



The Last Frontier



Fairbanks, in Alaska's vast interior, has much to offer the intrepid explorer whatever the time of year. Managing Editor **Mark Nicholls** visited its international airport – a vital communications node for the state's oil and gas industry and the gateway to natural wonders, the Arctic tundra and much more.



▲ Air North Boeing 737-2X6C(A) C-GANV (c/n 23122) arrives on stand at Fairbanks on July 8. The aircraft was ferrying oil and gas industry workers to and from Deadhorse/Prudhoe Bay on Alaska's northern coast. (Key – Mark Nicholls)

▼ Alaska Airlines is the primary carrier serving FAI, with flights to Anchorage and smaller communities within the state, and to Seattle, Washington. (AirTeamImages.com/Angelo Bufalino)

The primary direct route to Fairbanks International Airport (FAI) from Seattle takes you over some of the planet's most spectacular scenery during the three-and-a-half-hour flight.

Once there you'll be greeted by a modern terminal (opened in 2009) and, depending on the time of year, you might even find the sun beaming away at midnight... which is a very curious feeling indeed. Fairbanks is about 120 miles (190km) south of the Arctic Circle and is perfectly placed as a base from which to explore some incredible landscapes, visit a wealth of attractions and at opposite times of the year, to experience 24-hour daylight or the awe-inspiring Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights). Charters bring travellers from around the world to view the natural spectacle during the long winter nights, with visitors from Asia becoming more prevalent. Attractions and activities abound all year round and the city's airport stands ready to welcome anyone eager to venture north to enjoy them.

History

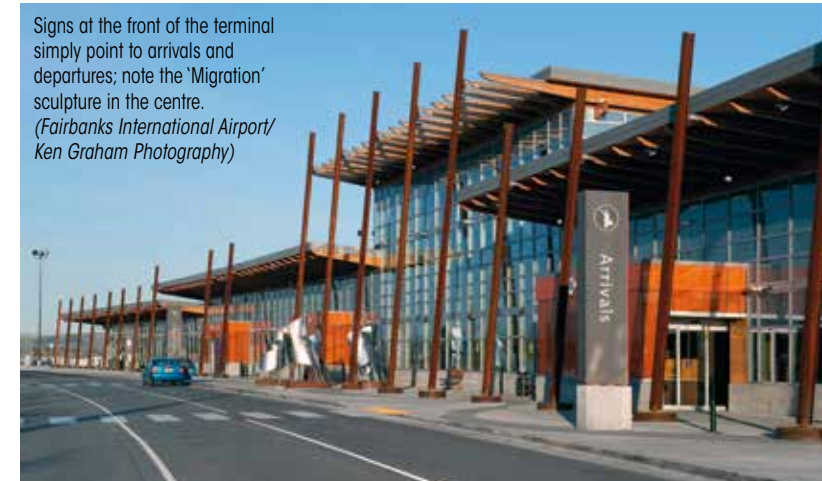
An airstrip was established at Weeks Field (also called Weeks Ball Park) to serve the growing town, as people began to explore the frozen wilderness to the north – the last frontier. The airstrip gained importance, especially after pioneering pilot Carl Ben Eielson arrived and flew Alaska's first air mail service in 1924. Most of the region's GA and commercial traffic remained concentrated at Weeks Field until the early 1950s, although some carriers also used Ladd Air Force Base, now the US Army's Fort Wainwright. Today what was Weeks Field is a residential area.

To better serve the community, Congressional authorisation was given to develop a new international airport in 1948, 4 miles (6.4km) west of the downtown area. It was finished three years later at which point all commercial flights switched across from Ladd AFB. However, infrastructure and amenities were minimal, leaving airlines to use temporary structures until a passenger terminal opened in 1954.

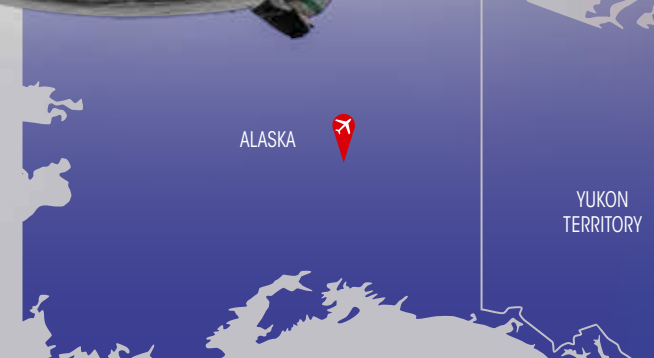
The airport was run by the federal government until Alaska was granted statehood in 1959, at which point responsibility for FAI was handed over to the state's Department of Public Works. This was later passed to the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, which remains in control today. A separate GA runway (01-19L) was added in 1971 aligned parallel to the main stretch of tarmac.

