



Bear Fishing in the Alaskan Wilderness | Travel | Panda Anku

August 3, 2022 by [eboudaoud](#)

KING SALMON, Alaska – Are you lucky enough to be traveling to Alaska this year? I am. If you are too, we'll be two of an estimated 2.3 million visitors—cruise passengers, fishermen and independent travelers—heading north to "America's Last Frontier." After spending two years in domestic isolation, I am more than ready for another trip to the 50th state. More than twice the size of Texas, Alaska has it all: mountains, glaciers, rivers, lakes, coastal bays, forests, tundra and even active volcanoes.

Also a lot of brown bears. Big hungry ones, for those of us lucky enough to see them up close.

After all, no arctic adventure should end without a whopper to tell and photos to prove it posted online for your friends back home. You are likely to see moose, eagles, caribou, whales, seals and maybe even wolves. But don't expect to see brown bears—or grizzlies, as they're called in the Lower 48.

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first trip to Alaska.

I was looking out the window at Denali, its snow-capped peak rising above the horizon, when the tour bus driver suddenly slammed on the brakes, parked on the rim, and grabbed his binoculars. "Over there! Look at that big rock near the bushes," he said, jumping up and pointing across the valley to a distant spot. In no time at all, the rest of us passengers were on our feet, crowded to the windows and at each other, peering, blinking, and speculating, until at last someone's finger touched a distant patch of brown that looked more like a haystack.

It wasn't until my second Alaskan adventure and subsequent close-up photography with several 1,200-pound giants that I discovered how easy it is to find and see bears, even up close. The secret is at hand. Go where the bears go when they're hungry and you'll find them of all sizes. And where is that? To the rivers, streams and streams where millions of salmon return each year and swim upstream to spawn.

Although Pacific salmon — chinook (king), sockeye (red), coho (silver), pink (hump), and chum (dog) — spend most of their adult lives in the ocean, they need to spawn (lay and fertilize eggs) there. Bach where their parents were spawned, no matter where that is. To achieve this, they swim back to shore, find the right river and swim upstream, ignoring logs, rocks, the wrong tributaries, muddy pools, waterfalls, fishermen, bears, dams and even trout swimming after them in search of a treat.

The bears, on the other hand, hungry and impatient after a long winter, have been there for days or weeks, waiting, patrolling the riverbanks and controlling the water. At the first sign of salmon, bears rush into the water, searching the rocks, ducking into deep pools, and snapping at any fish in the vicinity. When they catch one, they climb onto a bank or gravel bar and, grasping the body with a heavy paw, tear the body apart, devouring the richest parts and leaving the rest to the trout, minnows, insects, and birds.

As long as there is enough fish, the bears pay no attention to strangers – fishermen, photographers and the curious. But don't think they don't see you. Find a safe place away from the action and not too close. There are enough salmon, but the bears don't believe it.

With so many fish and relatively few bears, it seems like the fish that spawn and die are wasted. But with millions of salmon returning to Bristol Bay each year, there are more than enough. So many, in fact, that millions are caught and sold commercially. The rest, the ones that amateur fishermen don't catch, will return not only to bring forth the next generation, but to leave a gift – their body.

As countless bits of bone, flesh, and skin crumble away, they leave behind essential nutrients and return them to the creek and the local biome. Everything benefits, from the trees, shrubs, plants and the trout that follow. Beetles, snails, minnows, rabbits, mice, voles, birds, eagles and wolves also participate in the premium. As long as climate change doesn't ruin the oceans or the salmon, we'll always have bears.

In the meantime, how do you find a creek with bears and salmon? The easiest way is to spend a day fishing, or at least try. If your Alaskan itinerary includes a free day in Anchorage, Dillingham, Kenai, or Seward on the Kenai Peninsula (towns connected by roads), search online for a tour operator that offers one-day guided fishing trips on rivers with fish and bears. The price should include bus transport, possibly lunch, snacks and fishing equipment. Tell your guide you're a beginner and they'll set you up and show you what to do.

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A better option, if you have the time or can plan ahead, is a three to five day stay in a fisherman's cabin on a salmon river with frequent bear sightings, i.e. in the backcountry or at the end of a dirt road, or more likely, only accessible by seaplane. Be aware: these lodges are found on all rivers and come in many types, from plywood-walled cabins to luxurious five-star retreats. All provide basic necessities ie accommodation, meals, fishing gear, guides and boats. Since most fishermen want to take their catch home with them, they freeze it to take to the airport.

Serious anglers who just want to fish all day often opt for a sports-style lodge with half-price cabins. Guests who want the same fishing opportunities but in an authentic wilderness lodge with other guests, social cocktail hours, chef-prepared meals, a taste of Alaskan country life, and seaplanes that fly you to all nearby salmon rivers, choose the full service -Lodge at twice the price or more. How do you know? Search the internet, compare lodges and call for more information. Remember, you're looking for bears.

The right stuff

WHERE: Many of the best lodges for salmon and trout fishing can be found in Southeast Alaska, on rivers that flow south into Bristol Bay. To see this area, locate Dillingham and King Salmon on a map, then locate these salmon rivers – Kvichak, Nushagak, Togiak, Naknek.

SEARCH ONLINE: For one-day guided fishing trips, search Anchorage, Kenai, Dillingham and Seward. For lodges and the best salmon streams, see Ten Top Salmon Streams, Salmon Streams in Southeast Alaska, Best Fishing Lodges Southeast Alaska, and Bear Viewing in Southeast Alaska. Related websites include: crystalcreeklodge.com; alaskatravel.com; Ankerplatz.net; alaska.gov/visitorhome; kenaipeninsula.org; flyrusts.com; skytrekkingalaska.com; and withinthewild.com.

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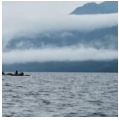
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