



TravelAlaska.com

Website Usability Study

Report of Findings

March 2014



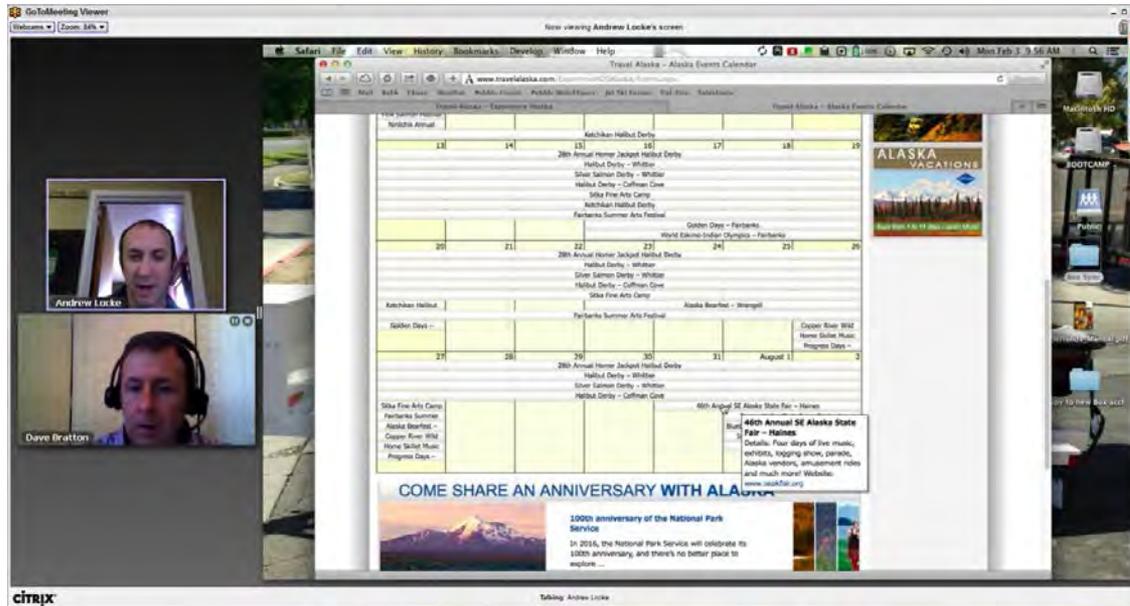
Methodology

- ❑ This study consisted of a series of 60-minute in-depth interviews with thirty travelers who will visit (or are interested in visiting) the state of Alaska in the next two years.
- ❑ Interviews were conducted via online video conference using Destination Analysts' online usability lab.
- ❑ Respondents shared their feedback and opinions on the Travel Alaska website as they used it to accomplish several travel planning related tasks.
- ❑ All respondents participated in a brief technical check at least 48 hours prior to their interview in order to guarantee a smooth flow of the interview session.



The Interview Environment

A screenshot of the interview environment from the moderator's perspective is shown below. During the interview, respondents viewed the website in full screen view on their home or work computers. This allows for maximum comfort from the respondent perspective. Persons watching the sessions could pass questions to the moderator via a private chat function.



Respondent Profile

The study participants included only those “Definitely” or “Considering” travel to Alaska within the next 2 years. The group consisted of:

- Travelers 35 years of age or older
- Household income above \$40,000
- At least some college education
- The majority are married or partnered
- Varying degrees of familiarity with Alaska
- Mix of Alaska trip interests
- Approximately half were recent requestors of information from the State of Alaska, while the other half did not have prior contact with the State of Alaska

Selected Participants



Objectives

This study is part of an ongoing effort to gather information useful to improving the Travel Alaska website. The specific goals of this research were to:

- ❑ Learn more about how users search for Alaska travel content and discover ways to improve SEO results and capture more traffic.
- ❑ Continue to assess the overall appeal of design elements and overall informational architecture of the website and catalog ideas for potential improvement.
- ❑ Assess the effectiveness of map features on the website.
- ❑ Examine specific functionality related to the “Experience Alaska” section of the website.
- ❑ Identify missing or non-functioning content in the sections tested.



OFFICIAL STATE OF ALASKA VACATION AND TRAVEL INFORMATION

ALASKA
TravelAlaska.com

EXPERIENCE ALASKA | MAPS + PLACES TO GO | THINGS TO DO | PLACES TO STAY | GETTING TO + AROUND | PACKAGE TOURS | PLANNING HELP

Morning view of Wonder Lake and Mt. McKinley in Denali National Park
A visit to Denali National Park and Preserve and its crown jewel, Mount McKinley, is at the top of many Alaska visitors' "must-do" lists. Here, the 20,237-foot mountain - the tallest in North America - is reflected in the still waters of Wonder Lake. (Photo: Michael DeYoung) Find out more

A WELCOME FROM GOVERNOR SEAN PARNELL
I am pleased to welcome you to the Official State of Alaska vacation and travel information website. Alaska is different from every other destination in the world. Every day offers an unforgettable memory: a mother moose and calf, glaciers and mountains, unique Native cultures. [More »](#)

FIND YOUR ALASKA

HAVING FUN | DRIVING | RELAXING | LEARNING | ADVENTURE

VACATION GUIDE
Request your free official State of Alaska vacation planner. [Order a Copy](#)

ALASKA GALLERY
View our photos of Alaska ranging from wildlife to relaxing life. [View Photos](#)

TRAVEL SPECIALS
Adventure Smith Explorations
Alaska's Largest Selection of Small Ship Cruises from \$1595

Categories
Packages
Accommodations
Transportation
Activities

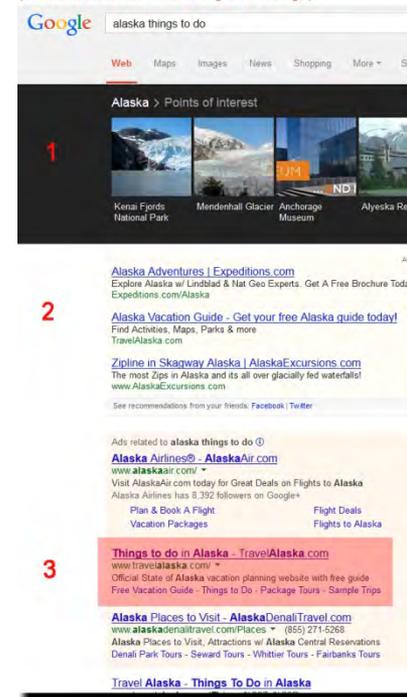
Use of Search Engines to Plan Alaska Travel

At the beginning of the interview, participants were asked to perform a search as if they were planning a trip to Alaska. This search exercise found that Travel Alaska does not perform well when specific search terms are entered as the query. For example, as many Alaska visitors arrive on cruise lines, many persons searched for specific items such as “Alaska shore excursions” or “Shore excursion Juneau.” TravelAlaska.com does not appear in the first page of these results.

The website appears to be performing well when search queries are generic, such as “Alaska Things to do” or “Alaska vacation.” This might be a fertile area for content expansion and SEO work. If most users are entering queries for which the website is not competitive content-wise or for which SEO work needs to be done, additional traffic could likely be generated through effort in this area.

