

**AVSP 7 – Summer 2016**

**Section 11:  
Summary Profiles -  
Southcentral Region and  
Communities**

# Summary Profiles: Southcentral Region and Communities

Visitors to Southcentral and the nine most-frequently visited communities are profiled in this chapter. Definitions for each community and sample sizes are provided in the table below.

**TABLE 11.1 - Market Definition and Sample Size  
Southcentral Region and Communities**

Market	Definition	% of Alaska Market	Estimated Market Size	Sample Size	Maximum Margin of Error
Southcentral	Visited at least one destination in the Southcentral region, day and/or overnight	52%	975,000	3,547	±1.6%
Anchorage	Visited Anchorage or Eagle River, day and/or overnight	47%	896,000	3,216	±1.8%
Seward	Visited Seward, day and/or overnight	23%	441,000	1,599	±2.6%
Whittier	Visited Whittier, day and/or overnight	10%	234,000	722	±4.0%
Talkeetna	Visited Talkeetna, day and/or overnight	11%	239,000	862	±3.5%
Kenai/ Soldotna	Visited Kenai or Soldotna, day and/or overnight	7%	127,000	515	±4.6%
Homer	Visited Homer or Seldovia, day and/or overnight	9%	166,000	659	±3.9%
Palmer/ Wasilla	Visited Palmer or Wasilla, day and/or overnight	9%	174,000	703	±3.9%
Girdwood	Visited Girdwood or Alyeska, day and/or overnight	8%	153,000	582	±4.2%
Valdez	Visited Valdez, day and/or overnight	4%	71,000	384	±4.6%

Southcentral Alaska visitors differed in a number of ways from the overall market.

- More than half of Southcentral visitors traveled to Alaska by air, a third by cruise, and a small amount (5 percent) by highway/ferry.
- Within Southcentral, especially high percentages of visitors traveled to Kenai/Soldotna, Girdwood, Palmer/Wasilla, and Homer. Visitors to these communities were also much more likely to travel between communities by rental vehicle and stay in private homes while in Alaska.
- Nearly all Southcentral visitors included a stop in Anchorage. Slightly less than half visited Denali National Park and Seward. A third visited Juneau and Ketchikan. Fewer visited Fairbanks (26 percent).
- Valdez visitors were unique in the large percentage that travelled to the state by highway/ferry (23 percent). They also stayed longer in Alaska, averaging 15.0 nights, and nearly all also visited the Interior.
- Visitors to Anchorage were most likely to report participating in culture/history activities in the community, whereas wildlife viewing was the most reported activity for those visiting Seward, Valdez,

Palmer/Wasilla, and Homer. Day cruises were the top activity in Whittier, flightseeing in Talkeetna, and tramway in Girdwood.

- Roughly a third of visitors to Kenai/Soldotna reported fishing while in the community. Higher percentages of Homer visitors also fished (25 percent) compared to other Southcentral towns.
- Visitors to Kenai/Soldotna and Palmer/Wasilla were the most likely to say they were very likely to return to Alaska within five years, compared to visitors to other Southcentral communities. They were also the most likely to have visited Alaska previously.
- Despite reporting similar levels of satisfaction, only a third of visitors to Whittier, Talkeetna, and Seward said they were very likely to return. This can likely be attributed to the higher percentage of cruise travelers in those towns.
- One-third of Palmer/Wasilla visitors travelled to Alaska for the purpose of visiting friends/relatives, the highest percentage among Southcentral communities.
- Nearly half of all visitors to Kenai/Soldotna and Homer were from the Western U.S., compared to 39 percent of all Southcentral visitors.
- Southcentral visitors spent an average of \$1,465 while in Alaska, much higher than the average among all visitors (\$1,057). Homer visitors reported the highest average statewide spending at \$1,912, while Whittier visitors spent the least at \$1,447.
- Southcentral spent an average of \$649 while in the region. The highest reported spending by community was in Anchorage, where visitors reported spending an average of \$398 while in the community.

