

Understanding the Port

Seward is where the other one-way cruises begin or end: a walkable railroad town on Resurrection Bay with a national park out one door and Alaska's newest, largest cruise terminal (so billed) out the other. The trick isn't finding something to do — it's fitting the right thing to your half of the day.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

The Port Area

Ships dock alongside — no tendering — at the rail-side terminal on the harbor end of town. The small-boat harbor is a ten-minute walk; downtown about a mile down a paved waterfront path. A free seasonal shuttle loops the whole run on ship days.

Getting to Anchorage

125 miles up the Seward Highway — an All-American Road hugging Turnagain Arm — about 2.5–3 hours by coach. Or four hours on the Alaska Railroad's Coastal Classic, ranked by National Geographic Traveler among North America's top train rides.

The Clock

Ships typically arrive at dawn and sail in the evening. Disembark day holds a full adventure; embark day holds a half one. Flights out of Anchorage belong in the mid-afternoon or later — and flying in a day early is the advice we give everyone.

GOOD

Mile 0 & the Murals

Best for: Spare hours, walkers, flag buffs

- ✓ The Iditarod Trail's Mile 0 marker on the waterfront
- ✓ 30-plus murals — billed as the Mural Capital of Alaska
- ✓ A two-mile bayfront path with otters offshore

Low effort, high reward.

BETTER

SeaLife & Exit Glacier

Best for: Embark day, families, rainy hours

- ✓ Alaska's only public aquarium — a working rescue hospital
- ✓ Exit Glacier: the park's one drive-up corner, 20 minutes out
- ✓ Free ranger walks daily in summer

Each fits a half day — pick one, not both, on boarding day.

BEST

Kenai Fjords by Boat

Best for: Disembark day, or with an extra night

- ✓ Six-plus hours to a calving tidewater glacier
- ✓ Whales, otters, sea lions, puffins — lunch included
- ✓ Midday departures timed to the evening train north

Timing management required. Plan around all aboard.

Top Experiences to Consider

GOOD

The Walkable Waterfront

Working harbor, gravel beach, eagles overhead, and history underfoot — the town where Alaska's flag was drawn and the Iditarod Trail begins, all inside a two-mile stroll.

BETTER

The Rescue Aquarium

The Alaska SeaLife Center was born from Exxon Valdez settlement funds and still rescues and releases marine mammals — puffin diving displays up top, real rehab work below.

BEST

The Fjords Cruise

Seward's signature day: out Resurrection Bay to a tidewater glacier calving into the sea. Operators report whales on the great majority of summer sailings — and the boats time their return to the evening train.

Where Staff & Travelers Recommend

Do the Big Boat AFTER the Cruise

The fjords day fits beautifully once you disembark — ship at dawn, boat by midday, train by evening. Boarding day is for the aquarium and the glacier, not the gamble.

Ride the Train One Way

Coach down, Coastal Classic back — you'll see country the highway never touches, and the depot sits steps from the boats.



Seward's small-boat harbor at the foot of the mountains — day cruises and dock a stroll apart



Resurrection Bay — deep, glacier-carved, and the reason ships call here

Key Considerations

The honesty line for this port: **the signature fjords cruise fits best after you disembark, or with an extra night — not on boarding day.** Embarking guests coming down from Anchorage land around midday; that's aquarium-and-Exit-Glacier time, and both are genuinely excellent. Post-cruise guests reaching Anchorage by evening train should never book a same-night flight.

Exit Glacier honesty, too: the ice has pulled back dramatically, and the walk now ends at overlooks, not at the ice — a moving climate story rather than a touch-the-glacier photo op. And book fjords boats and summer trains early; both fill in peak season.



A tidewater glacier face from the deck — the fjords cruise's main event



Exit Glacier from the overlook trail — the park's one road-accessible corner



Puffins headline Resurrection Bay's wildlife bingo card

Photos via Wikimedia Commons: Diego Delso, delso.photo, License CC BY-SA 4.0; mdixon85 (CC BY-SA 3.0); Enrico Blasutto (CC BY-SA 4.0); NPS (public domain)

Port Orientation

FROM THE CRUISE TERMINAL

● Small-boat harbor	~10 min walk — day-cruise docks
● Alaska Railroad depot	Steps from the boats
~ 1 mile along the waterfront path, or free shuttle	
● Downtown & the mural walk	30-plus murals
● Iditarod Mile 0 marker	Waterfront Park
● Alaska SeaLife Center	Rescue aquarium on the bay
~ 20 min by shuttle or taxi	
● Exit Glacier & ranger walks	Kenai Fjords' drive-up corner
By boat, from the harbor	
● Kenai Fjords day cruises	The signature — 4 to 8.5 hours
By coach or rail	
● Anchorage & the airport	125 scenic miles

DON'T FORGET

Confirm your all aboard time before you leave the ship.
Set a phone alarm. The ship will not wait for you.

Key Takeaway

Seward rewards whichever half of the turnaround you're on: a real town, a real national park, and a harbor full of boats pointed at calving ice.

Match the adventure to your half of the day — and give the fjords the day they deserve.

ETA will help you choose the right experience based on your travel style.

steve.ernst@ernst.llc
ernst.llc | 814/602-1851

Did You Know?

The Boy Who Drew the Flag. Alaska's flag — the Big Dipper and North Star on blue — was designed in 1927 by Benny Benson, a teenaged Alaska Native orphan living in Seward. His memorial stands by the lagoon.

Mile 0. Seward is the official start of the historic Iditarod Trail to Nome — the gold-rush mail route of serum-run fame. Today's race starts farther north, but the trail begins on this waterfront.

The Bar Bet Race. Legend says Mount Marathon's brutal Fourth of July race began as a sourdough's wager that the peak couldn't be climbed and descended inside an hour. First run in 1915, it's billed as North America's oldest mountain race.

An Easter Storm. The story goes that Russian fur trader Alexander Baranov rode out a Gulf storm in this fjord and emerged on Easter Sunday — naming it Resurrection Bay.

The Folly's Namesake. The town honors William H. Seward, the Secretary of State mocked for buying Alaska in 1867. Between the railroad, the fjords, and your cruise ship at his namesake dock — he got the last laugh.