Participants report automatically ignoring (as habit) Google special content (1) and paid listings (2), and going directly to the organic listings below, where the site performs well for generic searches. **Destination Analysts, Inc.**

Generic Search Query (TravelAlaska.com #2 in organic listings)



Google alaska things to do

Web Maps Images News Shopping More

Alaska > Points of Interest

1

Kenai Fjords National Park Mendenhall Glacier Anchorage Museum Alyeska Resort

2

Alaska Adventures | Expeditions.com
Explore Alaska w/ Lindblad & Nat. Geo Experts. Get A Free Brochure Today
Expeditions.com/Alaska

Alaska Vacation Guide - Get your free Alaska guide today!
Find Activities, Maps, Parks & more
TravelAlaska.com

Zipline in Skagway Alaska | AlaskaExcursions.com
The most Zips in Alaska and its all over glacially fed waterfall!
www.AlaskaExcursions.com

See recommendations from your friends: Facebook | Twitter

Ads related to alaska things to do

Alaska Airlines® - AlaskaAir.com
www.alaskaair.com/ *
Visit AlaskaAir.com today for Great Deals on Flights to Alaska
Alaska Airlines has 8,392 followers on Google+
Plan & Book A Flight Flight Deals
Vacation Packages Flights to Alaska

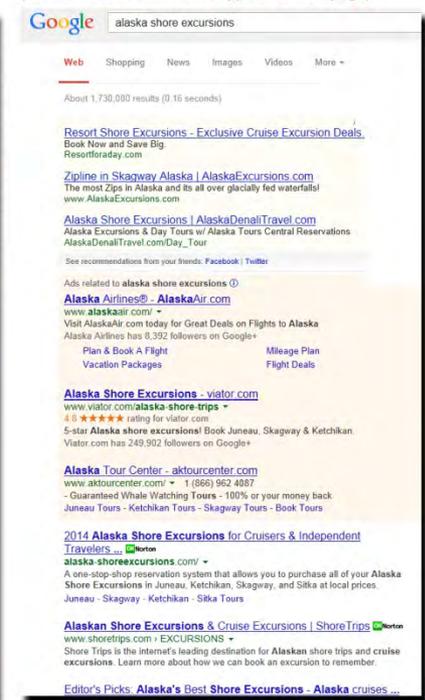
3

Things to do in Alaska - TravelAlaska.com
www.TravelAlaska.com/ *
Official State of Alaska vacation planning website with free guide
Free Vacation Guide - Things to Do - Package Tours - Sample Trips

Alaska Places to Visit - AlaskaDenalTravel.com
www.alaskadenaltravel.com/Places (855) 271-5268
Alaska Places to Visit. Attractions w/ Alaska Central Reservations
Denali Park Tours - Seward Tours - Whittier Tours - Fairbanks Tours

Travel Alaska - Things To Do in Alaska

Specific Search Query (TravelAlaska.com doesn't appear on first page)



Google alaska shore excursions

Web Shopping News Images Videos More

About 1,730,000 results (0.16 seconds)

Resort Shore Excursions - Exclusive Cruise Excursion Deals
Book Now and Save Big
Resortforaday.com

Zipline in Skagway Alaska | AlaskaExcursions.com
The most Zips in Alaska and its all over glacially fed waterfall!
www.AlaskaExcursions.com

Alaska Shore Excursions | AlaskaDenalTravel.com
Alaska Excursions & Day Tours w/ Alaska Tours Central Reservations
AlaskaDenalTravel.com/Day_Tour

See recommendations from your friends: Facebook | Twitter

Ads related to alaska shore excursions

Alaska Airlines® - AlaskaAir.com
www.alaskaair.com/ *
Visit AlaskaAir.com today for Great Deals on Flights to Alaska
Alaska Airlines has 8,392 followers on Google+
Plan & Book A Flight Mileage Plan
Vacation Packages Flight Deals

Alaska Shore Excursions - viator.com
www.viator.com/alaska-shore-trips *
4.8 ★★★★★ rating for viator.com
5-star Alaska shore excursion! Book Juneau, Skagway & Ketchikan
Viator.com has 249,902 followers on Google+

Alaska Tour Center - aktourcenter.com
www.aktourcenter.com/ * 1 (866) 962-4067
- Guaranteed Whale Watching Tours - 100% or your money back
Juneau Tours - Ketchikan Tours - Skagway Tours - Book Tours

2014 Alaska Shore Excursions for Cruisers & Independent Travelers
alaska-shoreexcursions.com/ *
A one-stop-shop reservations system that allows you to purchase all of your Alaska Shore Excursions in Juneau, Ketchikan, Skagway, and Sitka at local prices.
Juneau - Skagway - Ketchikan - Sitka Tours

Alaska Shore Excursions & Cruise Excursions | Shore Trips
www.shoretrips.com/ * EXCLUSIONS *
Shore Trips is the internet's leading destination for Alaskan shore trips and cruise excursions. Learn more about how we can book an excursion to remember.

Editor's Picks: Alaska's Best Shore Excursions - Alaska cruises...

Travel Alaska Search Listings

Travel Alaska's search listing content largely works and is attractive for those performing general travel planning searches. Respondents expressed no issues or dislike for the way these listings appear.

- ❑ ***Nevertheless, room exists to make TravelAlaska.com presentation in search results more compelling.*** In reviewing other search result listings, participants expressed significant levels of excitement about listings that contained expressions such as:

- ✓ Top 10 Attractions
- ✓ “Best of” lists
- ✓ Insider information
- ✓ Shore Itineraries

Travel Alaska Search Results

[Travel Alaska - Official State of Alaska Travel & Vacation ...](#)

www.travelalaska.com Cached

Find a wealth of information to plan your **Alaska Travel** or **Alaska vacation** including transportation cruises hotels lodges attractions tours activities fishing ...

[Travel Alaska - Things To Do in Alaska](#)

www.travelalaska.com/Things%20To%20Do.aspx ▾

Things to do on your **Alaska** vacation including fishing, cruises, wildlife, photos, travel tips and more.

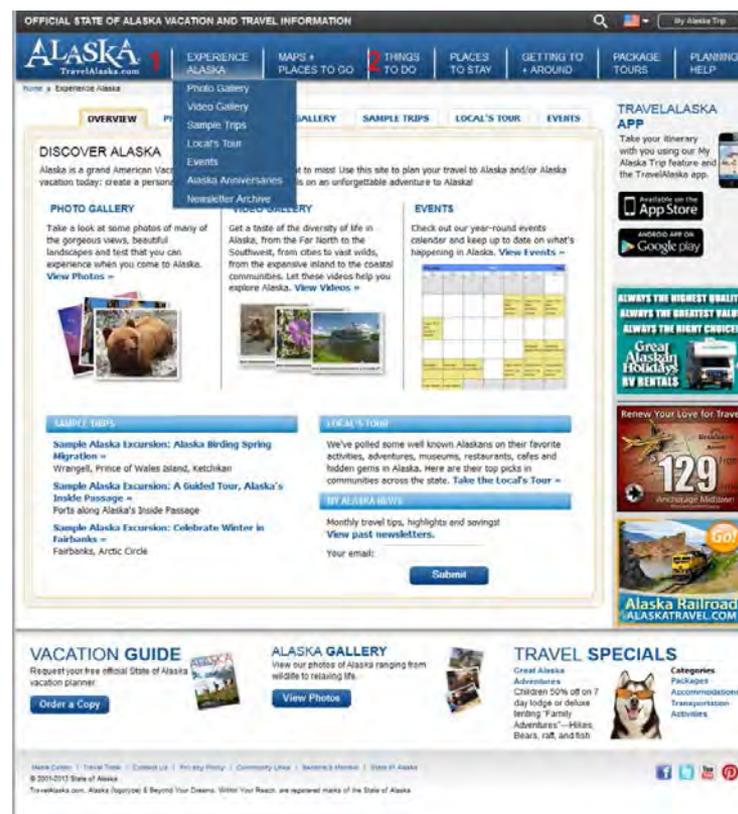
[State of Alaska | TravelAlaska.com](#)

