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# Alaska

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*Island of My Fears:*  
**A WALK ACROSS  
CHICHAGOF**





TRY THIS

Passengers aboard a Coral Princess cruise ship check out a glacier in Glacier Bay from the deck, swimming pool, and hot tub.

# 12 Free Alaskan Cruise Activities

BY AMRITHA ALLADI JOSEPH

**A** CRUISE IS AN ALL-INCLUSIVE WAY TO EXPLORE America's Last Frontier, and there's no need to spend a fortune to enjoy it.

My family went on a cruise through Alaska's Inside Passage, and we were determined to get as much bang for our buck as possible while onboard. Try these tips to give your wallet a break and create priceless memories of your time in Alaska.

## 1. Get active



Exercise may not sound fun while cruising, but most ships include fitness facilities onboard—and many of them come with spectacular views overlooking the ocean, making sweating a perk rather than a pain. While most ship gyms contain standard-issue equipment, some liners offer free yoga, strength training, or other classes. I booked an interior stateroom for our vacation, so I woke up early to catch the sunrise and whale-watch from the gym, all while burning off the calories of the bottomless buffets.

## 2. Listen to live music



Consider the price of concerts back home; at sea, this entertainment is free and still offers the same level of talent. One night, we listened to a live Latin band whose beats were so funky, listeners leapt to their feet to dance. With several styles of music

to choose from, you're bound to find something you like.

## 3. Sing karaoke



Steal the spotlight and show off those pipes at karaoke. The crew and audience onboard are encouraging, and song selections range from classics to country. Feeling less adventurous? Grab a partner to share the stage with you for a duet.

## 4. Play games



Let your competitive spirit loose with Ping-Pong, billiards, or trivia contests. Some activities promise prizes for winners, but beyond that, they help you engage with fellow travelers. In our case, we each took turns at table tennis against my dad, but we were no match for the topspin on his forehand.

## 5. Get cultured



Pick up a new skill or interest at sea through workshops offered at no cost. I convinced my husband to join me for salsa lessons, and one afternoon we studied impressionism through a presentation at the art gallery. Another day, Mom and I gawked at twinkling tanzanite crystals during a lecture on gemstones, after which we each walked away with a complimentary one-carat sapphire just for attending.



Sea lions amass on a popular haulout in Glacier Bay. Wildlife watching from a cruise ship might net you whales, sea otters, birds, porpoises, and more.



## 6. Search for wildlife

While paid whale-watching excursions might guarantee marine life sightings, you can also view wildlife from the ship. From both the deck and heated indoor spaces, we searched for signs of humpbacks in the water: flukes skimming the surface, breaks in the waves, and telltale blows of mist.

## 7. Catch stunning views

Maximize the long daylight hours to take in views of the glaciers, peaks, and narrow inlets of Alaska. Pack layers of clothing so you can comfortably spend time on deck. Depending on the time of year and clarity of skies, leverage the remoteness at sea for stargazing or to catch a glimpse of the northern lights.

## 8. Watch a movie

From rom-coms to action-thrillers to animated flicks to catch with the kids, cruises are equipped with movies of all genres. Showtimes (along with ratings) are listed in the ship's daily newsletter, and some theaters are located outdoors—so you don't have to worry about missing anything en route to the next port. Cruise goers can cozy up under blankets to watch a film with loved ones in the open air under the night sky, or perhaps watch a flick from the pool or hot tub during the afternoon.

## 9. Dance

Cut a rug at one of the nightclubs, or follow less fancy footwork at a daytime Zumba class with the family. Since the bars and lounges feature live music and DJs, you'll find numer-

ous chances to trip the light fantastic. Plus, hitting the dance floor will burn off the cocktails and desserts you consume onboard.


## 10. Enjoy water activities

Take a dip in one of the many swimming pools, or use the Jacuzzi or sauna to unwind. On our ship, there was an adults-only, heated thalassotherapy pool infused with therapeutic minerals and massage jets. After a night of dancing, my sister and I slipped away from the kids to soak our sore muscles and relax for a while.

## 11. Go to a show

The live spectacles rival Cirque du Soleil or the Lido in Paris. Spend an evening after dinner to marvel at the acrobatics, vocal abilities, complex dance routines, and elaborate light displays that will transport you to another world.

## 12. Learn about Alaska

Take time to attend a lecture about your destination. On our ship, two naturalists taught us about the land formations and fauna of Alaska. When we passed Glacier Bay National Park or searched for wildlife, we knew what to look for. 

*Amritha Alladi Joseph is an Atlanta-based writer and world traveler who has visited more than 20 countries, often writing about them in her extensive and informative blog: [joinmeintransit.com](http://joinmeintransit.com).*