



Waqaa! That is the traditional greeting in Yupik, the language of my people here in southwestern Alaska. My name is Agatha, and I can't wait to show you around my state. There are lots of things to see and experience here, so let's get started right away!

First, let me tell you about myself. My people are Yupik, some of the original people to settle in Alaska. The Yupik once moved from place to place to be near animals as they migrated through the harsh Alaskan wilderness. Eventually we settled into villages. My people are rugged and strong. We learned to be self-sufficient, because living in our villages can be lonely, and the climate is sometimes very harsh.

You may not know many girls named Agatha where you live, but among my people you will likely hear plenty of old-sounding names. The reason is partly because of our tradition. When an elderly person in our village dies, the next child to be born is often named to honor that person. That's how I got my name, and I think it is beautiful.

During your visit, we will go all the way to Anchorage, the largest city in Alaska. I feel kind of lost in such a big place, but I enjoy the interesting things there are to see and do there. We will go to a museum, called the Alaska Native Heritage Center, so you can learn about our state's history and the other people groups who live here. Before we leave the city, we will go to the Alaska Zoo. I can't wait to see the polar bears, snow leopards — and even elephants!

When you are in Anchorage, you may feel as if you are in any other city in the United States. Anchorage is a modern, beautiful city. But wait until nighttime during fall and winter, and you will see something you will never witness in the lower 48 states. The aurora borealis, or northern lights, can't help but amaze you. These bright bands of color light up the night sky for more than half the year, and you are visiting at just the right time. In the summer it will never get dark!

I wish I could take you across the entire state, but unfortunately you don't have enough time. Alaska is the largest state in the United States by far and has about every type of terrain: plains, mountains, islands, volcanoes, glaciers, and shorelines — even sand dunes. If we're going to see as much as we can, we'd better get started. Are you ready?



The Country

- ♥ Alaska's land area is about 665,000 square miles, nearly one-fifth the total size of the United States.
- ♥ No U.S. state borders Alaska. Its neighbors are Canada on the east, the Pacific Ocean on the south, the Bering Sea on the west, and the Arctic Ocean on the north.
- ♥ About 58 miles separates Alaska from Russia across the Bering Strait.
- ♥ Alaska's North Slope lies entirely within the Arctic Circle.
- ♥ Alaska gets its name from *aliasksha*, which means "great land" in the language of the Aleut people.
- ♥ Alaska includes the Aleutians, a string of about 150 islands sprinkled across the Pacific Ocean from the state's mainland.
- ♥ While northern Alaska can be bitterly cold and is covered with permafrost year round, southern Alaska is much more pleasant because of its location near the sea. Anchorage, the state's largest city, enjoys summer temperatures in the 70s, while winter months average in the 20s.
- ♥ Mount Denali, the highest mountain in the United States, is in south central Alaska. The mountain is also known as Mount McKinley, after President William McKinley. *Denali* means "the high one" in the language of the Athabascan people.
- ♥ Alaska is rich in natural resources, including oil, forests, fish, gold, minerals, and wildlife.
- ♥ Of the 10 strongest earthquakes recorded, three were in Alaska. Fortunately, because Alaska is so sparsely populated, few deaths resulted.
- ♥ Alaska became our 49th state January 3, 1959.
- ♥ Alaska's state flag is a dark blue field on which eight gold stars form the Big Dipper and the North Star.

The People

- ♥ Alaska's population is about 710,000. Only three states have fewer people: North Dakota, Vermont, and Wyoming.
- ♥ More than three-fourths of the population lives in cities.
- ♥ Alaskan Natives make up about 15 percent of Alaska's population. Some of the main Alaskan Native groups are the Athabascan, Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian Indians; the Inupiat and Yupik Eskimos, and Aleuts.
- ♥ While English is taught in Alaskan schools, many Alaskan Native peoples also speak their traditional language.
- ♥ Russians were the first non-Native people to settle in Alaska. In 1867 the United States bought Alaska from Russia for \$7.2 million, which is about \$.02 per acre. Many people in the United States thought such a purchase was a foolish waste of money. Alaska became known as Seward's Folly, named after U.S. secretary of state William Seward, who was in charge of making the deal.
- ♥ Juneau is the capital of Alaska, but Anchorage is the largest city.
- ♥ Travel can be difficult considering Alaska's rugged terrain and extreme weather. Outside the cities, most people travel by ATV, boat, snowmobile, small airplane, or dogsled. Ferry boats transport passengers along the shoreline in southeast Alaska.
- ♥ Alaska's state sport is dog mushing, which involves racing across frozen terrain on sleds pulled by dogs.
- ♥ The Iditarod, an annual dogsled race, covers 1,150 miles from Anchorage to Nome. The fastest time for the race, set in 2011, was 8 days, 18 hours, 46 minutes, and 39 seconds. The Iditarod is sometimes called the Last Great Race on Earth.
- ♥ Many people think Alaskan Natives live in igloos. Actually, the word *igloo* comes from an Inuit word that means "house." Most Alaskan Natives once built their round-topped houses from sod; Canadian Indians built igloos from

blocks of snow.

- ♥ Seafood and wild game are common foods in Alaska. The state leads the nation in production of seafood.

Did you know?