TravelAlaska.com

Get a free **Alaska** vacation guide with Activities, Maps, Parks & more

Experience Alaska Page

- ❑ For several participants, mousing over the "Experience Alaska" tab on the top navigation (1) does not create a strong enough visual cue that one can click on it and be sent to an overview page.
- ❑ Overall, the layout and design of the Experience Alaska overview page were described as easy to understand, but also crowded and somewhat disjointed from the highly pleasing visual presentation of the homepage.
- ❑ While most of the page's components were well understood, note that there was a lack of understanding of "Local's Tour." However, this confusion doesn't appear to be a major problem, as once accessed, the content was immediately understood.
- ❑ As users seem to be automatically drawn to the neighboring "Things to Do" tab (2), the Experience Alaska main page may see limited traffic relative to the Things to Do section. It is unlikely to be used as a focal point for exploring the site for activities and travel planning related information.

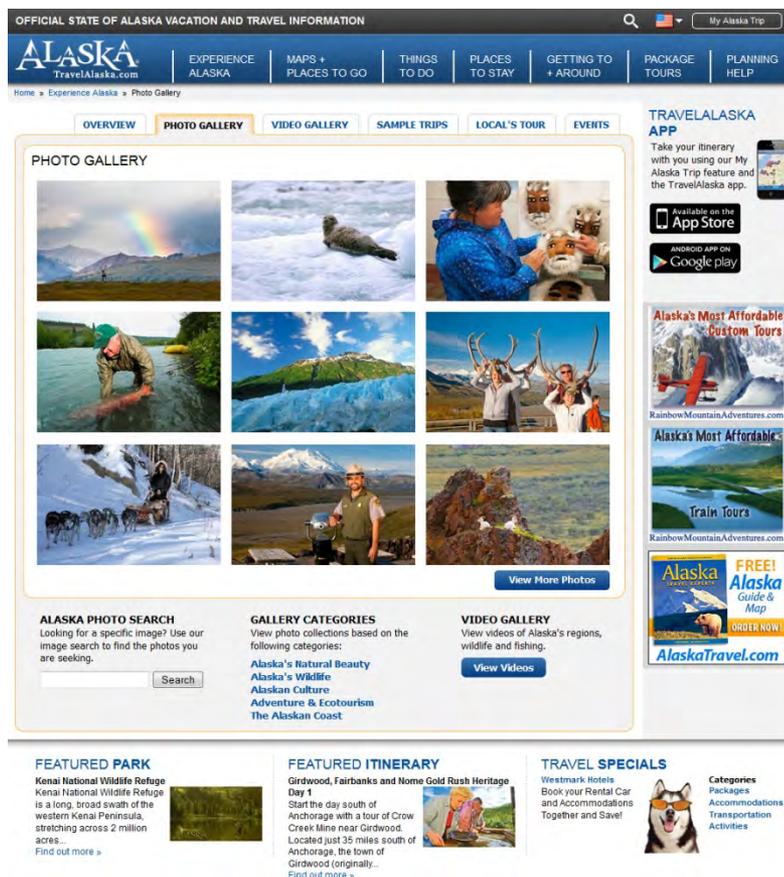


The screenshot displays the 'Experience Alaska' page on the official State of Alaska vacation and travel information website. The page is densely packed with information, including a top navigation menu, a main content area with multiple columns of text and images, and a sidebar with promotional banners. The 'Experience Alaska' tab is highlighted in the top navigation, and a dropdown menu is visible over it. The page layout is complex and somewhat cluttered, with various sections and links scattered across the screen.

Photo Gallery

The imagery of the photo gallery was praised as impactful and fun to explore. It is a good selling piece for the Alaska travel concept, but of limited use as a planning tool. The “Find more information on” concept was well appreciated by those that clicked through on the image, but few noticed these links. To get information on the content of the picture requires moving through an additional page, rather than being accessed directly from the image. Redesigning this page or elevating the link’s status on the enlarged image pages might help.

- ❑ The images are presented in seemingly random order. Presenting them by theme (Wildlife, parks, activities, culture, etc.) would be a very useful addition to the website. Integrating the "Gallery Categories" themes into the page would be an effective way to do this.
- ❑ In addition to the current “Gallery Categories,” the State of Alaska might consider adding galleries by city or region.



The screenshot shows the 'OFFICIAL STATE OF ALASKA VACATION AND TRAVEL INFORMATION' website. The navigation bar includes 'ALASKA TravelAlaska.com', 'EXPERIENCE ALASKA', 'MAPS + PLACES TO GO', 'THINGS TO DO', 'PLACES TO STAY', 'GETTING TO + AROUND', 'PACKAGE TOURS', and 'PLANNING HELP'. The main content area is titled 'PHOTO GALLERY' and features a 3x3 grid of nine images: a rainbow over mountains, a seal on ice, a person with a dog, a person fishing, a glacier, people with antlers, a person on a sled, a person in a hat, and a rocky coastline. Below the grid are sections for 'ALASKA PHOTO SEARCH', 'GALLERY CATEGORIES' (listing Natural Beauty, Wildlife, Culture, Adventure & Ecotourism, and The Alaskan Coast), and 'VIDEO GALLERY'. The right sidebar promotes the 'TRAVELALASKA APP' and 'Alaska's Most Affordable Custom Tours'. The footer includes 'FEATURED PARK' (Kenai National Wildlife Refuge), 'FEATURED ITINERARY' (Girdwood, Fairbanks and Nome Gold Rush Heritage Day 1), and 'TRAVEL SPECIALS' (Westmark Hotels).

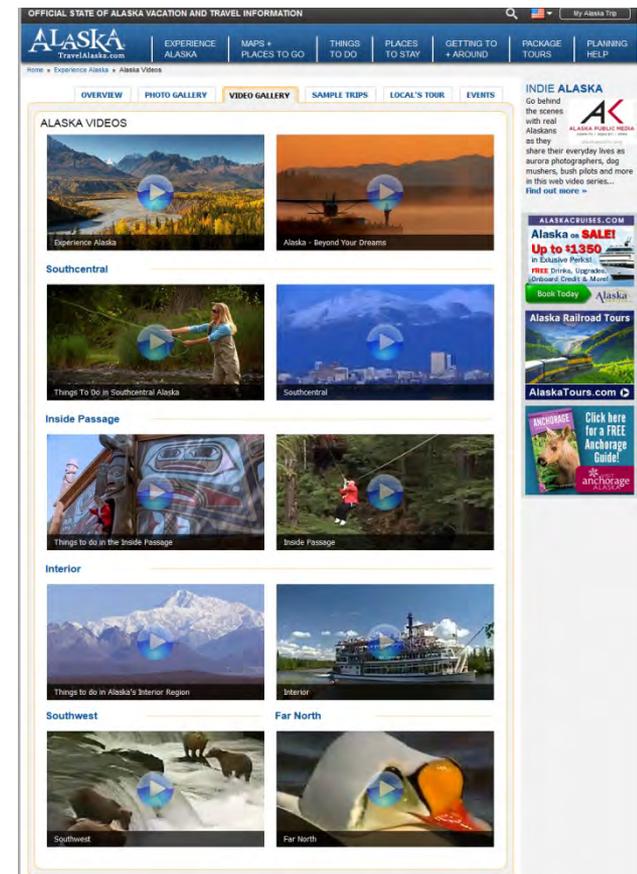
Photo Galleries (Continued)

- ❑ One idea that emerged was adding a caption that appears upon mouse-over, including the city or region of the photo so users know where the photo was taken without having to click on it.
- ❑ Also, to make the section more approachable to users, Alaska might provide a sense of how many total photos are available in the gallery, show the number of photos or number of pages, such as “Viewing Page 1 of 12” or “Viewing 12 photos of 200,” etc. Additionally, the state could consider adding an option to “View all photos” on one page so users don’t have to repeatedly click on “View more,” which few have patience for.
- ❑ Although the photo search seems unlikely to be heavily used, the state should ensure that search results are accurate. For example, there is only one photo returned for a search of “Northern Lights,” however the image is not the Northern Lights. The photo search for “Denali” had no results, which was disappointing.
- ❑ Upon clicking on a photo, include the option to view photos in a slideshow so that users don’t have to click on “Back to gallery” to see the next photo. Add arrows or a “Next” button on the side of each photo so that users can scroll through the photos.

