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
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. 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: 88 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
PLAN YOUR DAY

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
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.

HALF-DAY WILDLIFE EXPEDITION

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 34)

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!

P ALMER: A LASKA AT ITS BEST 7
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.

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, and a barn.

The railroad provided vital access for the development of Palmer.
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, 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.
EXPERIENCE THE STORY of the Matanuska Colony on an easy mile loop around the town green. Route is paved, drivable, and takes 45 minutes to walk at a leisurely pace. Guided and self-guided tours are available at the Palmer Museum.

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

Please do not disturb residents of private buildings, marked on this map in pink.
Businesses and churches are marked in dark blue
Please be courteous when visiting. Public locations are shown in green.

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)
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, first occupied by Don Irwin.

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 1936 by the men and women of its congregation still used today.
7. **BOROUGH BUILDING (SCHOOLHOUSE)**
Palmer’s first schoolhouse 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 town’s only restaurant.

10. **TRAIN DEPOT**
The combination of rail access and good farmland significantly influenced the decision to locate the Colony here.
PALMER AGRICULTURE & GARDEN WALK

Palmer is an agricultural hub providing food, plants, and flowers across the State of Alaska. The unique microclimate results in tasty produce which can be found at farmers markets, supermarkets, and on local restaurant menus. Giant vegetables, including world records, are displayed every at the Alaska State Fair hosted in Palmer during late August.

1. Palmer Showcase Garden
Next to the Palmer Museum, this fantastic garden features Alaska’s diverse plant life and legendary vegetables. Be sure to check out the historic farm equipment donated by local families for public display on the Museum grounds.

2. Colony House Museum
One of the original farm homes built by the colonists, restored to that time period. Managed by the Palmer Historical Society, low cost tours are available but times vary depending on the season.
DO remember to watch for traffic and observe pedestrian safety rules.
DO be respectful of the residents who live in the historic district. 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 pink.

6. Grow Palmer
Dubbed the “edible rail trail”, Grow Palmer offers free produce for the picking along this rails to trail corridor and elsewhere in downtown Palmer. Grow Palmer is a grassroots movement dedicated to creating lasting change in our local food system and fostering connections with community, businesses and traditions.

5. Colony Memorial
Here you’ll see the names of the original Colony families and the bell of the ship (named St Mihiel) that transported the Colonists to Alaska.

3. Agricultural Experimental Station
Built in the 1940’s, this two-story building, eight adjacent cottages, and arboretum were built by the University of Fairbanks and used by researchers studying how to increase productivity in cold-weather crops. Please do not enter the building as it is now an office no longer affiliated with the university. Adjacent cottages are all privately owned.

4. Babb Arboretum
This public space was established by Dr Myron Babb, to study woody plant species. Be sure to check out the various tree species and the mountain views at the south end of the property.
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
- Walk the urban trail loop to learn more about modern and historic agriculture sites in Palmer.

GIANT VEGETABLES

- CARROT
- CUCUMBER
- CABBAGE
- CELERY

NEWBORN GIRAFFE: 138.25 LBS
ALASKAN MALAMUTE HUSKY: 71.75 LBS
FOUR BOWLING BALLS: 63.3 LBS
CAR TIRE: 20.2 LBS
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

A popular local hangout, Hatcher Pass is a state recreation area and must-see part of any trip to the Palmer region! Drive along the beautiful Little Susitna river, experience the gold rush at the historic Independence Mine, and take a hike down one of several world class trail systems.

FOR DIRECTIONS AND TRAIL HEADS
Please see map inserts between pages 20 and 21.

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

BERSIES AND FLOWERS!
This is a popular area to pick blueberries during their peak season. There are also crowberries, less sweet, but edible and plentiful. Lookout for Fireweed, Bluebell of Scotland, Dwarf Dogwood, Star Gentian, and many other flowers.

GEAR UP.
This is a mountain pass, so there could be some snow, even in the middle of summer! Take sturdy 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:
FANTASTIC ALPINE SCENERY
HOW LONG IT TAKES: from Independence Mine to Willow is about 1 hour and 15 minutes.

