

The Bureau Bulletin

A publication of the Mat-Su Convention & Visitors Bureau

Spring 2012

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Alaskans targeted with in-state marketing efforts at outdoor shows in Mat-Su, Anchorage and Fairbanks.

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The Mat-Su Visitor Center - located in front of Mat-Su Regional Medical Center - is hosting the open house on May 16. Members are encouraged to come and tell other members what is new with their business. It's a great time to generate referrals for the summer.

Mat-Su CVB hosting annual member Open House on May 16

The Mat-Su Visitor Center will open to the public on May 18 for another summer of pointing visitors in the right direction for activities, lodging and more.

The center will host the annual open house on May 16, giving members the opportunity to give 3-minute spotlights on their businesses for other members. It's also a great time to network with other members and build referral business.

Lorraine Jallen will once again be back to manage the center. She'll be contacting members prior to the opening to get current rack cards and information. Her staff has a combined 50 years of experience at the center.

"Lorraine is not only a great staff member, she's a valuable resource for our members," said Mat-Su CVB Executive Director Bonnie Quill. "Her knowledge of the area helps assist visitors to the center each summer."

The open house begins at 5 p.m., with refreshments served throughout the

Mat-Su CVB Open House

May 16

5-7 p.m.

Opportunity for members to meet other members, inform the Visitor Center staff of new products and provide a spotlight on their business

evening. A sign-up sheet will be at the front desk event, and members can register for a business spotlight.

On May 18, the center opens to the public for the season. The center is open from 8:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., seven days a week (including holidays) through the middle of September. You can reach the center at 746-5059.

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From the president's desk

State marketing budget a big benefits for the industry

Our statewide tourism industry fared well during the last legislative session, when the Legislature approved a \$16 million marketing budget. What does this mean for you and the Mat-Su? It means on a statewide level, we can reach more people than in past years, with the ultimate goal that they will show up on your doorsteps as visitors to the Mat Su Valley.

The Alaska Travel Industry Association has long championed a \$20 million budget in Juneau. While this goal hasn't been reached quite yet, the \$16 million is a step in the right direction and keeps Alaska competitive with other destinations that market heavily to these same travelers.

This budget allows the state to be seen on precious air time on television, make a splash in national publications, target tour operators, reach highway travelers through a variety of methods and continue highly successful marketing programs already in place. It's a win for the travel industry.

State marketing efforts are designed to inform, educate and excite travelers about visiting Alaska, and that's where the Mat-Su CVB fits into the picture. As an organization, we work closely with ATIA on cooperative marketing – whether

it be in the Alaska booth at consumer trade shows in the Lower 48, partnering on international programs or working together to develop FAM trips for tour operators and media.

An increased marketing budget at the state level benefits us all – from DMOs to local business owners. We're happy to have the support of the legislature because as we all know, tourism is one of Alaska's renewable resources and a big part of the economy. A strong tourism industry doesn't only benefit us in the business, it benefits the state as a whole. More jobs are created for Alaskans and more local taxes are generated for communities, creating a cycle that is good for everyone (read a related story on the "Power of Tourism Marketing" on page 3 of the newsletter, by Mat-Su CVB Executive Director Bonnie Quill).

As you get ready for your busy summer season, take a moment to thank your local legislator for their support. It's an investment that will pay big dividends for years to come. Yahoo Mat-Su!

Dee Dee Kay is the president of the Mat-Su CVB Board of Directors. She works for CIRI Alaska Tourism Corporation.



Dee Dee Kay

An expert's take

Sanitation is an important topic for guests

We would all like to enjoy the benefits of an Alaska summer – one thing that can put a damper on summer activities, however, is illness.

A leading concern for the hospitality industry is sanitation – keeping things clean and healthy, so our guests don't get sick and can enjoy all the spectacular things Alaska has to offer. For purposes of this newsletter, I'll focus on norovirus – a very contagious virus that produces flu-like symptoms.

Knowing a bit more about norovirus and thus preparing for it can help you and your summer guests stay healthier and

happier.

I'm hearing there is an uptick in "noro" in the Lower 48 this spring, and if this is the case we can be sure it will be heading our way when our summer visitors arrive. While noro isn't typically deadly, it does lead to tens of thousands of hospitalizations worldwide each year.

Basically, if infected with noro, one is unable to keep any food or water in their system, thus being highly susceptible to dehydration as the primary medical concern.