Video Gallery

The video gallery was an extremely popular section amongst study participants, who really liked the concept of using videos to learn about the things to see and do in Alaska .

- ❑ The overall design of the page was praised and the images used to sell the videos were seen as exciting.
- ❑ The videos could use more explanation and information. For example, a two sentence description of the content, links to items featured in the videos, length of video in minutes would all make the video featured on the site more useful to travelers. Users would like to see a brief description in order to know the difference, for example, between “things to do in (region)” vs. “(region)” videos.
- ❑ Some of the video content was seen as too promotional and lacking in nitty-gritty planning content. These videos may be better at selling the idea of visiting (inspiration) rather than actual travel planning. This can be addressed (without changing the videos) if articles and links to further information are included on the video page.



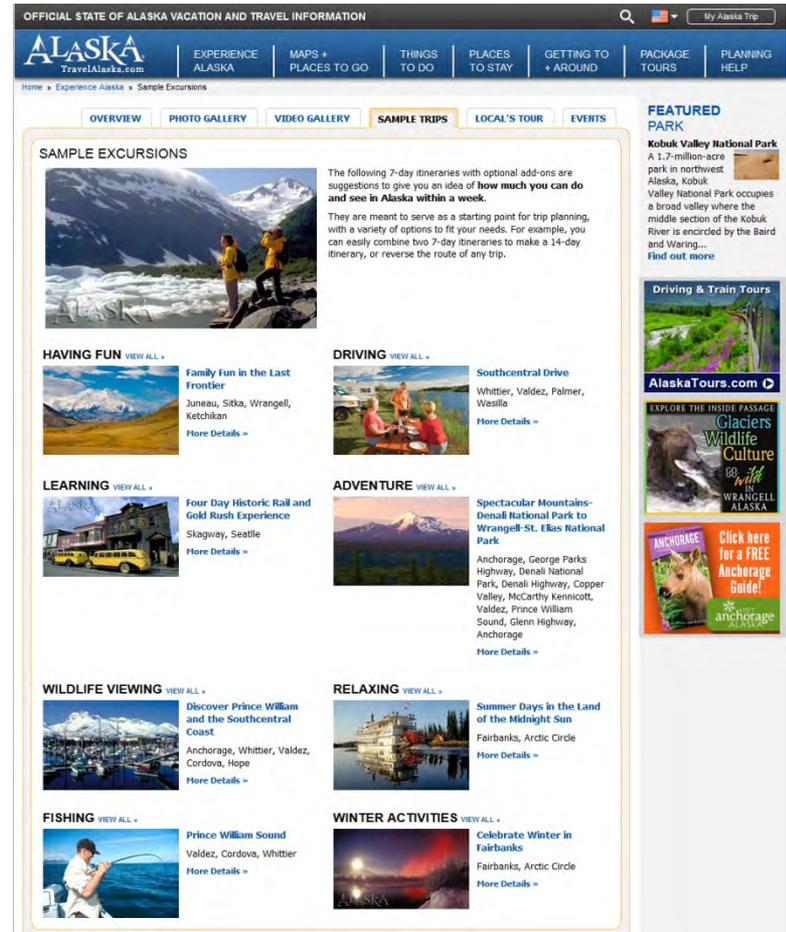
Video Gallery (Continued)

Several additional observations were made about the Video Gallery page:

- Regional names (Southcentral, Inside Passage, etc.) are of limited use as users are likely to have little working knowledge of Alaska's geography. This came up repeatedly during the tests, with participants having difficulty deciding which videos to watch to help them with their trip planning.
- With users having limited knowledge of the state's geography, it will be beneficial to show a map with the appropriate region highlighted next to each video.
- Reconsider the image (or orientation of the image) used in the Far North video. Participants were confused, asking, "Is this a fancy food dish or some sort of bird?"
- The development team might consider an option to show captioning for deaf people.
- The "View Videos" button from the Photo Gallery page does not work.

Sample Trips

- ❑ Like video, the idea of reading itineraries to get ideas for trips to Alaska was extremely popular and this content received a good deal of praise.
- ❑ That website users are going to be geographically challenged should be **a basic assumption all content development on the website**. Maps showing locations, distances and times will be of particularly great value in the Sample Trips section. For example, a detailed map for the "Kenai Peninsula Anchorage to Kodiak" trip would be an excellent addition to the content. This would be far more important and useful to users than the image currently fronting the page content.
- ❑ Two areas to consider for new Sample Trips content would be 1) activities in and around major destinations and 2) shore excursions in key ports of call. For example, a very valuable piece of content for cruise passengers would be ideas for how to spend a day in each major destination serviced by cruise lines.



OFFICIAL STATE OF ALASKA VACATION AND TRAVEL INFORMATION

ALASKA TravelAlaska.com

EXPERIENCE ALASKA | MAPS + PLACES TO GO | THINGS TO DO | PLACES TO STAY | GETTING TO + AROUND | PACKAGE TOURS | PLANNING HELP

Home » Experience Alaska » Sample Excursions

OVERVIEW | PHOTO GALLERY | VIDEO GALLERY | **SAMPLE TRIPS** | LOCAL'S TOUR | EVENTS

SAMPLE EXCURSIONS

The following 7-day itineraries with optional add-ons are suggestions to give you an idea of **how much you can do and see in Alaska within a week**. They are meant to serve as a starting point for trip planning, with a variety of options to fit your needs. For example, you can easily combine two 7-day itineraries to make a 14-day itinerary, or reverse the route of any trip.

