Northern Lights Adventure
COVID-19 UPDATE

October 20, 2021

We want you to know that your health and safety always comes first to all of us at Gondwana Ecotours. We apologize in advance in the event that this update is briefly out of sync with the impact and realities from this constantly evolving pandemic.

For upcomings trips to Alaska, please be prepared to provide either proof of vaccination or a negative PCR test taken 72 hours or less before departure upon arrival. If you need any help finding a testing site near you, please let us know, and we will be happy to help.

We are in constant communication with our local guides, partners, charter plane operators, restaurants, hotels, and local and state authorities. Every vendor we use has confirmed that they will observe and put into practice both mandated and recommended practices as they pertain to social distancing, disinfecting, and so forth. We stay updated and informed about the current realities on a macro and micro level so that we can make the best assessments at any given time. That said, we may have to make further tweaks based on new realities and will cancel without hesitation if it is unsafe to travel or if we have to make compromises that negatively impact the experience.

Our cancellation policies have been relaxed to reflect our new reality and you can view them here. We thank you for your flexibility and understanding and are excited to host you on this wonderful adventure!
CONTENTS

Trip Highlights >

Upcoming Dates >

Pricing & What’s Included >

The Itinerary >

Accommodations & Restaurants >

Our Guides >

Frequently Asked Questions >
Trip Highlights

- WITNESS the magic of the Northern Lights, including personal wake-up calls when the Aurora appears!

- RIDE dog-sleds through the snowy spruce forests and fields of the great Alaskan wilderness.

- EXPLORE an ice sculpture museum and enjoy a drink at their famous ice-bar.

- DISCOVER how locals live in interior Alaska from natives and homesteaders.

- SOAK in steaming geothermal hot springs under the starry night sky as you watch for the Aurora.

- HIKE in the forest with friendly reindeer, feeding them and learning from the family who raises them.
$2,995 per person in a double room
$500 single supplement

Upcoming Tour Dates
Custom dates available for individuals, couples, families & groups.

2021 Departures
- September 12 – 18 - Full
- September 19 – 25 - Full
- October 10 – 16 - Full
- October 17 – 23 - Full
- November 21 – 27 - Full
- December 26 – January 1, 2023 - Full

2022 Departures cont’d
- September 11-17
- September 18-24
- September 25-October 1
- October 9-15
- October 16-22
- November 20-26
- December 26- Jan 1, 2023

**These group tours are up to 18 guests

2022 Departures
- January 16 – 22 - Full
- February 13 – 19 - Full
- February 20 – 26 - Full
- February 27 - March 5
- March 6 – 12 - Full
- March 13 – 19 - Full
- March 20 – 26 - Full

*These group tours are up to 14 guests
What’s Included

Hotel accommodation in a charming family-owned lodge outside of Fairbanks

Personal wake-up service and photography assistance when the Aurora is active

Two expert Alaskan guides — one for day activities and another for Aurora watch

All of your delicious Alaskan breakfasts

Entry to Chena Hot Springs

A visit with friendly reindeer and the people who raise them

A curling lesson from local players

Entry to the Ice Sculpture Museum and the famous Museum of the North

A dog-sledding excursion

All of your transportation in Alaska, your safety and comfort always come first

Thanks to expert guides and planning, we have seen Aurora on over 97% of our tours!

PRICE

$2,995 Per Person

$500 Single Supplement

Limited to 14 or 18 Guests
Personal Wake-Up Calls

The Northern Lights are on many people’s bucket lists for good reason. The mystical colors and formations of this phenomenon can only be witnessed in the right place at the right time. We travel to a region directly under the Aurora belt during the darkest and most active times of year. Our guides spend the night watching for lights and wake you as soon as they appear, offering expert photo advice and attentive service.

Seasonality

**Below is a sample itinerary. Activities change based on snow conditions. In early fall curling is not available, snowshoeing is replaced with hiking, and dogsledding will instead be a dog-cart ride or hike with the huskies. Aurora is a natural occurrence and predicting it is not foolproof**

Day One

When you arrive Fairbanks we provide a complimentary ride to your lodge. We host a quick meet-and-greet with your guides in the lobby that night. Bring your camera if you have questions about photographing Northern Lights! The lodge is in a beautiful location, surrounded by snow-covered spruce forests.

Day Two

After breakfast we head into town to check out the Morris Thompson Cultural Center. Explore world-class exhibits on Alaska’s history and seasons and learn about traditional native art, dance, and music. Then take a city tour of Fairbanks and visit the famous Trans-Alaska Pipeline, followed by lunch at a classic Alaska log roadhouse. Back at the lodge you can explore the hiking trails that surround the lodge or just grab a hot cocoa and relax in your new home base. Following dinner you can come ‘hunt’ for the Northern Lights with us, or stay in the warmth of the lodge. Your guide will alert you if the Aurora appears.
Day Three

After a homemade breakfast at the lodge you have free time to take a casual hike around the property and try snowshoeing if the conditions are right. Not into hiking? Enjoy a warm beverage in the cozy common room. Following lunch we will head to a family ranch to meet reindeer and take a walk with them through a beautiful birch forest. Try some hot tea and Jane’s homemade cookies inside and learn more about reindeer. Enjoy dinner and, if we’re lucky, aurora viewing that evening!