HATCHER PASS HIKES:
Please see page 25

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
MATANUSKA GLACIER

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 17)
• 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

Photo by Cecil Sanders // View of Matanuska Glacier from mile 101
The Chickaloon Tribe of the Athabascan People group, in the Ahtna language group, 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.

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.

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.

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.
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 & SKIING
Hatcher Pass is a very popular area for snowboarding. Skeetawk is an alpine ski area run by Hatcher Alpine Xperience. The area will be opening in the winter of 2020.

NORDIC SKIING
Government Peak Recreation Area is known for its world class skiing trails that are groomed and lighted for your use.

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](http://gi.alaska.edu/auroraforecast) for the nightly forecast!
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).

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.

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 BARS
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.
WEEKLY EVENTS

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

MONTHLY EVENTS

APRIL 24-25
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 1-3 & 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 12-14
COLONY DAYS
Celebrate Palmer’s original colonists! Parade, Baking contests, Food Trucks, Inflatable Games, Skill Demonstrations, and more!

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

JUNE 27
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.

JULY 11
GARDEN ART FAIRE
Local vendors sell food, crafts, and art. Instructional demonstrations, and live music.

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

AUGUST 27-SEPT 7
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 AUGUST
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
OCTOBERFEST
Farm-to-Table Feast, Brew Fest, and Polka Bash!

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

MORE THINGS TO DO IN PALMER

TOUR THE HISTORIC DISTRICT
45 minutes
Walk or drive around the original Colony Community Center. See page 10.

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 24 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 29.

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 18.

HATCHER PASS
30 minute drive from Palmer
Explore Independence Mine and see Glacial lakes. See page 16.

MATSU MINERS BASEBALL
1.5-2 hours. Enjoy an All-American sport, Alaskan style!

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Want more information about community events in Palmer? Check our Community Calendar at palmermuseum.org
Whether you are a leisurely walker or on the search for a challenging incline, Palmer has a trail for you! Take an amble to the gorgeous Thunderbird Falls, explore miles of forested trail system at Crevasse Moraine, or bike into the shadow of Pioneer Peak along the Matanuska River. For amblers, hikers, and bikers alike, Palmer offers world class opportunities to play in Alaska’s great outdoors!

**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.

**MAPS**

Check out the fold-out maps in this guide for information about outdoor recreation.

*Photos by Cecil Sanders* // Moose-Creek Railroad trail and Thunderbird Falls
PALMER MOUNTAINS

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.

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.

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

GOLD CORD LAKE
- Access: Independence Mine Area
- 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.

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.

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.
Palmer is home to miles and miles of world class maintained trail systems. Be it biking, hiking, running or skiing, we have something for you! Many trails, such as Government Peak and Crevasse Moraine, serve as hubs for biking and running in the summer and skiing and snowshoeing in the winter. No gear? No problem! Swing by Backcountry Bike and Ski on Arctic Avenue for gear, trail system updates, and more!

**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.

**GOVERNMENT PEAK AREA WINTER TRAILS**

9 miles of trails offers groomed, lighted recreation trails, and a little something for everybody
- Access: Hatcher Pass- Mountain Trails Drive area
- Nordic skiing, snowshoeing, fat tire biking, skijoring, sledding

**INDEPENDENCE MINE**

This area offers a wide variety of options for winter activities, like cross-country skiing.
**Biking Trails**

Whether you are looking for a leisurely pedal along a paved riverside bike path or a challenging ride through hills and trees, you will find it here!

**Government Peak Recreation Area**

**Mountain Bike Trails**

There are two complete loops (upper and lower) which offer riders a great cross-country experience:

- Expect bumps to berms, amazing transfers, drops and airs, all with the most amazing views of the valley in a fireweed field
- Please visit backcountrybikeandski.com/summer-trails for more information

**Palmer Bike Park**

Located within Matanuska River Park

- Beginner to intermediate dirt tracks with rollers, berms, small jumps
- Two flow style trails one beginner and one intermediate/advanced with rock gardens, wooden rollers and more.

