

# REGIONAL OVERVIEW



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The *Inside Passage* segment of Alaska's Marine Highway National Scenic Byway extends from Bellingham, Washington to the south along the coast of British Columbia and through the southern portion of the state called the Inside Passage due to the thousands of islands protecting the coastline from the Pacific Ocean. It terminates in Skagway at the head of the Lynn Canal, the most northern portion of the Inside Passage. This segment serves sixteen port communities, fourteen of which are in Alaska, plus Prince Rupert, British Columbia and Bellingham, Washington. From that point northwestward, the next Marine Highway segment is the *Prince William Sound and Kenai Peninsula*. The direct distance along the *Inside Passage* is over 1,045 miles, north to south. The following information provides a quick overview of this segment and its communities.

### ACCESS AND SHIP SERVICE

Access to the *Inside Passage* communities is either by Marine Highway ship from the northwest or via land from the main highway access routes at Bellingham, Washington, Prince Rupert, British Columbia, Haines and Skagway. Air service, at varying levels of frequency, is available in most communities. The Marine Highway in this segment is linked to rail service by Amtrak in Bellingham, WA and by Via Rail Canada in Prince Rupert, British Columbia.

Several ships provide service for Alaska's Marine Highway along the *Inside Passage*. They are the *M/V Kennicott*, the *M/V LeConte*, the *M/V Matanuska*, the *M/V Malaspina*, the *M/V Columbia*, the *M/V Lituya*, and the *M/V Fairweather*. The *M/V Fairweather* is the fleet's newest ship and came on line in the summer of 2004. It is designed as a fast ferry that reduces travel time by 50% and its newer design will gradually replace the aging slower ships of the fleet.

The *M/V Columbia* sails through the deep water fjords of the upper *Inside Passage*.



The *Inside Passage* is the most complicated route for Alaska's Marine Highway system to support. In addition to the main Bellingham to Skagway route, there are numerous island communities and smaller side routes that must also be served by community feeder routes. For many of these communities, the Marine Highway is their primary transportation route. As such, more ships and resources are required to cover this area.

## STATUS OF COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERS

The mainline communities in this segment served by the Alaska's Marine Highway, from south to northwest are: Bellingham (WA), Prince Rupert (BC), Metlakatla, Ketchikan, Wrangell, Petersburg, Kake, Angoon, Sitka, Juneau, Haines and Skagway. Places served only by community routes are Tenakee Springs, Pelican and Hoonah. Hollis on Prince of Wales Island and nearby communities are served by the Inter-Island Ferry Authority. A majority of the Southeast port communities in Alaska are within the 17 million acre Tongass National Forest. Each community is briefly reviewed below in order to provide a general summary of the role of the community in the system.

It should be emphasized that as of the writing of this document, Kake, Tenakee Springs and Pelican are in the midst of a community discussion to determine the degree they wish to participate in tourism development, byway planning and byway marketing. Given the uncertain nature of their involvement, they are discussed in this plan in a manner emphasizing the options they might pursue if they become involved as byway partners, but with a tone that respects the villages' right and option to remain apart from the byway if they so choose.

**Bellingham, WA** is the southernmost port for Alaska's Marine Highway. It lies equidistant between Seattle and Vancouver, British Columbia via Interstate 5. It is a popular beginning point for many leisure travelers set to explore Alaska from the Marine Highway. The terminal is located in the picturesque **Fairhaven Historic District** and provides a Victorian setting for sailing northward. The community has numerous museums including the **American Museum of Radio and Electricity**, shops, and restaurants, many that overlook **Bellingham Bay**. Bellingham is a convenient center for accessing numerous recreational opportunities including kayaking or whale watching in the **San Juan Islands** or skiing and hiking at **Mount Baker**. Interstate highways and Amtrak converge in Bellingham near the terminal. Air service is frequent into Seattle and Vancouver. Weekly Alaska's Marine Highway service out of Bellingham is provided by the *M/V Columbia*. The run to Prince Rupert along the coast of British Columbia takes 37 hours. Bellingham terminal is modern and full service.

*Some communities have a very small population of less than a hundred residents providing a glimpse into rural coastal Alaska. Below is the boardwalk community of Pelican.*



**Prince Rupert** is located on the coast of British Columbia and is served by the *M/V Kennicott*. Ships sail from Prince Rupert four to five times a week during the summer months. Prince Rupert is the most northerly port community in British Columbia and lies near the Alaskan/U.S. border. Prince Rupert is served by Highway 16 and by regular air service. The community is linked to the Canadian transcontinental railway by Via Rail Canada and the train, *Skeena*. The community was developed as a ‘superport’ for Canada and the area is rich in natural resources and Native culture. Like Bellingham, the community is historic and offers a variety of museums and other visitor activities including the **Museum of Northern British Columbia** and **Kwinitsa Railway Museum**. The terminal facility is owned by the City of Prince Rupert and is spacious, accommodating typical terminal services as well as customs offices.