Day Four

Today we have a chance to visit some different sights around town. These can vary depending on guest interest, and may include unique souvenir shopping, a visit to the antique automobile museum or seasonal events in the area. This is followed by a visit to the famous Museum of the North on the University of Alaska campus to learn about the natural and cultural history of the region. Tonight we will enjoy another favorite local restaurant. Watch for Aurora too!

Day Five

Enjoy another tasty breakfast before our most exciting excursion yet — dog sledding! Meet the friendly dogs (and maybe even some puppies!) and learn about mushing before hopping on a sled for a ride through the forest. After lunch we will have a curling lesson with local players at the Fairbanks Curling Club. Test your skills by challenging your new friends — curling is so much more fun than you might expect! Dinner is at a local restaurant and then we spend another evening looking for Aurora.
Day Six

Today visit the remote and beautiful Chena Hot Springs. Soak in the steaming waters surrounded by snow; if it is really cold your hair might even freeze! While there we visit an ice sculpture museum where you can observe delicate artwork and sip an apple martini in a carved glass from the ice bar (not included in tour cost). The drive home from the Hot Springs provides a wonderful opportunity to search for the Northern Lights and spot moose.

Day Seven

One more Alaskan-sized breakfast before wrapping up our adventure and saying goodbye to new friends. Our guides will be available through the late afternoon for transfers to the airport or to other preferred locations. All guided activities end at 5pm on this day. We can also help to set you up with additional hotel rooms, activities or luggage storage for any extra time you are spending in town. Head home with memories of unique and exciting activities and the Alaskan locals you got to know along the way. When you arrive home check out the shared photo album we have set up for you to upload and share pictures from your adventure!
Accommodations
Alaska Grizzly Lodge

This lodge is located 10 miles outside of downtown Fairbanks for prime Aurora viewing uninterrupted by light pollution. The building is surrounded by boreal birch forest, and there are trails for hiking/snowshoeing easily accessible nearby. Within a few minutes you can visit the famous Trans-Alaskan Pipeline and enjoy 360 degrees unobstructed sky views.

This unique Alaskan lodge boasts large viewing decks nearby every room, so you don’t even have to leave the building to see the Northern Lights! This lodge is owned your guides and hosts Fred and Janet Vreeman, so you can expect all the same personal touches and superior quality that our tours are known for when staying here. Wake up to home cooked breakfasts, and cozy up by the electric fireplace at the end of the day. Alaska Grizzly Lodge provides the rustic atmosphere and seclusion you want while still delivering all the comforts of home.
A Taste of Alaska

We alternate lodges on our departures, and A Taste of Alaska is down the road from the Grizzly Lodge. We’ve been staying here since our first Northern Lights tour and it’s a unique and beautiful property. Located 11 miles outside of downtown Fairbanks on 280 acres of private land, the lodge is a family enterprise that goes back three generations. Current owner Kory Eberhardt’s grandparents moved from Idaho to this plot of land in 1947. They started out growing hay and vegetables. Kory’s parents opened the lodge in 1992, and Kory became the owner in 2010.

A Taste of Alaska is a unique alternative to Fairbanks hotels, offering views of the Alaska Range, Mt. Denali, and Fairbanks in the distance. Visitors get a first-hand look at Alaska’s natural beauty from here, including northern lights in the winter and wildlife year-round, all while enjoying the comforts and conveniences of cozy lodging.
Restaurants

The Pump House

The menu is served “Alaskan Style”, with large portions of fresh seafood, meat and pasta dishes. Enjoy the unique decor and cozy atmosphere. Don’t miss their famous seafood chowder and delicious elk meatloaf!

The Creperie

This casual spot next to the Fairbanks Art Co-op offers both sweet and savory gourmet options. Choices include Prosciutto & Fig, Smoked Salmon & Avocado, Pear & Brie and Creme Brulee & Berries. They are so proud of their food that they offer a money-back guarantee!

