

# Meeting of Frontiers

## *Tourism*

Teaching Unit: Alaska Tourism

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### Overview:

This unit is designed to link students with the authentic worlds of Alaska tourism as it developed and became popular and as it evolves today, as well as with questions of what the future might hold for tourism in the state. Integral to accessing the authentic world, be it past or present, is the technological world. Students access the records of past tourism through the digital world and examine how the digital world helps tourists of today make decisions about where and how to travel. The unit also contains an element of examining the ethics that accompany how one chooses to travel and be a tourist.

### Standards:

Geography Standards. The geographically informed student knows and understands:

- ❖ how to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.
- ❖ the physical and human characteristics of places.
- ❖ the human and physical systems that shape Earth's surface
- ❖ how to use geography to interpret the past, interpret the present. and plan for the future.

Geography Skills. The geographically skilled student knows and understands how to:

- ❖ ask geographic questions.
- ❖ acquire geographic information.
- ❖ organize geographic information.
- ❖ answer geographic questions.
- ❖ analyze geographic information.

Historical Thinking Standards. The history student:

- ❖ thinks chronologically.
- ❖ comprehends a variety of historical sources.
- ❖ engages in historical analysis and interpretation.
- ❖ conducts historical research.

Technology Standards. A technology literate student should be able to:

- ❖ use technology to explore ideas, solve problems, and derive meaning.

Writing and Speaking Standards. A student fluent in English is able to:

- ❖ write and speak well to inform and to clarify thinking in a variety of formats, including technical communication;

### Essential Questions:

- ❖ Why did Alaska tourism originally become popular and practical?
- ❖ How has Alaska tourism changed since the time it first became popular?
- ❖ What are the tourism trends of current times?
- ❖ To what degree are the is Alaska tourism interlinked with the concept of wilderness?
- ❖ Does ecotourism preserve the environment and will cultural tourism help cultures endure?
- ❖ What will be the tourism trends 100 years from now?

### Vocabulary:

adventure travel  
Baby Boomer  
ecotourism

exposition  
inchoate landscape  
market niche

tourism

### Instruction:

Why do people travel to Alaska?

Have students brainstorm a list of reasons tourists travel to Alaska. Compare their list with Roderick Nash's 1981 list. (See six items below.) Compare and contrast similarities and differences between the students' lists and Nash's. What are the similarities and differences *within* the lists?

- ❖ Native cultures
- ❖ the Arctic Circle
- ❖ inchoate landscape
- ❖ sourdoughs (pioneering life)
- ❖ rooftop of the world (Denali)
- ❖ wilderness

Nash discusses what he believes to be the commonality within his list.

The seven components of the Alaskan appeal to visitors have in common a dependency on quality of wildness that is fast fading from even the memories of most of the world's inhabitants. Publicity pictures, and the mental images they evoke, make the point another way.....The quintessential Alaska promotional image...is that of a group of tent campers looking at the reflection of Mt. McKinley in Wonder lake. Beyond the water a bull caribou stands majestically. "WILD ABOUT ALASKA."

Considering the way the wild calls tourists to Alaska, it may be useful to think of the territory and then the state as an *exporter* of wildness. Other societies, which have exhausted that quality in their own cultures and landscapes are wildness *importers*. Tourism is the economic mechanism for the exchange. Except in the case of trophies or fish, wild nature is not physically exported from Alaska. The traded commodity is experience. The importers consume it on the premises, and they pay handsomely for the privilege. That caribou beside Wonder Lake is worth far more on the hoof and in the viewfinders of Mount McKinley National Park visitors than converted to meat and hide products. In addition to travelers there is a large armchair clientele for Alaska's wildness. People who stay at home consume Alaska in the form of motion

pictures, television specials, coffee-table books, and illustrated articles. Again, wildness is the marketable commodity.

Carry the discussion further by sharing Nash's viewpoint with the class. Is Nash right? What are the basic economic concepts within his view? Does everyone travel to Alaska for "wildness"? Do Native cultures fit within this view? Why or why not?

Why did Alaska tourism first become popular? What made it practical?

Brainstorm students' prior knowledge of what led to the popularity of tourism in Alaska in the late 1800's and early 1900's.

- ❖ John Muir's travels in and writings about Alaska
- ❖ gold discoveries
- ❖ availability of transportation on steamships
- ❖ availability of transcontinental railroad travel
- ❖ completion of White Pass and Yukon Railroad in 1900
- ❖ Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition of 1909

One way to conclude or summarize this learning opportunity is to have students create their own graphic organizer or simple timeline of these factors or to have them label the sample graphic organizer included with the appendix.

