ALASKA AT ITS BEST!

PALMER

MAPS • RECREATION • HISTORY • TOURS
AGRICULTURE • BUSINESSES • GLACIER

ADVENTURE
IS IN THE
VALLEY

HIKE
2,000 miles of trails

EXPLORE
Hatcher Pass

FLIGHTSEE
and land on a glacier

FISH
for world-class salmon

YAHOO!

Mat-Su

Alaska's Mat-Su Valley, just 40 miles north of Anchorage,
is easily reached by car or the Alaska Railroad.

alaskavisit.com

ALASKA AT ITS BEST!

PALMER

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This is a publication provided by the

PALMER MUSEUM AND VISITOR CENTER
723 S Valley Way
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 746-7668
PALMERMUSEUM.ORG
museuminfo@palmermuseum.org

COVER PHOTOS by Cecil Sanders.

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS: Cecil Sanders, VanderWeele Farm, Josh Peckham, Richard Estelle

WRITER: Brooke Steinke

DESIGNER AND PUBLISHER: Alaska Adventure Media

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PHOTO BY CECIL SANDERS

PALMER MUSEUM HISTORY & ART

WELCOME TO PALMER!

PALMER is an agricultural community and seat of borough government, poised on the banks of the mighty Matanuska River. We are rich in history and loved by all who are looking to find a small Alaska community with hometown charm, warmth and friendliness.

Palmer is a beautiful and welcoming city, and I urge you to take your time, relax and enjoy the many sights and attractions that highlight our community.

A small Alaska community with hometown charm, warmth and friendliness.

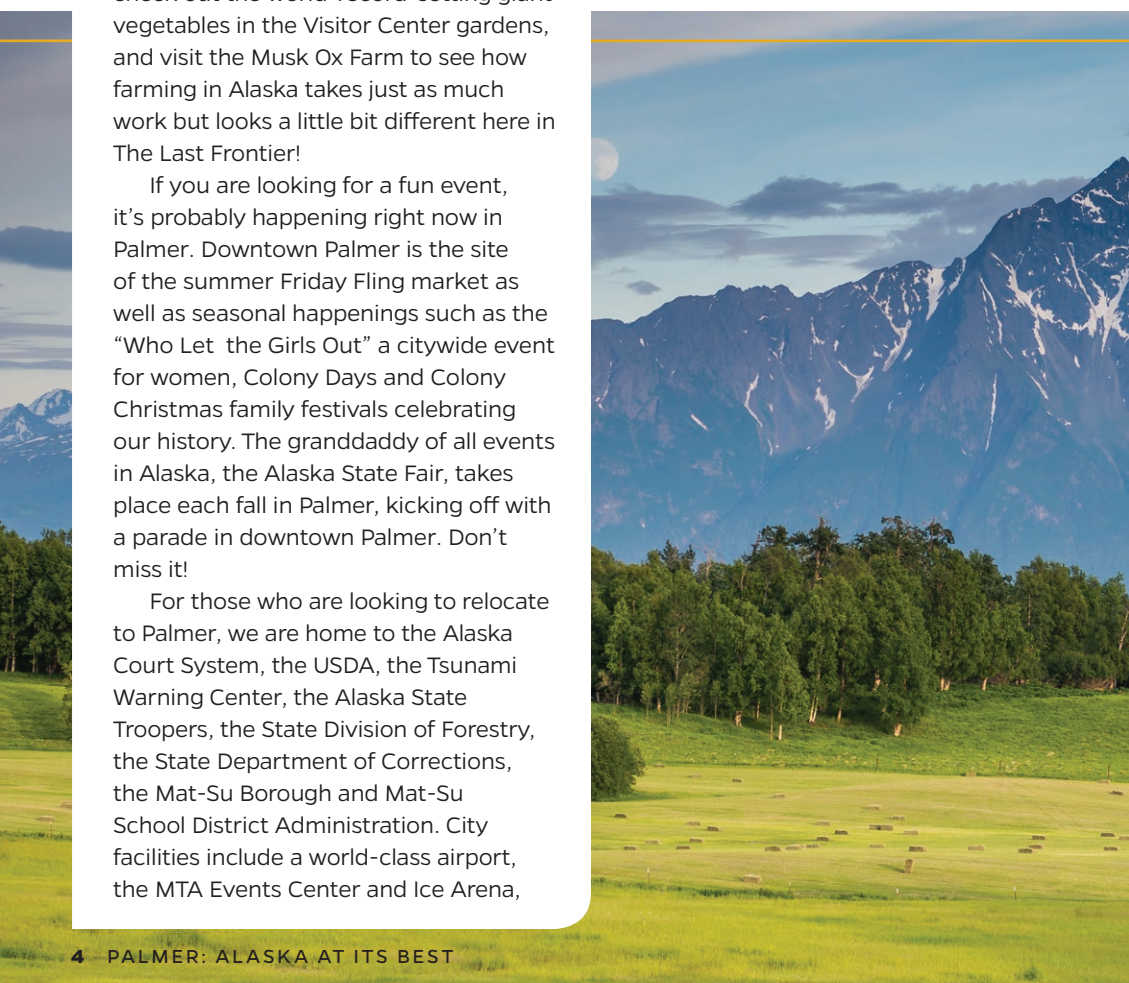
One may spend some time shopping our downtown shops, walk the historic district and visit the museums for a description of the 1935 Matanuska Colony built under FDR's New Deal Homestead Project. Don't forget to check out the world-record-setting giant vegetables in the Visitor Center gardens, and visit the Musk Ox Farm to see how farming in Alaska takes just as much work but looks a little bit different here in The Last Frontier!

If you are looking for a fun event, it's probably happening right now in Palmer. Downtown Palmer is the site of the summer Friday Fling market as well as seasonal happenings such as the "Who Let the Girls Out" a citywide event for women, Colony Days and Colony Christmas family festivals celebrating our history. The granddaddy of all events in Alaska, the Alaska State Fair, takes place each fall in Palmer, kicking off with a parade in downtown Palmer. Don't miss it!

For those who are looking to relocate to Palmer, we are home to the Alaska Court System, the USDA, the Tsunami Warning Center, the Alaska State Troopers, the State Division of Forestry, the State Department of Corrections, the Mat-Su Borough and Mat-Su School District Administration. City facilities include a world-class airport, the MTA Events Center and Ice Arena, the Palmer Museum and Visitor Center and the Palmer Golf Course. Palmer is also a great place to start your biking and hiking activities with numerous trails and paths that can connect to adventures throughout the Matanuska-Susitna Valley and the gorgeous Hatcher Pass Recreational Area. Along with the recreational facilities and governmental agencies, a variety of national and international private companies provide local job opportunities, but Palmer is also well-situated for an easy commute for those who work in Anchorage.

If you're considering relocating your home or business to Palmer or simply thinking about visiting, please do. Welcome to Palmer!

—Edna B. DeVries
Mayor, City of Palmer



FACTS ABOUT PALMER

POPULATION
Palmer City: 6,268
Greater Palmer: 21,100

TEMPERATURE RECORDS
Coldest: -38 F
Warmest: 87 F

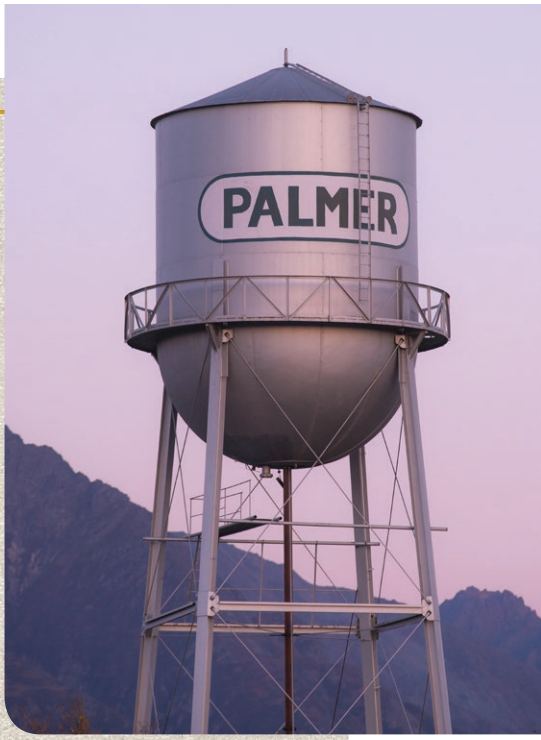
AVERAGE TEMPERATURES
Summer: 40s-70s
Winter: teens to 20s