The Alaska International Airport System (AIAS) was set up in 1961 encompassing FAI and Anchorage International Airport (now Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport) with the intention of making efficient use of both facilities. There is no state funding – revenues and costs are shared by both facilities with local management in charge of day-to-day running, and the setting of landing fees and other charges fall under the jurisdiction of the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities.

Fairbanks airport's development has gone hand-in-hand with that of the city and its population. In particular, passenger numbers and cargo volumes soared between 1974 and 1977 while the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System was being built. Two years later international



Signs at the front of the terminal simply point to arrivals and departures; note the 'Migration' sculpture in the centre. (Fairbanks International Airport/Ken Graham Photography)



cargo flights started using FAI for technical fuel stops – Japan Airlines and Korean Airlines being the first. Other carriers followed suit, bringing in large freighters such as the Boeing 747, Douglas DC-8 and McDonnell Douglas DC-10. While this new business was most welcome, it placed a heavy burden on the airport’s infrastructure. The flights stopped in 1984 (many moved to the larger facility at Anchorage), but resumed in September 1990 with Lufthansa Cargo.

Terminal

The current passenger terminal, costing \$89 million, opened in 2009, replacing the original 1954 structure. Last year it handled almost a million passengers, but it could take up to four times that number. There are six airbridge gates, two for Alaska Airlines, two common-use, one for Delta Air Lines and one for ConocoPhillips’ Alaska oil industry flights. In addition there are two walk-on gates at the northern end of the building used by smaller regional aircraft serving outlying communities.

Landside the terminal is fronted by a large open-air car park, with short- and long-stay options, as well as a rental car area. To simplify drop-off and pick-up signs only indicate ‘arrivals’ and ‘departures’, rather than individual zones for airlines.

Alaska Airlines’ check-in is the most central and features self-service kiosks as well as traditional desks; other carrier’s desks are to the left. The arrival hall is at the northern end of the terminal and



is equipped with two baggage carousels.

Near the centre of the building is a Military Lounge, that is used exclusively by service personnel – the US Army’s Fort Wainwright and the US Air Force Eielson Air Force Base being nearby.

Post security the departure lounge has a souvenir shop, small cafe and other amenities. At first sight that’s it; however, this terminal was designed to be ‘smart’

▲ One of the fire and rescue department’s Oshkosh appliances parked inside its garage at the Airport Response Center. (Key – Mark Nicholls)

and its southern end can be reconfigured to section off parts of both the departure lounge and arrivals hall to handle direct international flights and international transit passengers. Shutters in the departure lounge can be lowered to seal off the end of the building, creating up to three separate sections. International travellers can then be screened by immigration, while transit passengers remain segregated. Once through immigration the second landside baggage carousel can also be isolated using drop-down walls in the arrivals hall, permitting the necessary customs inspections. At the press of a button, the walls are raised and the terminal becomes purely domestic again. A novel solution to a common problem smaller airports face when dealing with limited direct international flights.

Not surprisingly there is great concern for the environment in this part of the world and FAI’s terminal makes good use some ‘green’ technologies. For example ground water is used to cool the terminal during the summer. After the long, cold winter, ground water stays almost at freezing, even in mid-summer. It is piped to a special unit, cooling the air which is then pumped around the building – natural air conditioning.

Display cases are dotted around the terminal containing examples of the local wildlife, including a white wolf, grizzly bear and polar bear. Several works of art are also on show, among them is a metal sculpture called ‘Migration’ that greets passengers outside the entrance and inside the sterile



This aerial view of the airport (its boundary marked in orange) clearly shows the four runways: two asphalt, one gravel and one water. (Fairbanks International Airport)



During the summer the water runway is particularly busy. Privately-owned de Havilland Canada DHC-2 Beaver N73Q gets airborne. (Keith Burton)

area are displays from a local aviation museum and the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Suspended from the ceiling above one of the two baggage reclaim carousels is Curtiss JN-4D Jenny 47358, which is owned by the University of Alaska Museum of the North based in Fairbanks.