Why did Alaska tourism become popular in the late 1800's? How was travel information disseminated in Alaska tourism's early days? Use cover images of the guidebooks from the late 1800's to generate a brainstorming session on what those guidebooks would have contained in terms of information. See Guidebooks to the Pacific Northwest at: <http://memory.loc.gov/intldl/mtfhtml/mfak/igguides.html>.

Then have students peruse one of the three guidebooks online (or pages selected and printed by the teacher if perusing online is not feasible) at the Meeting of Frontiers site, explore John Muir's *Travels in Alaska* (either the online version mentioned in the references or a hardcopy), or "glimpse" the Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition of 1909. Have students read selections from the source and make a list terminology that identifies the times in which the sources were written as well as the types of tourist activities described in the source. Ask students to work with other students who have perused the same source and develop a short role play in which they discuss traveling to Alaska. For example, if they perused the guidebooks, a student could role play Eliza Scidmore drafting one of travel articles on Alaska or describing her travels to Alaska to a group of friends over dinner; if they perused John Muir's *Travels*, they could be John Muir himself giving a reading of his work, someone who has read Muir and his trying to convince friends to travel with him to Alaska; if they perused the Exposition materials, they could role play having been to the Exposition and again convincing others to travel with them to Alaska. Assess the students primarily on participation, but also in terms of providing a convincing role play based on geographic information gleaned from the brief excursion into the historical record. See the accompanying Role-Play Scoring Guide.

*Role-Play Scoring Guide*

- Completed historical research
  - thoroughly and completely on-task
  - completely but not on task entire time
  - sketchy and not on task entire time
  - little attention to task
- Participated in role-play
  - with vigor and enthusiasm
  - with enthusiasm
  - with minor enthusiasm
  - with no enthusiasm
- Role-play was convincing
  - put the audience into the time period and played a convincing role from the time
  - role-play reflected the time and character
  - some dimensions of time and/or character were missing
  - role-play lacked convincing elements
- Role-play reflected accurate geographical information
  - geographical information was thorough and accurately based on source
  - geographical information was accurately based on source
  - geographical information was sketchy
  - geographical information was lacking or too general

*Comments and score:*

- studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any cultural manifestations
- ❖ Wilderness traveler: one who travels to areas where management objectives feature protection of the natural processes that have shaped the physical-biological character of the setting (goal is environmental preservation, with recreation as a legitimate use, and mechanized access and resource exploitation prohibited or greatly restricted)
- ❖ Adventure tourist: one who participates in strenuous, outdoor vacation travel, typically to remote places renowned for their natural beauty and physical attributes, involving hazardous activities
- ❖ Cultural tourist: traveler who immerses oneself in the natural history, human history, the arts and philosophy, and the institutions of another region or country

- What are the tourism trends of current times?
- Discuss trends that are driving tourism in Alaska today. This session can be a brainstorming session or a session based on students doing a quick reading of the short article, "Alaska tourism: A Move to the Future." In this article, the following trends are highlighted:
  - ❖ Baby Boomer attitude toward travel
  - ❖ technology for trip planning
  - ❖ adventure travel and ecotourism
  - ❖ cultural tourism
  - ❖ year-round travel

- For a more thorough or global list, refer to the list from *Sustainable Tourism*.
  - ❖ rising education levels and demand for travel
  - ❖ aging population
  - ❖ changing roles of women
  - ❖ change in the distribution of leisure time
  - ❖ importance of service quality
  - ❖ changing leisure patterns
  - ❖ advances in global communication and information technology
  - ❖ proliferation of travel options
  - ❖ personal security and safety
  - ❖ increasing social and environmental concerns
  - ❖ globalization of the economy

Take time at this point to create definitions of the various forms of tourism. Again, *Sustainable Tourism* (pp. 163-164) is an excellent source.

- ❖ Ecotourist: individual who travels to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of

Have students work in pairs to conduct a web site comparison of web sites for two web sites from each of the following (in other words, you could have 14 pairs of students with each partnership examining two sites from one of the following thirteen categories).