HAVING FUN [VIEW ALL >](#)
 Family fun in the Last Frontier
 Juneau, Sitka, Wrangell, Ketchikan
[More Details >](#)

DRIVING [VIEW ALL >](#)
 Southcentral Drive
 Whittier, Valdez, Palmer, Wasilla
[More Details >](#)

LEARNING [VIEW ALL >](#)
 Four Day Historic Rail and Gold Rush Experience
 Skagway, Seattle
[More Details >](#)

ADVENTURE [VIEW ALL >](#)
 Spectacular Mountains-Denali National Park
 Anchorage, George Parks Highway, Denali National Park, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, McCarthy Kennicott, Valdez, Prince William Sound, Glenn Highway, Anchorage
[More Details >](#)

WILDLIFE VIEWING [VIEW ALL >](#)
 Discover Prince William and the Southcentral Coast
 Anchorage, Whittier, Valdez, Cordova, Hope
[More Details >](#)

RELAXING [VIEW ALL >](#)
 Summer Days in the Land of the Midnight Sun
 Fairbanks, Arctic Circle
[More Details >](#)

FISHING [VIEW ALL >](#)
 Prince William Sound
 Valdez, Cordova, Whittier
[More Details >](#)

WINTER ACTIVITIES [VIEW ALL >](#)
 Celebrate Winter in Fairbanks
 Fairbanks, Arctic Circle
[More Details >](#)

FEATURED PARK
 Kobuk Valley National Park
 A 1.7-million-acre park in northwest Alaska, Kobuk Valley National Park occupies a broad valley where the middle section of the Kobuk River is encircled by the Baird and Waring...
[Find out more](#)

[Driving & Train Tours](#)

[AlaskaTours.com](#)

[EXPLORE THE INSIDE PASSAGE](#)
 Glaciers
 Wildlife
 Culture
 88
 116
 IN
 WRANGELL
 ALASKA

[ANCHORAGE](#) [Click here for a FREE Anchorage Guide!](#)

Sample Trips (Continued)

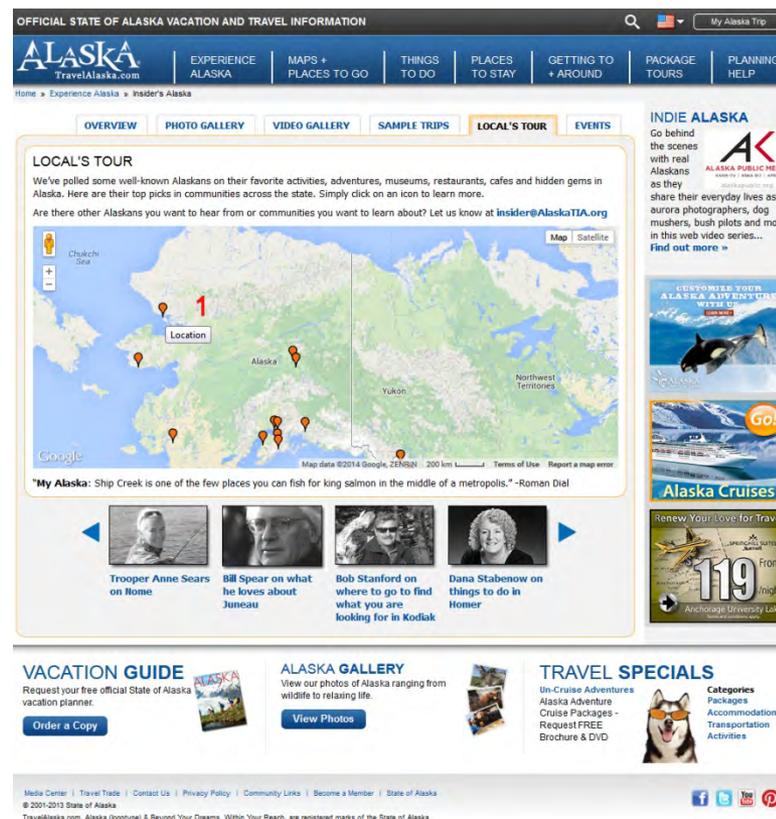
Several additional observations were made about the Sample Trips section:

- Links to the content items highlighted in the Sample Trips are lacking and should be added.
- Participants felt the presentation of the trips lacked visual punch. They frequently recommended having images for each of the highlighted activity for each day.
- Selecting the appropriate trips to review was somewhat challenging for participants. In addition to the type of trip (Fishing, Driving, Having fun, etc.), the development team should consider a way to present/filter sample trips by region and number of days.
- The Sample Trips pages should include links to outfitters or companies who could take you on the trip—or at least provide services for parts of it. This is an enormous opportunity for members/advertisers.
- The “View all” link is not noticed and should be relocated and/or made bigger, as the variety of sample trip options in the “View all” section was of great interest to participants.
- Fishing trips could be improved by adding links to summarized state fishing regulations and information on how to obtain fishing permits/licenses.

Local's Tour

The Local's Tour section was also very popular. This would be a good content area to focus on developing and improving. Test participants were keen on exploring this content and felt it was some of the most valuable on the website.

- ❑ The author (source) was largely understood as relevant and seen as trustworthy and highly valuable.
- ❑ Users figured out that the pins on the map represent a specific Local's Tour. However, mousing over the pin simply shows the word "location," (1) which confused users and diminished the page's usability.
- ❑ Rather than having to click on a pinpoint to see a pop-up window of information, users expected the pop-up window to appear as they moused-over the pinpoint.
- ❑ As the Local's content was highly desirable, some participants wanted an option to "Add to My Alaska Trip."



OFFICIAL STATE OF ALASKA VACATION AND TRAVEL INFORMATION

ALASKA TravelAlaska.com

EXPERIENCE ALASKA | MAPS + PLACES TO GO | THINGS TO DO | PLACES TO STAY | GETTING TO + AROUND | PACKAGE TOURS | PLANNING HELP

Home » Experience Alaska » Insider's Alaska

OVERVIEW | PHOTO GALLERY | VIDEO GALLERY | SAMPLE TRIPS | LOCAL'S TOUR | EVENTS

LOCAL'S TOUR

We've polled some well-known Alaskans on their favorite activities, adventures, museums, restaurants, cafes and hidden gems in Alaska. Here are their top picks in communities across the state. Simply click on an icon to learn more.

Are there other Alaskans you want to hear from or communities you want to learn about? Let us know at insider@AlaskaTIA.org

Map data ©2014 Google, ZENGIN 200 km

"My Alaska: Ship Creek is one of the few places you can fish for king salmon in the middle of a metropolis." -Roman Dial

Trooper Anne Sears on Home | Bill Spear on what he loves about Juneau | Bob Stanford on where to go to find what you are looking for in Kodiak | Dana Stabenow on things to do in Homer

VACATION GUIDE | ALASKA GALLERY | TRAVEL SPECIALS

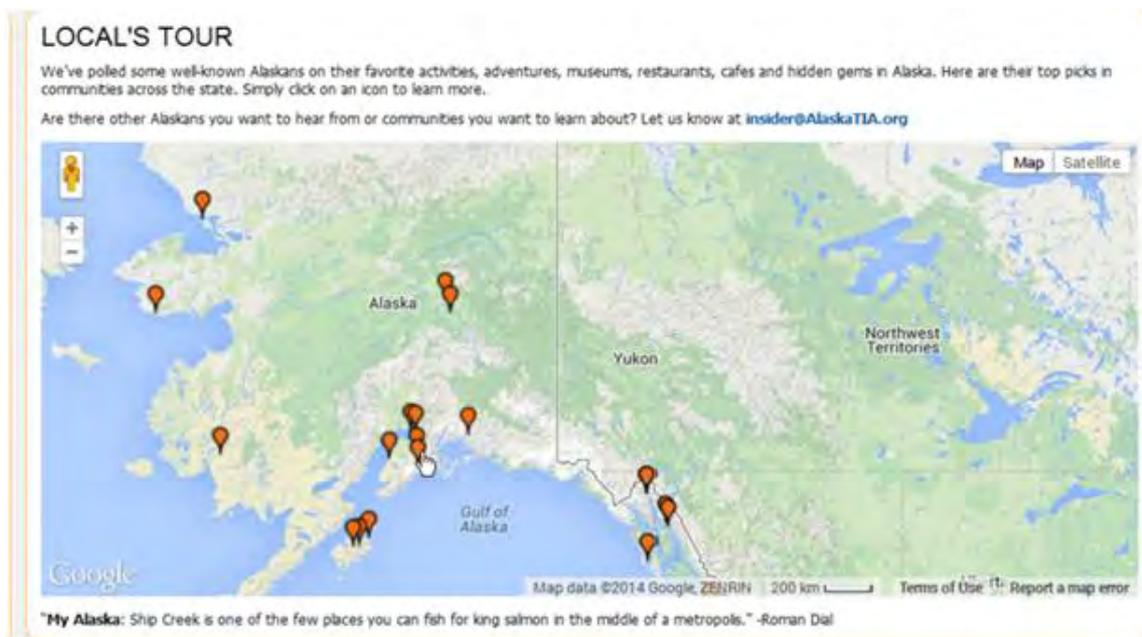
Media Center | Travel Trade | Contact Us | Privacy Policy | Community Links | Become a Member | State of Alaska

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Local's Tour (Continued)

Another issue with the Local's Tour overview page concerned the prominence of the map. The current map view dominates users' view of the content and is confusing. The topographical map has no roads or city labels, and given that users will not understand the state's geography, use may be problematic.



