

Winter Alaska: Northern Lights & Iditarod

For Jewish Singles in their 40's, 50's & 60's

March 1-9, 2018

Led by Bill Cartiff



Thursday, March 1: ARRIVE ANCHORAGE

- Located in Southcentral Alaska on the shores of **Cook Inlet**, Anchorage stands as a sophisticated metropolis in the midst of rugged wilderness. **Anchorage** is the largest city in Alaska, where half of the state's residents live. It is one of the only places in Alaska with all the modern fixtures of American life, such as a modern performing arts center, gourmet restaurants and shopping malls. Moose can often be seen in urban parks and the city is home to North America's largest floatplane base, Lake Hood.
- Upon arrival, you will transfer on your own to your centrally-located downtown hotel which is located within walking distance of many features.
- This afternoon, we'll join together for a welcome program and orientation followed by a very special kickoff event; reservations for the **Iditarod Mushers Banquet**. Beginning at 5:30 pm, we will have a chance to meet and interact with many past and present mushers. Feel the excitement build as the mushers draw starting positions for Saturday's race start!

Overnight in Anchorage

(D)

Friday, March 2: ANCHORAGE - TURNAGAIN ARM – GIRDWOOD - ALYESKA

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- This morning, we meet our guide and begin our first full day of our Alaska adventure. We begin with a brief panoramic tour of **Anchorage** before heading along the **Turnagain Arm** to the mountain community of **Girdwood**. Originally named Glacier City, Girdwood was founded as a gold mining town at the turn of the century. The town was moved 2 ½ miles up the valley after the devastating Good Friday Earthquake of 1964, when the land under the original town site subsided into Turnagain Arm, putting much of the town below high tide. This quaint town has evolved from a mining town into Alaska's only year-round resort community.
- First, we visit the **Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center**, a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving Alaska's wildlife through public education. AWCC takes in injured and orphaned animals from the wild and provides spacious enclosures and quality animal care. Animals that cannot be released into the wild are given a permanent home at the center.

- **The Alyeska Resort** is featured by the **Aerial Tramway** that takes visitors 2,300 feet up **Mt. Alyeska** to a viewing deck that provides breathtaking panoramic views of majestic mountains, hanging glaciers, icy streams, and towering spruce trees. The observation deck is a perfect place to enjoy the view while having our included **lunch** at the **Bore Tide Deli**.
- We conclude with an awesome drive back to Anchorage, where some free time or your choice of optional activities will be made available for the remainder of the day.
- Tonight, join us for a short but sweet private group **Shabbat service**. Then, “follow-the-leader” to dinner or feel free to have an evening on your own.

Overnight in Anchorage

(B, L)



Saturday, March 3: ANCHORAGE - IDITAROD CEREMONIAL START

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- After breakfast at your hotel, step out onto the streets of Anchorage to experience the pageantry and excitement of the **ceremonial start of the Iditarod**. You will have the opportunity to say hello to mushers as they prepare their dogs for the **Last Great Race on Earth** and then cheer the mushers on as they take off down 4th Avenue.
 - At the conclusion of the race, enjoy the **Fur Rondy Carnival** and watch the **Running of the Reindeer**. If you are feeling gutsy, sign up at the Egan Center and run with the Reindeer yourself!
 - Later, enjoy some free time or your choice of optional activities.
 - Tonight, you may choose to “Follow the Leader” to dinner.

Overnight in Anchorage

(B)

Sunday, March 4: ANCHORAGE – WASILLA – WILLOW - IDITAROD OFFICIAL START - TALKEETNA

- Grab & go an early breakfast on your own this morning, then we head north to **Willow** for the **re-start (official start) of the Iditarod**.
- En route we will make a stop at the **Iditarod Headquarters & Museum** in Wasilla (yes, Sarah Palin’s hometown) and learn more about the Last Great Race on Earth.
- We continue on to Willow to watch the mushers begin their 1,000 mile journey to Nome, from across frozen Willow Lake. Starting at 2:00pm, one musher and their team of dogs will exit the urban Alaska countryside every two minutes, heading for the great wilderness. Along the way, mushers will encounter mountainous terrain, freezing temperatures, bone chilling winds and hundreds of miles of open tundra.
- After all the excitement, we travel to the uniquely Alaskan "Northern Exposure" town of **Talkeetna**, where we’ll have some time on our own to enjoy this small art community and then dine on some local fare for **dinner**.

Overnight in Talkeetna

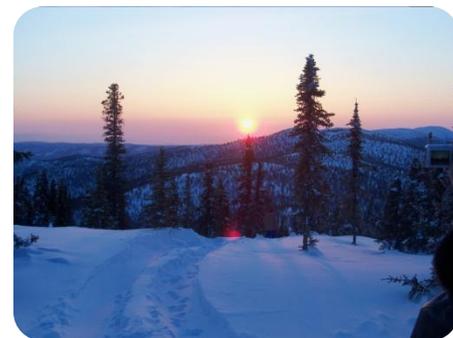
(D)

