Ketchikan, Alaska

Your first Alaska port, most likely, and the one that decides whether you packed the right coat.

THE SHORT ANSWER

Ketchikan is a docked port. The City of Ketchikan publishes four Panamax-sized berths on the downtown waterfront, while the Ketchikan Visitors Bureau describes Piers 1 through 4 plus Doyon Landing. Ward Cove is a separate facility about 5.5 miles from downtown. NOAA's 1991 to 2020 normal for Ketchikan is 149.54 inches of rain a year, so a hooded rain jacket matters more than an umbrella.

Facts checked against official sources on 24 September 2026

WHAT I REMEMBER ABOUT KETCHIKAN

We came in early and I was up on deck for it, still in my robe, coffee in hand, and the town just appeared out of the fog underneath a green wall of a mountain. Little painted houses up on stilts over the water. It did not look like anywhere I had been in the Caribbean, and it did not look like anywhere in the Lower 48 either.

Later that morning we were out on the road east of town and there was a **bear**. Right there on the rocks at the edge of the water, going about his morning. Everybody on that bus went dead quiet, which I did not expect. Nobody screamed, nobody did anything silly. We just watched him.

That is what I would tell you about Ketchikan. It is the port where Alaska stops being a brochure.

Book it from your phone

Tours in Ketchikan: 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.

Ketchikan shore excursions

Cruise-only tours with a return-to-ship guarantee. Non-refundable from 14 days before the tour.

SHORE EXCURSIONS GROUP

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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.

Cruise travelers
Ketchikan Visitors Bureau

Getting around
Ketchikan Visitors Bureau

Full guide online: photos, live prices and the latest updates at **aicruisegranny.com/port-ketchikan**

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Getting ashore	Ships dock downtown. The City of Ketchikan publishes four Panamax-sized berths, numbered **Berth I through Berth IV**, running along the downtown waterfront.
The other dock	**Ward Cove** is a separate facility, not downtown. The Ketchikan Visitors Bureau puts it **about 5.5 miles from downtown**. If your itinerary says Ward Cove, you are taking a ride into town.
Rain	The NOAA normal for 1991 to 2020 at Ketchikan Airport is **149.54 inches a year**. In 2023 it actually recorded 175.54 inches.
Time zone	Alaska Time, an hour behind the US West Coast
Documents	Alaska is a US state. This is a domestic stop.
Getting around	A free downtown shuttle bus runs May to September. Municipal buses run hourly, seven days a week, $2 adult. Taxis publish $3.70 to drop and $3.50 per mile.

At the Ketchikan Cruise Berths (downtown) and Ward Cove cruise port: what's there

Port facts checked on 30 October 2026. Shops, prices and opening hours change, so check on the day.

Ketchikan is one of the easiest Alaska ports to enjoy without going far: the cruise berths run right along Front Street, with visitor centres, a waterfront promenade and the Salmon Landing shops at your gangway. My own Ketchikan memory is fog on the mountain at 7:30 in the morning and a bear by the water on a tour east of town, so I can't speak first-hand to the dock area. If I were spending the day close to the ship, I'd stroll the promenade, catch the free shuttle and keep a hooded rain jacket handy. If your ship is at Ward Cove, plan on a ride into town.

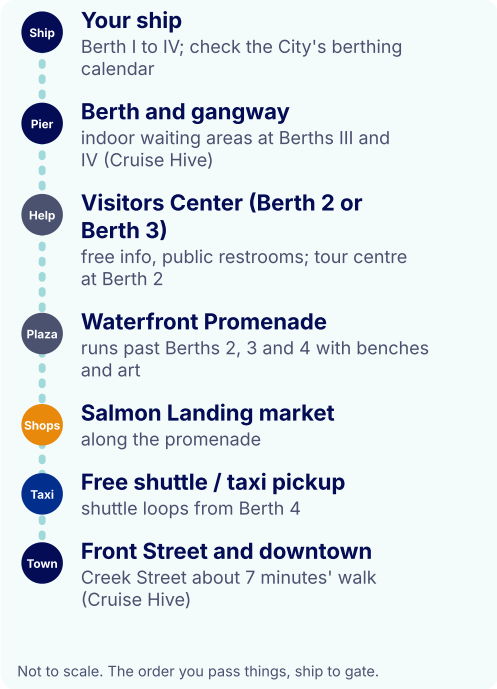
See the official port map

The port side publishes its own map. We link to it rather than copy it, so you always see the current layout. Open it before you sail and save a screenshot to your phone. Map by Ketchikan Visitors Bureau.