DAYLIGHT
Summer Solstice: 20 hours
Winter Solstice: 5 hours

WILDLIFE
Look for moose, eagles and fox

BIGGEST RECORDED CABBAGE
138.2 lbs

SISTER CITY
Saroma, Hokkaido, Japan



SURROUNDING MOUNTAINS
Pioneer Peak: 6,398 ft
Lazy Mountain: 3,576 ft
Matanuska Peak: 5,456 ft

PHOTOS BY CECIL SANDERS

PALMER HISTORY

PRE-1935

THE EARLIEST INHABITANTS of the Matanuska Valley were the Athabascan Natives, who developed a successful culture of subsistence and trade. Russian fur traders were some of the first to make contact from the outside. After the U.S. purchased Alaska in 1867, American traders took over from the Russians and additional immigrants began to arrive, including trappers, prospectors, and homesteaders. One of the pioneers was named George Palmer, who became a prominent trader around Cook Inlet and established a small unmanned trading post near the Matanuska River. In 1916-1917 the US government built a railroad spur through the Valley to reach high quality coal deposits at Chickaloon to supply fuel for the Navy. The railroad provided vital access for the development of Palmer. Between 1929-1934, the railroad recruited over 50 farm families from the States to relocate to the Valley, joining the scattered homesteaders who were already there.

The railroad provided vital access for the development of Palmer.

THE MATANUSKA COLONY PROJECT

DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION, the Federal Government instituted a program to relocate destitute farm families from the Midwest to Alaska's Matanuska Valley. Some 203 young families were selected to participate in this highly government-controlled experiment to establish a socialistic agricultural community. This "Matanuska Colony Project" offered each chosen family 40 acres of land, a new house, a barn, animals and equipment to support a farm family, as well as generous government support and long-term financial help. The Government also built a community center including a store, school, railroad depot, and all manner of support facilities, which became the foundation of the City of Palmer.

This "Matanuska Colony Project" offered each chosen family 40 acres of land, a new house, and a barn.

The project was characterized by hasty planning and plagued with problems. Planning began in Washington DC in late 1934. Once selected, families had little time for moving preparations. The new Colonists arrived by train in Palmer in May 1935 and determined each family's farm location by lottery. Construction was behind schedule, so everyone lived in tents while houses were built, land was cleared, and community center facilities were constructed. Despite many problems caused by weather, bureaucratic

PHOTO BY CECIL SANDERS

INTERACT WITH HISTORY!
Take the Historic Walking Tour (page 8) or Farm Tour (page 17). Visit the Palmer Museum of History and Art. Or visit the Senior Center and talk to some experienced Palmerians!

oversight, and the short summer season, all families were able to move from their tents to their new houses by Thanksgiving.

The new Colonists faced great challenges. Most land was forested and had to be cleared before farming could begin. While unlimited credit was available to them at the community store, debt accumulated until income could be produced from their farms. In addition to normal problems associated with starting a new farm, government rules often appeared arbitrary and heavy-handed, affecting farm production and prices, and limiting opportunities for outside income. Colonists were strongly discouraged from patronizing local private businesses rather than those within the Colony. The administration attempted to control spending by issuing the monthly family allowance in unique coinage called "Bingles", which could only be traded at the colony store. Over half of the original colonists withdrew from the colony project within the first couple years, causing the government to recruit replacement families from various states to take their place.

PALMER TODAY

BY 1940 the government gave up management of most Colony activities and facilities, replaced by a member-owned cooperative that handled rules and provided marketing for the farmers. New roads connected scattered farms, improving transportation throughout the Valley. A telephone cooperative was formed to improve communication, and in 1941 an electrical cooperative began supplying electricity. Both co-ops continue today. Many descendants of the Colonists continue to live in the Valley, and there is still a strong agricultural community within a growing population. Palmer has retained its small-town atmosphere, with a walkable downtown district, local restaurants, fresh farm produce available in stores year-round, numerous lively events and celebrations, and even holds the seat of many public services and government functions.

Palmer has retained its small-town atmosphere with a walkable downtown district.

PALMER HISTORIC DISTRICT WALKING TOUR

EXPERIENCE THE STORY of the Matanuska Colony on an easy mile loop around the Green. Route is paved, drivable, and takes 45 minutes at a leisurely pace. There are several places to sit and admire the stunning mountain vistas along the way.

Please so not disturb residents of private buildings, marked on this map in **orange**. Businesses and churches are marked in **purple**: please be courteous when visiting. Public locations are shown in **green**.

IMPORTANT DOS & DON'TS

DO remember to watch for traffic and observe general pedestrian safety rules.

DO be respectful of the residents who live in the historic district and of the businesses that operate here. Clean up after your pets and properly dispose of your garbage.

DON'T trespass on private property. All tour stops that are private property are marked in orange but many privately owned buildings along the route are not marked. Please be observant and read posted signage.

GUIDED TOURS
June 1-August 31

Daily at 1pm, Monday through Saturday

Private group tours available if scheduled in advance

$10 per person or $8 each for a group of 4+

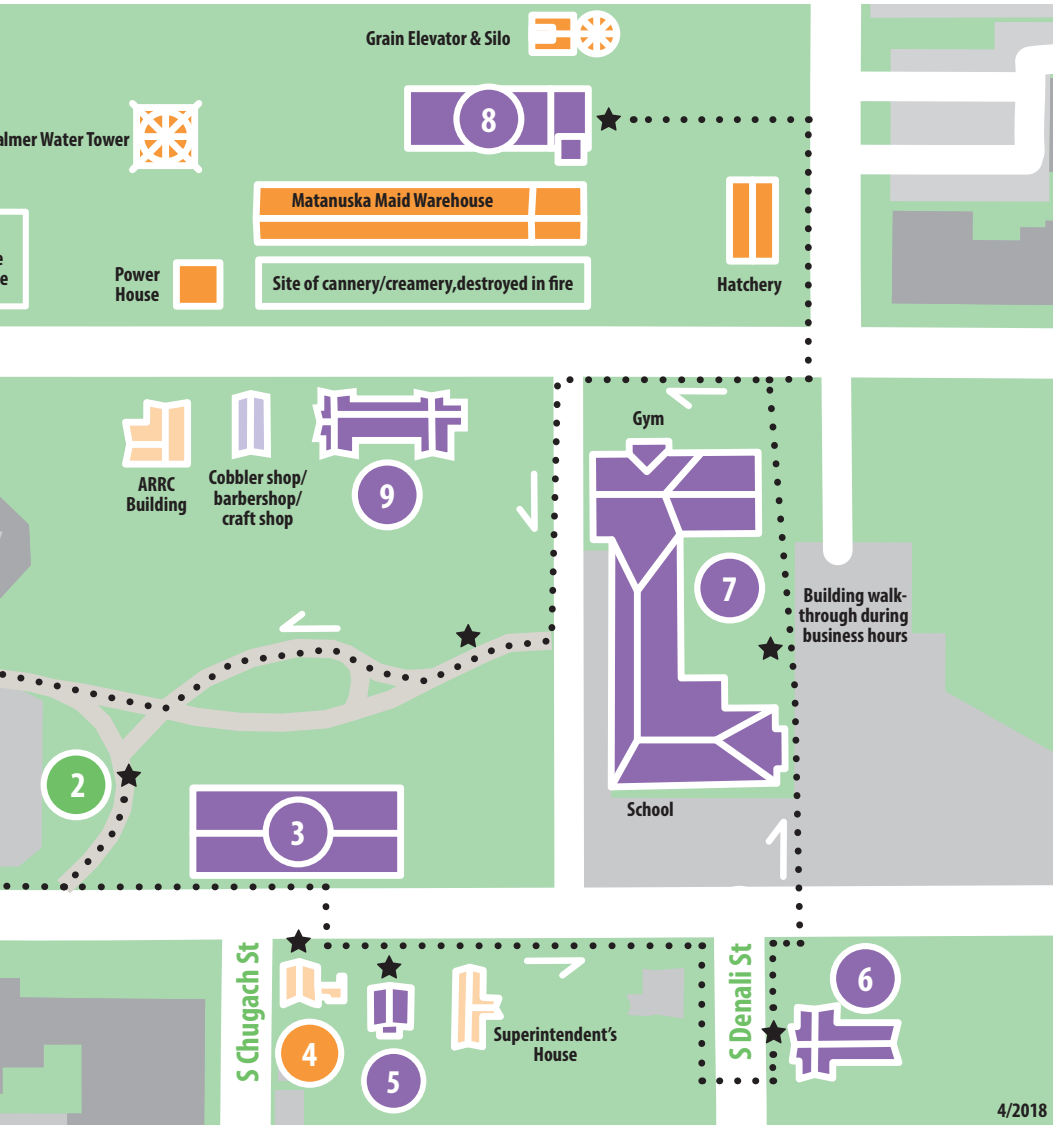
AUDIO TOUR: available year round
$7 per headset rental or $5 for a group
Available in English, Korean, and Japanese
★= Audio tour stop