1. Alaska Native cultural sites
2. cruise lines
3. railroads
4. ferries
5. local, regional, state visitors/tourism sites
6. bed and breakfasts
7. wilderness lodges
8. sportfishing or hunting services
9. hotels
10. national parks, wildlife refuges, wilderness areas
11. wildlife viewing
12. winter sports activities
13. arts and music (i.e. art galleries, music festivals)
14. airlines

Students can search online for appropriate sites or start at an omnibus Alaska tourism web site such as:

- ❖ Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association <http://www.awrta.org/>
- ❖ An Alaska tourism web site maintained by the *Anchorage Daily News*  
<http://www.alaska.com/akcom/v-css/>
- ❖ National Geographic’s Great Land Web Site  
[http://www.nationalgeographic.com/greatland/ax/primary\\_fs.html](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/greatland/ax/primary_fs.html)
- ❖ National Park Service (Alaska) <http://data2.itc.nps.gov/parksearch/state/state.cfm?statevar=ak>
- ❖ North West Cruiseship Association <http://www.alaskacruises.org/home/index.cfm>
- ❖ Official State of Alaska Visitor Information Website <http://www.travelalaska.com/>

After students complete their comparison, have them write a short evaluation of the web sites for an appropriate travel publication: *Alaska Airlines Magazine*, *Outsider*, *Backpacker*, National Geographic’s *Adventure* or *Traveler* magazines, the Sunday travel section of an large urban newspaper, or *AARP* (with baby boomers entering retirement ages).

*Scoring Guide for Website Comparison Article*

Yes	No	
		Utilized, engaged in, and provided evidence of each step of the <u>WRITING PROCESS</u> ○Comparison Chart ○Rough draft ○Peer editing ○Final draft
		Chose and used a parallel or integrated <u>STRUCTURE</u> .
		A clear <u>INTRODUCTION AND CONCLUSION</u>
		<u>PARAGRAPHS</u> provide clear details (more show than tell)
		<u>TRANSITIONS</u> used effectively
		Conveyed <u>ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE IN COMPARE AND CONTRAST FORMAT</u>
		Provides satisfactory evidence of understanding the two tourism websites.
		Evidence of thorough analysis of each website.

## Assessment:

Have students create a guidebook for a village, town, or region in Alaska using an appropriate theme—such as Alaska Native culture, ecotourism, winter sports, the arts—or have a group create a guidebook that spans the themes. (This is a good time to have students self-select based on their own interests. For example, students who are members of a Native dancing group may want to focus on Alaska Native Culture, students involved in music and the arts may want to focus in that area, and those who like to snowboard to focus on winter sports, etc.) Guidebooks can take the form of individual web sites or a class web site, a multimedia presentation, or a printed publication. Have students present their guidebooks to a panel of local tourism business people, tourism bureau, Native corporation, cruise industry, etc. who help to assess them using the scoring guide.

### *Student Performance Task*

*Attending to the trends in Alaska tourism and knowing we are competing in a worldwide market, develop a guidebook for today's traveler in which you highlight and detail a specific market niche for a specific tourist interest.*

After students have completed their guidebooks, hold a class discussion in which the class explores such questions as:

- ❖ *What will Alaska tourism look like 100 years from now?*
- ❖ *Will Alaska continue to be a popular tourist destination? Do you agree with geographer Henry Gannett, a founder of the National Geographic Society, who predicted in 1904, Alaska's "grandeur is more valuable than the gold or the fish or the timber, for it will never be exhausted." Is there a chance that the Alaska tourism market will ever become oversaturated?*
- ❖ *Will ecotourism preserve the environment or does the influx of tourists lead to more environmental degradation, pollution, and unsightly development? Can one be a tourist without exploiting the environment?*
- ❖ *Considering one of John Muir's beliefs, what is the level of experience or personal contact one needs to have with the Alaska wilderness in order to benefit from it?*
- ❖ *Will cultural tourism help to preserve the true essence of Native cultures in Alaska or does cultural tourism trivialize and exploit culture by packaging traditions for outsider consumption? Can indigenous cultures truly endure intact when barraged by tourists?*
- ❖ *Roderick Nash describes John Muir's concern with the "tyranny of the guidebook." What is the tyranny of the guidebook? Can a guidebook contribute to the preservation of the environment and cultures without also destroying them?*

Use a turn-taking format so that everyone in the class participates and speaks before anyone speaks a second time. Encourage students to think outside the box. If students participate in the discussion, assess them by crediting them with being able to use geography to interpret plan for the future.

