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Alaska - A Freezing Adventure

There is no way to deny it: if you go to Alaska, you'll go back several times.

Alaska

All the way up the Yukon Trail, beyond the borders of the USA with Canada lies a bit (or rather, a lot, judging by the size of it) of Uncle Sam's land. Alaska is somewhat of a forgotten American state. It is also the last one. Lands that are mostly in the Arctic Circle, mountains as high as the Himalayas, Alaska is an ice-paradise on Earth.

Alaska is the 49th state of the USA. It was incorporated on January 3, 1959. The Alaskan population is 626,932 according to the 2000 US census. "Alaska" derives from the Aleut Alyeska ('greater land'). Its borders meet British Columbia and the Yukon Territory to the east, the Pacific Ocean and the Gulf of Alaska to the south, the Bering Sea, Bering Strait and Chukchi Sea to the west, and the Arctic Ocean and the Beaufort Sea to the north. Alaska is the largest state in the United States area-wise and the 18th largest territory on the planet.

The first Alaskan inhabitants came across the Bering Land Bridge. This extinct stretch of land used to link Russia to Alaska during the Ice Age, but today it is submerged. Its first settlers were the Inuit, Yupik Eskimos, Aleuts, Inupiaq, and many other American Indian tribes. This route is widely believed to be the one taken by all pre-Columbian settlers of America.

Alaska over the centuries became part of Russia. On April 9, 1867, the US Senate purchased it from Russia for around seven million dollars at the time (around 134 million today counting inflation).

Alaska is not bordered by any other US state. A land stretch of 500 miles of Canadian soil separate Alaska from its homeland. Alaska is, again, the largest state in area in the USA with its 570,374 square miles. Its also has the longest coastline of the other 49 states. Since it has many islands, its shoreline is very tidal. There are some areas that have a 35-foot difference between high and low tide. Alaska is also a very wet state. It has three-and-a-half million lakes just counting the ones that are 20 or more acres large. There are also enormous marshland and wetland permafrost areas, all covering 188,320 square miles, mostly in the northern, western, and south western lowlands. Sixteen thousand square miles of the land are in the form of frozen water, or glacier ice.

Alaska's main export is seafood. Agriculture there is only a fraction of the industry. It mostly attends to its internal needs within the state as it is difficult for Alaskans to import food from mainland USA. This difficulty comes from the poor transportation infrastructure to and within Alaska. This makes food prices soar compared to the food prices in mainland USA. There is also a strong military pole that grosses high on Alaskan income. They industrialize crude petroleum, natural gas, coal, gold, precious metals, etc.

The alcoholism rate is very high in Alaska. People there tend to get depressed due to the intense cold and isolation. There is also a high suicide, domestic abuse, and violent crime rate probably due to the alcohol. There is also something called "brain-drain". When students achieve recognition in the academic field they usually flee to mainland USA and never go back, leaving behind the not-so-successful students. Nevertheless, the University of Alaska has been successful in taking care of this problem. It offers the best 10 percent of high school graduates a four-year scholarship.

So you see, Alaska grows year by year in the tourism field due to the magic of its arctic land. Don't let the downside of it keep you away from seeing the beautiful side of it! You might die without ever seeing the Aurora Borealis!

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