FEATURED LOCATIONS

1. PALMER MUSEUM
The garden was originally installed to demonstrate plants and crops grown in the area.

2. COLONY MEMORIAL
Here stands the bell of St. Mihiel, the ship that transported the Colonists from San Francisco to Seward.

3. COLONY INN (DORMITORY)
Now a working cafe and inn, this building originally housed single staff, including nurses and teachers.



4. PROJECT MANAGER'S HOUSE
This was the home of the Project Manager for the Colony.

5. COLONY HOUSE MUSEUM
This is an original Colony farmhouse, moved from north of Palmer and furnished entirely with Colony era decor.

6. CHURCH OF 1000 TREES
This log church was built in 1937 by the men and women of its congregation.

7. BOROUGH BUILDING (SCHOOLHOUSE)
Palmer's first schoolhouse and attached "Community Center and Gym" hosted basketball games, dances, movies and other community gatherings. The first Fair was held there in 1936.

8. ALASKA PICKER
Built in 1957, this building was the cold storage for the Matanuska Co-op, keeping root vegetables fresh. You can see much of the old Industrial Sector from here.

9. PALMER CITY ALEHOUSE
The Palmer Alehouse was once the Trading Post, Recreation Hall, shooting range and the town's only restaurant.

10. TRAIN DEPOT
The combination of rail access and good farmland significantly influenced the decision to locate the Colony here.

FARMING IN PALMER

BEST CROPS

The best types of crops to grow here are cold weather crops: root crops and brassicas (leafy crops); potatoes; carrots; rutabaga; lettuce; kale; cabbage; broccoli; peas. People use hoophouses and greenhouses to grow crops like tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers and squashes.

INTERACT WITH FARMING!

Drive the Springer Loops and see barns and fields

Visit the gardens at the Visitor Center or the Matanuska Experiment Farm

Tour an animal farm

Buy local produce at Bushes Bunches

Book a tour with Alaska Farm Tours

Shop at the Friday Fling (page 20)

Eat at a restaurant with local produce

GIANT VEGETABLES

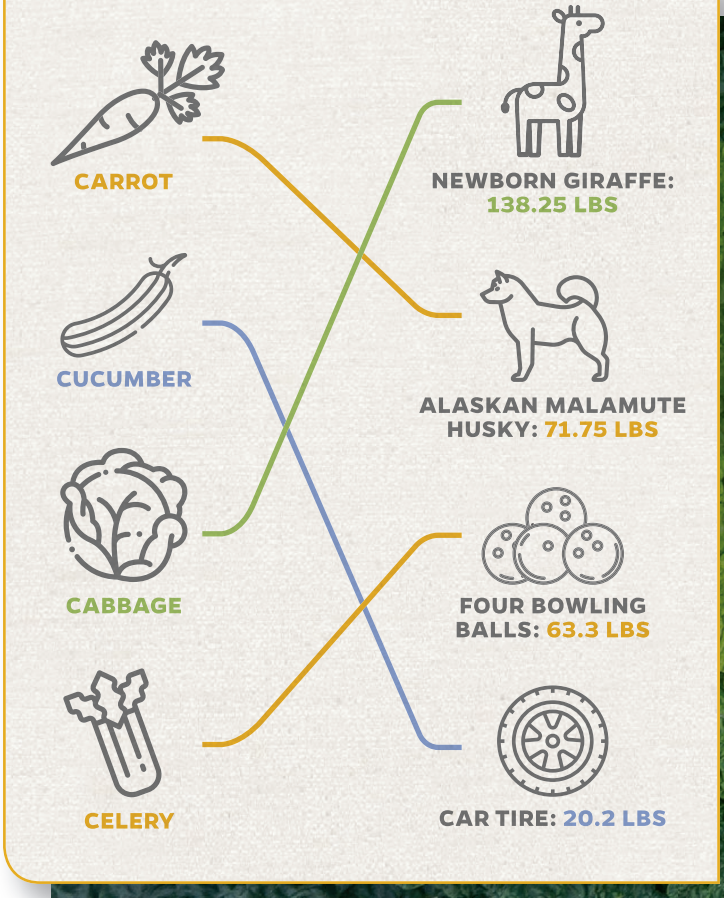


PHOTO BY CECIL SANDERS

PHOTOS COURTESY OF VANDERWEELE FARMS

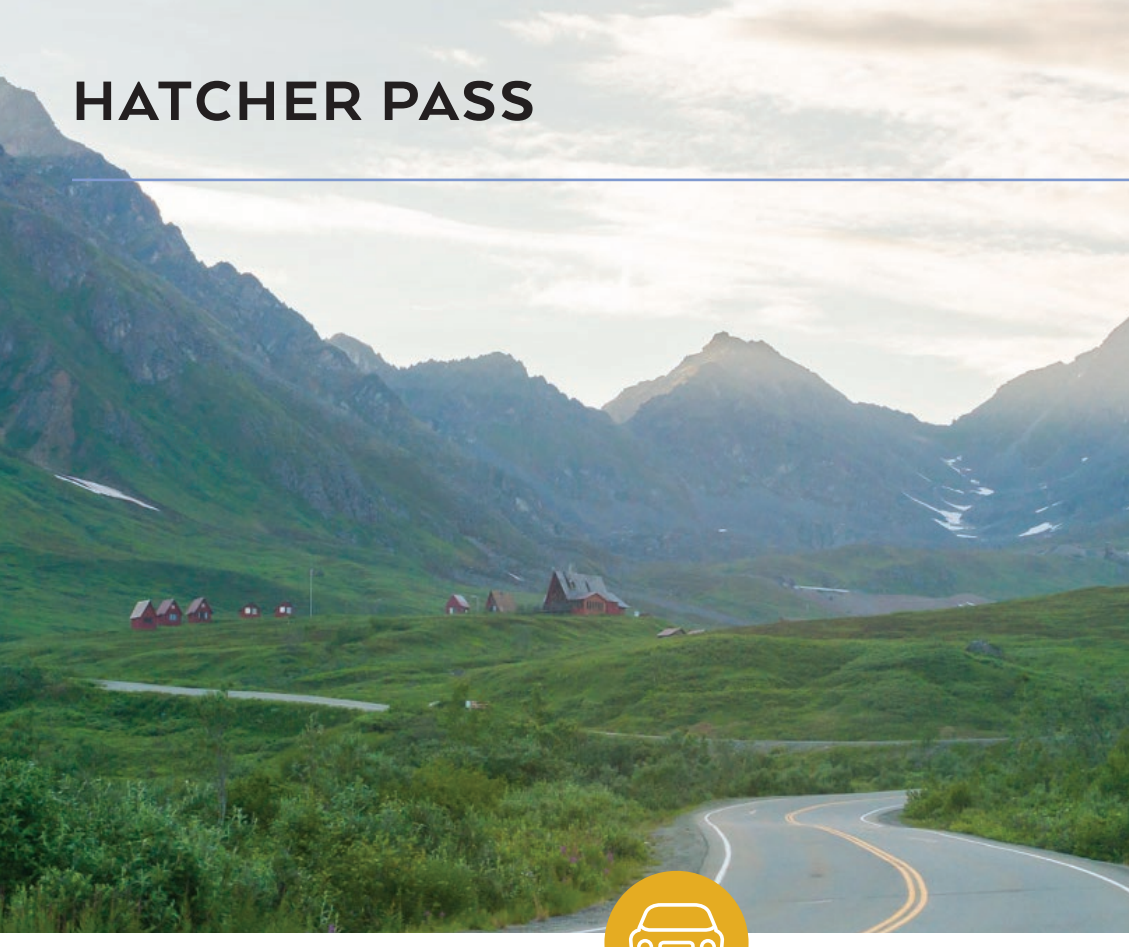
WHY DO VEGETABLES GROW SO WELL HERE?