Lulu’s Bread & Bagels

This Fairbanks favorite offers artisan breads and baked goods made from scratch on site. Choose from delicious bagels, quiches, sandwiches and more and warm up with a cup of Kaladi Brothers coffee, a local Alaskan roaster.
Meet Your Guides
Fred Vreeman is an environmental engineer/scientist who teaches part time at the University and loves sharing Alaska with travelers. He came here in 1978 and loves exploring the wilderness as a pilot, boat captain, scientist and adventurer. He has worked for Alaskan environmental agencies and the National Parks. He has degrees in Natural Science, Sociology and Environmental Engineering. In addition to guiding land tours he operates a riverboat for adventurous guests discovering Alaska’s Yukon River.
Janet Vreeman is a local tour director and travel consultant. She has been in Alaska for decades and has spent many years guiding tours for multiple Fairbanks operations including the Alaska Railroad. She has degrees in Anthropology and Photography, and is an accomplished artist who creates unique pieces from birch bark! She is an expert on the Northern Lights and is great at helping our guests capture the perfect shot. Her warm personality and expertise on all things Alaska will make your trip an unforgettable experience.
Gabe King first came to Alaska in 2016 as a service member in the army and decided to stay. Gabe works as a full-time photographer, a gig that keeps him busy year round, both indoors and outside. He won the Ted Stevens Foundation "Denali at 100" photo contest in 2018 and is also published in Alaska Magazine. “I believe that Alaska drives a creative spirit in all who visit and it’s never too late to start exploring.”

Kyle Hasner was born and raised Fairbanks and he’s been taking photos of the Aurora for a few years now. Kyle loves the outdoors and sharing his passion for the northern lights with locals and visitors alike. “Some of my favorite times that I’ve had with my friends have been chasing the Auroras in winter. When I’m not chasing the aurora, I’m often snowboarding the different slopes in the area.”
**What kind of clothing do I need and is it possible to rent it?**

When you sign up we will send you a pre-trip guide with a comprehensive packing list and other info for planning your adventure! We have heavy duty jackets, snow pants, boots, hats and mittens available for rent. Upon booking you will have a chance to reserve these items as well as camera gear — we won’t let you freeze!

**Is this trip for me?**

Our Northern Lights Ecotour does not require a high-degree of physical fitness but it is important to have a decent level of mobility. Guests should be able to support themselves on occasional slight inclines and be able to easily enter and exit a passenger van. While there are options available for those who enjoy longer hikes, snowshoeing and more physical activity, this is not required to participate in the trip. Conditions do vary widely over the duration of the season, and sometimes it can get very cold, icy and slippery. Guests should be prepared for the possibility of extremely low temperatures as well.

**How likely am I to see the Northern Lights?**

While nature can never be guaranteed, if you spend a minimum of four nights in Fairbanks and are actively looking in the evening hours your chance of seeing the Aurora Borealis is around 90%. During our past two seasons (2018-2020) we saw Aurora at least once on every tour! We believe that careful planning and our diligent Aurora wake-up services were key to this success.

**How do I sign up?**

To reserve your spot simply request (via phone or email) an invoice for your $500 deposit. This deposit is refundable for any reason within 30 days of booking. Upon signup we will send you our pre-trip guide to prepare you for the journey. It contains booking terms, a detailed packing list, health and safety tips, suggested reading and lots of other useful information. We will also send you two easy links to fill out your personal information and flight details. Please fill these out as soon as possible.

As your trip approaches we will email you with introductions to your guides and fellow travelers, and information on what to expect for your arrival and departure.

**Optional Participation**

Participation in all activities is not required, just let your guides know as soon as possible - guests may stay at the lodge or we can arrange taxis to bring them back to the lodge during the day (taxi cost not included).

Thanks so much for contacting us and if you have any other questions please email us at (Ola@GondwanaEcotours.com) or call us at 877-587-8479.
Why Travel With Gondwana Ecotours?

Aurora Wake Up Calls
Our night guides stay up watching the skies and provide personal wake up calls when the Aurora appears. You can stay well rested and warm and still catch the best of the Northern Lights!

Remote Lodge with Prime Viewing
Our lodge is located 30 mins outside of Fairbanks, surrounded by beautiful forests and trails and far from the lights of town which makes for better Aurora viewing and better photography. Enjoy viewing steps from your room, right outside the lodge so you can stay warm and enjoy the show.

Small Groups
Our groups are never larger than 18, so you can really get to know your guide and fellow travelers. Ask plenty of questions and never feel like you are getting lost in the crowd. As a small company, we can adapt our plans to the needs of our guests, so it’s not just a trip, it's YOUR trip.

Authentic Culture
We only work with guides and partners who truly embody the local spirit of Interior Alaska. Meet with a native author, homesteaders, dog-mushers and others who live and share this unique culture.

Gondwana Exclusive Activities
Many of our activities have been developed exclusively for our tours. You won’t get experiences like this with anyone else!

Friendly Local Guides
Our guides are always local, and always have interesting stories to tell. One of our guides is a pilot, captain and environmental engineer. Another is an author and Aurora photographer - these are not your average guides!

Attentive 24/7 Service
We have you covered from beginning to end. All your transportation in Alaska is arranged, and our guides escort you to all activities and meals. We do everything together as a group, and by the end of our trip we have always made new friends. Our guides at night will alert you when the lights are active and will be there to assist you with photos and provide hot tea or cocoa as you watch the skies.

Expert Photography Assistance
It is tricky to capture the magic of the Northern Lights, but our guides have been doing it for years and can assist you in getting your camera primed and ready to nail the perfect shot!