Executive director's report

The power of tourism marketing is important

Bed tax is a universal tool used to fund tourism marketing organizations. But it is often misunderstood. Tourism marketing is powerful. It is an economic engine for our communities. A new report commissioned by the U.S. travel association “provides conclusive evidence that marketing programs drive greater visitation, generate new tax dollars and create jobs in local communities.”

The report documents the success and financial return on investment of two destination marketing campaigns: The State of Michigan “Pure Michigan” and the Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation “Philadelphia: With Love.” The report summary identifies, “convincing evidence that destination marketing represents an investment, not a cost to tax payers; that it does not compete with entitlement programs, but rather helps pay for them; that it puts cash into public coffers, creates jobs, and enhances the lifestyle of both tourists and residents.

In 1986 community leaders recognized the economic impact and opportunity of enacting a borough-wide 5 percent bed tax and put it on the borough ballot for

residents to approve. Since then, bed tax collections now exceed \$1 million and 65 percent is appropriated to the Mat-Su CVB as a grant to provide a destination marketing campaign to lure visitors to the Mat-Su Valley. Just like Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Ketchikan and Valdez, the Mat-Su CVB is a non-profit tourism marketing organization, not a part of local government. The return to the community is a vibrant tourism industry contributing to local and state taxes which in turn reduces resident tax burdens. You can access the entire report at www.ustravel.org

Mat-Su CVB divides its marketing efforts into six different target markets: outside (U.S.) visitors, in-state summer, in-state winter, group tours, meeting planners, and international visitors. To increase the value of our efforts we partner with Alaska Travel Industry Association and Alaska destinations such as a consumer tradeshow booth share with

Fairbanks and Kenai Peninsula Tourism Marketing Council (KPTMC) in a “Get off the Boat” message, and with Valdez CVB and KPTMC at International Pow Wow in a booth branded “Authentic Alaska.”

The in-state resident and visiting friends and relatives market makes up over half of our visitors. We use local television, radio, Internet and print media to create awareness of travel to the Mat-Su Valley. Staff recently finished participating in three in-state sportsman and outdoors shows, showcasing and sharing information on visitor opportunities in the



Bonnie Quill

Valley.

People have choices in deciding where to visit. Just like candidates on a ballot you select the best option for you. And you can bet that candidate had a campaign strategy to capture your vote.

Bonnie Quill is the executive director of the Mat-Su CVB

HEALTHY: Paying attention to details can keep your guests safe

Continued from Page 2

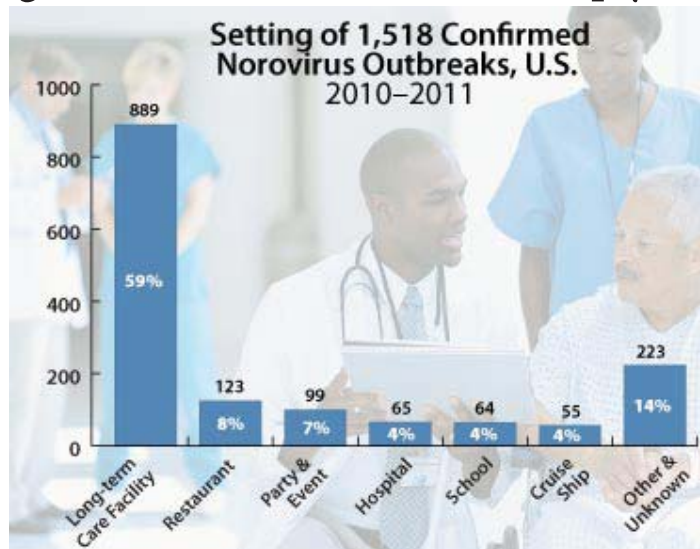
In many cases, medication won't stay “down,” which causes other complications.

How do you get it?

As mentioned, it's extremely contagious, and passed person to person by means as simple as touching surfaces or objects contaminated with the virus and then touching your mouth, or having direct contact with a person who has contracted the virus – such as caring for someone who has the illness (airborne), or sharing food, drink or utensils with a person who is ill.

So what can you do about it as a business owner?

Fortunately, the basics of sanitation also help keep noro away. Train your employees about the basics of hand-washing – it's the number one thing you can do to stay



Source: Center for Disease Control (CDC)

noro-free. It's easy, and the best preventative measure you can take.