**TABLE 11.2 - Trip Purpose and Packages  
Southcentral Region and Communities (%)**

	All Visitors	South-central	Anchorage	Seward	Whittier	Talkeetna
<b>Trip Purpose</b>						
Vacation/pleasure	79	69	69	84	84	85
Visiting friends or relatives	13	19	19	12	12	10
Business	5	7	7	1	1	1
Business and pleasure	3	5	5	3	3	3
<b>Purchased multi-day package (including cruise)</b>						
Yes	64	46	45	55	53	51
<b>Package type (Base: non-cruise, purchased package)</b>						
Fishing lodge	49	35	34	18	22	7
Rail package	11	15	15	19	16	29
Wilderness lodge	10	12	12	15	15	15
Adventure tour	9	12	12	16	13	12
Motorcoach tour	8	11	11	16	8	19
Rental car/RV package	6	8	8	12	16	14
Hunting	2	3	3	-	-	1
		Kenai/ Soldotna	Homer	Palmer/ Wasilla	Girdwood	Valdez
<b>Trip Purpose</b>						
Vacation/pleasure		62	72	56	68	81
Visiting friends/rel.		26	23	32	23	15
Business only		5	1	5	2	1
Business/pleasure		7	4	7	7	2
<b>Purchased multi-day package (including cruise)</b>						
Yes		17	24	15	24	20
<b>Package type (Base: non-cruise, purchased package)</b>						
Fishing lodge		51	40	9	23	5
Rail package		5	10	6	13	8
Wilderness lodge		4	9	16	18	20
Adventure tour		12	13	23	20	19
Motorcoach tour		2	6	26	8	25
Rental car/RV package		21	17	12	15	19
Hunting		2	2	3	-	-

**TABLE 11.3 - Transportation Modes  
Southcentral Region and Communities (%)**

	All Visitors	South- central	Anchorage	Seward	Whittier	Talkeetna
<b>Transportation Market</b>						
Cruise	55	37	35	45	46	39
Air	40	58	60	50	50	55
Highway/ferry	5	5	5	5	4	6
<b>Used to Travel Between Communities</b>						
Tour bus/van	15	28	28	29	40	38
Rental vehicle	14	26	27	31	33	34
Alaska Railroad	14	26	26	31	35	42
Personal vehicle	9	16	16	13	13	14
Air	9	15	15	8	9	12
Rental RV	2	4	4	5	7	6
State ferry	2	2	2	2	4	4
Personal RV	1	2	2	3	2	3
		Kenai/ Soldotna	Homer	Palmer/ Wasilla	Girdwood	Valdez
<b>Transportation Market</b>						
Cruise		4	11	8	12	8
Air		87	77	80	83	69
Highway/ferry		8	12	12	6	23
<b>Used to Travel Between Communities</b>						
Tour bus/van		6	6	10	17	15
Rental vehicle		51	46	45	48	35
Alaska Railroad		8	9	12	21	14
Personal vehicle		27	23	32	25	20
Air		12	13	12	10	12
Rental RV		11	10	9	8	14
State ferry		3	6	3	3	13
Personal RV		7	8	7	4	12

**TABLE 11.4 - Length of Stay, Destinations and Lodging Type  
Southcentral Region and Communities (%)**

	All Visitors	South-central	Anchorage	Seward	Whittier	Talkeetna
Average length of stay in Alaska	9.2	10.8	10.7	11.1	10.9	12.2
<b>Regions Visited</b>						
Southeast	67	42	40	50	52	46
Southcentral	52	100	100	100	100	100
Interior	29	50	49	56	65	83
Southwest	4	8	8	3	3	3
Far North	2	3	3	2	2	3
<b>Destinations Visited, Top 10</b>						
Juneau	61	38	37	46	48	41
Ketchikan	58	37	35	45	47	39
Skagway	48	34	33	41	48	39
Anchorage	47	92	100	93	88	92
Glacier Bay Nat'l Park	29	13	12	11	29	14
Denali Nat'l Park	23	42	42	52	61	79
Seward	23	45	46	100	35	58
Fairbanks	17	26	25	27	31	38
Hoonah/Icy Strait Point	13	15	14	27	2	16
Talkeetna	11	22	22	28	34	100
<b>Lodging Types Used</b>						
Cruise ship	57	36	35	45	45	37
Hotel/Motel	37	63	65	69	64	73
Lodge	15	25	24	26	32	41
Bed & Breakfast	4	7	8	9	9	12
Vacation Rental	3	5	5	6	5	7
Friends/Family	15	21	22	15	13	15
Campground/RV	6	10	10	13	10	14
Wilderness Camping	2	3	3	3	2	4
State Ferry	1	1	1	1	1	1