**Butte to Palmer Bike Path**

Located on the Old Glenn Highway between E Plumley Road in the Butte to downtown Palmer

- 6 miles
- Trailhead: Park in downtown Palmer or at Matanuska-River Park to start from the Palmer side. Park at the Bodenburg Butte trailhead off Bodenburg Loop Road to access from the Butte side
- A nice easy ride from Palmer to Butte and back (or vise-versa). This path is used by bike commuters, families out for a walk with their kids and dogs, and other users.

*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*
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.

**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)
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.

ARTIST OF THE WEEK

Each week of the summer, a different local artist’s work will be displayed in our hall gallery at the Palmer Museum, and the artist will be available for a short Q&A the first Friday of opening.

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
LODGING

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
2252 N. Love Dr.
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 745-4263
alaskasharvest@gmail.com

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

Alaska Garden Gate B&B
COTTAGES • ROOMS • APTS
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www.alaskasharvest.com
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Private baths, kitchenettes, King/Queen beds, balconies, awesome views.
No minimum stay, Great for retreats or single traveler.

907-232-7674
6 Bed 5 Bath
Room or whole house rental available!
alaskaknottypine.com

Knotty Pine B&B
The Valley Hotel became a proud part of Palmer in 1948 and has been the place to be in the Mat-Su Valley for over 65 years. Offers a comfortable nights stay, the Open Cafe – open 24/7, the Caboose Lounge, Coffee Shop, and Iron Horse Liquor Store. An easy walk to the visitor’s center, shops, restaurants, & local attractions. Weekly rates available for those who find Palmer so charming they can’t leave.

www.akvalleyhotel.com . 606 S Alaska Street, Palmer, AK. 99645

Historic Charm in the Heart of Palmer

Enjoy a sense of American history at the Colony Inn. Relax in your individually decorated room with views of the surrounding mountains, amenities include Whirlpool tub, TV, free Wi-Fi, & coffee bar in the upstairs hall. Read a book in the cozy great room or grab a bite to eat at the Colony Inn Cafe. Check in for the Inn is located at the Valley Hotel.

Stroll along the self-guided walking tour, visit the local museums, Reindeer Farm or cute baby Musk Ox just down the highway. Take in hiking trails along Lazy Mountain or Hatcher’s Pass. Visiting during the winter? Palmer offers amazing cross-country skiing trails at Government Peak, sledding hills and alpine skiing in Hatcher’s.


The Pioneer Motel is again awarded the honor of being the highest rated motel, out of all the other accommodations in the area.

Newly remodeled rooms, excellent service and top quality bedding make the Pioneer the perfect place to stay.

www.thepioneermotel.com
LODGING

Big Bear RV Park
2010 S. Church St.
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 745-7445
bigbear@mtaonline.net

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

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

Our Alaskan Dream B&B
4504 N. Heaton Rd
Palmer, AK 99645
(801) 791-0576
ouralaskadream.com
Come as strangers. Leave as friends.

Paradise Alaska RV Park
16199 E. Outer Springer Loop
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 775-6359
paradisealaskainn@yahoo.com
Extra large spaces, laundry and showers available, full hookups, free wifi, lawn area with fire pit and barbeque.

ITALIAN, GREEK, AND AMERICAN CUISINE
Established 1978

101 WEST ARCTIC AVE
PALMER, ALASKA

MON-THURS: 11AM-10PM
FRI: 11AM-10:30PM
SAT: 11:30AM-10:30PM
SUN: 12PM-10PM

FREE PALMER DELIVERY

32 PALMER: ALASKA AT ITS BEST
An eclectic décor of antique and vintage collectables

COFFEE • FRESH HOMEMADE FUDGE • HAND-DIPPED ICE CREAM • CANDY • DIY ART • ART CLASSES

Conveniently located at 131 E Blueberry Ave.
LODGING

Pioneer Motel
124 W. Arctic Ave
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 745-3425
manager@thepioneermotel.com

Valley Hotel
606 S. Alaska St.
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 745-3330

DINING

Colony Kitchen/Noisy Goose
1890 Glenn Hwy
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 746-4600
colony@mtaonline.net

PizzaRia Delphi
101 W. Arctic Ave
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 745-2929

Purple Moose Espresso
418 Evergreen St.
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 355-5674