If you have anyone at your business who exhibits symptoms, increase the

frequency and diligence of your cleaning – especially contact surfaces or high “touch-points” in high-traffic areas of guests or employees. A little extra work in cleaning can

go a long way to ensuring your guests stay healthy.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) is a fantastic resource for informing you about norovirus. I have included links for your use and highly encourage you to learn more about this topic at: <http://www.cdc.gov/norovirus/index.html>.

Also, here are two additional links with great information: <http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/> and http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr6003a1.htm?s_cid=rr6003a1_e

Steve Zadra is the director of hotel operations for Holland America/Princess Alaska/Yukon and a Mat-Su CVB board member.

Marketing to Alaskans at outdoor shows a success

The Mat-Su CVB attended three outdoor shows in the last month, talking with thousands of people about everything there is to see and do in the Mat-Su.

The Mat-Su Outdoorsman Show and the Great Alaska Sportsman Show are the first signs of spring, as people are looking to get out after a long winter. Mat-Su CVB Marketing Manager Casey Ressler said the three shows were successful.

“We handed out more than 1,300 visitor guides at the shows, and passed out member brochures. There was a general feeling that after the snowy winter we had, people are excited to get out and enjoy the outdoors this summer,” Ressler said.

The final show, in Fairbanks, was held April 20-22. This show is a good one for the Mat-Su CVB because many of the attendees are members of the military, and are looking for new things to do around Alaska, Ressler said.

“The three in-state shows are important in reaching one of our primary markets – Alaskans who are looking to visit other areas of the state,” Ressler said. “We target the Anchorage market and want them to come north for adventure. Fairbanks is also important because those residents often want to visit Southcentral every summer.”



Casey Ressler of the Mat-Su CVB visits with Fairbanks residents, talking about the Mat-Su Valley, during the Fairbanks Outdoors Show in mid-April.

Many members took advantage of the cooperative marketing offer, paying \$25 to distribute their brochures. Special thanks to our members who donated giveaways for the shows – Fishtale River Guides,

Alaska Railroad, Talkeetna Majestic, The Milepost and Major Marine Tours. Also, special thanks to Andy Couch and Dan McDonough, who volunteered their time in the booth.



New mobile alaskavisit.com goes live

The Mat-Su CVB recently launched an all-new mobile site that includes click-to-call for members, Google maps capabilities and other useful functions for visitors.

When visitors with a mobile device such as a Blackberry, iPhone or Android go to the homepage, www.alaskavisit.com, they will automatically be redirected to the mobile-friendly site.

“This was an important tool to add to our Web marketing efforts because it specifically targets visitors who already here,” said Casey Ressler, Mat-Su CVB marketing manager. “It gives us an opportunity to keep them here longer, generating more room nights and more activities booked.”

A QR (quick response) code has been included in most of the printed marketing efforts by the CVB. Users scan the code with their phone and then are directed to the mobile site.

Later this spring, the CVB will be distributing cards for lodging partners to display in their lobby with a QR code on it.

“By giving visitors instant access to this

information in an ever-growing mobile marketplace, we can extend their time in the Valley, which is good business for everyone,” Ressler said.

Visitors accessing the CVB’s Web site on their tablet devices, such as the popular iPad, will not be redirected to the mobile-enhanced site, however. Because of their larger screens, tablets will be pointed to the regular Web site.

“Our mobile statistics have shown a big increase in the last quarter, so this is a very timely project,” Ressler said. “Visitors using mobile devices while they are traveling is a trend that won’t be going away.”

“In a sense, this gives our visitors a virtual visitor guide to the area, because members are grouped by category, and site visitors can then sort them by location. It’s an invaluable tool to give our visitors.”

The mobile project was part of the efforts by the Mat-Su CVB Internet committee. If you’d like to participate on the committee and offer input for future development projects or current marketing efforts, please contact Ressler at casey@alaskavisit.com.



Casey Ressler of the Mat-Su CVB gives a presentation about the Valley during the Icelandair Mid-Atlantic Seminar in Reykjavik, Iceland in February.

European tour operators targeted during Icelandair presentations

The Mat-Su CVB reached hundreds of European tour operators by participating in the Mid-Atlantic Seminar, sponsored by Icelandair, in early February in Iceland.

The seminar, in its 20th year, is subsidized by Icelandair, including airfare and lodging for participants for a greatly reduced rate.

“The seminar was important because as a state, we were well represented and made a big impression on the tour operators and travel agents,” said Mat-Su CVB Marketing and Communications Manager Casey Ressler. “The cost was minimal and the opportunity was excellent.”