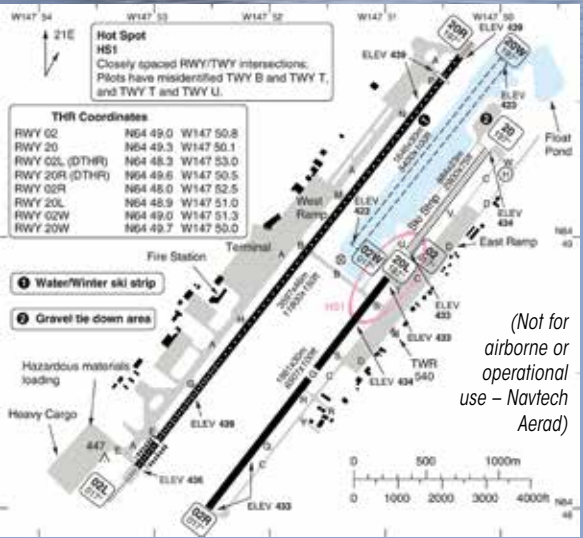
Infrastructure

Not many airports can handle every type of aircraft, whether it has large wheels (airliners), small wheels (GA), floats or skis, but FAI can. The primary Runway 02L/20R is 11,800ft (3,597m) long and can accommodate any aircraft currently flying, including the giant Antonov An-225, which has visited on occasions. It comprises grooved asphalt and both directions are ILS-equipped and have four-light PAPIs.

At the northern end of the parallel GA runway (02R/20L) on the same alignment is a gravel strip for summer use, but in winter it becomes a snow runway for ski-equipped aircraft. Between the main and GA runways is a long thin lake used by floatplanes – the ‘runway’ being marked by a series of red buoys.

Several good-size aprons on the commercial site are used by scheduled passenger flights, visiting and transient aircraft, as well as the vital regional supply flights provided by Everts Air Cargo and Everts Air Fuel. One apron at the southern end can take up to four 747s at a time. Across all aprons the airport can accommodate up to 27 747s at a time when necessary. Several old propliners are stored by Everts (as a spares source) outside its two hangars either side of the passenger terminal.

The ATC tower sits beside the GA apron and is regularly used to train new controllers – giving the latest recruits exposure to practically every kind of situation and aircraft they are likely to deal with anywhere in the US.



Airport Statistics

ICAO Code:	PAFA
IATA Code:	FAI
Location:	64° 48.54' N, 147° 51.23' W
Elevation:	439ft (134m)
Runways:	02L/20R 11,800 x 150ft (3,597 x 46m) 02R/20L 6,501 x 100ft (1,981 x 30m) 02W/20W 5,400 x 100ft (1,646 x 30m) 02/20 2,900 x 75 (884 x 23m) gravel
Frequencies:	ATIS: 124.4 Tower: 118.3 Ground: 121.9 Approach: 118.6, 125.35, 126.5
Website:	www.dot.state.ak.us/fai/ap



A cafe and bar are among the terminal’s aside facilities; the large windows give an excellent view across the airfield. (Fairbanks International Airport/Ken Graham Photography)



▲ Air Arctic Inc Piper PA-31 N59826 (c/n 31-7652077) awaits its next four passengers for one of the many summer trips provided by Northern Alaska Tour Company. (Key – Mark Nicholls)



◀ Curtiss JN-4D Jenny 47358, owned by the University of Alaska Museum of the North, is displayed above one of the baggage reclaim carousels. (Key – Mark Nicholls)

The 16-person airfield maintenance team aims to carry out routine repairs and larger jobs during the summer months because the severe cold in winter makes such work particularly difficult. As you would expect, snow clearance is vital at FAI and so two shifts of eight staff are rostered and have at their disposal two ploughs and five motorised brooms, plus an assortment of other vehicles, including de-icers. A fascinating piece of equipment, nicknamed the 'Yeti' was developed on site and is used to break up ice that can form on the taxiways after freezing rain, rendering them dangerous. The ice can produce a slippery surface on top of the super-cold rock-hard taxiways, which would otherwise be perfectly useable. The 'Yeti' is towed across the affected areas so that its rows of irregularly spaced toughened steel 'teeth' can progressively smash the ice apart for a following broom to sweep away.