## Appendix:

- ❖ Quick Timeline of Factors Contributing to Popularity of Early Alaska Tourism
- ❖ Alaska Tourism Website Evaluation
- ❖ Guidebook Scoring Guide

## References:

Allen, Stewart D.; Robertson, Guy; Schaefer, Julie. 1998. Economies in transition: an assessment of trends relevant to management of the Tongass National Forest. Gen. Tech. Rep. PNW-GTR-417. Portland, OR: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station. 101 p. (Shaw, Charles G., III, tech. coord.; Conservation and resource assessments for the Tongass land management plan revision).

Eagles, Paul F. J., McCool, Stephen F., and Haynes, Christopher D. *Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas: Guidelines for Planning and Management*. (World Commission on Protected Areas, Best Practice Protected Areas Guidelines Series No. 8) Gland, Switzerland: IUCN The World Conservation Union, 2002.

Jackinsky, McKibben. "The New Rage in Tourism." *Alaska Business Monthly*. Anchorage: Oct 01, 2002. Vol. 18, Iss. 10; pg. 22.

Knox, Paul and Marston, Sallie. *Places and Regions in Global Context: Human Geography*. Updated Second Edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2003.

Lindgren, Tina. "Alaska tourism: A Move to the Future." *Alaska Business Monthly*. Anchorage: Aug 01, 2000. Vol. 16, Iss. 8; pg. 20.

Nash, Roderick. "Tourism, Parks, and the Wilderness Idea in the History of Alaska." *Alaska In Perspective*. Anchorage: Alaska Historical Commission and the Alaska Historical Society, 1981. Vol. IV, No. 1.

Smith, Claire and Ward, Graeme K., editors. *Indigenous Cultures in An Interconnected World*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000.

*Women in Transportation: Changing America's History (Reference Materials)*. U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, March, 1998.

### Web Sites:

John Muir Exhibit at the Sierra Club Web Site

[http://www.sierraclub.org/john\\_muir\\_exhibit/frameindex.html?http://www.sierraclub.org/john\\_muir\\_exhibit/writings/travels\\_in\\_alaska/alaska\\_map.html](http://www.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/frameindex.html?http://www.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/writings/travels_in_alaska/alaska_map.html)

Meeting of Frontiers: Alaska Tourism and Transportation

<http://frontiers.loc.gov/intldl/mtfhtml/mfak/mfaktour.html>

National Geographic Society's Web Site on the Great Land

[http://www.nationalgeographic.com/greatland/ax/primary\\_fs.html](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/greatland/ax/primary_fs.html)

Transcontinental Railroad Photograph

[http://www.archives.gov/digital\\_classroom/history\\_day/bright\\_ideas/digitized\\_images.html](http://www.archives.gov/digital_classroom/history_day/bright_ideas/digitized_images.html)

National Archives ARC Identifier 513341

*Quick Timeline of Factors Contributing to Popularity of Early  
Alaska Tourism*

Cut apart each block of the table below. Then match the year with the picture of the event. Paste the items onto a sheet of paper in correct chronological order.

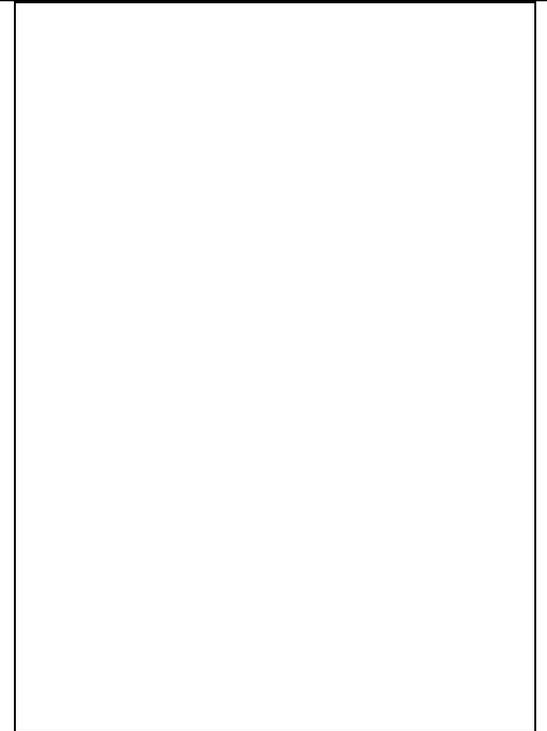
	<b>1869</b>
	<b>1879- 1880</b>
	<b>1909</b>