Icelandair currently flies nonstop from Reykjavik to Alaska Airlines hubs Minneapolis, Denver and Seattle. Discussions have already begun between Alaska officials and the airline to get direct flights from Reykjavik to Anchorage in the next few years. A nonstop flight to Anchorage would open up a pipeline to European travelers.

“Icelandair offers European travelers the opportunity to stop in Iceland for an extended time for no additional cost. By

“The seminar was important because as a state, we were well represented and made a big impression. The cost was minimal and the opportunity was excellent.”

- Casey Ressler

offering an Anchorage flight, it would give Europeans a chance to visit Iceland for relatively no cost, then continue on to Alaska for their holiday. This brings great potential for Alaska.”

During the seminar, Ressler participated in a 40-minute presentation about Alaska to approximately 350 tour operators and travel agents from Europe. He highlighted the vastness and diversity of activities available in the Valley, the agricultural roots and the Alaska State Fair, and the Denali experience from Talkeetna.

A tradeshow was held after the presentation, and agents stopped by the Mat-Su CVB booth to discuss potential tours. Visit Anchorage sponsored the farewell dinner on the final night of the event, and highlighted several locations in the Valley.

Stay
connected!



YouTube
“yahoomatsu” channel



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visitmatsu](http://www.facebook.com/visitmatsu)



[www.twitter.com/
visitmatsu](http://www.twitter.com/visitmatsu)

2013 Visitor Guide advertising packets in the mail

As we get ready for the 2012 summer tourist season, the Mat-Su CVB is already gearing up for 2013, as advertising packets for next year's guide will be mailed in the next few weeks.

For the seventh year in a row, the advertising rates remain unchanged, giving members more value than ever for their advertising dollar. The guide will be printed in October and distribution begins in November.

"We keep the rates as low as we can, to ensure all members have an opportunity to purchase listings and advertisements," said Mat-Su CVB Membership Manager Justin Saunders. "We're committed to keeping the cost as inexpensive as possible."

Members have the opportunity to purchase display advertising for as low as \$170, and purchase additional lines in their listing for as low as \$50.

All current Mat-Su CVB members receive a free listing that includes business name, address, telephone number and icons to indicate if they are on Facebook or Twitter.

In the 2013 guide, all members will

"We keep the rates as low as we can, to ensure all members have an opportunity to purchase listings and advertisements. We're committed to keeping the cost as inexpensive as possible."

- Justin Saunders

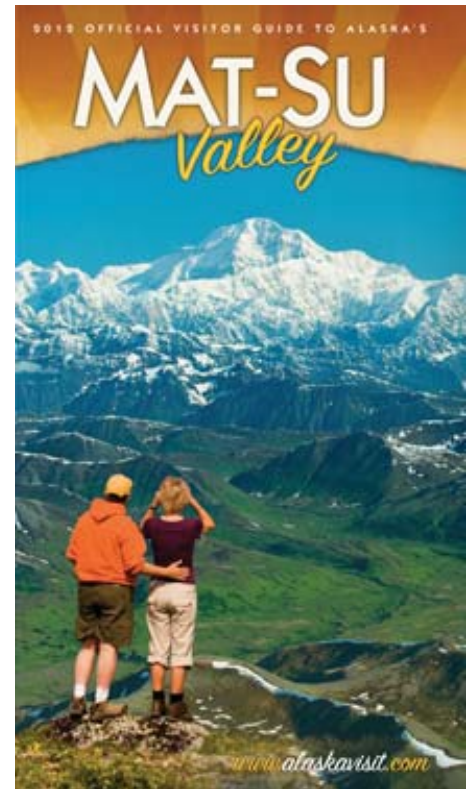
receive a complimentary e-mail listing as well, which previously cost \$40.

The deadline for submission of advertising contracts is June 20. The art deadline is June 29. If you submit your contract by June 1, members will be in a drawing for a free 1/8 page ad, including layout and design.

"We're excited about the guide again this year – it's a signature marketing piece that we work hard to make better every year," Saunders said.

Palmer graphic artist Chris Whittington-Evans is designing the guide once again this year.

For information on advertising in the guide, interested members can contact Saunders at 746-5032 or Justin@alaskavisit.com.



Membership year to match fiscal year

The Mat-Su CVB has modified the membership year, bringing it in accordance with the fiscal year and coinciding with Visitor Guide advertising packets being mailed.