**TABLE 11.4 - Length of Stay, Destinations and Lodging Type (cont'd)  
Southcentral Region and Communities (%)**

	Kenai/ Soldotna	Homer	Palmer/ Wasilla	Girdwood	Valdez
Average length of stay in Alaska	12.6	13.5	12.5	11.1	15.0
<b>Regions Visited</b>					
Southeast	12	20	17	19	27
Southcentral	100	100	100	100	100
Interior	41	47	58	56	90
Southwest	5	13	4	4	3
Far North	2	3	3	2	5
<b>Destinations Visited, Top 10</b>					
Juneau	7	14	11	14	14
Ketchikan	5	12	9	12	10
Skagway	6	6	10	12	15
Anchorage	92	94	95	98	89
Glacier Bay Nat'l Park	4	3	4	4	7
Denali Nat'l Park	33	38	45	50	65
Seward	53	56	47	61	51
Fairbanks	19	21	28	22	54
Hoonah/Icy Strait Point	<1	8	3	6	1
Talkeetna	24	23	36	36	34
<b>Lodging Types Used</b>					
Cruise ship	4	11	8	11	7
Hotel/Motel	55	52	55	65	58
Lodge	21	18	15	24	22
Bed & Breakfast	11	16	14	11	14
Vacation Rental	11	10	9	9	4
Friends/Family	31	29	37	28	25
Campground/RV	24	26	21	16	38
Wilderness Camping	5	6	5	3	10
State Ferry	1	2	1	1	2

**TABLE 11.5 - Statewide Activities – Top 10  
Southcentral Region and Communities (%)**

	All Visitors	South- central	Anchorage	Seward	Whittier	Talkeetna
Shopping	75	68	67	76	75	79
Wildlife viewing	45	65	66	74	73	77
Cultural activities	39	45	45	53	52	61
Day cruises	39	43	43	62	61	61
Hiking/nature walk	34	45	45	51	49	55
Train	32	34	33	44	47	49
City/sightseeing tours	31	28	28	36	37	35
Fishing	16	22	22	19	17	17
Flightseeing	13	16	16	20	19	30
Tramway/gondola	13	12	12	15	20	16

  

	Kenai/ Soldotna	Homer	Palmer/ Wasilla	Girdwood	Valdez
Shopping	71	70	72	75	67
Wildlife viewing	66	74	68	80	75
Cultural activities	36	49	50	49	59
Day cruises	36	44	38	53	55
Hiking/nature walk	49	53	56	66	54
Train	10	13	16	25	18
City/sightseeing tours	14	19	21	26	22
Fishing	56	45	24	17	32
Flightseeing	16	18	17	20	18
Tramway/gondola	8	10	11	37	11

**TABLE 11.6 - Activities in Community/Region  
Southcentral Region and Communities (%)**

	South-central	Anchorage	Seward	Whittier	Talkeetna
Wildlife viewing	36	12	32	17	13
Birdwatching	9	3	8	5	12
Culture/history	23	16	8	2	8
Museums	18	13	6	2	4
Historical/cultural attractions	5	3	1	<1	2
Native cultural tours/act.	5	4	1	<1	1
Gold panning/mine tour	2	<1	<1	<1	1
Hiking/nature walk	27	12	20	4	13
Day cruises	21	1	30	22	7
City/sightseeing tours	12	11	3	2	4
Fishing	15	<1	8	2	3
Unguided	8	<1	3	1	1
Guided	9	<1	5	1	2
Flightseeing	6	1	1	<1	14
Dog sledding/kennel tour	4	<1	4	<1	5
Tramway/gondola	5	<1	<1	-	<1
Shows/Alaska entertainment	2	2	-	-	<1
Salmon bake/crab feed	1	<1	1	<1	<1
Camping	4	1	3	1	2
Kayaking/canoeing	3	<1	2	1	<1
Rafting	2	<1	<1	-	4
ATV/4-wheeling	2	<1	<1	-	1
Zipline	1	-	<1	-	2
Biking	3	2	1	<1	<1
Hot springs	<1	-	-	-	<1
Northern lights viewing	1	<1	<1	-	1
Hunting	<1	-	-	-	-
Other	3	<1	<1	<1	<1

Note: Participation in shopping, Alaska Railroad and business were not recorded at the community/regional level.

