

SAMPLE SUMMER ITINERARY FOR POINT HOPE

Day 1 — Fly to Point Hope (*Overnight—The Camp at Point Hope*)

Today, we will depart Anchorage early to fly to Point Hope, arriving mid-day. Visiting Point Hope, Alaska, is literally like visiting an article out of National Geographic. It has “other-world” qualities often read about in the periodical. We do not take our civilization with us to Point Hope, leaving it at the Arctic Circle, where we make ready to embrace a wholly unique cultural experience.

Point Hope is a village on the northwestern Arctic coast of Alaska with a population of 850 people. The only way in and out of the village is by bush plane. Local natives follow many age-old traditions, including hunting seals, walrus and whales found in the icy sea. They maneuver the water in skin-covered boats called umiaks.

Located near the tip of the Point Hope (Tikeraq) Peninsula, where the Chukchi Sea and the Bering Strait meet, Point Hope is 330 miles southwest of Barrow. It consists of a large gravel spit which forms the western-most extension of the northwest Alaska coast. The climate is Arctic, with temperatures ranging from -49 to 78°F. Precipitation is light, 10 inches of rain annually, with 36 inches of snowfall. The Chukchi Sea is ice-free only from late June until mid-September. For more than nine months each year, the Arctic ice pack is hard against the shore of the Peninsula.

Point Hope Peninsula is one of the oldest continuously occupied Inupiat Eskimo areas in Alaska. Several settlements have existed on the Peninsula for the past 2,500 years, including Old and New Tigara, Ipiutak, Jabbertown, and present Point Hope. These are considered to be the longest continuously inhabited settlements in North America. The Peninsula offers good access to marine mammals and the icy conditions allow easy boat launchings into open leads for the early spring whale hunting. Alaska natives comprise over 90% of the population. Point Hope residents (Tikeraqumuit Inupiat Eskimos) are dependent upon marine subsistence. This highly favorable locale, with its abundant resources, has enabled the Tikerqumuit to retain strong cultural traditions despite the many outside influences of the last century.

Our afternoon will be spent checking gear, meeting our local Eskimo guides and going over the operation and safety of the ATVs on which we will be riding throughout our stay. In the afternoon, evening and after dinner, we will be taking the ATVs out to explore the beaches and the Point itself.

Day 2 & 3 — Private Touring of Point Hope (*Overnight Camp at Point Hope. Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner*)

We will have breakfast each day at approximately 9:00am, before starting our unforgettable exploration of this remote Arctic village. During our stay, local artists will be visiting our camp to sell their fine artwork and likewise, we will visit some of their workshops.

Life in Point Hope is weather dependent and our activities will be determined by the conditions. During these two days, we plan to explore the ancient ruins of Old Town to the west, which include the underground sod huts in which the people lived until the 1960s! Depending on weather and winds, we may also visit Jabbertown, the site of the whaling village established by the non-Eskimo whalers in the early 20th century. During the time of the Whale Fest activities start around 10am and last well into the evening with food, dancing and other traditional activities.

From May through August, the enormous variety of wildlife available to the villagers for hunting is also available to us for photographing. The sea is home to an abundance of marine mammals and those fortunate enough to visit in May will likely be able to witness a subsistence whale hunt (authorized by the International Whaling Commission and having taken place for over 2,500 years). Visitors in June will witness the annual Whale Festival, which celebrates the successful hunt. This land supports caribou herds, polar bears, Arctic wolves, foxes and lemmings—we hope to view and photograph these fascinating creatures. Fishing camps are set up from July through September and in these camps villagers catch and preserve five species of salmon as well as trout, grayling, and whitefish. Also abundant are waterfowl such as murre, gulls, geese and ducks that migrate to the Arctic in the springtime. These birds nest in the rookeries on the sea cliffs, where the Eskimos harvest eggs by hanging from ropes, sometimes 400 feet above the surf below. These birds can be observed through mid-August, after which they begin their Southward migrations.

Finally, we will visit a village with local Eskimos to gain knowledge about their amazing lifestyle. If our visit happens to be on a Sunday, an excellent way to interact with the villagers would be to attend a service at one of the local churches. Our travelers involved in education may want to visit the local school if the timing is right—the school year runs through late May. Travelers in the medical profession may want to visit the local clinic. A visit to the village store is always interesting to learn what locals pay for mere essentials.

Day 4 or 5 — Fly to Kotzebue

This morning after breakfast, we depart Point Hope for Kotzebue. The flights depart in the Mid-morning