The shift also allows members to take care of their advertising and membership in one step, simplifying the process. The membership year will now run from July 1 to June 30, instead of Sept. 1 to Aug. 30. Because of the shift, every member will receive a complimentary e-mail address listing in the 2013 guide, a \$40 value, which is equivalent to more than four months of membership.

"The shift will help our members by being more convenient for them, and will be more in line with the CVB's accounting year," said Mat-Su CVB Executive Director Bonnie Quill.

For more information, interested people can contact Justin Saunders, Mat-Su CVB membership manager, at 746-5032 or Justin@alaskavisit.com.

Mat-Su tourism industry loses a leader

The Mat-Su tourism industry lost a longtime leader with the passing of Ron Wilson on Feb. 7.

Wilson, owner of Ron's Riverboat Service in Willow and operator of Susitna Landing, served on the Mat-Su CVB Board of Directors and was an outspoken advocate for the sportfishing industry in the Valley.

"Ron brought a strong voice to the board and was passionate about fishing and everything that encompasses," said Mat-Su CVB Executive Director Bonnie Quill. "His contributions could be seen not only as a fishing guide, but also in the improvements he and his wife, Marilyn, made to Susitna Landing."

Wilson headed the operations at Susitna Landing when the state purchased it in the early 1990s. The landing was in disarray, and needed serious renovations to even be viable.

Throughout the next two decades, Wilson worked tirelessly to turn the landing into what it is today – a family-friendly campground with excellent amenities, as well as a boat landing that services anglers in the summer and snowmachiners in the winter.

It also serves as a major hub along a massive trail system in the Susitna



Ron Wilson

River Basin – one in which Wilson was instrumental in forming.

"Ron was a fixture in the Susitna River area, and the product of his life's work will be enjoyed by outdoor enthusiasts for years to come," Quill said.

Member success story

Denali Brewing Company enjoys success a pint at a time

One Talkeetna business has found gold during trying economic times – in the form of beer.

Denali Brewing Company, along with its sister restaurant Twister Creek, opened for business less than three years ago. Since then, the company has not only blossomed, but it has become an integral part of the community.

“During the peak of the season, we employ up to 47 people. We’re number one or two in terms of private employers in Talkeetna,” said Sassan Mossanen. “My partner, Bo, and I have always wanted to start a brewery, and right away, things just clicked. We’ve got the right folks working together, and it’s been fun.”

That first year, Mossanen was distributing Denali Brewing Company beer with his own van. He would load up the beer, drive to Anchorage, and do the route himself. As the business grew, so did the means to transport it.

“We had to start using our horse trailer,” he said. “We took small steps to get where we are now.”



The winter staff at Denali Brewing Company and Twister Creek Restaurant make sure residents don't go thirsty during the cold. In the summer, the brewery and restaurant employs nearly 50 people, making it one of Talkeetna's largest private employers.

Now, the brewery has got to the point where self-distribution isn't a reality. With more than 100 restaurants and bars pouring their beer, Denali is now distributed by the Odom Corporation.

“We’re in places from Hoonah to Nome,” Mossanen said. “People can get Denali Brewing Company beer in a lot of places now.”

And by this fall, customers

will be able to purchase cans of the craft beer in local liquor stores.

“We built a new facility on Talkeetna Spur Road last summer, and by the end of this summer, our canning line will be up and running,” Mossanen said. “Canning technology has come very far, and it just makes sense for Alaskans’ lifestyles to have cans.”

Denali Brewing Company

has also become a major contributor in Talkeetna. They are one of the founders of the Hudson Memorial Fly In, scheduled for May 19-20 this year. At last year's event, they were able to raise \$5,000 for both the Alaska Airman's Association and the Talkeetna Build-A-Plane program.

They've also become involved with fundraisers for the American Red Cross, and are planning a beer festival in September to support the Northern Susitna Institute.

“We help out any way we can,” Mossanen said. “Talkeetna is our home, and anything we can do to support our community, we do.”

Denali Brewing Company has hosted numerous community events, and is always looking to give back, Mossanen said.

For more information on the Denali Brewing Company and the Twister Creek Restaurant, visit the business' Web site at www.denalibrewingcompany.com.

The restaurant and brewery are open seven days a week during the summer.

Marketing in action

In the first quarter alone, the Mat-Su CVB worked directly with more than 40 tour operators, meeting planners and members of the local and national media. These marketing efforts help highlight the Mat-Su Valley, and lead to more business for our members.