LIGHT: Plants eat sunlight, which averages 19 hours a day in the summer.

MILD TEMPERATURES: It rarely gets above 80 F, so plants don't bolt like they would in hot weather.

YOUNG SOIL: The soil is still rich in nutrients because Alaska is a newly developed area.

HATCHER PASS



HATCHER PASS

What you will see:
BERRIES AND FLOWERS! Hatcher Pass is a popular area to pick blueberries when they are in season. There are also crowberries, less sweet, but edible and plentiful. Be on the lookout for Fireweed, Bluebell of Scotland, Monkshood, Dwarf Dogwood, Star Gentian, and many other flowers.

WILDLIFE! In this Alpine area, you are likely to see Arctic ground squirrel and hoary marmots (also known as whistle pigs), magpies, ptarmigan, spruce grouse, and other kinds of birds and small mammals. Birds of prey like eagles, hawks, and falcons like to hunt here. Occasionally you can spot bigger animals like moose, bear, and fox.

GEAR UP. This is a mountain pass, so there could be snow, even in July! Take study close-toed shoes, water resistant if you have them, and a jacket, a hat, and some gloves. Having several layers is best.

WILLOW-FISHHOOK ROAD

ROAD CONDITION:
Mostly gravel, can be sharp switchbacks, don't recommend RVs or trailers.

OPEN OR CLOSED?
Generally open from July 4 to mid-September. Check alaskastateparks.org for status.

What you'll see:
SPECTACULAR ALPINE SCENERY

HOW LONG IT TAKES: from Independence Mine to Willow is about 1 hour and 15 minutes.

PHOTOS BY CECIL SANDERS

INDEPENDENCE MINE

Learn what it was like to live and work in one of Alaska's largest gold mining camps. Although no longer in operation, the buildings are maintained so people can take self-guided tours through the mine camp. The scenery is amazing, and worth the drive whether or not you wish to tour! The mine is typically open from mid-June to Labor Day, but is always open to foot traffic.

PARKING FEES

DAY PARKING PASS
available onsite: $5-$7

ANNUAL PARKING PASS:
$40 (MSB)
$50 (State)

WHERE DO I GET AN ANNUAL PASS?
Borough annual permits: cover parking for all Borough maintained trailheads/parking lots. Get them at the Borough Building (350 E Dahlia Ave) or online at matsugov.us under Lifestyle.

STATE ANNUAL PERMITS: cover parking for all State maintained trailheads/parking lots. Get them at the Finger Lake State Rec Site (7278 E Bogard Rd) or online at dnr.alaska.gov

HATCHER PASS HIKES:
Please see page 23

MATANUSKA GLACIER

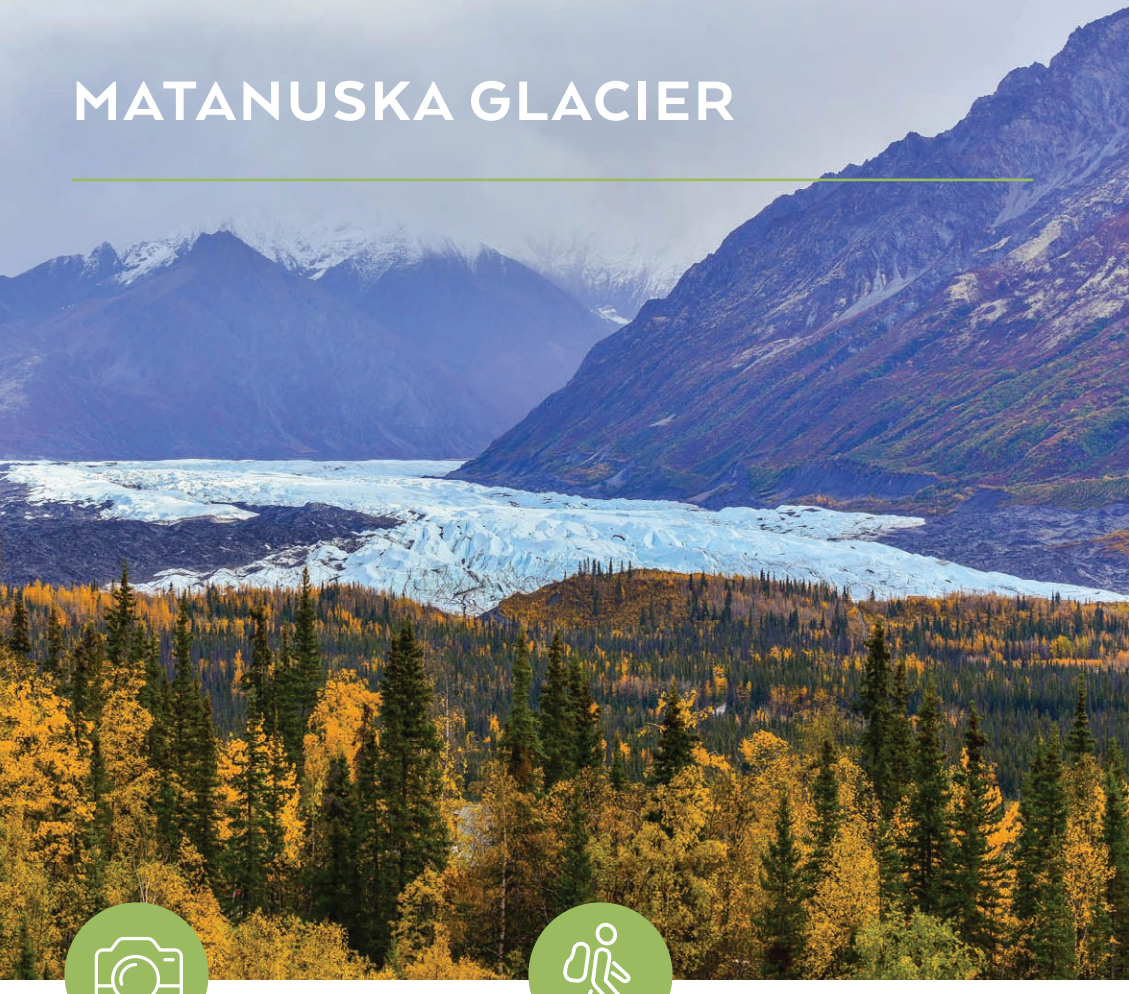


PHOTO BY CECIL SANDERS

SEE THE GLACIER

STATE RECREATIONAL SITE, MILE 101

This spot overlooks the valley, giving you an opportunity for some great photos.

- Walking Trail
- Restrooms
- ADA Facility
- Camping and Picnic sites
- $5 parking fee (or annual pass, see page 13)
- Great views; NO glacier access

EXPERIENCE THE GLACIER

MATANUSKA GLACIER PARK, MILE 102

Want to walk on the ice? At glacier park, you can access the glacier directly. Questions, call (907) 745-2534

General Access: A $30 entrance fee is required for general access. If you are experienced with glaciers, this unguided tour option may be for you

Guided Tour: For the safest glacier experience, book a guided tour with one of the many companies available. Guides will help you navigate, narrate the tour, and show you some of the wonders of the glacier!