- ♥ Alaska has an estimated 100,000 glaciers that cover about 5 percent of the state. Malaspina Glacier is so large, the state of Rhode Island could fit inside it two times!
- ♥ Juneau is the only state capital that has no roads connecting to other towns. Outsiders can reach it only by plane or boat.
- ♥ If someone offers you muktuk to eat, be cautious. Muktuk, the skin and blubber of a whale, is considered a delicacy by some, but not everyone enjoys it.
- ♥ Barrow, Alaska, lies inside the Arctic Circle and is only about 800 miles from the North Pole. Because of its location, the sun doesn't rise for two months during winter. In summer, the city has continuous sunlight for two months or more.
- ♥ If you think young people can't make a big difference, think again. Two young people made a big impact on Alaska. In the mid-1920s, 13-year-old Benny Benson's design became the flag of the Alaska territory. When Alaska became a state in 1959, officials chose to keep the same flag design. Another Alaskan, Molly Hootch, was 16 years old when she joined others in suing the state of Alaska in an effort to get high schools in Alaskan villages. Before that time, Alaskan Natives were often sent to boarding schools in places as far away as Oklahoma. Today these village schools are sometimes called Molly Hootch schools.

Foods From Alaska

Here is a traditional Alaskan recipe that has survived over the years and remains popular among the Yupik. Do you have the nerve to try it? There are no specific amounts of ingredients because everything is added to suit each person's particular tastes.

Akutaq (Eskimo Ice Cream)

You will need:

- ♥ Fish filets (such as white fish or salmon), thawed
- ♥ Water
- ♥ Shortening
- ♥ Vegetable Oil
- ♥ Sugar
- ♥ Berries

What to do:

1. Place fish filets in a saucepan. Add enough water to cover.
2. Bring to a boil; reduce heat to simmer.
3. When fish is cooked through, set aside to cool.
4. Squeeze water out of fish. Place dry, flaked fish into a large bowl.
5. Add one or two handfuls of shortening. Stir briskly with your hand for 3 to 5 minutes or until fluffy, adding more shortening if necessary to get the right consistency.
6. Add oil, about one-half cup, and stir with your hand until mixture is creamy in texture. Add more oil if needed.
7. Add one-half cup of sugar. Mix with your hand until the sugar dissolves. Repeat with another half cup of sugar. Taste, then add more sugar if needed.
8. Add fresh berries to the mixture. Mix well.
9. Eat immediately or refrigerate until serving.



Fry Bread

This is an adaptation to the bread eaten among the Yupik. Traditional fry bread is a sour dough mixture and is fried in seal oil.

You will need:

- ♥ 2 cups flour
- ♥ 1 tablespoon baking powder
- ♥ One-half teaspoon salt
- ♥ One-fourth cup shortening
- ♥ One-half cup warm water
- ♥ Oil for frying

What to do:

1. In a bowl, combine flour, baking powder, and salt.
2. Alternate adding shortening and warm water in small amounts, mixing well after each addition.
3. Turn dough onto lightly floured board. Knead several times.
4. Pinch off pieces the size of a tennis ball. Cover pieces with a cloth and let rise 10 minutes.
5. Roll or pat pieces into circles about half an inch thick.
6. Fry dough in hot oil until golden brown on both sides.
7. Drain on paper towels.

Yupik words

English

Hello
Yes
No
Father
Mother
Snow
Ice Cream

Yupik

Waqaa (wah-ca)
li-i (eee)
Qang'a (ang-na)
Aataq (ah-tak)
Aanaq (ah-nak)
Qanikcaq (ah-nik-cuk)
Akutaq (ah-goo-duk)



Things to do in

Squirrel and Dog (An old Yupik children's game)

What to do:

1. Divide all but two players into groups of three. One of the two free players will be a squirrel; the other will be a dog.
2. For each group of three, two of the players should face each other and hold hands to form a circle, representing a tree. The remaining member should be a "squirrel" and hide inside the tree.
3. As the game begins, the "dog" should chase the free "squirrel" and attempt to tag her. To escape the dog, the squirrel can run inside a tree. However, only one squirrel can be in a tree at one time, so the original squirrel must then run to another tree.
4. This continues until a dog succeeds in catching a squirrel. The dog and captured squirrel exchange roles, and the game begins again. To keep the game more interesting, let girls who are trees exchange roles with the squirrels so everyone can be involved.

Popsicle sleds

Make this craft to remind you of the Iditarod dog sled race for which Alaska is famous.

You will need:

- ♥ 6 craft sticks
- ♥ White glue or glue gun
- ♥ Knife or small saw
- ♥ Paint and paintbrushes
- ♥ Yarn

What to do:

1. Carefully cut off the rounded ends of one craft stick; then cut the stick in half. (You may need an adult's help with this.)
2. Lay two whole sticks side by side. Glue one of the half sticks across them near the top and glue in place.
3. Cut another craft stick in half at an angle. Place one half on each side of the whole sticks near the bottom of the sticks. Glue the remaining half stick from step 1 across all four sticks.
4. After the glue hardens, turn the two remaining craft sticks on end and glue one edge to each side of the sled for runners.
5. At the top of the sled, attach a length of yarn to each side of the half stick.
6. When the glue has completely hardened, paint the sled with decorations that remind you of Alaska.



Alaska