Yahoo, Mat-Su!

Welcome new members

The Grape Tap
Kelci Hatcher
376-8466

thegrapetap@yahoo.com

Phantom Salmon Charters
Rhett Nealis
733-2322

phantomsalmon@mtaonline.net

Denali Zipline Tours
Laura Caillet
733-3988
info@denaliziplanetours.com

Frontier Family Medicine
Sandra Spencer
373-3940
sandy@frontierfamilymed.com

A very special thanks to these travel auction sponsors



The UPS Store™
Key Bank Plaza - Palmer
1150 S. Colony Way,
Ste. 3

Annual 'ExTRAVELganza' raises money, awareness

The 20th annual Mat-Su CVB Wine Tasting and Travel Auction ExTRAVELganza was a rousing success, and Reagan Brudie came away as a big winner in the MTA/Alaska Airlines luggage tag raffle.

Brudie won two system-wide round-trip tickets on Alaska Airlines after purchasing a \$20 ticket. Only 225 tickets were sold.

The travel auction is the largest Mat-Su CVB fundraiser and organizer Justin Saunders said he was overwhelmed by the generosity of donors and sponsors this year.

"It was one of the best travel auctions we have had, thanks to the many sponsors and donors," Saunders said.

Items up for bid included a full-page ad in Alaska Magazine, a cruise for two on Royal Celebrity, a signed musher bib from 2012 Iditarod champion Dallas Seavey and a \$1,000 gift certificate from Drifter's Lodge in Cooper Landing.

This year, the luggage tag raffle sold out prior to the event, so Mat-Su CVB hosted a split-the-pot raffle at the event. The additional raffle raised \$650.

"It's always a fun evening for everyone, but it's also an important one for our organization," said Mat-Su CVB Executive Director Bonnie Quill.



Travel auction attendees enjoy appetizers and wine at Evangelo's on April 13. The event serves as the largest fundraiser of the year for the Mat-Su CVB.

Thanks to these generous donors to the travel auction

AIE Inc	Edward Jones, Office of Tammy Bruce	Palmer Golf Course
Alaska Airlines	Excel Physical Therapy	Phillips Cruises & Tours
Alaska Aviation Museum	Fairbanks CVB	Premier Alaska Tours
Alaska Backcountry Adventure Tours	Fishtale River Guides	Princess Cruises
Alaska Center for Acupuncture	Garcias Cantina & Café	Ramada Anchorage Downtown
Alaska Railroad Corporation	Gold Dredge 8	Red Onion Saloon
Alaska Raptor Center	Healing Path Therapeutic Massage	Red Robin
Alaska SeaLife Center	Hotel Seward	Riverboat Discovery
Alaska Tour & Travel	HQ Embroidery	River's Edge Resort
Alaska Zoo	Iditarod Trail Committee	Shane Lamb Studios
All I Saw Cookware	K2 Aviation	St. Elias Alpine Guides, LLC.
Bells Travel Guides	Kaladi Brothers Coffee	Stamp Cache
BIONIC Chiropractic	Kenai River Drifter's Lodge	Stan Stephens Glacier Cruises
Chickaloon Village Traditional Council	Knik Glacier Tours	Sunny Cove Sea Kayaking Company
CIRI Alaska Tourism Corporation	Knik River Lodge	Talkeetna Air Taxi
Color Art Printing	Leonard's Landing Lodge	Talkeetna Gifts & Collectables
Coming Attractions Theatres	Mahay's Riverboat Service	Talkeetna Majestic & Loft
Conoco Phillips Alaska, Inc.	Major Marine Tours	Talkeetna Roadhouse
Cycle Alaska	Matanuska Electric Association	Temsco Helicopters Inc
Denali ATV Adventures	Matanuska Telephone Association	Town Square Art Gallery
Denali Foods Inc. Taco Bell of Alaska	Mat-Su Miners Baseball	Tracy Ressler
Deshka Landing Outdoor Association, LLC	Morris Alaska	Turkey Red
Diamond Airport Parking	Museum of Alaska Transportation & Industry	Visit Anchorage
Diamond M Ranch Resort	Musk Ox Farm	Walmart
	NMS Lodging	Wasilla Knik Historical Society
	NOVA River Runners	Whittington-Evans Communications

come North to Adventure

- Experience Denali
- Walk on Glaciers
- Explore Hatcher Pass



MAT-SU

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