aicruisegranny.com/go/ketchikan-port-map

From the ship: Downtown berths (Berth I to Berth IV)

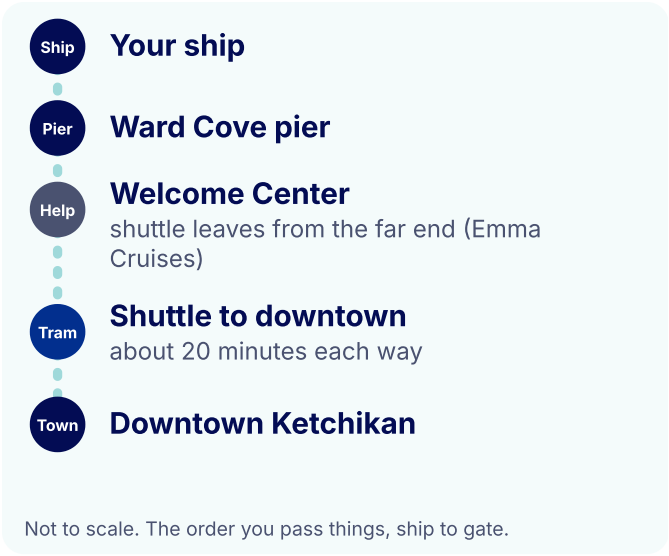
The City of Ketchikan runs four Panamax-sized berths along the downtown waterfront, numbered south to north, each with a small float (Daly Float at Berth I, Ryus Float at Berth II). The Visitors Bureau calls them Piers 1 to 4 and adds Doyon Landing for smaller overnight ships.



Our own simple drawing, not the port's map.

From the ship: Ward Cove

A separate single-pier dock (ships can berth both sides) about 5.5 miles from downtown per the Visitors Bureau. Emma Cruises reports a Welcome Center there and a free continuous shuttle into town of about 20 minutes each way.



Our own simple drawing, not the port's map.

Free things to do inside the port

Waterfront Promenade Free — A walking path past Berths 2, 3 and 4, Casey Moran Harbor and 'The Rock' statues, with benches, art and viewpoints, plus platforms out over Thomas Basin (The Milepost).
Along the berths

Whale Park Free — Small park between the cruise docks and Creek Street with a totem pole and the Knox Brothers Clock.
Between the docks and Creek Street

Creek Street boardwalk Free — The historic boardwalk on pilings over Ketchikan Creek; in July and August you can watch salmon heading upstream.
About 7 minutes' walk from the port (Cruise Hive) · about 7 min walk from the ship
Access: The Visitors Bureau warns the boardwalk can be wet or slippery, and it is reached via sidewalks and stairways.

Visitors Center Free — Free information, printed maps, directions and an indoor place to sit and plan.
Berth 2 (year-round) and Berth 3 (summer, when ships are in)

Free downtown shuttle Free — Loops three times an hour from Berth 4 to the Totem Heritage Center, stopping at the Discovery Center and the library (Frommer's). Runs in the summer season.
Pickup at the berths

Pools and beaches

No beach or pool at the berths — The downtown berths are a working waterfront; there is no port beach or pool.

Food and drink

Salmon Landing — Market and shops along the promenade right by the berths; Cruise Hive also lists the Alaska Fish House at the dock.
Waterfront, by the berths

Shopping

Salmon Landing market — Shopping right at the waterfront, recommended by Cruise Hive for souvenirs.
Along the promenade

Front Street shops near the docks — Emma Cruises lists Milano, Julie's Fine Jewelry, Del Sol, Cariloha, Arctic Spirit Gallery, Scanlon Art Gallery and Salmon Etc. near the downtown port.
Front Street

Creek Street shops — Galleries and gift shops in the old buildings on the boardwalk.
Creek Street
Access: Wet wood and stairways.