Monday, March 5: TALKEETNA - DENALI NATIONAL PARK - CHENA HOT SPRINGS

- Breakfast on own, then check out of our hotel.
- We depart Talkeetna. Our journey takes us into the Alaska Range along the border of **Denali National Park**, where we will have awesome views of mountains, old gold rush towns, frozen rivers, open tundra and deep canyons.
- Upon arrival at Denali National Park, we will enjoy a true winter adventure. A park ranger will meet our group at the Visitor's Center and provide us with a privately guided **2-hour snowshoe trek** or hike into the park (snowshoeing is dependent on snow conditions).
- Departing Denali, we'll provide a **picnic lunch** aboard our coach as we continue our journey.
- We travel to **Chena Hot Springs**, which was discovered by brothers Robert and Thomas Swan, gold miners who learned that a U.S. Geological Survey crew had seen steam rising from a valley along the upper Chena River in 1904. Our time at Chena Hot Springs offers a myriad of choice activities that will stir your adventurous spirit as well as relax and refresh your body. A Hot Springs pool pass will provide you with unlimited use of the resort's main feature during your entire stay.
- We check in to the resort and have time to refresh.
- In the early evening, we enjoy a guided tour of the **Aurora Ice Museum**, the world's largest year-round ice environment. It was created from over 1,000 tons of ice and snow, all harvested at the resort. The museum was completed in January 2005 and stays a cool 25° F (-7° C) inside. Keeping the museum icy cold in the heat of summer comes from the patented absorption chiller, the first of its kind in the world used for this purpose! Parkas are available free of charge to use during your tour.
- We enjoy **dinner** together this evening at our resort.
- Tonight, we will have the opportunity to indulge and relax in the essence of Chena's **hot springs**, while gazing at the sky above to see what display of the **aurora** might be in the offing.

Overnight in Chena Hot Springs

(L, D)



Tuesday, March 6: CHENA HOT SPRINGS

- This morning we enjoy an included breakfast at our resort and relax in the hot springs.
- It is the resort's desire that all guests have the most fulfilling Alaskan experience possible. There is no other sport more unique to Alaska than **dog mushing!** Nearly 100 Alaskan-bred dogs call the Chena Resort Kennel home, and they can't wait to show you what they do. After meeting the dogs and learning more about the importance of dog mushing in Alaska, off you go on your own **2-mile mushing adventure**.
- Lunch and free time on own in the early afternoon to relax in the hot springs or partake in a variety of activities and amenities offered at the resort.
- Later this afternoon, we will be treated to a **Renewable Energy Tour** to learn more about how the resort uses its geothermal energy to be a sustainable facility out in the wilderness.
- This evening, we will travel on a **Sunset Snow Coach excursion** through the beautiful winter wilderness up to a panoramic viewing mountaintop.
- **Dinner** in the lodge restaurant is included tonight.
- Tonight, we will take a short hike in the forest to the **Aurora** viewing platform in hopes of seeing the stars dancing in the sky in all their glory. Another dip in the springs is available too!

Overnight in Chena Hot Springs

(B, D)

Wednesday, March 7: CHENA HOT SPRINGS - FAIRBANKS

- Breakfast is included at our resort.
- Delight in one last dip in the hot springs this morning before checking out of the resort.
- We travel to **Fairbanks** and delve into the sights and sounds of this historic city. Situated at the heart of the Tanana River Valley, Fairbanks is a city that combines modern amenities with a quintessentially Alaskan frontier spirit. Commonly known as the “Gateway to the Arctic,” the second-largest city in Alaska has a colorful history dating back to the late 1800s and the discovery of gold in the area. Located near the state’s epicenter, Fairbanks has the widest temperature range of any city on Earth, with a variance of over 150 degrees between winter’s cold and summer’s heat.
- Time in Fairbanks would not be complete without a visit to Alaska’s **Museum of the North**, located on the University of Alaska Fairbanks campus. This museum sports the state’s cultural and natural history; galleries showcasing the infamous gold rush, the history of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline, and the scientific phenomenon of the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights). We enjoy **lunch** here this afternoon.
- We check in to our hotel and have time to relax and refresh.
- This evening, we enjoy **dinner** together at a local Fairbanks restaurant.
- Late tonight, (from approximately 10pm – 2am), we will travel to a prime **aurora viewing** destination away from the city lights. Dress warmly so you can view the Northern Lights from outdoors. If you become cold, you can warm up inside the ski lodge and purchase coffee, tea and hot chocolate.

Overnight in Fairbanks

(B, D)

Thursday, March 8, 2018: EXPLORING FAIRBANKS

- Enjoy an included breakfast this morning.
- This morning, we depart the hotel and visit the log cabin homestead of **Mary Shields**, the first woman ever to cross the finish line of the Iditarod. Mary’s “**Tales of the Trails**” is a personal account of her mushing life. You will get to know this extraordinary woman as well as share the opportunity to interact with her team of dogs who are descendants of Iditarod racers and who still love the mush today.
- Lunch on own.
- We pay homage to over 70 teams of talented international artists from across the globe at the **World Ice Art Championships**. This stunning display of ice sculptures comes to life, attracting over 45,000 visitors a year; a unique, exciting (and *chilling*) activity that can only be found in the frigid north of Alaska.



- We enjoy a festive **farewell dinner** together this evening, then return to see the ice carvings after the sun sets and the art is illuminated in colored lights.
- Later this evening, return to see the completed ice sculpture all lit up.

Overnight in Fairbanks

(B, D)

Friday, March 9, 2018: FAIRBANKS - DEPARTURE

- Breakfast at our hotel.
- Today, your tour of Alaska comes to a close. Check out of hotel and travel to the Fairbanks Airport on the hotel courtesy shuttle for your flight home.

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THE MEMORIES LAST FOREVER!

**Itinerary subject to change*

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