

**MR. ALASKA AT CRUISEBROTHERS.COM
OFFERS TIPS FOR MEMORABLE CRUISES
TO AMERICA'S LAST FRONTIER**

CRANSTON, R.I., March 17, 2006 – Touring Alaska by cruise ship and experiencing the natural beauty, wildlife and people of America's last frontier is a once-in-a-lifetime adventure for most people.

To assure the experience lives up to such expectations, Jeff Hastings, known as "Mr. Alaska" at CruiseBrothers.com, says travelers must do their homework in selecting the right cruise line and shore excursions to explore the Land of the Midnight Sun.

Alaska is second only to the Caribbean region in cruise popularity. Some 20-plus large cruise ships and other smaller ones sail on the southeast coast of Alaska each week from late April through early September.

"Alaska is a hugely popular cruise destination, but too many people book Alaska cruises based simply on price," said Hastings, a native Alaskan and travel expert on his home state. "Your true Alaska experience doesn't take place just on the cruise ship. What ports you visit and what you do can make or break your trip. Research and select the right cruise itinerary and excursions and you'll surely enjoy an unbelievable adventure."

Travel agents that specialize in Alaska cruises, local excursion operators, state and local tourist bureaus and the Internet can all provide important answers to questions cruisers may have as they consider an Alaskan cruise. Hastings offers the following tips when planning a truly memorable Alaska cruise.

Familiarize yourself with cruise migration patterns – Not every Alaskan cruise is created equal. Depending on the time of year, schedule, itineraries, port clearances and other variables, one cruise line's Alaska sailing can be significantly different from the next. Hastings points out, for example, that due to environmental impact concerns not all cruise lines have clearance to visit the stunning Glacier Bay National Park near Gustavus. It is important to find out exactly which ports and other sites are included on a cruise ships itinerary.

Consider flying directly into Alaska to save time – Rather than flying into Seattle, Wash. or Vancouver, B.C. and boarding a cruise ship there for the trip north, spend a little more money and fly directly to Alaska. Travelers who do so spend less time at sea and more of their vacations experiencing the 49th state. Hastings knows cruise lines coming from the southern ports are sometimes on tight schedules, enabling only brief stops in ports – sometimes a half day or less – or only a few hours in Glacier Bay versus up to 12 hours on cruises originating from Alaskan ports. Many of the cruise lines offer pre and post trips to extend your vacation.

Research and book shore excursions well in advance – Rather than wait until you are onboard your Alaskan cruise ship to select shore excursions, cruisers should work with their travel agent well in advance to reserve spots. Hastings' favorite excursions include glacier fly-ins on helicopters, combined with an exhilarating dogsled tour across the ice. (Many of the dogs are training for or retired from the famous Iditarod race.) He also strongly recommends whale watching from Juneau. Tourists board jet boats to spots where humpback whales are virtually guaranteed congregate. If you are lucky, a killer whale or two may also make an appearance. Another favorite excursion out of Juneau and Skagway is the four-hour train ride through the White Pass Mountains.

Consider a pre- or post-cruise inland tour – Many cruisers to Alaska spend extra time before or after their sailings to travel inland by bus or train on overnight excursions designed to enhance the Alaska experience even further. One of the most popular inland tours is to Denali National Park and Mount McKinley, the highest peak in North America. Other interior destinations of interest include the Alaskan cities of Anchorage and Fairbanks. Hastings says these inland tours sell out fast, so it is best to book them with your cruise reservation.

Celebrate Alaska's culture – The Alaska experience would not be complete without garnering an appreciation for the culture of its peoples. The ports of Ketchikan and Sitka offer a number of shows and festivals that celebrate Alaska's Native American population. Your visit also would not be complete without a stop at one of the impressive totem parks in the area. Hastings said Sitka is actually the former capital of the Russian territories in Alaska. As such, it features unique Russian architecture, a number of Russian Orthodox churches and other reminders of the first settlers to the area.

Support the local merchants – There are plenty of unique shopping opportunities during an Alaskan cruise, especially in the port of Ketchikan. Authentic Native American artwork and crafts, jewelry and ulu knives are very popular items for purchase. The cruise lines can help you ship oversized packages back home. The native merchants offer the most intriguing goods and, considering how important tourism is to the state's economy, Hastings asks everyone to support them. He says tourists also should check to make sure the "Made in Alaska" sticker is on the items to be purchased.

Prepare to dress in layers – No matter where you go or what you do on an Alaskan cruise, Hastings strongly suggests dressing in layers. July and August see the most sun, but the weather is always unpredictable and temperatures rarely climb above the 60s. He said people do not realize southeast Alaska is actually a rain forest. Wet weather is always possible, even during the summer months.

Cruisers interested in learning more about a cruise to the Land of the Midnight Sun can contact Mr. Alaska at 1.800.827.7779 (ext. 735) or via email at Mr.Alaska@CruiseBrothers.com.

CruiseBrothers.com, located in Providence, R.I., is one of the largest family-owned cruise travel agencies in the country. The firm has been in business for more than 30 years and recently celebrated its 500,000th cruise booking. They are a top producer for Princess Cruises and many other lines. The travel agency has been recognized by MSNBC and travel expert Arthur Frommer as a top "Web Player" in the cruise vacation category.