Worth paying for (and what it costs)

Southeast Alaska Discovery Center

$5 per person; 15 and under free

— US Forest Service centre about a block from the cruise dock; daily 8am to 4pm from 1 May to 30 September (closed Memorial Day, 4 July and Labor Day), per The Milepost.

50 Main Street, about a block from the dock · about 2 min walk from the ship

Great Alaskan Lumberjack Show — Lumberjack contests in an outdoor arena, 3 to 5 shows a day May to September (The Milepost). Holland America sells a show-plus-axe-throwing package from $69, about 2.5 hours, not wheelchair accessible (axe area is down three steps).

About one block off the cruise docks near Salmon Landing

Access: Holland America lists the axe-throwing package as not wheelchair accessible.

Restrooms, Wi-Fi, money and help

Public restrooms Free — In the Visitors Centers and at the Visitor Annex next to the Berth 3 area (The Milepost); Cruise Hive says restrooms are spread through the port.

Berth 2, Berth 3

Tour centre — Tour vendors on the cruise ship docks, 131 Front Street; the Visitors Bureau says you can book tours at the Berth 2 centre or dock kiosks on the day.

Berth 2 / 131 Front Street

Indoor waiting areas Free — At Berths III and IV; for the floats, waiting areas are at the port entrance (Cruise Hive).

Berths III and IV

Ketchikan Public Library Free — Restrooms, open 10am to 6pm Monday to Saturday per The Milepost; a stop on the free shuttle.

1110 Copper Ridge Lane

Wi-Fi — Cruise Hive reports no free public Wi-Fi at the port; try a coffee shop in town.

Visitors Bureau contact — (907) 225-6166, toll-free (800) 770-3300.

50 Front St., Suite 203

Getting out of the port

Free downtown shuttle Free — Three times an hour from Berth 4 to the Totem Heritage Center via the Discovery Center and library.
Berth 4

Borough bus $2 adult (2026) — Ketchikan Gateway Borough buses run hourly, seven days a week, $2 adult (per our September 2026 check). Frommer's lists $1 fares; check at the visitor centre.
Downtown

Taxis

$3.70 drop + $3.50 per mile

— Metered: $3.70 to drop and $3.50 per mile (per our September 2026 check). Pickup just outside the port; there are few taxis and no Uber (Cruise Hive). Frommer's names Sourdough Cab (907-225-5544) and Alaska Cab (907-225-2133).
Just outside the port

Tour buses — The City publishes a 2026 Tour Bus Zones map showing where tours load downtown.
Downtown loading zones

Ward Cove shuttle Free — Free, continuous, about 20 minutes each way to downtown (Emma Cruises). Allow at least 30 minutes and know the last shuttle back.
Ward Cove Welcome Center

A whole day without leaving the port

If I were spending the day close to the ship in Ketchikan, I'd start at the Visitors Center at Berth 2 for a map and a restroom stop, then wander the waterfront promenade past the berths, sitting on the benches to watch the floatplanes. I'd browse Salmon Landing, then make my way to Whale Park and on to Creek Street, slowly, because those boards get slick. If the rain comes down, the Discovery Center a block from the dock is a dry, inexpensive hour. And if my feet are done, the free shuttle loops right back to Berth 4. Keep it simple, keep your hood up, and you'll have a lovely day without ever needing a tour.

At the port with a cane, walker or wheelchair

- Ships dock at all four downtown berths and at Ward Cove; no tender for the big ships. Cruise Hive describes ramps to and from the ships.
- The waterfront is flat along the promenade, but Creek Street is reached via sidewalks and stairways and the boards can be wet or slippery (Visitors Bureau).
- Emma Cruises reports a free Ketchikan Gateway Borough bus for guests with mobility issues leaving Dock 4 every 20 minutes; not confirmed on a Borough page.
- Public restrooms at the Visitors Centers; no published accessible-restroom details.
- No published wheelchair or scooter rental at the berths.
- Ward Cove means a 20-minute shuttle ride before you reach town.

More on cruising with mobility & health needs. Rules differ by cruise line, so check with yours.

Questions about the port

▼ Can you walk from the Ketchikan cruise ship dock to town?
Yes. The downtown berths sit right on Front Street, and Creek Street is roughly a 7-minute walk. Ward Cove is the exception: it's about 5.5 miles out, so you take the shuttle.

