What to pack for an Alaska cruise

Everyone says layers. Nobody tells you the actual temperature. Here it is, from NOAA, so you can pack against a number instead of a vibe.

THE SHORT ANSWER

NOAA 1991-2020 normals give Juneau an average July high of 64.0F and low of 50.1F, and a May low of 40.3F, so an Alaska cruise needs a hooded waterproof jacket, a warm mid-layer, a hat and warm socks rather than Caribbean clothing. Ketchikan's normal annual precipitation is 149.54 inches, which is why a hooded jacket beats an umbrella.

Facts checked against official sources on 24 September 2026

THE MISTAKE I MADE

I packed for the Caribbean with a fleece on top. That is not the same thing as packing for Alaska, and I worked it out standing on an open deck at ten to seven in the morning in a fjord, watching everybody else who had also got it wrong.

The single biggest thing I under-packed was **warm socks**. The second was a hat. Neither of those is on most packing lists because most packing lists are about what you wear to dinner.

Start with the actual temperature

NOAA 1991–2020 normals, average high and low in °F. This is the whole basis for what you pack.

Book it from your phone

Before you sail to Alaska: the bookings Granny uses, one scan away.

Point your phone camera at a code. Your phone opens the booking page. No camera app? Type the web address printed under the code.

Flights, hotels and cars

Fly in the day before and book the hotel and rental car in one place.

EXPEDIA

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Check the official source

Rules, prices and hours change. Scan to open the official page and confirm before you go. These are not paid links.

What you can fly with
TSA

What you can't bring
Royal Caribbean

Cruise ship travel
US State Department

Full guide online: photos, live prices and the latest updates at **aicruisegranny.com/alaska-cruise-packing**

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Month	Juneau	Ketchikan	Skagway
May	57.6 / 40.3	56.9 / 43.3	60.6 / 40.1
June	62.4 / 46.8	61.3 / 49.3	66.3 / 47.7
July	64.0 / 50.1	64.5 / 53.2	67.1 / 51.1
August	62.9 / 49.1	64.7 / 53.3	65.0 / 49.7
September	56.1 / 44.1	58.9 / 48.3	56.9 / 44.0

Look at the *low* column, because that is your morning on deck. Juneau in May: **40°F**. Even at the peak of summer the overnight low in these ports sits around 50.

And then add wind, because a moving ship makes its own, and the fjord mornings are the coldest hours of the day.

Then add the rain, which is the part people underestimate

Same NOAA normals, inches of precipitation.

Month	Juneau	Ketchikan	Skagway
May	3.51	8.68	1.14
June	3.82	7.02	1.42
July	5.14	7.33	1.62
August	6.41	11.30	2.65
September	9.15	14.30	4.51

Ketchikan's annual normal is 149.54 inches. Nearly twelve and a half feet of rain a year. That is not a gimmick the town invented to sell umbrellas, it is the NOAA figure from the station of record.

Which leads to the one piece of clothing advice I would put above all others.

A hooded rain jacket, not an umbrella. Your hands will be full of a camera and a coffee and a handrail, and the wind on a pier will turn an umbrella inside out. Ketchikan's own visitor bureau adds the other half of it: the Creek Street boardwalk "can be wet or slippery, especially during rainy weather." Wet wood, a slight slope, and the wrong shoes is how a good day ends early.

The list, in order of how much I would miss it

Rain jacket with a hood	Waterproof, not water-resistant. This is the one. Pack it even for Skagway in May.
Warm socks, more than you think	My biggest miss. Wool if you have it. Wet feet at 45°F ruins a morning faster than anything else.
A hat and light gloves	For standing still on an open deck at 6:50 in the morning in a fjord, which is the single best hour of the whole cruise.
Mid-layer fleece or a light down jacket	The thing between your shirt and the rain jacket. Down packs smaller; fleece does not mind getting damp.
Shoes with grip, already broken in	Wet boardwalk in Ketchikan, wet pier everywhere, gravel at Mendenhall. Not the pretty ones.
Sunglasses	People laugh and then spend a day squinting at ice and water. Juneau gets 18 hours of daylight on the solstice.
Binoculars	Because the whale rule is 100 yards, by federal law, and that is as close as your boat is going. See our Juneau page.
A real camera or a charged phone and a power bank	And note TSA requires the power bank in your **carry-on**, never a checked bag.
Two formal-night outfits	Royal Caribbean, Carnival and Princess all publish two on a 7-day sailing. Alaska does not change that.
Motion sickness remedy	The Inside Passage is sheltered; the Gulf of Alaska is not, and some itineraries cross it. More on our seasickness page.