HALF-DAY TRIP TO GLACIERVIEW: add to your glacier experience

- Rafting
- Public Hiking Trails
- Wildlife viewing pullouts
- Numerous cozy roadside lodges
- Birdwatching

ATHABASCAN PEOPLE

THERE ARE OVER 229 Native Alaskan tribes. The Chickaloon Tribe are of the Athabascan People group, in the Ahtna language group

TRADERS

The Chickaloon Tribe lived in the Matanuska Valley long before the trappers, miners, and settlers from Russia and America came to the area.

The historic Chickaloon people were traders between Tribes of the Interior and Tribes from the Coast. Rather than set up permanent villages, they had a number of seasonal campsites they traveled between. Some longhouses were constructed for winter, but warm weather campsites included good fishing and hunting areas.

PRACTICAL PEOPLE

Because so much time was spent traveling between seasonal homes, Chickaloon buildings and arts are utilitarian. Examples include birchbark baskets, moosehide vests and tunics, willow branch fish traps, and porcupine quillwork.

CHANGE

Russians came to the area as early as 1730, introducing new trade goods such as beads and gunpowder. The Chickaloon people developed beautiful beadwork into their traditional crafts, such as moose hide regalia. However, as newcomers began to settle in traditional fishing and hunting areas, the Chickaloon people's lifestyle of seasonal travel for food and resources was severely impacted. Finally, the installation of the railroad in 1917 for the Chickaloon coal mines caused a massive influx of settlers, which contributed to the fragmentation of the Chickaloon Tribe and their traditions.

NURTURE THE LAND AND PEOPLE

Katherine Wade, pictured above, did much to help revive and preserve the traditional culture of the Chickaloon Tribe. Nay' dini' aa Na' Hwt' aene Ugheldze' Xuk' amotta Nene' (Nurture the Land and People) is a current tribal project dedicated to promoting and preserving Ahtna language, culture, and traditional crafts.

CHICKALOON TRIBE TODAY

Alberta Stephan, Elder for the Eklutna Tribe, said that the native people are like strawberry plants, which send out runners, spreading all over.

Some of the Chickaloon Tribe descendants live close to historic campsites, while others have spread throughout Alaska, to the Lower 48, and even other countries.

WINTER

SNOW PLAY

SLEDDING
Buying a sled at the store is one of the cheaper ways to play in the snow. Try Hatcher Pass or Crevasse Moraine Trailhead for sledding hills.

SNOWBOARDING
Hatcher Pass is a very popular area for snowboarding. There is not a ski lift at this time.

SKIING
Government Peak Recreation Area has groomed and lighted trails for cross country skiing.

NO SNOW? TRY ICE!
Ice Skating and Ice Fishing are both great once the lakes are frozen over. Some lakes with easy public access include Kepler Lake, Finger Lake, and Wasilla Lake.

NORTHERN LIGHTS

CLEAR NIGHTS
If you can't see the stars, you probably can't see the lights. Remember, though: clear night = cold night, so bundle up or find a good window.

11 P.M.–2 A.M.
While a general time is nice, it's hard to predict. Remember to look up often, since the sky changes quickly and it's easy to miss a 15 minute light show.

*Check **gi.alaska.edu/auroraforecast** for the nightly forecast!*

PHOTOS BY CECIL SANDERS

FARM DRIVE

PHOTO BY RICHARD ESTELLE.

1 BLEEDING HEART BREWERY
One of the first dairy farms in the valley, this farm has been in the same family for 80 years. It is currently an active angus farm and also the location of the Bleeding Heart Brewery (est. 2014).

2 VANDERWEELE FARMS
The premier source for Alaska Grown Vegetables since 1967, Vanderweeles grow potatoes, carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, brussels sprouts, red and green cabbage, many different lettuce varieties, kale, onions, beets, and a number of other vegetables. Check out their facebook page (VanderWeele Farm).

3 COUNTRY GARDEN FARMS
Country Garden Farms grows hay and sod—look for the neatly cut rows of grass! They also farm the Grover farm, a picturesque farm with a historic barn. (Please stay on public roads if you want a picture!) Because the fields are situated so close to the river, the Palmer winds blow dirt from the riverbeds in every year, helping replenish some of the soil removed with the sod.

4 FRESH STARTS FARMS
Fresh Starts Farms is a small retail Greenhouse selling bedding plants and hanging baskets. They are open from April 15 to June 15 approximately.

Please respect that these farms are private property and these are businesses and homes, not attractions. If you are not with a tour guide who has permission from the farm owners, stay on public roads. **Numbers above refer to those on the fold-out map**.

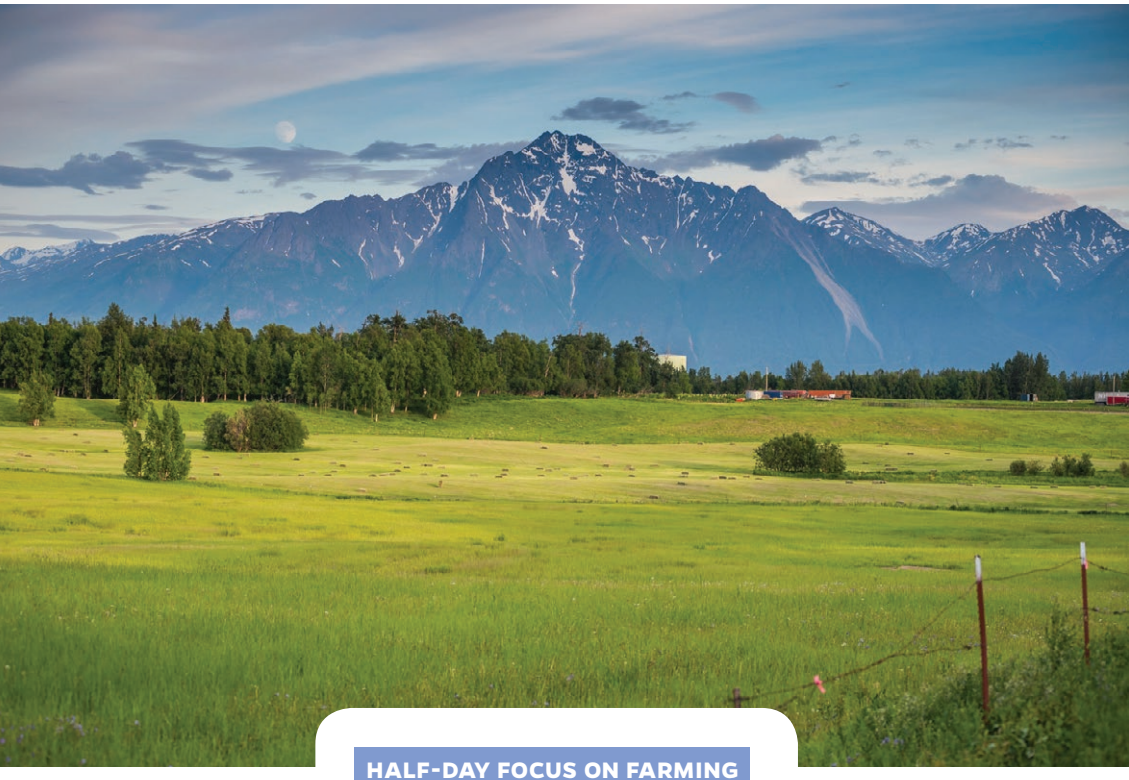
MATANUSKA COLONY BARNS

AS PART OF the Matanuska Colony Project, each of the 203 colonist families were each provided with 40 acres, a new house, and a barn. Some of these historic barns still stand on the original farming tracts.

There was only one barn design originally. Barns were built 32' x 32' x 32' with gambrel roofs. They were 1 ½ stories tall. The lower floor was log and the upper floor was frame.