Local's Tour (Continued)

The scrolling content bar (at right) beneath the map was largely unnoticed by test participants. Some users suggested a list view in which all Local's Tours were listed on the page and each had a photo thumbnail, title and brief description. Users would like to know how many Local's Tours are featured without having to scroll through.

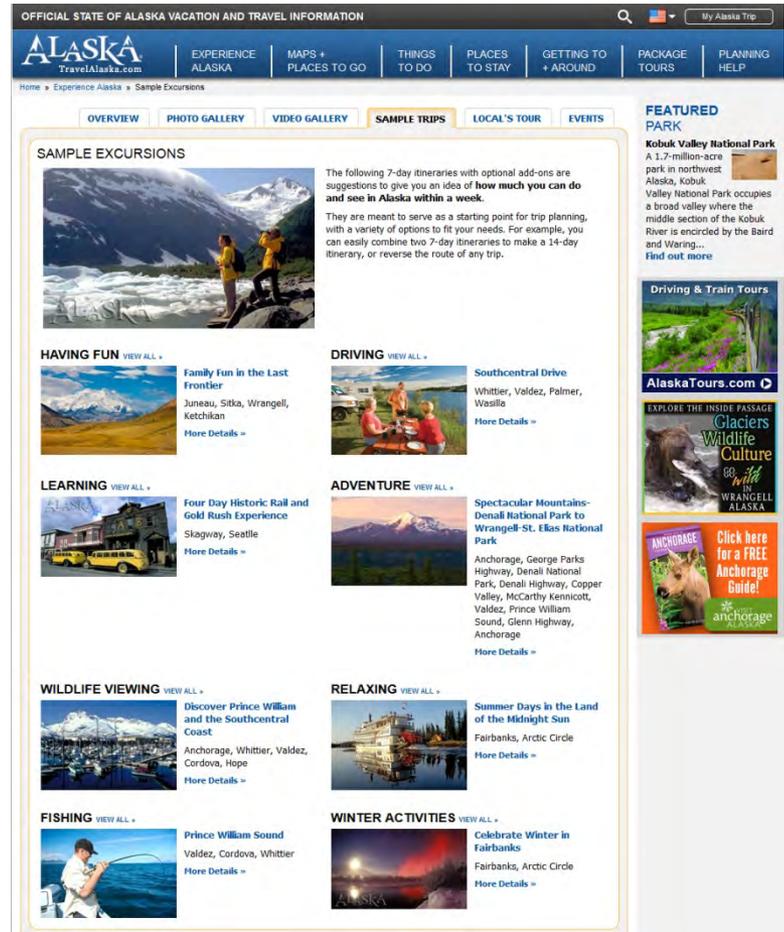


- Users expected that the map content and the scrolling image bar below to be connected in some way. Re-envisioning the application to do this effectively would improve its usability.
- The internal Local's Tour pages were criticized as visually being too content heavy. Users of TravelAlaska.com would be better served if the content was bullet pointed or given additional white space. More photos and hyperlinks would be appreciated.
- The tours should focus on truly hidden gems. For example, many users criticized content that might be found in traditional guidebooks. Additionally, in the Local's Tour page detailing the full tour, a map pinpointing each place recommended by the local would be helpful.

Events Calendar

The Events Calendar was easy to use for all participants and appreciated as a valuable planning tool.

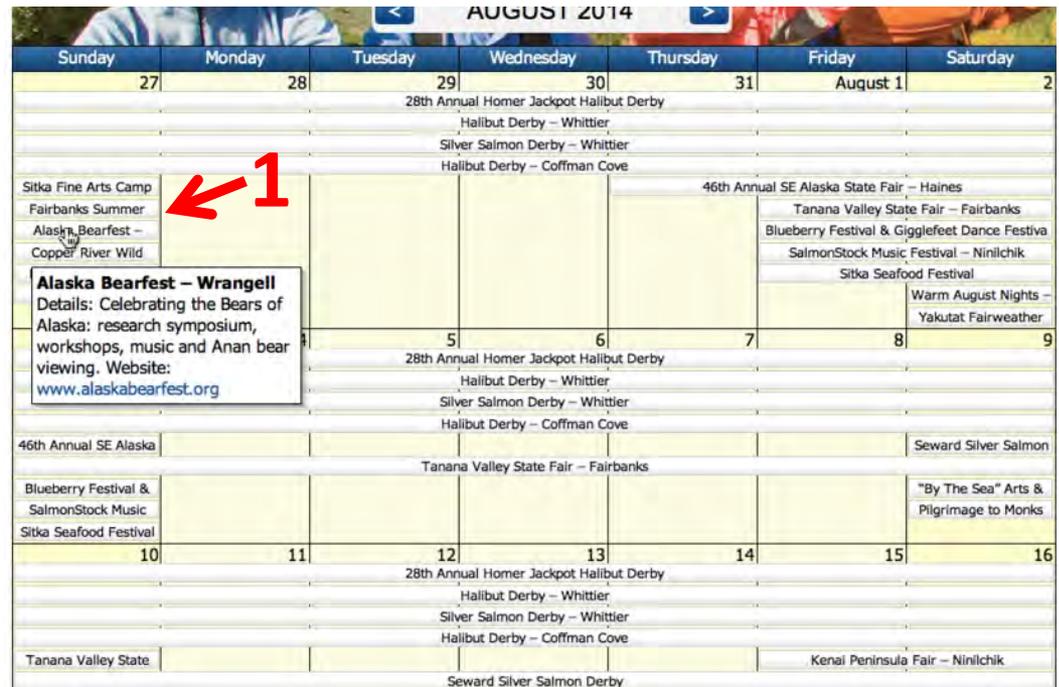
- ❑ However, a perceived lack of content in the events calendar was seen as problematic. Few users could find an event they would like to attend, especially those who were planning to travel to Alaska later this year.
- ❑ The filters above the calendar were not independently noticed by test participants. It should be noted that the overall lack of content in this section would likely limit their usefulness anyway.
- ❑ The options under the “Communities” filter is overwhelming, and not beneficial to those who are unfamiliar with the state’s geography. A filter by Region or Major City might be more manageable.



Events Calendar (Continued)

One major technical problem arose in this test. Users are unable to scroll to a specific event whenever the events content is tightly packed on a day. For example, a user trying to get to the Alaska Bearfoot event (at right) would not be able to do so. Before they could move the mouse to the pop-up box, Copper River Wild would take over the pop-up space.