Turkey Red
550 S. Alaska St, Ste 100
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 746-5544
contact@turkeyredak.com

Vagabond Blues
642 S. Alaska St.
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 745-2233

Valley Hotel Café
606 S. Alaska St
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 745-3330

TOURIST ATTRACTIONS, ART

Shane Lamb Gallery
550 S. Alaska St. 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

www.matsuminers.org
907-746-5018
132. W. Arctic Ave
Mon-Sat. 10 am to 6 pm
www.BackcountryBikeandSki.com

Thankful for all of your support!
Whether you want to see a great event or create one, the Glenn Massay Theater can help you make it happen. We are the Mat-Su Valley’s performance center.

Check out our events and rental opportunities at glennmassaytheater.com or call (907) 746-9300
THE GALLERY
1150 S. Colony Way
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 745-1420
galeryak@ak.net

TOURIST ATTRACTIONS, FARMING

Alaska Farm Tours
Alaskafarmtours.com
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 519-7067
info@alaskafarmtours.com

Matanuska Experiment Farm
and Extension Center
1509 S. Georgeosn Dr.
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 745-3360
jrbird@alaska.edu

TOURIST ATTRACTIONS, EXPERIENCE

203 Kombucha
105 S. Valley Way #3
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 203-0716
david@203kombucha.com

49th State Motor Tours
5126 S. Mitzi Cir
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 278-0157
ride@49smt.com

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

Backcountry Bike and Ski
132 W. Arctic Ave
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 746-5018
backcountrybikenadski@gmail.com

Bleeding Heart Brewery
562 S. Denali St.
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 746-2421

Glacier Surgical & Med Spa
425 E. Dahlia Ave Ste J
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 746-1520

Glenn Massay Theater
8295 E. College Dr.
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 746-9300

Hatcher Pass Adventures
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 671-8628
hatcherpassadv@gmail.com

MatSu Miners Baseball
Hermon Bros. Field – State Fairgrounds
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 745-6401
Mastuminers.org

Midnight Sun Yoga Center
125 W. Evergreen Ave
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 723-5262
midnightsunyoga@gmail.com

Musk Ox Farm
12850 E. Archie Rd
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 745-4151
info@muskoxfarm.org

Palmer Museum & Visitors Center
723 S. Valley Way
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 746-7668
museuminfo@palmermuseum.org

SHOPPING

AKtive Soles Performance Footwear
642 S. Alaska St. Ste 100
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 746-0600
Events@AKtiveSoles.com
Shoppers can find a variety of shops in Palmer, AK. Here are some of the notable ones:

- **Alaska Picker**
  - 562 S. Denali St
  - Palmer, AK 99645
  - (907) 746-7878
  - alaskapicker@gmail.com

- **Cobb Street Market**
  - S. Cobb St & W. Dahlia Ave
  - Palmer, AK 99645
  - (907) 745-2622
  - cobb.street.market@gmail.com

- **Fireside Books**
  - 720 S. Alaska St
  - Palmer, AK 99645
  - (907) 745-2665

- **Nonessentials**
  - 728 S. Alaska St
  - Palmer, AK 99645
  - (907) 745-2258
  - nonessentialsalaska@gmail.com

- **Northern Lilly**
  - 810 S. Colony Way
  - Palmer, AK 99645
  - (907) 746-5459
  - thenorthernlilly@gmail.com

- **Peak Boutique**
  - 840 S Colony Way
  - Palmer, AK 99645
  - (907) 746-3320
  - peakboutiquealaska@gmail.com

- **Whimsy Gift Shop**
  - 642 S. Alaska St Ste. 104
  - Palmer, AK 99645
  - (907) 745-4312
  - whimsygiftshoppe@gmail.com

- **Dalrymple Law, P.C.**
  - 353 S. Denali St.
  - Palmer, AK 99645
  - (907) 745-6332
  - info@matsulaw.com
  - www.matsulaw.com

- **Business & Corporate**
  - Real Estate
  - Wills & Probate
  - General Civil Practice