The Colonists had many complaints about the barns, saying they were too small, inefficiently partitioned, and drafty. Since the barns were meant for general subsistence farming, they weren't suited to commercial use. To make the barns fit for Grade A dairy production, many expensive upgrades were needed, including concrete floors and foundations, as well as milk parlors. There were eventually many Grade A Dairies in the Valley.

ITINERARIES



HALF-DAY FOCUS ON FARMING

SEE GIANT VEGGIES
at the Visitor Center Garden (July-September is best)
20 minutes

DRIVE THE SPRINGER LOOPS
to see fields and historic Colony barns
20 minutes

TOUR AN ANIMAL FARM
20 minutes

VISIT THE EXPERIMENT FARM
to learn about current farming research
and see community gardens
45 minutes

EXPLORE LOCAL PRODUCE
Stop at a farm stand or eat at
a restaurant with local produce,
or take a tour with Alaska Farm Tours

PHOTOS BY CECIL SANDERS

PALMER SAMPLER

9 AM	Hike the Butte or walk the Old Railroad Trail
10 AM	Visit the Musk Ox Farm
11:30 AM	Eat lunch (see page 28)
12:30 PM	See the Visitor Center Garden
1 PM	Tour the Matanuska Colony Historic District
2 PM	Downtown Shopping/Art Galleries
3 PM	Drive to Hatcher Pass and tour Independence Mine
6 PM	Pick a local brewery or visit the Palmer Alehouse to round off the evening!

HALF-DAY WILDLIFE EXPEDITION

Walk around Reflections lake, looking for **BIRDS, MUSKRAT**, and other small wildlife.

Don't forget to look for **MOOSE** on the Hay Flats as you drive!

On the way to the Musk Ox Farm, stop at the pullout between Fishhook and Archie to look for **BIRDS OF PREY**

Visit the **MUSK OX** Farm

Drive into Hatcher Pass and take Archangel Road to look for **MARMOTS** and **BEAVERS**. Hike Reed Lakes trail for the best chance to spot them!

Visit the Matanuska Bridge and look for **EAGLES**.

From the top of the Butte, you can see a working **REINDEER** farm.

MORE THINGS TO DO IN PALMER

TOUR THE HISTORIC DISTRICT
45 minutes
Walk or drive around the original Colony Community Center. See page 8.

GIANT VEGETABLES
20 minutes
See our world famous veggies! Visit the State fair or Visitor Center Garden. August through September

HIKING
30 min-2 hours
Find a hike that fits your group! See page 22 for a full list.

BREWERIES
30 minutes
Visit the tasting room at one of our local breweries for unique drinks!

DOWNTOWN SHOPPING
1 hour
Visit our walkable downtown district to shop local!

ART GALLERIES
30 minutes
See what Palmer can make! See page 25.

LOCAL PRODUCE
45 minutes
Get it while it's here! Check farmstands, supermarkets, or the Friday Fling.

MATANUSKA GLACIER
1 hour drive from Palmer
This glacier is accessible from the road. See page 14 for more info.

HATCHER PASS
30 minute drive from Palmer
Explore Independence Mine and see Glacial lakes. See page 12.

ATV/SNOWMACHINING
1-4 hours. Experience the backcountry adventure style!

EVENTS

APRIL 27
WHO LET THE GIRLS OUT
Celebrate Spring with this downtown shopping event!

EARLY MAY
VALLEY CHROME AND WHEELS CAR SHOW
A three-day event. Check the 49th State Street Rodders Facebook to learn more.

MAY 4-5 & LATE NOVEMBER
VINTAGE MARKET
May is the Vintage Home Market, with upcycled furniture, local crafters, and homemade goods. November is geared toward the holidays.

JUNE 7-9
COLONY DAYS
Celebrate Palmer's original colonists! Parade, Baking contests, 5K Races, Food Trucks, Inflatable Games, Skill Demonstrations, and more!

JUNE 22
ART ON FIRE
Come join this Fire Iron Pour Art Fest at the Museum of Transportation and Industry.

PHOTO BY RICHARD ESTELLE

JULY 13
GARDEN ART FAIRE
Local vendors sell food, crafts, and art. Instructional demonstrations, and live music.

JUNE 29
ALASKA SCOTTISH HIGHLAND GAMES
Bagpipes, traditional Scottish games, and vendors who sell food and paraphernalia.

JULY
PALMER PRIDE PICNIC
Gather at the Depot to celebrate our community with a free picnic, fresh veggies, live music, and Citizen of the Year.

AUGUST 11
RUNNING WITH THE BULLS
Run a 1K, 5K, or 10K at the Musk Ox Farm!

PHOTO BY CECIL SANDERS

AUGUST 22-SEPT 2
STATE FAIR
Exhibit halls, National performers, giant vegetable competitions, livestock, food vendors galore, carnival rides, entertainment. Shuttle buses available for transport to and from the fairgrounds.

LATE AUG
HOT SUMMER NIGHTS CAR SHOW
Check the 49th State Street Rodders Facebook to learn more.

SEPTEMBER
POTATO BOWL
This football game continues the traditional rivalry between Palmer and Wasilla High Schools.

NOVEMBER 30
SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY
Skip Black Friday Shopping and come find your gifts locally.

OCTOBER 5
OXTOBERFEST
Farm-to-Table Feast, Brew Fest, and Polka Bash!

PHOTO BY CECIL SANDERS

MID-DEC
COLONY CHRISTMAS
Parade of lights, smoosh races, craft fairs, live animals, and Christmas festivities.

WEEKLY EVENTS

FRIDAYS, MAY THROUGH SEPT.
FRIDAY FLING
At the pavilion in front of the Visitor Center

EVERY MONDAY
MONDAY FUN RUN
6 p.m., year round. Check happyrunak.com for details

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Want more information about community events in Palmer? Check our Community Calendar at palmermuseum.org

HIKING

AMBLES

MORGAN HORSE TRAIL

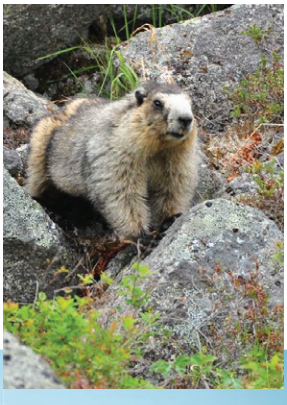
- 2 miles
- Trailhead: S Huntley Road (Lazy Mt Trailhead)
- A forested horseback trail also good for walking or running.

PALMER-MOOSE CREEK RAILROAD TRAIL

- 6 miles one way
- Trailhead: Eagle Avenue, Palmer
- Lovely walk along old railroad tracks with a view of the Matanuska River.

THUNDERBIRD FALLS

- 1 mile one way
- Trailhead: The Old Glenn Hwy, from the Eklutna Exit between Palmer and Anchorage
- An easy, rewarding hike.



PHOTOS BY CECIL SANDERS

MOUNTAINS

HATCHER PASS: GOLD CORD LAKE

- Access: Independence Mine Area Parking
- 1.7 miles round trip
- This trail is excellent for families with children or groups with different fitness levels. Hike ends at a glacial lake.

HATCHER PASS: APRIL BOWL TRAIL

- Access: Mile 19 of the Hatcher Pass road (just before Summit Lake)
- 2.2 miles round trip
- This trail takes you up to Hatch peak, starting with switchbacks, passing through a valley with a lake, and eventually along a ridge to the top.

HATCHER PASS: REED LAKES TRAIL

- Access: Archangel Road
- 9 miles round trip
- This trail passes turquoise lakes, waterfalls, and the abandoned Snowbird Mine, ending at Upper Reed Lake. The first 1.5 miles are easy, following an old road to an abandoned cabin. The rest of the trail is challenging, including a boulder field marked by cairns.

LAZY MOUNTAIN

- 2.5 miles to peak (2-4 hours)
- Trailhead: S Huntley Rd.
- Choose between a steep (Lazy Mt) or switch back (Lazy Moose) route to start off.

MATANUSKA PEAK

- 4 miles to peak (7-8 hours)
- Trailhead: Smith Road
- Rewarding but challenging. Consider not summiting to make this hike easier and shorter.

