of providers – with contact information – in the guest folder you receive at booking.

Can we celebrate a special occasion aboard?

Yes. Just let us know before you embark and the crew will be primed and ready to celebrate that anniversary, graduation, promotion, retirement or birthday in style.

Should I worry about seasickness?

The good news is, you'll be traveling on the sheltered waters of the inside passage. You'll always be at anchor each night in a protected bay. The captain will usually move the boat in the mornings and then only for a few hours at a time – we want you to have plenty of opportunity to get off the boat – kayak, hike, fish - and see Alaska up close.

That said, if you are prone to motion sickness, it's best to consult your physician beforehand and choose either a prescription or OTC remedy. Remember: *"it's better to have it and not need it, than to need it and not have it."* Your crew will make every effort to warn you if rough water is expected – so you can take your chosen medication **before** you experience any symptoms – when it's most effective.

What's the best kind of luggage to bring?

Space is somewhat limited onboard – but each stateroom has a roomy double wardrobe and several drawers – so 1 or 2 large soft-sided pieces (like duffel bags) per-person will fit. After unpacking they will lie flat on the bottom of the wardrobe – out of the way.

Tipping/Gratuities: what's the “right” amount and how is it usually handled?

Recognition for exceptional service is entirely at your discretion, which is why the Boat Company does not impose an “automatic gratuity program” such as those found aboard most cruise ships. Each guest who wishes to recognize the crew in this manner usually gives the Captain an average of between \$250 and \$300 for each person in their party (in cash, check or travelers checks) at the end of the trip. Gratuities are shared by all crewmembers. Please consider the level of service you have received and adjust this amount accordingly.

Are there any other additional costs?

- Roundtrip airfare to Alaska
- Travel insurance
- Fishing licenses for guests 16 and older – which can range from as little as 3 hours up to several weeks – may be purchased on line before you even go to Alaska or from the Captain onboard (cash or checks)
- The possibility of a fuel surcharge

Is there telephone, fax or e-mail access available aboard?

Our boats carry communications gear to conduct official ship's business and to ensure your safety, but unfortunately we do not have phones or Internet access for guests.

Your cell phone may get intermittent service – when the boat is out in a main channel and in range of a tower. (This is how the office communicates with the boats – by leaving voice-mail on the ship's cell phone.) A laptop equipped with a cellular wireless card (check with your provider) will get the same intermittent access as a cell phone – our experience has also been that these connections are at 'dial up' speeds.

Is there television aboard?

There is an entertainment center with a TV-VCR- DVD unit in the main salon as well as a few portable DVD players on each boat – for viewing movies from the ships' collection and naturalist presentations. We have recently added a TV-VCR-DVD unit to the upper deck observation lounge on each boat so that kids can gather there while the adults socialize in the main Salon. In the remote wilderness areas we cruise, broadcast reception is unavailable.

What amenities does the Boat Company provide in my cabin?

Your cabin is 'move-in' ready with down or hypoallergenic bedding, a private bathroom with toilet, sink (potable water), stall shower, shampoo, conditioner, soaps, lotion and hair dryer. 110-volt outlets in your stateroom accommodate electric razors, camera chargers, your personal electronics, etc. Mounted on the wall is a flashlight and large, high-power binoculars for wildlife viewing.

Do you provide laundry service during the trip?

Laundry service is not available once we leave port, but the ship's drying locker may be used to dry your wet clothes. With our casual dress standard, you won't need to worry about ironing or donning a completely new outfit every day. Please see our 'What to Pack' guidelines for suggestions on planning your flexible 7-day wardrobe.

Is the tap water in my stateroom safe to drink?

All the tap water aboard is 'potable' – fresh from our reverse-osmosis water makers.

What kind of electricity is supplied? Will I need an adapter?

All the electrical outlets supply 110 volt current – the same as homes throughout North America. If you are coming from outside the United States and Canada, you may need a plug adapter for any personal electronics you bring.

What will the weather be like?

Alaska's Inside Passage – the Tongass National Forest – is a temperate rain forest so rain is possible year-round. However, it is not 'the frozen north'. During our cruising season, rainfall averages about 3½" per month during May and June, trending gradually upward through July and August to 7½" in September. Temperatures average in the mid 60's during the day and mid 40's at night, but has been known to go as high as the upper 80's or dip down to the 30's. The key to comfort is to dress in layers and bring a lightweight waterproof outer shell.

What about bugs – do I need to bring bug spray?

Biting insects are not as prevalent in the Inside Passage as in the Alaskan interior, i.e. Denali and they tend to peak in July. We suggest you pack your preferred brand of insect repellent – particularly if you have sensitive skin – and we will also have head nets and a variety of sprays, lotions and creams aboard. "Deep Woods OFF" and "Ultrathon" (by 3M) works well and, for some, Avon's "Skin-so-Soft" oil.