**TABLE 11.6 Activities in Community/Region (Cont'd)  
Southcentral Region and Communities (%)**

	Kenai/ Soldotna	Homer	Palmer/ Wasilla	Girdwood	Valdez
Wildlife viewing	24	35	18	24	27
Birdwatching	4	14	3	2	12
Culture/history	3	13	13	6	21
Museums	3	12	8	2	20
Historical/cultural attractions	<1	1	4	<1	2
Native cultural tours/act.	<1	<1	1	-	1
Gold panning/mine tour	<1	<1	2	4	-
Hiking/nature walk	13	15	15	31	21
Day cruises	2	10	1	1	21
City/sightseeing tours	2	2	1	2	2
Fishing	32	26	5	-	15
Unguided	19	9	4	-	8
Guided	15	18	1	-	8
Flightseeing	4	4	1	1	1
Dog sledding/kennel tour	-	-	6	1	-
Tramway/gondola	-	-	-	35	-
Shows/Alaska entertainment	-	2	1	<1	-
Salmon bake/crab feed	1	<1	<1	<1	<1
Camping	5	8	5	1	11
Kayaking/canoeing	<1	2	1	-	8
Rafting	<1	<1	1	<1	-
ATV/4-wheeling	1	<1	3	-	1
Zipline	-	-	<1	-	-
Biking	<1	1	1	3	1
Hot springs	-	-	-	-	-
Northern lights viewing	1	<1	<1	-	1
Hunting	-	-	1	-	-
Other	1	1	2	1	1

Note: Participation in shopping, Alaska Railroad and business were not recorded at the community/regional level.

**TABLE 11.7 - Satisfaction Ratings  
Southcentral Region and Communities (%)**

	All Visitors	South-central	Anchorage	Seward	Whittier	Talkeetna
<b>Satisfaction with overall Alaska experience</b>						
Very satisfied	75	74	74	78	79	79
Satisfied	23	24	24	21	20	19
<b>Compared to expectations</b>						
Much higher	29	28	27	30	31	32
Higher	36	36	37	38	40	41
About as expected	32	33	33	29	26	24
<b>Value for the money, compared to other destinations</b>						
Much better	15	11	10	11	12	12
Better	23	20	20	18	19	18
About the same	45	48	49	48	47	49
<b>Likelihood to recommend and return to Alaska</b>						
Very likely to recommend Alaska	79	79	80	83	82	84
Very likely to return to Alaska in next five years	40	43	44	34	31	32
		Kenai/ Soldotna	Homer	Palmer/ Wasilla	Girdwood	Valdez
<b>Satisfaction with overall Alaska experience</b>						
Very satisfied		70	74	75	76	71
Satisfied		27	24	23	23	24
<b>Compared to expectations</b>						
Much higher		24	27	27	29	25
Higher		38	36	38	44	39
About as expected		32	32	32	25	30
<b>Value for the money, compared to other destinations</b>						
Much better		10	9	9	9	8
Better		22	15	19	17	15
About the same		46	48	50	52	48
<b>Likelihood to recommend and return to Alaska</b>						
Very likely to recommend Alaska		80	82	83	84	78
Very likely to return to Alaska in next five years		58	48	51	45	36

**TABLE 11.8 - Previous Alaska Travel  
Southcentral Region and Communities (%)**

	<b>All Visitors</b>	<b>South-central</b>	<b>Anchorage</b>	<b>Seward</b>	<b>Whittier</b>	<b>Talkeetna</b>
Been to Alaska before	40	43	43	31	29	31
Average # of vacation trips (base: repeaters)	4.1	4.6	4.5	3.2	2.4	3.1
Previously traveled in Alaska by cruise ship	16	14	13	14	12	13
		<b>Kenai/Soldotna</b>	<b>Homer</b>	<b>Palmer/Wasilla</b>	<b>Girdwood</b>	<b>Valdez</b>
Been to Alaska before		54	45	53	42	42
Average # of vacation trips (base: repeaters)		6.2	5.9	4.7	3.6	6.7
Previously traveled in Alaska by cruise ship		14	14	13	12	15