- **Cecil Sanders**
  - PO Box 4514
  - Palmer, AK 99645
  - (907) 775-0816
  - publisher@lastfrontiermagazine.com
Hitchcock Piano Studio
950 W. Edinborough Dr.
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 745-3134
salgreek@mtaonline.net
Studio is in a cozy front room: perfect for small performance parties around the fireplace. A large music library is available from the 42 years of the studio existing.
Palmer: Alaska at Its Best

Services

Valley Market Real Estate
603 W. Recon Cir
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 232-7900
marty@valleymarketrealestate.com

Valley Recycling Center
9465 E. Chanlyut
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 745-5544

Organizations

City of Palmer
231 W. Evergreen Ave
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 745-3271
cityofpalmer.org

MatSu CVB
610 S. Bailey St. Ste 201
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 746-5000
info@alaskavisit.com

Palmer Chamber
550 S. Alaska St
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 745-2880
director@palmerchamber.org

Radio Free Palmer/Big Cabbage Radio
716 S. Alaska St
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 745-8951
manager@radiofreepalmer.org

St. Bartholomew’s Episcopal Church
907-745-3526
Palmer, Alaska
Find us on Facebook!
St. Bartholomew’s Welcomes You!

St. Bartholomew’s Episcopal Church
323 N. Alaska St
Palmer, AK 99645
(907) 745-3526
stbartak@gmail.com

Bushes Bunches Stand
since 1956

907.745.1115 - Store
907.354.2894 - Victoria Bush
907.355.2874 - Bruce Bush

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FIND THE RIGHT SHOES...

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AKtiveSoles.com
907.746.0600
SUITE #100

AKtive Soles’ qualified staff is here to help find happiness for your feet. Our primary goal is to educate individuals about the most appropriate footwear for their foot type. Satisfaction is guaranteed with our 30 day return policy. We also offer a shoe card that will qualify you for a discount on your 7th pair of shoes. AKtive Soles gives back to the community each week with our Monday evening Happy Run; Come join us!

GO TO THE GYM...

AKtive Body

AKtiveBody.com
907.746.3700
SUITE #B1

At AKtive Body, you will find smiling personal trainers and staff ready to help you look, feel, and live better. Maximize your workouts with our top-of-the-line equipment or join us for one of our exciting and motivating group classes. Our current class schedule and membership options are available online or at our information desk. Be the best version of yourself!

ATTEND TO YOUR ACHES AND PAINS...

Body In Balance

www.bodyinbalanceak.com
907.746.0722
SUITE #209

Body In Balance Physical Therapy strives to help you achieve excellence in your personalized therapy training. We specialize in orthopedic and sports injury rehabilitation, aquatic therapy, women’s health, and foot orthotics. At Body In Balance, we work with you to achieve the physical balance that’s right for you.

AKtiveBody.com
907.746.3700
SUITE #B1

AKtiveSoles.com
907.746.0600
SUITE #100

www.bodyinbalanceak.com
907.746.0722
SUITE #209

642 S ALASKA STREET PALMER, ALASKA 99645 - Locally Owned -
Surgical Treatments:

- Thyroid, colon, gallbladder, breast, varicose veins and hernias.
- These options include state of the art options including DaVinci robotic system and Covidien Vein Ablation systems.

Dr. Gulley and her staff specialize in various cosmetic procedures, including facial treatments, spray tans, eyelash lift and tint, advanced laser treatment options and injectable services, such as Botox and Juvederm.

GLACIER MED SPA

www.glaciermedspaak.com
(907) 745 1524

www.glaciermedgroup.com
(907) 746 1520

Surgical Treatments:

- Thyroid, colon, gallbladder, breast, varicose veins and hernias.
- These options include state of the art options including DaVinci robotic system and Covidien Vein Ablation systems.
Bleeding Heart Brewery is tucked right beneath the iconic Palmer Water Tower in the Old Matanuska Maid block with “Alaska Picker”.

Our mission is to create unique, high quality, reserve style ales and lagers, and to bring new craft drinkers and seasoned “craft life” veterans together while pushing the limits of craft brewing in Alaska.
Fair guests send Eskimo Ninja Warrior, Nick Hanson, high into the sky during a blanket toss demonstration.