Airport Response Center

A modern and extremely well equipped \$15 million Airport Response Center (ARC) came into use earlier this year. It is one of the most impressive I've ever seen, especially for a small airport. It brings together police, fire, operations, maintenance and airport badging and permit staff in one place. There are dedicated facilities for an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) if there were a major incident, allowing all related agencies

to liaise directly – helped by comprehensive communications suites to help speed up reaction times.

Airport police and fire officers (four women and 19 men) receive one-and-a-half years of extensive training (the EOC doubles as an airport training centre) and can perform several roles, perhaps policing one day and fire-fighting the next. FAI's operations officers are among the most credentialed in the airport industry. Five officers coordinate all landside and airside activity and are further responsible for airport security and wildlife mitigation. There is also a Communications Center which oversees the day-to-day communications and alarm monitoring of the airport. It receives any fire alarms from the terminal, reports maintenance indicators from around the facility and monitors the terminal via an extensive CCTV system.

Airport Manager Jesse VanderZanden told *Airports of the World*: "We take great pride in the new Airport Response Center. This facility brings together all of the airport's critical operational and emergency response teams. Housing three departments within a single facility allows a one-stop shop for our customers and creates a plethora of inter-departmental synergies."

Airlines

The primary carrier is Alaska Airlines (and its subsidiary Horizon Air), which has busy routes to Anchorage and Seattle as well as flights to smaller communities around the state. Delta Air Lines competes on the popular Seattle run and from this winter will run a year-round service using Embraer 175s. Frontier Airlines flew in from its Denver hub between 2009 and 2014, but pulled out during a route consolidation exercise. United Airlines competed on the same route but it too has withdrawn, perhaps surprisingly as it would have had a monopoly. However, it continues to fly to Chicago O'Hare.

During the summer Condor flies in once a week (Thursdays) from Frankfurt, currently the only direct European connection – the city is the smallest in the US with a non-stop link to Europe. Canada's Air North flies summer tourists between Dawson City, Yukon and Fairbanks several times a day using a Boeing 737-200. Winter charters from Asia are becoming increasingly popular – Japan Airlines has been coming to FAI for more than a decade while Korean Air flights began last year. This winter the airport will also welcome China Airlines bringing in visitors to

▼ Row after row of GA types are ranged along the large apron on the eastern side of the airport. (Key – Mark Nicholls)



Everts Air Cargo Curtiss C-46F Commando N54514 *Maid in Japan* comes in to land. The opportunity to watch and listen to these wonderful old transports is now almost exclusively restricted to Alaska. (Keith Burton)

see the Northern Lights, and enjoy numerous activities including dog sledding.

Anchorage-based Ravn Alaska runs extensive flights to many small outlying communities across the vast state, notably to the oil town of Deadhorse/Prudhoe Bay as well as to Barrow, Fort Yukon, Galena, Kotzebue, Point Hope and a connection to Anchorage. It uses a mixed fleet of small aircraft, ranging from 19-seat Beech 1900C/Ds and six Bombardier Dash 8-100s to Cessna 207s and 208s and two former Arctic Circle Air Short 330s that carry cargo. It is also the sole mail supplier to the villages of the North Slope region, and the smaller aircraft in its fleet give vital access to some of the remotest communities in the US.

Resident carrier Warbelow's Air Ventures also links isolated communities, mostly to the north of Fairbanks where many are inaccessible by road. In partnership with the Northern Alaska Tour Company its aircraft are available for a wide range of mainly summer tours, plus the popular Aurora Borealis and winter adventure trips.

Everts Air has to be the most appealing carrier based at FAI for anyone interested in aviation. It is actually two companies – Everts Air Cargo hauls freight to remote airstrips across the state, while Everts Air Fuel specialises in transporting largely petrol-based flammable and hazardous materials. Everts is Federal Aviation Regulations Part 121-certified, permitting it to provide domestic, flag, and supplemental services. The cargo arm flies mostly Douglas DC-6s along with Embraer EMB-120s, Cessna 208 Caravans, McDonnell Douglas MD-80s and of course a Curtiss C-46 Commando. A further three C-46s, four DC-6s and two Air Tractor AT-802s are used by Everts Air Fuel. Aircraft, engine and APU manufacturers

Three of the airport's snow clearance brooms stand in the short-lived summer sun. (Key – Mark Nicholls)



▲ Developed by a member of the on-site airfield maintenance team, the 'Yeti' is used to break up surface ice that can form on the airport's taxiways after freezing rain. (Key – Mark Nicholls)

occasionally bring their latest products to FAI for low temperature testing during the depths of the Alaskan winter.