**TABLE 11.9 - Trip Planning  
Southcentral Region and Communities (%)**

	All Visitors	South-central	Anchorage	Seward	Whittier	Talkeetna
<b>Trip Decision, by Quarter</b>						
Before July 2015	14	13	12	16	14	16
July-Sept 2015	17	16	15	18	17	19
Oct-Dec 2015	17	16	16	16	17	19
Jan-Mar 2016	23	22	23	22	25	24
Apr-Jun 2016	20	23	24	20	20	17
July-Sept 2016	8	10	11	8	8	4
<b>Trip Booking, by Quarter</b>						
Before July 2015	6	4	4	5	5	5
July-Sept 2015	11	9	9	13	9	13
Oct-Dec 2015	15	13	13	16	16	18
Jan-Mar 2016	27	25	25	25	27	29
Apr-Jun 2016	29	32	33	28	30	26
July-Sept 2016	13	16	16	13	13	9
<b>Internet including apps and Travel Agent Usage</b>						
Used internet	68	73	74	75	72	78
Booked over internet	58	64	65	64	62	65
Used travelalaska.com	18	21	22	29	27	32
Received Official State Vacation Planner	12	15	15	19	21	24
Booked through travel agent	35	29	28	32	37	34
<b>Other Sources – Top 10</b>						
Friends/family	51	51	51	47	54	49
Prior experience	23	26	27	19	16	17
Cruise line	22	13	13	18	16	16
Brochures	15	18	18	22	24	26
AAA	8	8	8	10	11	13
Other travel/guide book	6	9	9	12	12	14
Tour company	5	5	5	7	6	8
Magazine	5	6	6	7	7	8
Television	4	4	4	5	3	4
Milepost	4	7	6	9	9	11

**TABLE 11.9 - Trip Planning (Cont'd)**  
**Southcentral Region and Communities (%)**

	Kenai/ Soldotna	Homer	Palmer/ Wasilla	Girdwood	Valdez
<b>Trip Decision – Top Three Periods</b>					
Before July 2015	8	10	11	10	14
July-Sept 2015	18	20	16	15	21
Oct-Dec 2015	13	14	16	19	13
Jan-Mar 2016	27	27	25	25	27
Apr-Jun 2016	25	21	24	23	15
July-Sept 2016	9	8	9	8	10
<b>Trip Booking – Top Three Periods</b>					
Before July 2015	<1	2	1	2	2
July-Sept 2015	5	5	5	6	5
Oct-Dec 2015	11	11	12	15	13
Jan-Mar 2016	31	31	27	26	27
Apr-Jun 2016	36	34	38	38	28
July-Sept 2016	17	17	17	13	26
<b>Internet including apps and Travel Agent Usage</b>					
Used internet	82	82	85	83	78
Booked over internet	76	73	78	76	62
Used TravelAlaska.com	26	28	29	33	31
Received Official State Vacation Planner	19	19	20	21	25
Booked through travel agent	9	14	11	16	21
<b>Other Sources – Top 10</b>					
Friends/family	56	55	62	52	45
Prior experience	35	29	34	24	28
Cruise line	3	3	4	6	5
Brochures	24	25	24	27	31
AAA	8	9	10	10	13
Other travel/guide book	9	13	13	13	18
Tour company	4	5	5	7	7
Magazine	8	9	8	9	12
Television	3	5	4	4	4
Milepost	13	16	17	12	28

**TABLE 11.10 - Top 10 Websites/Apps Used to Plan/Book  
Southcentral Region and Communities (%)**

	All Visitors		South-central		Anchorage		Seward		Whittier		Talkeetna	
	Plan	Book	Plan	Book	Plan	Book	Plan	Book	Plan	Book	Plan	Book
Airline websites	50	50	53	53	54	54	50	50	47	48	48	47
Cruise line websites	35	27	22	17	21	17	28	22	29	22	26	20
Google	28	4	29	5	30	5	36	6	37	6	37	7
Trip Advisor	23	3	23	4	23	4	32	5	32	5	31	5
Expedia	14	10	15	12	15	12	16	13	17	14	17	12
Hotel/lodge/RV Park	11	10	14	12	15	13	16	13	13	11	13	11
Tour company websites	11	8	14	10	14	10	20	14	18	13	21	15
Car/RV rental websites	10	9	16	14	16	14	18	16	19	18	20	17
Travelocity	7	2	6	3	6	3	7	3	6	3	6	3
Facebook	7	<1	5	<1	5	<1	6	<1	6	<1	7	<1