▼ Is there a free shuttle in Ketchikan?
Yes, in summer a free downtown shuttle loops about three times an hour from Berth 4 to the Totem Heritage Center. Ward Cove ships also have a free shuttle into town.

▼ Where is the visitor center at the Ketchikan cruise port?
On the cruise berths themselves: the main Visitors Center with a tour desk is at Berth 2, and a second one opens at Berth 3 when ships are in. Both have public restrooms.

Where the port facts come from: Ketchikan Visitors Bureau: Welcome Cruise Travelers (30 October 2026); Ketchikan Visitors Bureau: Visitors Centers (30 October 2026); City of Ketchikan: Port (30 October 2026); The Milepost: Ketchikan (30 October 2026); Frommer's: Getting around Ketchikan (30 October 2026); Holland America: Great Alaskan Lumberjack Show excursion (30 October 2026); Cruise Hive: Ketchikan cruise port (2024) (30 October 2026); Emma Cruises: Visiting Ketchikan by cruise ship (30 October 2026); City of Ketchikan / KRBD: Ward Cove shuttle operations request (May 2022) (30 October 2026)

Two official sources, two different answers. The City of Ketchikan says four berths, numbered with Roman numerals. The Ketchikan Visitors Bureau says *"Piers 1 through 4, and Doyon Landing, which typically accommodates smaller overnight ships"* — which is five, with Arabic numerals. Doyon Landing does not appear anywhere on the City's port pages. We are not going to pretend we can settle that for you. Both are official; click through and read them yourself.

About that rain

Nearly **150 inches a year** is the official normal, and that is not a gimmick the town invented to sell umbrellas. It is the NOAA number from the station of record at the airport.

So here is the practical version. Bring a rain jacket with a hood, not an umbrella, because your hands will be busy and the wind will take it. Bring shoes you do not mind getting wet. And do not cancel your plans because it is raining, because if you only go out in Ketchikan on the dry days you may never go out at all.

One genuinely useful thing, and it is in the town's own words: the Creek Street boardwalk *"can be wet or slippery, especially during rainy weather."* That is the Visitors Bureau saying it, not me. Wet wood plus a slight downhill plus a cane is exactly the combination that ruins a day.

Creek Street

This is the postcard: a wooden boardwalk built out over Ketchikan Creek on pilings, lined with painted buildings that used to be something quite different from the gift shops they are now.

The Visitors Bureau puts it *"just steps from the waterfront"* and says you get there from downtown *"via sidewalks and stairways."* That word **stairways** is the one to notice.

In July and August the creek fills with spawning salmon, and Alaska Department of Fish and Game names the planks of Creek Street specifically as a good spot to stand and watch them going upstream. Fish, not bears — we come back to that below.

> **What nobody publishes.** We could not find an official source for the walking distance in feet from any berth to Creek Street, the walking time, the grade of the hill, whether there are stairs on the boardwalk itself, or whether any funicular or tram serves it. The Visitors Bureau's own Creek Street page does not mention one. If someone quotes you a confident number, ask them where it came from.

Where the bears actually are

This matters because people get it backwards, and I would rather you knew before you spent a port day on it.

Downtown is a fish-viewing site, not a bear-viewing site. Alaska Department of Fish and Game lists downtown Ketchikan for watching salmon run up the creek, best May through September and peaking in July and August. It does not list bear viewing there.

The Visitors Bureau's named bear spot near town is **Herring Cove**, and it publishes exactly the things you need to know:

- It is **about 8.6 miles south of downtown**, fifteen to twenty minutes by vehicle.
- **The public bus does not go there.**
- Cell phone service *"is often unavailable."*
- Those 8.6 miles are along a busy highway, which the Bureau says *"makes it unsuitable for walking or biking from town."*
- Arrange your taxi back **before** you go out.
- Black bears come for the salmon runs, and *"wildlife sightings are seasonal and not guaranteed."*

That last line is the honest one. We got lucky. You might not.

WHY I AM TELLING YOU THE BORING PART

No cell service, no bus, a busy road you cannot walk, and a taxi you have to arrange in advance. That is four separate ways to end up stranded eight miles from your ship on the one day it really matters.

