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THE NORTH AMERICA ISSUE

Land, Sea and Air

Embark on Alaskan adventure tours from Anchorage. BY SUSAN B. BARNES

As our four-passenger plane prepared to land on a gravelly shoreline in Lake Clark National Park, one of the most remote national parks in the United States, accessible only by plane or boat, my excitement grew. Though the flight was scenic and provided a terrific perspective of the vast expanse of this part of Southcentral Alaska, my fellow passengers and I had one thing on our mind — bears!

Our flight was part of a Lake Clark National Park Bear Viewing daytrip from Anchorage with Rust's Flying Service — and view bears we did. Our guide met us at the plane upon arrival, and we took off to find the coastal brown bears — or grizzly bears — foraging for clams along the shoreline. It didn't take long for us to spot our first bears, digging their giant paws into the low tide to find a late breakfast. After a while, the two bears lumbered off into a pasture for a bit of repose. Once they left, we walked down the beach and spied a young bear perched on an outcropping, as interested in watching us as we him. During our time in the park, we saw perhaps a dozen or so bears, going about their day without paying us any mind at all. What a thrill!

In addition to taking flight, visitors will find plenty of land- and water-based tour opportunities from Anchorage. One option is to board the Alaska Railroad and travel north or south for a day-long excursion. If traveling north, ride the train to the small town of Talkeetna and take a jetboat adventure; you may even peep Denali — the highest mountain peak in North America — en route.

For an Alaskan backcountry adventure, hop off the train at the Spencer Glacier Whistle Stop and join a guide for a nature walk, go ice climbing or raft on a glacial river. When your outing is over, wait beside the tracks; wave down the train as it approaches and it will stop and pick you up to take you back to Anchorage.

Or travel south by train or car to Seward for a full day of discovery. Arrive in the coastal town and depart on a cruise that will take you into Resurrection Bay and Kenai Fjords National Park. There you'll glide past glaciers and likely spot whales, seals, puffins and other wildlife along the way.

However you choose to explore Southcentral Alaska, Anchorage serves as a terrific starting point.



Bear Spotting:
Rust's Flying Service (above), and grizzly bears (left)

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