PIONEER PEAK

- 12 miles (8-12 hours)
- Trailhead: Knik River Road, mile 3.5
- This hike can take up to 12 hours. The last 1.5 miles can require hands and feet and has steep drop-offs. Plan ahead and know your limits.

BUTTE

- 1.5 miles (30 min-1 hr)
- Trailhead: Mothershead Lane (off Bodenburg Loop)
- Excellent view of surrounding mountians, Knik glacier in the distance, the Matanuska River and sprawling farmlands.

TRAIL SYSTEMS

Good for: hiking, running, mountain biking, horseback riding, cross country skiing, snowshoeing

MATANUSKA GREENBELT TRAILS

30+ miles of looping trails, with multiple access points. Access points include:

- Crevasse-Moraine (Trailhead: Loma Prieta Drive)
- Matanuska Lakes State Recreation Area
- For a map of the entire trail system, including trail surface type and parking, visit matanuska-greenbelt.org

MATANUSKA RIVER PARK CAMPGROUND

- 2 miles
- Trailhead: Matanuska River Park
- This small network takes you from the playground/campsite area through trees to the Matanuska riverbed.

Times are approximate total hike time. Dogs must be on a leash. Don't forget the bug spray! Find fantastic trail brochures with descriptions and pictures at matsugov.us/trails

LAKES

PUBLIC ACCESS

All lake waters are public—however, the land that allows access to the water may be privately owned. Respect private property and find public access. Finger Lake is ADA accessible.

BETWEEN PALMER AND ANCHORAGE

EKLUTNA LAKE: About a half hour drive from the highway, recreational activities include hiking, kayaking, camping, and biking. Rentals are available for some of the activities.

REFLECTION LAKE: Knik exit coming from Palmer. Handicap accessible 1-mile loop around the lake. There are benches, restrooms, and a wildlife viewing tower.

FISHING

Many lakes are stocked with fish including Rainbow Trout, Arctic Grayling, Arctic Char, and Coho Salmon. Fishing licenses are required for residents and nonresidents, and are available at the Fish and Game Office in Palmer, Fred Meyer, or Carrs. For more information about stocked lakes, public access to lakes, and fishing licenses, visit adfg.alaska.gov.

SUGGESTED LAKES

MATANUSKA LAKES STATE RECREATION AREA
Access: North of the Glenn Hwy, Milepost 36.4

KEPLER LAKE
Access: Mile 37.3 of the Glenn Hwy

FINGER LAKE STATE RECREATION AREA
Access: 7278 E. Bogard Road

WASILLA LAKE
Access: Newcomb Park/Wasilla Lake Park

LAKE LUCILLE
Access: Lake Lucille Park (1401 S Endeavor St)

COTTONWOOD LAKE
Access: Intersection of Spruce Dr and E Hemlock

MEMORY LAKE
Access: Hebrides Drive (off of Shrock Rd)

WOLF LAKE
Access: Wolf Lake State Recreation Site (Engstrom Road off of Bogard)

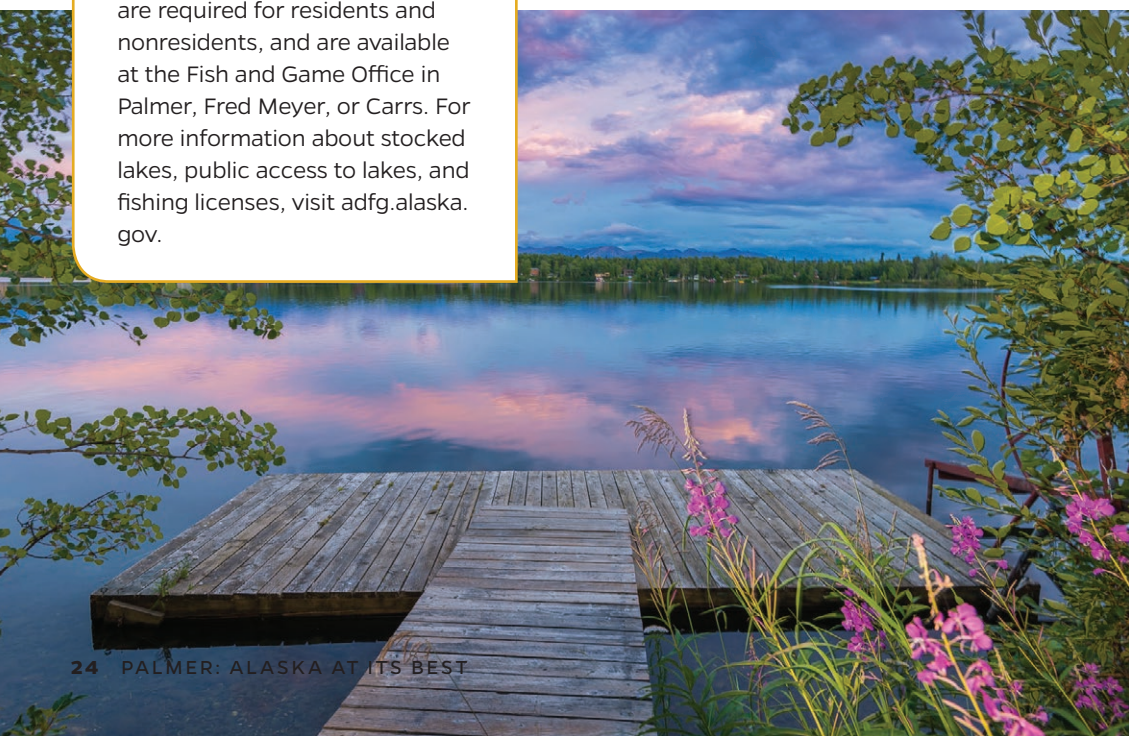


PHOTO BY CECIL SANDERS

ARTS IN PALMER

AN ART COMMUNITY

Palmer is full of art and artists, from painters to metal workers, woodcrafters to brewers, photographers to musicians. Local bands play at community events or coffee shops, shops sell local soaps and preserves, and galleries feature unique creations. Organizations like the Valley Art Alliance encourage, sponsor, facilitate, and support artistic expression in the MatSu Valley. Look in the restaurants, businesses, and community buildings such as the library to find art on display.

INTERACT WITH ART!

See/buy individual artists' work at local stores (see our downtown map)

Visit one of the art galleries in Palmer

Look for art in local restaurants, shops, businesses, and schools

Attend an event such as the State Fair, Garden Art Fair, Vintage Market, or Colony Days to see local craftsmanship and performances (for more info see Events on page 20)

Make some art! (Try the Art Café for classes and projects)

Check the Glenn Massay Theater for current shows

PHOTOS BY RICHARD ESTELLE

PALMER BUSINESS DIRECTORY

LODGING

MOTEL/B&B/CABINS

Alaska Garden Gate B&B and Cottages
950 S Trunk Rd
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 746-2333
info@gardengatebnb.com

Alaska's Harvest B&B/Cabins
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Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 745-6788
cabins@hatcherpassbb.com

Alaska Knotty Pine BNB
3525 N Clark-Wolverine Rd
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 982-3278
alaskaknottypine@gmail.com

Bear Den Cabins
65920 S Victory Rd
Sutton, AK 99674
(907) 746-2292
gerwig@mtaonline.net

Colony Inn
325 E Elmwood Ave
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 745-3330

Hatcher Pass B&B
9000 N Palmer-Fishhook Rd
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 745-6788
cabins@hatcherpassbb.com

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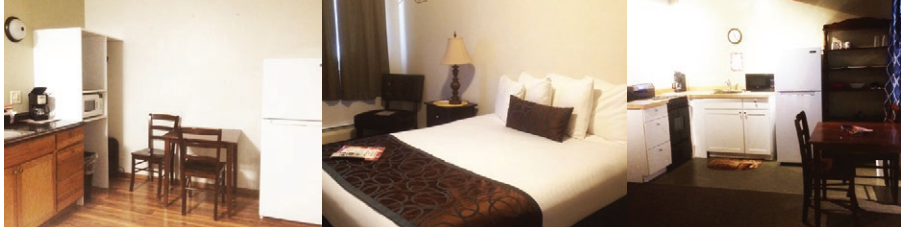

