

Understanding the Port

Skagway is the gold rush, preserved: seven blocks of false-front boardwalk inside a national park, a cliff-hugging railroad out the back door, and a town of about 1,200 year-round residents that hosts around a million cruise visitors a summer — and still winks about it.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

The Port Area

Three docks, all facing town — most berths are a 5–10 minute flat walk from Broadway. Ships at the Railroad Dock use a short free shuttle or water taxi instead (its walkway has been closed since 2022 rockslides). Big days bring four ships.

Money & Phones

US dollars, normal cards, and your phone works like it does at home. The document that matters here is a **passport** — see the Yukon rule on the next page before you book anything past the summit.

Getting Around

The historic district is flat, compact, and walkable. A cheap SMART shuttle loops dock-to-downtown on ship days; there's no Uber or Lyft and barely a taxi. The train often boards right at the pier.

GOOD

Broadway & the Gold Rush Park

Best for: History lovers, walkers, free-day fans

- ✓ Boardwalks and false fronts inside a national park
- ✓ Free NPS film, museum, and self-guided walking tour
- ✓ The driftwood-covered Arctic Brotherhood Hall photo stop

Low effort, high reward.

BETTER

White Pass Summit by Rail

Best for: First-timers, railfans, camera rolls

- ✓ Nearly 3,000 feet up in 20 cliff-edge miles
- ✓ Trestles, tunnels, and the Trail of '98 below
- ✓ Stays aboard at the border — no passport needed

Billed as Alaska's most popular shore excursion — book early.

BEST

Into the Yukon

Best for: Long port calls, overlanders, bucket lists

- ✓ Carcross Desert and Emerald Lake beyond the summit
- ✓ Rail-and-bus combos deep into Canada's lake country
- ✓ Passport required — no exceptions at the border

Timing management required. Plan around all aboard.

Top Experiences to Consider

GOOD

The Historic District

Start at the 1898 depot visitor center: a free gold-fever film, ranger talks, and a self-guided walk past saloons that haven't changed their faces since the stampede.

BETTER

The Railway

Blasted to the 2,865-foot summit in 26 months — by the railway's own telling, with workers dangling from ropes — and now an International Historic Civil Engineering Landmark. The ride up is the day's easy superlative.

BEST

The Yukon Day

Cross the pass the stampedeers climbed and coast into lake country: a pocket desert at Carcross, water the color of cut emerald, and a border crossing in the middle of grand nowhere.

Where Staff & Travelers Recommend

Left Side Up

On the Summit train, sit on the left going uphill for the gorge — then trade views for the ride back down.

Spruce Tip Blonde at Skagway Brewing

The town's signature sip, brewed with hand-picked local spruce tips. One pint, zero regrets.



Broadway's false fronts — including the driftwood-covered Arctic Brotherhood Hall



The valley below White Pass, from the climb — our own photo

Key Considerations

The rule that saves vacations: **turn around at the Summit and you never need a passport; touch Canadian soil and you must have one.** Fraser, Bennett, Carcross, Emerald Lake — all passport territory (kids 15 and under can use a birth certificate; a child traveling without both parents may need a consent letter). Operators check documents before boarding, and a forgotten passport is a missed tour, not a refund.

Your berth decides your first ten minutes: Broadway and Ore docks walk straight into town, while the Railroad Dock sends you by short shuttle or water taxi. And the marquee bookings — the train, the helicopter dog camps, the Yukon days — sell out weeks to months ahead. Book them when you book the cruise.



The White Pass & Yukon Route on the cliff ledge — the retired 1901 cantilever bridge beyond



Five flags at the summit border — our own photo from the pass



Sailing out of Skagway down the Taiya Inlet — ours too

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Port Orientation

FROM THE DOCKS

● Broadway & the Brotherhood Hall	5–10 min flat walk
● Klondike NHP Visitor Center	Free film in the 1898 depot
~ 10–15 min on foot	
● Days of '98 Show	Soapy's story, staged since the 1920s
● Yakutania Point	Footbridge to quiet coves
~ 35–40 min walk, or a short shuttle	
● Gold Rush Cemetery & Reid Falls	Soapy & the man who stopped him
By rail — often from the pier	
● White Pass Summit	No passport needed
● Fraser, Bennett & the Yukon	Passport required
By tour	
● Dyea Valley	Ghost town, trail rides, dog camps

DON'T FORGET

Confirm your all aboard time — and the last shuttle or water taxi, if your berth uses one — before you leave the ship.
Set a phone alarm. The ship will not wait for you.

Key Takeaway

Skagway is a time machine with a train attached: the boardwalks are real, the graves are real, and the pass that broke a hundred thousand dreams is now a spectacular afternoon loop.

History here isn't behind glass — you walk on it, ride over it, and drink to it.

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 Con Man and the Hero. Gold-rush boss Soapy Smith and surveyor Frank Reid both died from the same 1898 wharf shootout. Reid got the cemetery's grandest stone — "He gave his life for the honor of Skagway." Soapy was buried just outside the fence.

A Ton — Literally. Canadian Mounties turned back any stampeder without roughly a ton of supplies, so climbers relayed their outfits over the pass load by load — dozens of trips each.

One in Three Made It. An estimated 100,000 people set out for the Klondike. Historians reckon only about 30,000 reached Dawson City.

Landmark Company. The narrow-gauge railway, finished in just 26 months, is an International Historic Civil Engineering Landmark — an honor the company likes to note it shares with the Eiffel Tower and the Panama Canal.

A Park in Two States. Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park includes downtown Skagway's boardwalks — and a fourth unit a thousand miles away in Seattle, where the stampede began.