**Ketchikan** is the first stop for Alaska’s Marine Highway in Alaskan waters and is located on Revillagigedo Island. Known as the **Salmon Capital of the World**, Ketchikan offers a pleasing waterfront with sites such as historic **Creek Street** with its buildings on piers overhanging the waterfront and the USDA Forest Service’s **Southeast Alaska Discovery Center**. The community has the world’s largest collection of totem poles in the world providing outstanding cultural opportunities in the **Totem Blight State Historical Park** and **Totem Heritage Center**. The terminal is north of the downtown and offers ticketing, waiting areas, restrooms and traveler information kiosks. Parking is adequate. Ketchikan is served by the *M/V Malaspina*, *M/V Matanuska*, *M/V Kennicott*, and *M/V Columbia*. Service is offered several times each week. The *M/V Lituya* also provides ferry service from Ketchikan to Metlakatla on Alaska’s Marine Highway and the Inter-Island Ferry Authority provides service to Hollis and Prince of Wales Island.

**Metlakatla** is reached via ferry service on the *M/V Lituya* from Ketchikan five days a week. This community started as a Tsimshian Native village on Annette Island south of Ketchikan. Today it is the home of approximately 130 residents mostly Native Americans. Literally translated, Metlakatla means, “where the wind dies down,” referring to the salt water passage where the community is located. The community offers cultural and recreation opportunities and basic visitor services. The community has a simple modular terminal building that operates only prior to each ship’s arrival and departure. The *M/V Lituya* provides ferry service from Ketchikan to Metlakatla.

**Wrangell** lies at the mouth of the Stikine River and is near the **LeConte Glacier**, the southern most tide water glacier in North America. Both are major tourism and recreation attractions within the **Stikine/LeConte Wilderness Area**. Wrangell was a strategic fort location as well as trading center for furs and gold due to its close proximity to the Stikine River, a major trade route into Canada. As a result, Wrangell was the only Alaskan community to have been under Russian, British and American rule. Coastal Native American history is prevalent in Wrangell and can be experienced at the Wrangell **Petroglyph Beach State Historic Park** and **Chief Shakes Island**, the site of a Tlingit clan house and collection of totem poles. The community has a new museum the **Nolan Center** that highlights natural history, logging, fishing, and Native culture. The Marine Highway terminal located downtown is somewhat small, but serves current needs. The same ships that serve Ketchikan also serve Wrangell.

*Ketchikan has an outstanding collection of totem poles and long houses from throughout Southeast Alaska.*



**Petersburg** is a quaint community steeped in Scandinavian heritage and fishing. The community is known as *Little Norway* and hosts several festivals and special events to celebrate their heritage. Scandinavian heritage can be seen in the community's architecture and 'rosemaling' Norwegian paintings on buildings. The **Clausen Memorial Museum** interprets Petersburg, its culture and its history. Visitors walk along the historic **Hammer Slough** and **Sing Lee Alley** to experience the community's historic waterfront and downtown areas. Tourism is already well established here. Within Petersburg, there are current problems with recreational vehicle parking and general camping areas; the public sector needs to look at providing higher quality facilities to address these needs. Petersburg is served by the same ships as Wrangell and Ketchikan.

**Kake** is small Native community that lies on the main line route of Alaska's Marine Highway. It is a Tlingit village named after the clan that called this area home. The community's industry included a fish cannery and later timber harvesting. Today the community continues its fishing, logging and subsistence lifestyle where traditional culture is important to its residents. The world's largest totem pole (132 feet) was commissioned by Kake and carved for Alaska's centennial. Kake has no terminal building; just a paved staging and parking area with a waiting shelter. The community has basic services. The *M/V LeConte* provides service to this community.

*Petersburg's Norwegian and fishing heritage creates a wonderful community.*



**Angoon** is located on the southwest side of the **Admiralty Island National Monument** at Kootznahoo Inlet. It is the only community on the National Monument and is located 60 miles southwest of Juneau. It is a community of 600 people with a commercial fishing and subsistence lifestyle. It was originally established as the home of the Kootznoowoo Tlingit tribe and in the mid-1800s became a fur trading center. In the late 1800's, a whaling station was established at an adjacent island to employ the residents of Angoon. Today the community maintains its cultural heritage. Angoon has basic visitor services. Angoon has a city-owned terminal, but this has not been used for many years. The *M/V LeConte* provides service to this community.