LODGING

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Fox Run Lodge and RV Campground
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Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 355-8641 (text)
walkingoutside@mtaonline.net

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paradisealaskainn@yahoo.com
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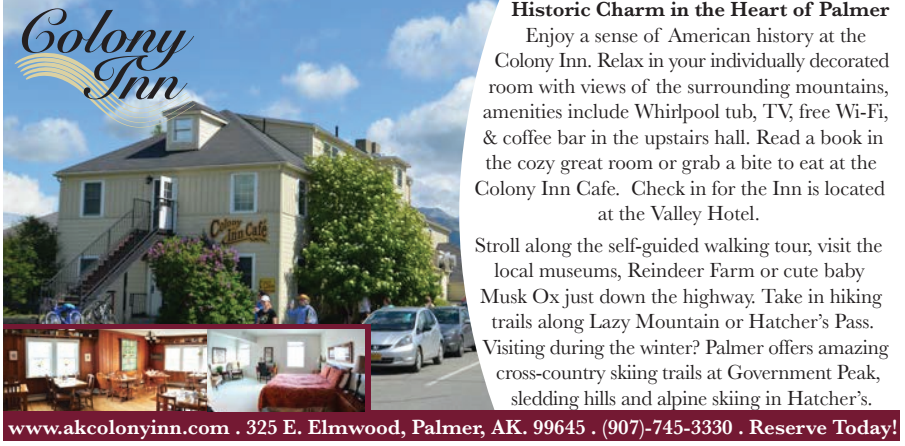

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(907) 745-2929

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(907) 745-3330

Vagabond Blues
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(907) 745-2233

TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

ART

Shane Lamb Gallery
550 S Alaska Ste, Ste 107
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 746-3343
info@shanelamb.com

The Art Café
131 E Blueberry Ave
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 745-6100
theartcafeak@gmail.com

The Gallery (Colony Plaza)
1150 S Colony Way
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 745-1420
galeryak@ak.net

Ray Gamradt Studio:
Alaskan Charcoal
761 S Gulkana St
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(406) 546-1956
rgamradt@hotmail.com

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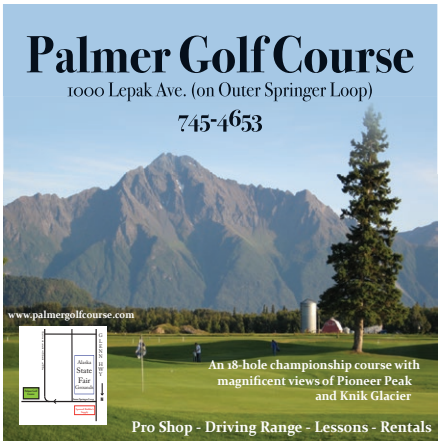

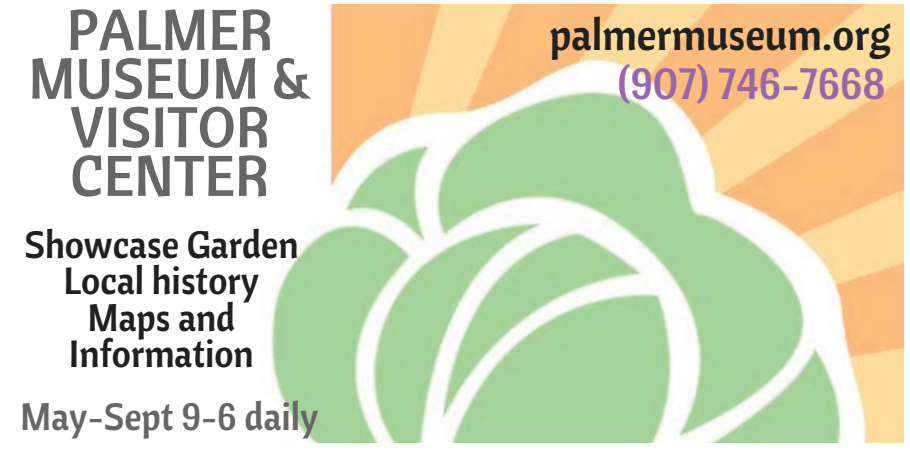

TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

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1509 S Georgeson Dr
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(907) 745-3360
jrbird@alaska.edu

EXPERIENCE

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(907) 745-2505
reservations@alaska.global

Backcountry Bike and Ski
132 W Arctic Ave
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(907) 746-5018
backcountrybikeandski@gmail.com

Alaska State Fair
2075 Glenn Hwy
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 745-4827
alaskastatefair.org

Bleeding Heart Brewery
16013 E Outer Springer Loop
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 746-2421
bleedingheartbrewing@hotmail.com

Glenn Massay Theater
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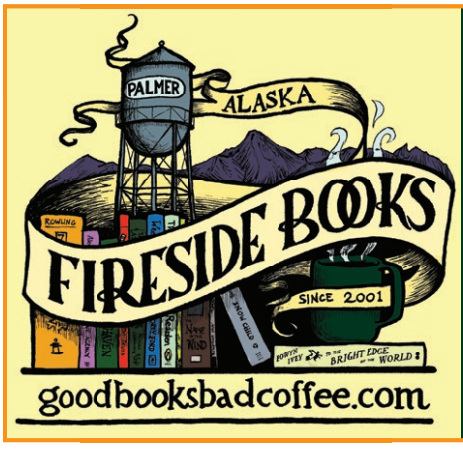

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(907) 745-4151
info@muskoxfarm.org

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director@valleyrecycling.org

ORGANIZATIONS

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(907) 745-3271
cityofpalmer.org

MatSu CVB
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Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 746-5000
info@alaskavisit.com

Palmer Chamber
”550 S Alaska St
Ste 101”
Palmer, AK 99645
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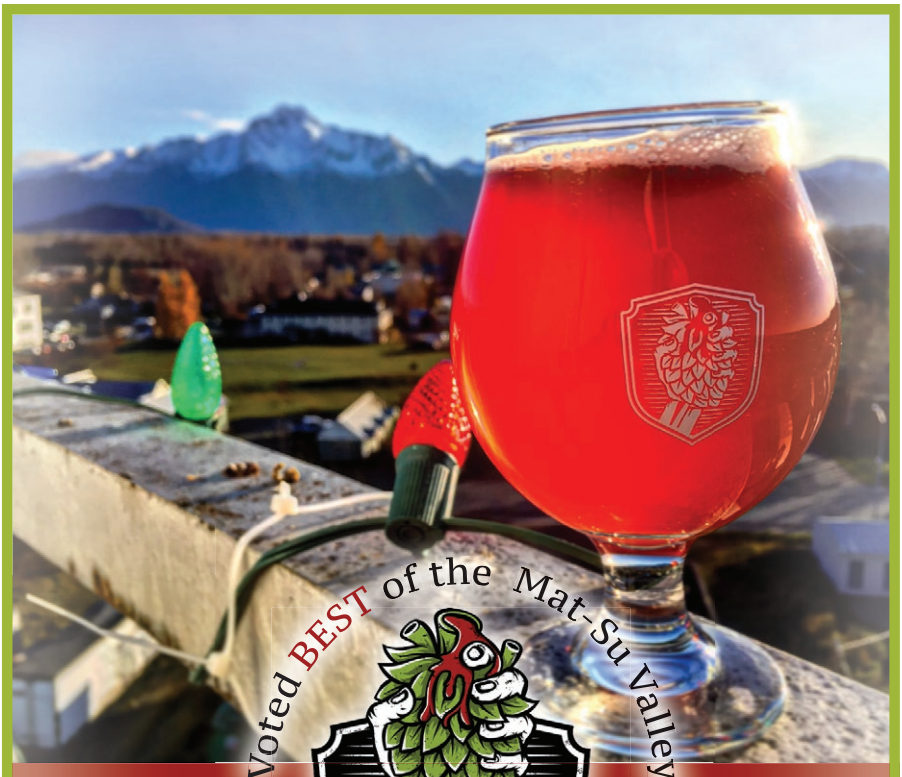

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