General Aviation

Driving along the GA apron is akin to being at Oshkosh, with vast numbers of small types neatly lined up including what must be one of the largest concentrations of Piper Cubs and Super Cubs on the planet. The eastern side of the Float Pond has dozens of moorings for floatplanes.

Numerous small businesses and air carriers work from the eastern side of the airport, with easy access by the Old Airport Road that borders the GA area. Hangars, workshops and other ancillary buildings are often surrounded by dozens of aircraft, many stored or up for sale, alongside others on long-term maintenance. Near the control tower a North American T-6 Texan is available for warbird rides and a short distance away the Northern Alaska

Tour Company has a check-in for its various tours. Similarly, Warbelow's Air Ventures is just along the adjacent taxiway.

In the northeast corner of the airfield, off the Charlie taxiway, is an unusual find – an air camping park designed specifically for GA visitors. It is equipped with two barbecue pits, showers, toilets and two covered pavilions and this wooded area has 15 'alcoves' either side of a gravel taxiway in which to park aircraft, allowing visitors set up camp under the wings of their plane. Visitors can park for \$10 per day.

Nearby is the University of Alaska Fairbanks Community and Technical College aviation maintenance technology hangar. It boasts one of the few 12-month FAA-certified, Part-147 school programmes in the US, an associate's degree in aviation maintenance, and certificates in airframe, powerplant, or airframe and powerplant.

Prospects

Fairbanks and the North Star Borough in which it sits, have approximately 100,000 inhabitants so origin and destination traffic is fairly light. Tourists make up most of the passenger traffic, while business travellers and those employed in the oil and gas industries account for the remainder.

Yet FAI is within nine-and-a-half hours' flying time of 90% of the northern industrialised hemisphere and Europe is barely eight hours away by a direct polar flight. This is why Anchorage welcomes dozens of cargo aircraft every day for technical stops, which FAI can also accommodate. Thanks to so many tourist attractions, outdoor recreation and superb wildlife on the doorstep, accompanied by a plethora of man-made sights, there is enormous potential for increased passenger traffic.

Seven hotels are within a mile radius of the airport, several beside the Chena River which borders the western side of the facility. They provide a convenient base from which to explore the city and surrounding area with excellent road links to the city centre, barely 15 minutes away.

For airlines considering new routes, the airport is an attractive option. Delays are almost unheard of as VRF applies for 94% of the year and low-visibility hours average less than ten per year. Winds are usually very light, giving an aircraft captain the discretion of whether to arrive or depart either north or south.

Open 24hrs a day, 365 days a year, with an 11,800ft runway, enjoying excellent weather for the majority of the year (even in winter) and with a modern uncongested terminal, Fairbanks International Airport is ideally placed to welcome new airlines and their passengers to one of the most amazing regions on Earth. ✕

Acknowledgements

The Editor would like to thank Jesse VanderZanden, Airport Manager, Melissa Osborn, Chief of Operations and Angie Spear, Division Operations Manager for their assistance in preparing this article.





Fairbanks

Of all the cities I've visited over the years, Fairbanks, Alaska, has been by far the most surprising. It's not a place you often read about, giving the impression there is not much to see or do - but nothing could be further from the truth. It has a wealth of fascinating attractions and is surrounded by the vast Alaskan interior, with swathes of pine forests, mountains, rivers and lakes all waiting to be explored.

It celebrates the indigenous Indian population and promotes a 'can do' attitude - essential in America's largest and most challenging state.

I say challenging because of the climate. Fairbanks is barely 120 miles (190km) south of the Arctic Circle and being so far north makes for short summers and long cold winters. And I mean cold - the average winter temperature is -26°C to -32°C (the record is -50°C set in 1934) - yet in summer it is usually between

10°C and 21°C. The long winter effectively starts in September when the first snow usually falls, and lasts until May, leaving just three short summer months.