**Tenakee Springs** is located on the east side of Chichagof Island, 45 miles southwest of Juneau. It is a small community with just over 100 people. The community was established in this location due to natural 108-degree sulfur hot springs now in the center of town. Fishermen and prospectors stopped for the hot springs and built bath houses and eventually a small community. Several canneries were opened near Tenakee Springs however none continue to operate today. The community name is derived from the Tlingit word "tinaghu," meaning "Coppery Shield Bay." Vehicles are not permitted in Tenakee Springs however basic services are available. The community is served by the *M/V LeConte* and has no terminal facilities beyond a small covered waiting area on the dock.

**Pelican** sits on the northwest coast of Chichagof Island on Lisianski Inlet. Pelican has a population of just over 100 and is a fishing community with a fish cold storage plant. The community is named not after the bird but the name of a boat that was the first fish packing vessel in the community in the 1930's. There are no vehicles allowed in the community that is linked by a waterfront boardwalk. There are good recreation opportunities surrounding this community. Pelican has limited services and the *M/V LeConte* calls into port once a month. There is no terminal or terminal amenities in Pelican and the ship ties up at the City dock.

**Hoonah** is the largest Tlingit village in Alaska and has a rich cultural presence. Located on Chichagof Island, nearly a thousand people call Hoonah home. The community name means "village by the cliff," and was the home to the Huna Tlingit tribe that has occupied this area and Glacier Bay. In the early 1900's a large cannery was built near the community. A major fire destroyed much of the city and cultural artifacts in 1944. Today the community continues its fishing and timber heritage and a subsistence lifestyle. Hoonah has basic services and has recently opened a new visitor destination in the old cannery as well as opened its doors to the cruiseship industry emphasizing its cultural resources. Hoonah's Marine Highway terminal provides typical services for a modern small terminal (restrooms, ticketing and waiting area).

**Sitka** was once the Russian-American capital of North America and as such it offers an intriguing mixture of Russian, Native and pioneer cultural history and flavor. It was known as the "Paris of the Pacific". Russian heritage can be found at the ruins of **Castle Hill**, the beautiful **St. Michael's Orthodox Cathedral** and the **Baranof Museum**. Sitka's Native Heritage is showcased at the **Sitka National Historic Park** and the **Sheldon Jackson Museum**. The community, located on Baranof Island, was established to trade sea otter pelts and later fishing and timber. It was the Territorial Capital of Alaska until 1906. The Navy established a major base on a neighboring island to protect Alaska from a Japanese invasion in World War II which is now abandoned. Sitka has moderate visitation by cruiseships and many visitor services. Sitka is a popular recreation area known for its fishing and majestic **Mount Edgecumbe**, a dormant volcano. The Marine Highway terminal is located seven miles from the downtown. The terminal and staging areas are in good condition. Sitka is served by the *M/V Matanuska*, the *M/V Malaspina*, the *M/V LeConte* and the *M/V Fairweather*. The *M/V Fairweather* provides fast ferry service from Juneau to Sitka two days a week in the summer.

Sitka's Saint Michael's Russian Orthodox Church is the centerpiece of the community. Sitka was the capital of Russian America until the territory was purchased by the United States.





**Juneau** is the capital of Alaska, a central hub terminal for Alaska's Marine Highway and a major cruise ship and tourism destination. The community was established due to the rich gold deposits in the area and is now the largest community in Southeast Alaska. **Glacier Bay National Park** lies just west of the city. Juneau provides a wide range of recreational and cultural activities due to its capital status, educational institutions and tourism economy. Juneau is home to the **Alaska State Museum**, the **Mendenhall Glacier**, and numerous flight seeing opportunities. Juneau is a popular tourist destination due to its historic downtown, shops and tourism related tours of local attractions. The terminal facility, lying 15 miles north of downtown Juneau at Auke Bay, is modern and fully equipped. This distance can create problems when transportation into town is not available. All visitor services are provided. Juneau is served by the *M/V Malaspina*, *M/V Matanuska*, *M/V Kennicott*, *M/V LeConte*, *M/V Columbia* and the *M/V Fairweather*. The *M/V Fairweather* provides daily fast ferry service from Juneau to Haines and Skagway five days a week and twice a week to Sitka.