Will we see the Northern Lights?

Usually, no – in part because the summer night sky doesn't get dark enough, plus there tends to be a lot of cloud cover, and in part because you still won't be quite far enough north. That said, guests have on rare occasions reported observing pale versions of the Northern lights in September.

Will we see glaciers?

We almost always take half a day to travel up Tracey Arm, south of Juneau to see the twin Sawyer Glaciers. Tracy Arm is narrower than the entrance to Glacier Bay so we don't have to jockey for position with really big cruise ships. The glacier is just as impressive and we usually spend some time watching it calve. Weather permitting, the crew will put one or more skiffs in the water and take you in for a closer look. There are also Juneau-based outfitters who offer guided "flightseeing" tours over glaciers. Check the Juneau visitors guide or ask us for more information.

What kind of wildlife will we see?

Brown and black bear are active throughout the summer – and, as salmon runs progress, bears may often be observed stream fishing. Whales and dolphins are present all summer – especially humpbacks – our captains make a point of seeking them out and calling all hands on deck when they are spotted. Orca (killer whales) and sea otter are less common but also present all season – we'll keep our eyes peeled (and the radio tuned) as to their whereabouts. Seals are visible, hauled out on ice floes with their new pups, as we travel up Tracy Arm to view Sawyer Glacier, and we usually visit a sea lion rookery sometime during each trip. Deer, of course, and dozens of different kinds of birds – notably bald eagles, hawks and other raptors - may be observed on hikes or along the shore when at anchor.

Is smoking permitted onboard?

Smoking is not permitted indoors but is allowed on deck. Each stateroom, the observation room, wheelhouse and salon opens out onto a covered companionway.

How do I pay for my trip? Does the Boat Company accept credit cards?

The Boat Company accepts Visa, MasterCard and American Express. You may make your deposit at the time of booking without a surcharge. Subsequent payments will carry an additional 4% convenience fee.

What kind of medical treatment is available onboard?

We do not have a doctor or nurse onboard – however, at least one crewmember is a certified "Wilderness First Responder" and all the crew are current on first-aid, CPR and use of the onboard defibrillator. Each

ship carries communications gear – radio and satellite phones - and can arrange for medical evacuation in an emergency as well as Med-Link remote communication with a physician. Each ship also carries oxygen for emergency use. We recommend that you to carry your regular medications in your hand luggage - including extra supplies to cover any unexpected circumstances or travel delays. If you have received treatment for any significant medical condition, please carry a recent report along with any pertinent information from your physician.

We also urge you to review your health insurance coverage before your trip. Many policies, including Medicare, may not cover services or hospitalization under certain circumstances or emergency evacuation. We strongly recommend that you secure travel protection and include a list of providers in your guest folder. Compare the coverage and rates to determine which is best for you.

I have special dietary concerns. Can they be accommodated?

Given enough notice – our chefs are eager to accommodate your needs and preferences. We ask that you complete the Passenger Registration form (in your guest package), which will alert the galley to any allergies or special dietary needs you may have. You may attach more detailed instructions if need be.

Who will my fellow passengers be?

Boat company passengers hail from all over the world – though predominantly from North America – and are generally easygoing, adventurous and curious about the Inside Passage and the Tongass National Forest. More than 70% each year are either returning guests or have been referred by previous passengers. We work hard to create congenial groups on each trip and can give you an overview of the others who will be traveling with you.

I'm not much of a “joiner”—do I have to participate?

There are no required activities onboard. You could happily spend your entire trip curled up in the Salon with a good book – just savoring the view – or watch it all go by from a chair up on the Skiff deck; while sipping coffee or a chilled glass of wine. The crew will meet regularly with guests – usually at mealtimes – to apprise you of the best current opportunities for hiking, kayaking, fishing and wildlife viewing – but you are free to choose.

I don't know anything about fishing – will someone help me?

You bet! Our deckhand/guides are eager to help novices. They can get you started, but their primary job while ashore in bear country is to ensure group safety, and sometimes this won't allow for dedicated individual attention.

Can I bring the fish I caught in Alaska home with me?

Yes! The crew will clean; fillet & vacuum seal your fish before stowing it in the walk in freezer on board. At the end of your trip, they will pack your catch in an insulated easy to carry box for your flight home. If you are staying over at the end of your trip at one of the Westmark Hotels, the hotel will store your fish overnight in their freezer until you are ready to leave for the airport.

I'd like to bring my kids or grandkids – do you provide child-care?

We do not offer separate babysitting services – however, the crew is skilled at including kids in all the activities and in tailoring hikes, fishing and wildlife to their level. On many trips, the adults find themselves drawn in to fish-printing and tide-pooling expeditions originally planned with the kids in mind – rediscovering their inner child while at the same time experiencing memorable family time together. Some families opt to bring a 'nanny' along to mind their little ones.