Fairbanks lies in the Tanana Valley on the Chena River. This means cold air often becomes trapped over the city in winter, and ice fog can form. But generally it is a dry cold, with little moisture; so in the same way the dry heat of Arizona makes the temperature more bearable, so the cold is less noticeable than it would be in damper climates.

Compensating for the cold are the spectacular displays of the aurora borealis, or Northern Lights. The natural phenomenon is visible on average more than 200 days a year, and because the city is so far north, the light show is directly overhead.

As well as being known as America's coldest city, Fairbanks is also the farthest north and one of the smallest, with a population of

around 34,000. The compact centre has only a few streets and can easily be explored in a day - it is possible to drive from the airport on the western side to the eastern side of the centre in around 15 minutes.

Despite its small size, there is plenty to see, including the Morris Thompson Cultural & Visitors Center, which is a good starting point for first-time visitors. It has an array of exhibits and information about camping, outdoor activities and local attractions, as well as helpful staff.

There is an extraordinary arch of caribou antlers close to the visitors' centre alongside the Chena River. A short walk along the river bank brings you to the Golden Heart Plaza and an aviation memorial. It commemorates the US to Siberia World War Two delivery flights by American and Russian pilots who flew much-needed US-built aircraft to the Eastern Front.

Keeping with the aviation theme, a couple

▲ Panning for riches at the Gold Dredge 8 attraction near Fox, just north of Fairbanks. (Sherman Hogue/Explore Fairbanks)

▲◀ The memorial commemorating the pilots who flew US-built aircraft to Russia as part of the World War Two Lend-Lease agreement. (All photos Key - Mark Nicholls unless stated)

▼ The spectacular aurora borealis is visible in Fairbanks for more than 200 days each year. (Sherman Hogue/Explore Fairbanks)

▲ A musher and dog team race down a frozen slough in Fairbanks during the Open North American Championship Sled Dog Race. (Jade Frank/FCVB)

► Crossing the Arctic Circle at 66° 33' 00" north in a North Aslaska Tour Company Piper PA-31.

of miles west of the city centre is the 44-acre (18ha) Pioneer Park, which celebrates Fairbank's and Alaska's heritage. The park, which features reconstructed cabins offering glimpses into the past, also has a range of shops, activities and restaurants including the Alaska Salmon Bake and its all-you-can eat nightly buffet of prime rib, fire-grilled salmon and beer-battered Alaskan cod.

Among the attractions is the Pioneer Air Museum, which concentrates on Alaska's flying heritage. Fronted by a pole-mounted Beech 18, the domed museum is quite small, meaning its artefacts are tightly packed. That said there are some fascinating items on display, including a Bell UH-1H Huey, a Noorduyn UC-64 Norseman and a Ryan PT-22. But it is the photographs that are perhaps most interesting, especially those showing the vast numbers of 'Lend-Lease' US aircraft passing through to join the beleaguered Russian Air Force during World War Two.

Staying with museums, the University of Alaska Museum of the North, on high ground to the northwest of the city is not only impressive, it also provides a great view across Fairbanks. The modern US\$42 million building opened in 2006 and is climate-controlled to protect the collection.

A mind-boggling array of exhibits helps tell Alaska's story - its culture, its history and its wildlife. Photos, artefacts, wood and ivory carvings help visitors discover 2,000 years of Alaskan art.

The museum is actively involved in education programmes, with local school children regularly using its dedicated classrooms to learn about the state's history. One of the city's best attractions is also among the hardest to find. Hidden away on Wedgewood Drive is the Fountainhead Antique Auto Museum. I've been to several car museums, but this is easily in the top two. The collection of American cars dates from 1898 to 1936 - and all except three are in full working order. Immaculate is not adequate to describe their finish, which is testament to the huge amount of work put in by the two resident mechanics and several volunteers.

What makes this museum stand out from the crowd is the superb use of historical photographs and dozens of original period costumes. The clothing has been sourced from across the US and is placed beside cars of the same vintage - a simple but effective display technique.