*Hiking the mountains surrounding Inside Passage communities is a popular recreation activity. Downtown Juneau is located along Gastineau Channel at the base of Mount Juneau. Cruiseships can be seen in the channel.*

**Haines** is near the northern end of the *Inside Passage* region and lies on the Lynn Canal. Like Skagway, its neighbor, Haines provides highway access to the *Inside Passage* segment via the scenic Haines Highway and the Alaska Highway. Haines was established by Klondike gold seekers heading to the interior. Haines offers Native American culture, pioneer cultural history and significant natural resources like the **Chilkat Bald Eagle Preserve**. Every November the Preserve is populated by over 4,000 bald eagles feeding on the last run of salmon and Haines holds its **Bald Eagle Festival**. Historic **Fort Seward** is now home to several inns, an arts center and the host site of festivals and special events. Haines popularity is attributed due to being able to 'drive out' of town and the outstanding recreation opportunities. Cruiseships call in at Haines and therefore many services are available. The Alaska's Marine Highway service is provided by the *M/V Malaspina*, *M/V Matanuska*, *M/V Kennicott*, *M/V Columbia* and the *M/V Fairweather*. Service is offered several times each week and daily during the summer months. The *M/V Fairweather* provides daily fast ferry service from Juneau to Haines five days a week in the summer. The Haines terminal is modern and ample.



**Skagway** is the northern-most point along the *Inside Passage*. It lies at the beginning of the scenic Klondike Highway which provides road access to the Alaskan Highway, the city of Whitehorse and Canada's Yukon Territory. Skagway was a gold rush town in the late 1800's and that history has been preserved through the **Klondike Gold Rush National Historic Park**. Skagway is one of the most popular cruiseship docking points in Alaska and therefore has modern dock facilities and many visitor services. Visitors can take a ride on the **White Pass and Yukon Route Railway** over the historic White Pass to Lake Bennett. Hiking the **Historic Chilkoot Trail** is a popular three to four day recreation activity retracing the rugged route over the pass. Alaska's Marine Highway service is provided by the *M/V Malaspina*, *M/V Matanuska*, *M/V Kennicott*, *M/V Columbia* and the *M/V Fairweather*. The *M/V Fairweather* provides daily fast ferry service from Juneau to Skagway five days a week in the summer. The terminal lies within an easy walk to town and thus transportation to town is not a challenge.

In addition to these communities, there are other key players along this segment of the byway. These places include Seattle Washington, Vancouver British Columbia, Whitehorse Yukon, Anchorage Alaska and smaller communities along the few access roads into the *Inside Passage*. Seattle and Vancouver both have significant existing tourism industries and any partnership they can offer Alaska's Marine Highway will benefit the byway due to these cities' resident and visitor populations. Additionally, air service to many of the *Inside Passage* port communities is through Seattle. Whitehorse is a key partner in this byway effort due to its two road connection to the Marine Highway and direct flights to Juneau in the summer. Whitehorse is the capital of the territory, offers a rich history of the Yukon gold rush and is an established tourism destination along the Alaska Highway. Many museums and other resources are appealing to travelers. Encouraging byway travelers to explore this interesting Canadian city is an important challenge. Finally, Anchorage is an airport of entry and a gateway to *Inside Passage* airports. It also provides direct highway and rail service to the neighboring *Prince William Sound and Kenai Peninsula* segment of the Marine Highway. These places all provide services for byway visitors. In addition, their attractions significantly augment the pure 'water-and-port' experience that some visitors might have. All visitors should be encouraged to explore these partner communities in order to lengthen stays and increase in-state expenditures.

Nestled between the Chilkat Mountains and River, Haines has a picturesque setting.



Various public land management agencies are critical partners in this effort as well. Major partners include the National Park Service (Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, Sitka National Historic Park and Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve), the U.S. Forest Service (Tongass National Forest, Misty Fjords National Monument, Admiralty Island National Monument and Tracy Arm-Fords Terror Wilderness). Other agencies include the Department of Natural Resources, State Parks and local government who provide visitor services. These agencies guide some of the key resources that visitors are coming to see and their staff provides important educational, safety and overall management services for visitors.

In addition to these entities, the many regional and local tourism, cultural, economic development and community development agencies along the *Inside Passage* will be significant players and partners in this effort. These organizations include the regional Southeast Conference, regional and local Native Corporations, local Visitor and Convention Bureaus, Chambers of Commerce and Economic Development Committees.

In addition, there are numerous not-for-profit entities such as museums, trails and recreation groups and educational institutions that are likely to be involved in this byway. Successful implementation will require actions that mesh with existing organizations' activities and make best use of existing staffing and financial resources.

Numerous marine mammals can be seen along the Inside Passage route and include Stellar sealions (left), humpback whales, orcas, and porpoises.