  

	Kenai/ Soldotna		Homer		Palmer/ Wasilla		Girdwood		Valdez	
	Plan	Book	Plan	Book	Plan	Book	Plan	Book	Plan	Book
Airline websites	57	58	55	54	59	59	58	57	44	43
Cruise line websites	4	4	9	9	9	5	11	9	7	6
Google	33	9	35	9	33	5	33	6	38	6
Trip Advisor	24	6	26	6	28	4	30	4	34	9
Expedia	19	14	21	15	18	14	17	10	18	14
Hotel/lodge/RV Park	19	16	14	11	15	12	18	13	14	11
Tour company websites	15	11	19	14	16	11	20	13	16	14
Car/RV rental websites	29	25	26	25	25	21	27	23	23	21
Travelocity	8	3	8	4	7	4	10	4	8	5
Facebook	6	<1	7	<1	6	<1	5	<1	7	1

**TABLE 11.11 - Demographics  
Southcentral Region and Communities (%)**

	All Visitors	South-central	Anchorage	Seward	Whittier	Talkeetna
<b>Origin</b>						
Western US	38	39	39	29	29	29
Southern US	21	22	21	23	24	24
Midwestern US	15	17	17	20	20	22
Eastern US	10	10	10	14	13	14
Canada	7	3	3	3	2	2
Other International	9	10	10	11	12	10
<b>Other Demographics</b>						
Average party size	2.4	2.3	2.3	2.5	2.5	2.5
Average group size	4.2	3.8	3.8	4.3	3.9	4.1
Male/female	49/51	52/48	52/48	49/51	50/50	50/50
Average age	53.7	53.7	53.4	53.7	54.4	54.8
Children in household	23	22	22	22	20	19
Retired/semi-retired	44	42	41	45	44	46
College graduate	63	64	65	66	63	67
Average income	\$114,000	\$113,000	\$113,000	\$114,000	\$113,000	\$117,000
		Kenai/ Soldotna	Homer	Palmer/ Wasilla	Girdwood	Valdez
<b>Origin</b>						
Western US		48	46	41	39	31
Southern US		16	16	21	22	19
Midwestern US		20	19	18	19	15
Eastern US		8	8	10	11	9
Canada		1	3	2	1	4
Other International		6	8	9	9	22
<b>Other Demographics</b>						
Average party size		2.6	2.5	2.4	2.5	2.4
Average group size		3.8	3.3	3.6	3.9	3.4
Male/female		59/41	54/46	50/50	48/52	54/46
Average age		50.6	53.2	51.3	49.7	53.3
Children in household		28	23	25	24	17
Retired/semi-retired		37	42	41	35	46
College graduate		62	63	58	65	63
Average income		\$112,000	\$108,000	\$106,000	\$111,000	\$101,000

**TABLE 11.12 – Visitor Expenditures, Per Person  
Southcentral Region and Communities**

	All Visitors	South-central	Anchorage	Seward	Whittier	Talkeetna
Average per-person total spent in Alaska	\$1,057	\$1,465	\$1,514	\$1,539	\$1,447	\$1,815
Average per-person total spent in region/ community		649	398	164	67	169
Lodging		169	124	41	5	36
Tours/activity/ entertainment		99	19	67	51	62
Gifts/souvenirs/ clothing		60	42	13	1	15
Food/beverage		147	94	32	8	34
Rental cars/fuel/ transportation		124	116	9	2	5
Other		50	2	2	1	15
		Kenai/ Soldotna	Homer	Palmer/ Wasilla	Girdwood	Valdez
Average per-person total spent in Alaska		\$1,769	\$1,912	\$1,629	\$1,793	\$1,848
Average per-person total spent in region/ community		367	294	251	130	282
Lodging		85	77	35	52	78
Tours/activity/ entertainment		43	81	18	17	87
Gifts/souvenirs/ clothing		28	26	14	7	15
Food/beverage		92	61	53	45	66
Rental cars/fuel/ transportation		38	20	43	8	20
Other		81	28	88	1	17