Apart from fast-food outlets and popular supermarkets, Fairbanks has few of

① Useful Websites

www.explorefairbanks.com
www.northernalaska.com
www.morristhompsoncenter.org
www.downtownfairbanks.com
www.uaf.edu/museum
www.riverboatdiscovery.com
www.golddredge8.com
www.fountainheadmuseum.com
www.pioneerairmuseum.org
www.pioneerpark.us
www.pumphouse.com
www.akvisit.com
www.alaska.org





The impressive Gold Dredge 8 at Fox, north of Fairbanks.

the well-known branded hotels, bars and restaurants found in the rest of the US. Local business proliferates, with dozens of cafes and restaurants unique to the area – including the Cookie Jar Restaurant, Sam's Sourdough Cafe, the Pump House, LuLu's Breads & Bagels and the Silver Gulch Brewing and Bottling Company, to name just a few.

The same is true for accommodation, with plenty of independents providing a wide range of rooms to suit all pockets. I can certainly recommend Sophie Station Suites for cleanliness, polite service and a good, quiet restaurant.

Two of the best local attractions are the Riverboat Discovery tours and the Gold Dredge 8, which tells the story of Alaskan gold prospecting. Travelling down a river on a large American riverboat is an entirely relaxing experience, but extras are thrown in, such as a Piper Cub floatplane taking off and landing right beside you, a stop beside the kennels of the late Iditarod Champion Susan Butcher to see her sled dogs in action, and then mooring to explore an Athabascan Indian village.

Here the boat's passengers are split in to three groups and escorted around three displays where Indian boys and girls (part of the boat crew) give short but informative lectures about frontier living and survival. An absolutely fascinating

experience and well worth the trip.

You can strike it rich at the Gold Dredge 8, as you get the chance to pan for gold during the tour (even I found \$35 worth!). A narrow-gauge railway takes you past several dioramas showing the evolution of gold prospecting before arriving at the main site dominated by the rusting hulk of the old Gold Dredge 8 machine. A museum section details the history of the site and Alaskan prospecting while a US\$75,000 gold nugget that was found at the site is on display at the jewellery shop inside the main building.

If you want to be more adventurous, take one of the Northern Alaska Tour Company's packages. There are several options, including fly-drive and fly-fly, which start from the firm's small terminal on the GA side of the airport. You venture north to Coldfoot on the Dalton Highway, made famous by the Ice Road Truckers TV series. The fly-drive involves a long coach trip up the Dalton to Coldfoot and then a flight back, or vice-versa.

I took the fly-fly option, which gives a great idea of the vastness of Alaska as well as providing some spectacular views of the mountains, forests, rivers and lakes. If you're sitting at the front of the Piper PA-31 you can watch the GPS readout reach 66° 33' 00" north as you cross the Arctic Circle.

Once in Coldfoot, a minibus takes you to

the tiny village of Wiseman (population 13), where resident Jack Reakoff gives an enthralling talk about, survival, hunting, basic living and life in terrifying low temperatures. It's then back to the Coldfoot truck stop and chance for a bite to eat in the famous truckers' cafe before heading across the Dalton to the small airfield and the 70-minute flight back to Fairbanks. Thoroughly recommended!

If time permits then a trip to the Denali National Park should certainly be considered (a two-hour drive). The park is home to Mount McKinley, America's highest peak, pristine rivers, and, of course, plenty of wildlife, including grizzly bears, wolves and caribou.

If you want to see the Northern Lights, then you must go in winter, but otherwise summer is the best time to visit as you can use the 24-hour daylight to best advantage. You will never be short of things to do, so if you want a truly unique experience, then I can wholeheartedly recommend a week or two in Fairbanks. ✉

Acknowledgements

The Editor would like to thank Amy Reed Geiger, Director of Communications, and Jerry Evans, Public Relations Manager of Explore Fairbanks for their hospitality and assistance in preparing this feature.

▲▲▲ The Pioneer Air Museum is crammed with fascinating photographs and artefacts.

▲▲▲ One of the world's most impressive collections of its kind is on display at the Fountainhead Antique Auto Museum.

▲▲ The sign says it all – 63 miles north of the Arctic Circle at Wiseman. The remote village is beautiful – and incredibly quiet!

▲▲▲ A rather large grizzly bear is among the exhibits at the University of Alaska Museum of the North.

▲▲ A native Alaskan Indian guide explains the various furs and their uses to her captivated audience at the Athabascan Indian village on the Chena River.