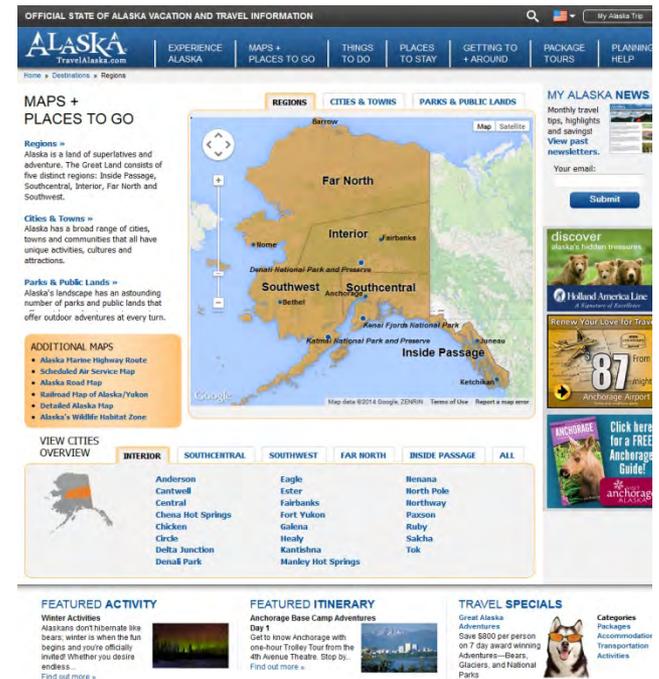
- The overall approach to presenting the events content—with links to external content—was approved of.
- Usability of this section would be improved if color was used to distinguish between several events on the same day.
- The development team should consider adding cost content and a photo thumbnail to the pop-up window, as this information is top of mind for virtually all users.



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27	28	29	30	31	August 1	2
		28th Annual Homer Jackpot Halibut Derby				
			Halibut Derby – Whittier			
			Silver Salmon Derby – Whittier			
			Halibut Derby – Coffman Cove			
Sitka Fine Arts Camp					46th Annual SE Alaska State Fair – Haines	
Fairbanks Summer					Tanana Valley State Fair – Fairbanks	
Alaska Bearfest –					Blueberry Festival & Giggiefoot Dance Festiva	
Copper River Wild					SalmonStock Music Festival – Ninilchik	
					Sitka Seafood Festival	
						Warm August Nights –
						Yakutat Fairweather
		5	6	7	8	9
		28th Annual Homer Jackpot Halibut Derby				
			Halibut Derby – Whittier			
			Silver Salmon Derby – Whittier			
			Halibut Derby – Coffman Cove			
46th Annual SE Alaska						Seward Silver Salmon
			Tanana Valley State Fair – Fairbanks			
Blueberry Festival & SalmonStock Music						"By The Sea" Arts & Pilgrimage to Monks
Sitka Seafood Festival						
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
		28th Annual Homer Jackpot Halibut Derby				
			Halibut Derby – Whittier			
			Silver Salmon Derby – Whittier			
			Halibut Derby – Coffman Cove			
Tanana Valley State						Kenai Peninsula Fair – Ninilchik
			Seward Silver Salmon Derby			

Maps & Places to Go

- ❑ As was noted about the “Experience Alaska” section navigation, mousing-over the “Maps + Places to Go” tab does not create a strong visual cue for the user that they can click and go to /Destinations/Regions.aspx. Users will likely go directly to one of the sections subpages instead.
- ❑ The map section's functionality to drill down to travel planning content was not well understood. It was apparent from the tests that users will generally not look at these maps and immediately think they can click through to business listings or other content. This functionality should be explained. If not, users are likely to see this section purely as a set of maps. Furthermore, many users will not be likely to click on the map to drill down to sub regions. Making the maps more obviously interactive would help users access this function.
- ❑ On the “Regions,” “Cities & Towns” and “Parks & Public Lands” maps, it would help to add a visual element to communicate that users can click on the name for more information.



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ALASKA TravelAlaska.com

Home » Destinations » Regions

EXPERIENCE ALASKA | MAPS + PLACES TO GO | THINGS TO DO | PLACES TO STAY | GETTING TO + AROUND | PACKAGE TOURS | PLANNING HELP

MY ALASKA TRIP

MONTHLY TRAVEL TIPS, HIGHLIGHTS AND SAVINGS. VIEW PAST NEWSLETTERS.

Your email:

discover alaska's hidden treasures

Hiland America Line Alaska's Finest Food

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ANCHORAGE ALASKA

Categories: Packages, Accommodation, Transportation, Activities

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Regions

Alaska is a land of superlatives and adventure. The Great Land consists of five distinct regions: Inside Passage, Southcentral, Interior, Far North and Southwest.

Cities & Towns

Alaska has a broad range of cities, towns and communities that all have unique activities, cultures and attractions.

Parks & Public Lands

Alaska's landscape has an astounding number of parks and public lands that offer outdoor adventures at every turn.

ADDITIONAL MAPS

- Alaska Marine Highway Route
- Scheduled Air Service Map
- Alaska Road Map
- Railroad Map of Alaska/Yukon
- Detailed Alaska Map
- Alaska's Wildlife Habitat Zone

VIEW CITIES OVERVIEW

INTERIOR	SOUTHCENTRAL	SOUTHWEST	FAR NORTH	INSIDE PASSAGE	ALL
Anderson Cantwell Central Chena Hot Springs Chicken Circle Delta Junction Denali Park	Eagle Ester Fairbanks Fort Yukon Galena Healy Kantishna Manley Hot Springs			Hennana North Pole Northway Pazson Ruby Sakha Tok	

FEATURED ACTIVITY

Winter Activities
Alaskans don't hibernate like bears: winter is when the fun begins and you're officially invited! Whether you desire endless...
Find out more >

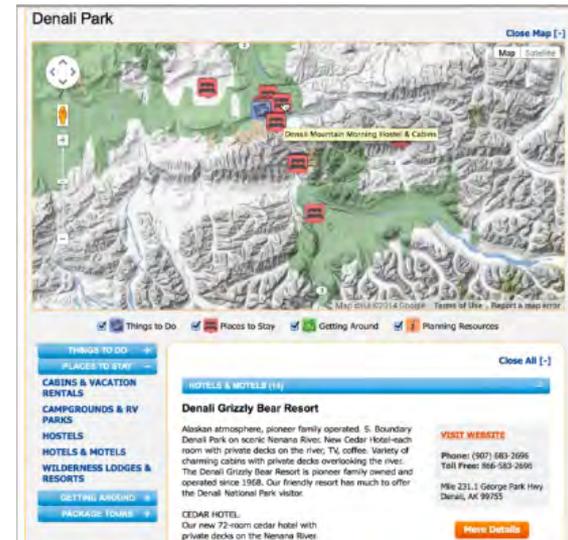
FEATURED ITINERARY

Anchorage Base Camp Adventures
Day 1
Get to know Anchorage with one-hour Trolley Tour from the 4th Avenue Theatre. Stop by...
Find out more >

TRAVEL SPECIALS

Maps & Places to Go (Continued)

- ❑ The topographic maps in this section are problematic as they contain no visual cues that help users orient themselves to cities or major points of interest in Alaska. Things to do in Seward is a good example of this (see map at right). Users could not identify where Seward was in relation to the icons on the map, especially as they zoomed in to the map. The only things on the maps that allowed users to orient themselves were topographic elements like rivers and mountains or valleys, with which most users are unfamiliar. Another good visual example was using the maps to find things to see and do around Denali National Park.
- ❑ Having icons of the maps that are outside the destination of interest creates confusion. This might be (as shown in the image at right) hotels in Anchorage showing up as things to do in Seward.
- ❑ Users are accustomed to and expect that the map icons correlate to the business listings, i.e with a numbering system.