Book it as a tour, or go with a driver who is waiting for you. This is not the port to improvise in.

Bear safety, from the state of Alaska

Alaska Department of Fish and Game publishes this, and it is worth reading before you go anywhere near a salmon stream:

- *"Making noise (sing, clap, talk) while you travel will reduce your chances of surprising a bear."*
- Keep your belongings with you or in bear-proof storage.
- If you meet one: face the bear, wave your arms, talk to it calmly. If it approaches, stand your ground. ***"Never run from a bear."***

The things people actually do here

Great Alaskan Lumberjack Show	420 Spruce Mill Way. The show's own site says it is *"just 1 Block from the Downtown Cruise Ship Docks."* That is the business's own claim, not the city's.
Totem Heritage Center	601 Deermount Street. City-run. Open 8:00am to 5:00pm daily, May through September.
Saxman Totem Park	In the community of Saxman, about **2.5 miles south of downtown**, roughly five minutes by road. Outdoors, open year-round.

MY VERDICT

Ketchikan is the easiest of the Alaska ports to do well on foot, and the hardest to do well in the wrong shoes. If your ship docks downtown you can have a genuinely good day without booking anything, because the town starts where the gangway ends.

If your ship is at Ward Cove, plan the day properly. Five and a half miles is not a stroll.

Questions people ask about Ketchikan

Will I see a bear in Ketchikan?

Maybe. The Ketchikan Visitors Bureau says plainly that wildlife sightings are seasonal and not guaranteed. Black bears come to Herring Cove, about 8.6 miles south of downtown, during the salmon runs. Downtown itself is listed by Alaska Department of Fish and Game as a place to watch salmon, not bears.

Do I need a passport for Ketchikan?

No. Ketchikan is in Alaska, which is a US state, so it is a domestic stop. If your Alaska cruise also calls at Victoria, British Columbia, that stop is in Canada and has its own document rules.

How much does it rain in Ketchikan?

The NOAA normal for 1991 to 2020 at Ketchikan Airport is 149.54 inches a year. In 2023 the station recorded 175.54 inches. Bring a hooded rain jacket rather than an umbrella.

Is Ward Cove the same as the downtown Ketchikan dock?

No. Ward Cove is a separate facility that the Ketchikan Visitors Bureau places about 5.5 miles from downtown. If your ship berths there you will need transport into town. No official source publishes the shuttle operator, frequency, cost or accessibility.

Can I walk to Creek Street from the ship?

The Ketchikan Visitors Bureau describes Creek Street as just steps from the waterfront, reached from downtown via sidewalks and stairways. It does not publish a distance or a walking time, and it warns that the boardwalk can be wet or slippery in rain.

Where these facts come from

- City of Ketchikan, Port of Ketchikan (https://www.ketchikan.gov/port)
- Ketchikan Visitors Bureau, Cruise Travelers (https://www.visitktn.com/cruise-travelers/)
- Ketchikan Visitors Bureau, Creek Street (https://www.visitktn.com/plan/places-to-discover/creek-street/)
- Ketchikan Visitors Bureau, Herring Cove (https://www.visitktn.com/plan/places-to-discover/herring-cove/)
- Ketchikan Visitors Bureau, Getting Around (https://www.visitktn.com/plan/getting-around/)
- **NOAA NCEI, Ketchikan Airport Local Climatological Data (PDF)** (/crew-library.html)
- Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game, Downtown Ketchikan viewing (https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=southeastviewing.ketchikandowntownketchikan)
- **Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game, Ketchikan wildlife viewing guide (PDF)** (/crew-library.html)
- US Forest Service, Bears of Alaska (https://www.fs.usda.gov/r10/animals-plants/animals/bears-alaska)
- City of Ketchikan, Totem Heritage Center (https://www.ketchikan.gov/maps/location/TotemHeritageCenter)
- Ketchikan Visitors Bureau, Saxman Totem Park (https://www.visitktn.com/plan/places-to-discover/saxman-totem-park/)
- eCFR 49 CFR 71.11, Alaska standard time zone (https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-49/subtitle-A/part-71/section-71.11)

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.