**1900**



**1897**



**1891**

## Alaska Tourism Website Evaluation

<i>Type of Tourist Service Evaluating</i>		
	Web Site 1	Web Site 2
<i>1. Where in Alaska is this service offered? What part of Alaska would the tourist see or need to travel to in order to make use of this service? Does the website include maps of Alaska and/or the area?</i>		
<i>2. What kind of tourist is the intended audience of the website? (Describe the person to whom this website will have the most appeal.)</i>		
<i>3. What tourist services does this web site offer? (Go beyond the obvious. Is there a range of services offered?)</i>		
<i>4. Can the tourist make reservations through the web site? Does the process appear to be user-friendly? (Don't actually make a reservation, but look at the process.)</i>		
<i>5. What is the range of prices for the services offered? (What is the difference between first class and coach, for example?)</i>		
<i>6. Are there any hidden costs for the service? (What will costs will the tourist need to prepare for that aren't mentioned in the prices?)</i>		
<i>7. Does the web site represent Alaska, the region, or locale in an accurate fashion? (Would you recommend the service to a family member or friend traveling to visit Alaska?)</i>		
<i>8. Are there maps and photos that help the visitor visualize the type of experience they will have? Do you think they depict a realistic experience?</i>		
<i>9. Does the company offering the service have offer services elsewhere in the U.S. or world? Do you think they can offer a truly Alaskan experience?</i>		
<i>10. Does this website link to other tourist websites? If so, what kind?</i>		

## *Guidebook Scoring Guide*

Level of Performance	Criteria of Performance
<b>4</b>  Bestseller	<p>Guidebook:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains apt and carefully crafted geographic representations (maps, charts, diagrams, pictures) that illustrate the spatial context of the tourist's travel experience</li> <li>uses eloquent language to highlight the human and physical characteristics of the places to be encountered during the tourist's travel experience</li> <li>describes in vivid detail and with geographic terminology the physical processes and ecosystems of the area to be traveled</li> <li>describes in vivid detail and with geographic terminology the human activities, settlements, structures, populations, economic activities, cultural mosaics, and/or migrations</li> <li>attends not only to the practical aspects of the tourist's needs but also to the ethical dimensions of the type of travel central to the guide</li> <li>demonstrates overall how geography enables people to develop an understanding of the relationships among people, places, and environments</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>  Workable	<p>Guidebook:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains geographic representations (maps, charts, diagrams, pictures) that illustrate the spatial context of the tourist's travel experience</li> <li>highlights the human and physical characteristics of the places to be encountered during the tourist's travel experience</li> <li>describes the physical processes and ecosystems of the area to be traveled</li> <li>describes the human activities, settlements, structures, populations, economic activities, cultural mosaics, and/or migrations</li> <li>somewhat attends not only to the practical aspects of the tourist's needs but also to the ethical dimensions of the type of travel central to the guide</li> <li>demonstrates to some degree how geography enables people to develop an understanding of the relationships among people, places, and environments</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>  Back to Editing	<p>Guidebook:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains limited geographic representations (maps, charts, diagrams, pictures) that illustrate the spatial context of the tourist's travel experience</li> <li>includes but does not highlight the human and physical characteristics of the places to be encountered during the tourist's travel experience</li> <li>includes but does not highlight the physical processes and ecosystems of the area to be traveled</li> <li>includes mention of the human activities, settlements, structures, populations, economic activities, cultural mosaics, and/or migrations</li> <li>may mention but does not attend to the practical aspects of the tourist's needs but also to the ethical dimensions of the type of travel central to the guide</li> <li>demonstrates to a limited degree how geography enables people to develop an understanding of the relationships among people, places, and environments</li> </ul>
<b>1</b>  Back to the Beginning	<p>Guidebook:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contains minimal geographic representations (maps, charts, diagrams, pictures) that illustrate the spatial context of the tourist's travel experience</li> <li>begins to outline the human and physical characteristics of the places to be encountered during the tourist's travel experience</li> <li>begins to outline the physical processes and ecosystems of the area to be traveled</li> <li>mentions general knowledge of the human activities, settlements, structures, populations, economic activities, cultural mosaics, and/or migrations</li> <li>does not attend to the practical aspects of the tourist's needs as well as the ethical dimensions of the type of travel central to the guide</li> <li>hints at some general understanding of how geography enables people to develop an understanding of the relationships among people, places, and environments</li> </ul>