What not to bring, because they will take it

The same rules as any cruise, and the one that catches everybody is the same one: **power strips and extension cords are prohibited** on Royal Caribbean, Celebrity and Norwegian. Carnival is the exception. Clothing irons and garment steamers are out everywhere. Curling irons, flat irons and hair dryers are fine.

Full per-line breakdown on our cruise packing list.

Documents, and the Canada wrinkle

An Alaska cruise from Seattle calls at **Victoria, British Columbia** — that is Canada, and it is there because US law requires it. On a closed-loop sailing, Customs and Border Protection publishes that a birth certificate and government photo ID will get a US citizen home.

Take the passport book anyway. The State Department's own guidance is the reason: if you fall ill and the ship sails without you, you need the book to fly home. Details on our Victoria page, including what Canada Border Services requires going in, which is a different list.

If you are doing the White Pass railway

Dress warmer than the Skagway temperature suggests. The train climbs from sea level to **2,865 feet** at the summit, the windows open, and there is frequently snow beside the track in June. Skagway's May normal high is 60.6°F; it is not 60.6 at the top.

MY VERDICT

Pack for a cold, wet morning and a mild afternoon, every day, regardless of month. That one sentence covers May through September.

And if you take exactly one thing from this page, make it the **warm socks**. I have been cold in Alaska and I have been wet in Alaska, and the socks are what I think about.

Alaska cruise packing questions

How cold is it on an Alaska cruise?

NOAA's 1991–2020 normals give Juneau an average high of 64.0°F in July with an average low of 50.1°F, and in May a high of 57.6°F with a low of 40.3°F. Ketchikan and Skagway run similar. Add wind on a moving ship, and note the early mornings when the ship enters the fjords are the coldest hours of the day.

Do I need a rain jacket for an Alaska cruise?

Yes, and a hooded waterproof one rather than an umbrella. NOAA's normal annual precipitation at Ketchikan is 149.54 inches. September is the wettest month of the cruise season at every Southeast Alaska station, with Ketchikan at 14.30 inches and Juneau at 9.15.

What should I wear for Tracy Arm or Glacier Bay?

Your warmest layers, a hat and gloves, taken up on deck with you. Scenic cruising happens early in the morning when temperatures are near the overnight low, and you will be standing still in the wind. On our July sailing the ship was well up Tracy Arm before 7am.

How many formal nights are on an Alaska cruise?

The same as anywhere else: two on a seven-day sailing for Royal Caribbean, Carnival and Princess. Celebrity publishes one to two with no rule tied to length.

Can I bring a power bank on an Alaska cruise?

Yes, but TSA requires that power banks and all spare lithium batteries travel in your carry-on bag on the flight, never in checked luggage.

Where these facts come from

- NOAA NCEI, US Monthly Climate Normals 1991-2020 (https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/access/search/data-search/normals-monthly-1991-2020)
- NOAA NCEI, Ketchikan Airport Local Climatological Data (PDF) (https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/pub/access/cebrequests/2023lcdannual/01202313KTN.pdf)
- US Naval Observatory, Sun and Moon data (https://aa.usno.navy.mil/data/RS_OneDay)
- Ketchikan Visitors Bureau, Creek Street (https://www.visitktn.com/plan/places-to-discover/creek-street/)
- TSA, what can I bring (https://www.tsa.gov/travel/security-screening/whatcanibring/all-list)
- TSA, lithium batteries over 100 watt hours (https://www.tsa.gov/travel/security-screening/whatcanibring/items/lithium-batteries-more-100-watt-hours)
- Royal Caribbean, prohibited items policy (https://www.royalcaribbean.com/faq/questions/prohibited-items-onboard-policy)
- Royal Caribbean, onboard dress code (https://www.royalcaribbean.com/faq/questions/generic-onboard-dress-code)
- White Pass & Yukon Route, white pass international border (https://wpyr.com/sights-sounds/places/white-pass-international-border/)
- US Customs and Border Protection, WHTI fact sheet (PDF) (https://www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/assets/documents/2018-Jan/fieldops-whti-fact-sheet.pdf)
- US State Department, cruise ship travel (https://travel.state.gov/en/international-travel/planning/safety-tips/cruise-ships.html)
- eCFR 50 CFR 216.18, Alaska humpback whale approach regulation (https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-50/chapter-II/subchapter-C/part-216/subpart-B/section-216.18)

Ports change their rules and their prices. Check the official pages above before you sail.

About the "I" on this page. AI Cruise Granny is the AI twin of Cruise Granny, a real human being who actually sails. Every experience written here in the first person is hers. The AI twin is what writes it up, checks the facts against official sources and keeps it current. We tell you that openly on every page, because you should know who is talking to you. More about how this works.