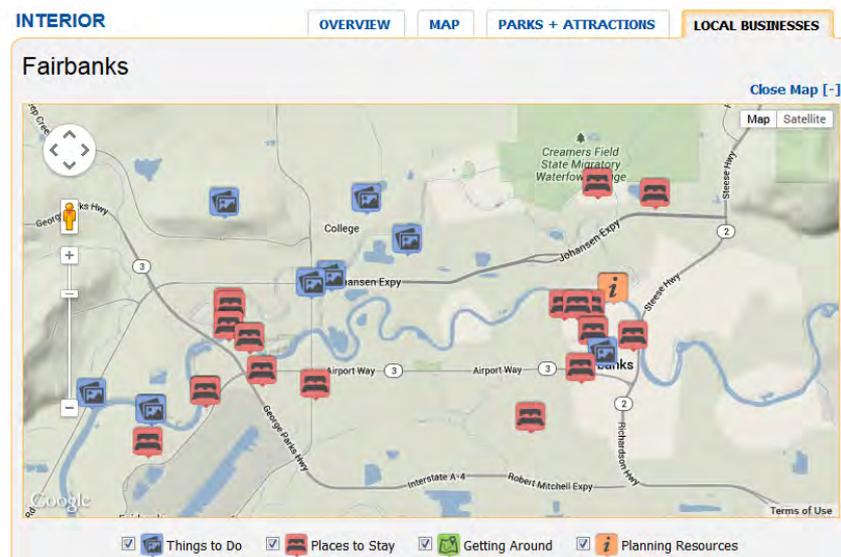
Maps & Places to Go (Continued)

- ❑ The development team should consider reimagining the regional content that pops up on scroll over. The current content is wordy and difficult to read. Users report that they "don't like to read" when they're surfing the web. Consider a much briefer description in bullet point format, featuring key points of interest, activities and communities.
- ❑ Also, we recommend considering changing the approach which requires users to scroll over an icon to reveal the name of the attraction. This was most evident on the "Parks and Public Lands" map. Finding information using this approach becomes a guessing game for users, which makes finding specific parks nearly impossible. This issue (as discussed before) made using the map on the "Local's Tour" page problematic.
- ❑ Many of Alaska's attractions are not accessible by road, and are only accessible by air or the Marine Highway system. The maps on the website do not help users easily address this information gap. A common assumption of users is that attractions on the maps are accessible by road. As an example, if given a task to find a park they would like drive to, Katmai National Park and Preserve or the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge might come up. ***This problem transcends the mapping functions of the website.*** When evaluating things to do in Alaska, users would frequently find things they would want to add to their itinerary only to be disappointed when they learned they could not access them by road. In most cases, test participants had to be told about accessibility issues and did not find this organically on their own.

Maps & Places to Go (Continued)

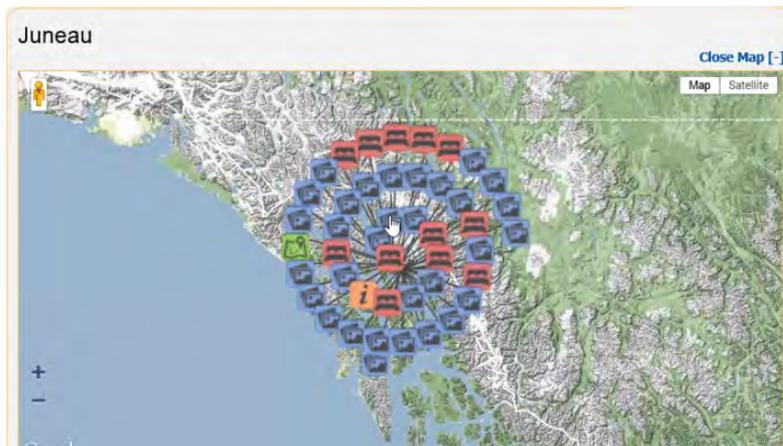
Clicking on a destination's "Things to do" link has two problematic results:

- ❑ It immediately opens a window that shows all business listings in the community, including "Hotels," "Planning Resources" and "Getting Around." This causes confusion as the icons used on the map are not immediately understood, and the filter under the map was largely not seen.
- ❑ The tab name becomes "Local Businesses," which was not commonly noticed, but created confusion with users who did notice this. Renaming should be considered.
- ❑ The listing of attractions accessed through the maps are wordy and should highlight (in bullet point format) important travel planning information. Requested information from users includes: Distances, times, costs and accessibility methods.



Maps & Places to Go (Continued)

- ❑ Overload in the number of icons shown can be problematic. The images at right show this issue. This made using the maps to find travel planning content virtually impossible for participants.
- ❑ Other occasional anomalies came up. The visual at right (bottom) shows a map with no overlying content.



PLACES TO GO

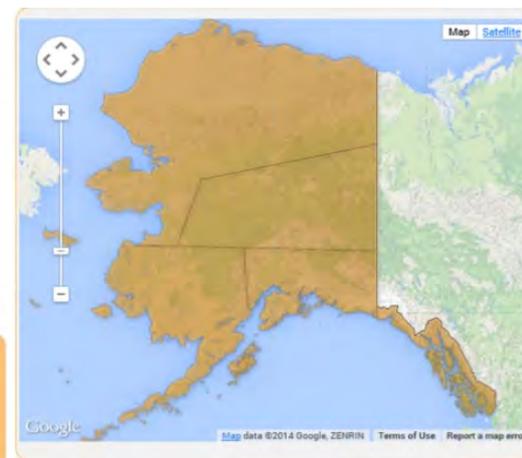
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My Alaska Trip, Registration and the App

- ❑ The concept of the My Alaska Trip itinerary planner continues to be popular.
- ❑ Registration for using the My Alaska Trip function before adding items is unpopular. Users are accustomed to using itinerary/saving features without this step. This requirement is likely to greatly reduce usage of the tool. We recommend allowing users to access this content without registration, or using interactive tools to educate them as to the value of registration.
- ❑ Consider changing wording that refers to My Alaska Trip as a shopping cart. This was unpopular and misunderstood by panelists.
- ❑ The mobile app is also a well-liked concept. The new roll-over explaining the app (bottom right) is a great addition. Using creative techniques like this to educate users about the value of My Alaska Trip function would be a positive addition to the website.

REGISTRATION

What is My Alaska?

My Alaska is a personal 'shopping cart.' As you find businesses of interest throughout the site, simply click on the My Alaska icon and save it to your personal file. You can add as many as you like, remove any you like and save your My Alaska for future visits.

Your email and password is secure and will not be used for any reason unless you check the opt-in boxes on the Registration Page. You can opt-in to receive the My Alaska News, email responses from the businesses you have saved into [your file](#) and/or request the Alaska State Vacation Planner.

Email:

Full Name:

Password:

Confirm:

Yes, I would like to receive emails on travel promotions.

Yes, I would like to receive a free Alaska trip planner in the mail.

Submit

VISIT WEBSITE

Toll Free: 800- 323-5757

Mile 1 Ljarsville Road
Skagway, AK

Add To My Alaska Trip

Take your itinerary with you using our My Alaska Trip feature and the TravelAlaska app.

