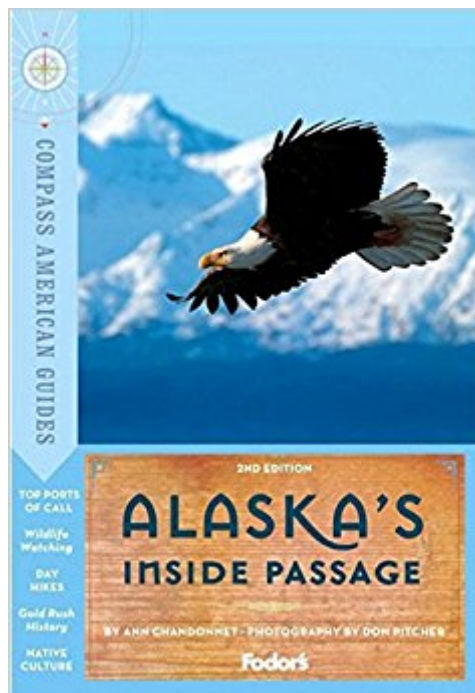




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Compass American Guides: Alaska's Inside Passage, 2nd Edition (Full-color Travel Guide)



Synopsis

Compass American Guides: Alaska's Inside Passage— taps a growing travel market. Alaska is the world's third most popular cruise destination, attracting about one million cruise ship passengers a year. While other guides offer recommendations on where to stay and what to see, none combine that practical information with the depth and literary quality of a Compass American Guide. In this thoroughly readable book, travelers, locals, and armchair travelers alike will find a mix of stunning color photos, sightseeing scoops, historical background, fun FAQs, and evocative, inspiring descriptions of this breathtaking region. Following the route of a fantasy cruise from south (Ketchikan) to north (Sitka), the guide takes readers through all the incredible attractions, including Glacier Bay National Park, Ketchikan's totem poles, and Skagway's historic Gold Rush District. The explorations of each port of call are organized by the amount of time visitors have on shore. In addition to natural and historic sights, the guide includes favorite places to eat and shop in each town, and tips on everything from animal-watching to packing the night gear. Writer Ann Chandonnet lived in Alaska for more than 30 years and is the author of more than a dozen books, including The Alaska Heritage Seafood Cookbook, and Alaska's Arts, Crafts & Collectibles. Photographer Don Pitcher spent 15 summers in the wilds of Alaska and Wyoming and now works as a photographer and travel writer, basing his travels from Homer, Alaska.

Book Information

Series: Full-color Travel Guide (Book 2)

Paperback: 220 pages

Publisher: Fodor's Travel; 2 edition (May 5, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1400009022

ISBN-13: 978-1400009022

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.6 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.4 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 4 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #771,828 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #190 in Books > Travel > Food, Lodging & Transportation > Cruises #259 in Books > Travel > Europe > Ireland > General #1725 in Books > Travel > United States > West > Pacific

Customer Reviews

This book focuses solely on ports (not cruise lines) and solely on the inside passage of Alaska (e.g. not on Canadian ports and not on Gulf of Alaska stops). However, it provides a fresh approach to the ports and is rich in information. The maps are very nice, the current photos breathtaking, and the many historical photos amazing. The sidebars provide neatly packaged information on topics such as "Glacier Facts" and "Totem Poles." This book provides recommendations for packaged shore excursions as well as walking tours for those who want to explore (inexpensively) on their own. There is also a "Kid Stuff" section for most ports, listing activities that would appeal to children. Additionally, there are handy recommendations for places to eat and places to shop. There are various pieces of information regarding wildlife and native cultures as well - something for everyone.

Nicely put together travel book.

The font is a little small. In anticipation of my first trip to Alaska I started with the section in the back on history and culture.

The author clearly loves Alaska and it shows. I just got back from a two week family cruise and found her guidebook invaluable (and small enough to carry around in my shoulder bag, which is nice). I found I disagreed with her very rarely, most notably on the quality of food to be found in the various towns she describes. Note that if you are from pretty much any city in the lower 48, you'll be appalled by the both the cost of a meal and the lack of good restaurants (not to mention the complete absence of salmon, which I was looking forward to, on all the menus). There may be something in Juneau, which I wasn't lucky enough to see, but in the smaller towns, expect to pay \$20 or more for very average meals at diner-type establishments. I also was disappointed by our trek to the "Petroglyph Beach" in Petersburg - after walking an hour from the marina to the beach and slogging through freezing tide pools at low tide, we were only able to find one small face and a pair of feet. I was excited to find them, but I think you'd have to be pretty into the quest to be anything but disappointed - the Petroglyph Beach at Wrangell is a much better bet with something like 40 carvings to be found. In either case, make sure you go at low tide! Another small complaint is that since the author raves about everything it's difficult to gauge what is a must-see and what isn't. To that end, here are some of my favorites from the trip: 1. The Museum at Wrangell was wonderful and a bargain at less than \$10 admission for adults. It also has a very nice gift store where you can find local garnets, birch syrup, t-shirts and books from Ketchikan artist Ray Troll, and other

inexpensive gifts for the folks back home.² I can't rave enough about the Sing Lee Alley Bookstore in Petersburg. It was fantastic, friendly, and by the time I got there I was desperate for books. Wonderful collection of Alaskan (including very giftable children's books), as well as a totally unexpected inventory of other books to rival any other independent bookstore I've seen.³ I was also very impressed by the public library in Petersburg. I was on a private boat (not a commercial cruise) so Internet access was a terminal problem. The very friendly public library had fast, free wi-fi and a great selection of magazines to browse while I was waiting for a particularly large download.⁴ The Alaska Raptor Center in Sitka is worth visiting if you're interested in birds of prey. You'll get used to seeing bald eagles and the like perching in trees in Alaska (where the species has never been endangered), but the Raptor Center, which is really a hospital for injured birds from all over North America, is a good place to see the majestic birds up close.⁵ Tracy Arm Fjord is worth visiting if you get the chance and have the time. It's several hours of cruising through Tolkienesque landscapes (we're talking 2,000-foot granite cliffs heading up into the mist and harbor seals lying on blue icebergs) to the twin Sawyer glaciers. Each of the glaciers calves huge chunks of blue ice into the water every hour or so.

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