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# Cultural Tours of Alaska

by Rogue Parrish, Demand Media

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Visitors to Alaska curious about its kaleidoscope of native cultures will find it a win-win proposition to take a cultural tour of the Last Frontier. Local tribal associations obtain a source of income to supplement erratic fishing and logging income. Native youth employed as guides often gain pride and confidence as they interact with intrigued tourists. And lore and legends thrive as visitors learn a few words of Tlingit, or teen Inupiat dancers in full regalia teach them an Eskimo-style ice-breaker dance.

## Icy Strait Point

Created in 2004, Icy Strait Point offers cruise ship passengers in Southeast Alaska between Hoonah and Glacier Bay National Park a chance to take a look at Huna Tlingit culture. Traditionally clad dancers enact their tribal story at the Native Heritage Center Theater. Visitors can take walks along the shore, into rain forest and around a misty lake, or take a tram ride on a two-hour forest and nature tour. They can also throw a cedar chip on the constantly burning ceremonial fire that welcomes them; buy artisan crafts including carvings, glassware and jewelry; and study structures built by local Tlingits in traditional style. The highlight, according to some visitors, is a wildlife tour led by local guides; watch out for bears. Eateries include the Cookhouse and Landing Zone Restaurants and the Crab Station. Visitors can also jump on one of the world's largest ziplines and visit a restored cannery. Icy Strait Point 108 Cannery Road Hoonah, AK 99829 907-945-3141 [icystraitpoint.com](#)

## Alaska Native Heritage Center

After years of planning and enthusiastic support from the Alaska Federation of Natives, the Alaska Native Heritage Center opened its doors in Anchorage in 1999. This simple yet powerful museum features exhibits that offer insight into daily living for the Last Frontier's indigenous peoples. Teen tribal members offer sometimes halting but heartfelt descriptions of their tribal life at each of five open-air structures faithful to the housing of various groups: the interior Athabascans; the Unangax and Alutiq of the Aleutians; Western Alaska's Yup'ik and Cup'ik; the Inupiaq of the Arctic; and Eyak, Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian people of Southeast Alaska. In the summer, the heritage center brings tribal elders and translators in from remote areas to teach native art, sewing and regalia making, and skinning. A Hall of Cultures features exhibits with Alaska Native artifacts, including fans, ornaments, paintings, moosehide boots, delicate grass and bark baskets, and more. Alaska Native Heritage Center 8800 Heritage Center Drive Anchorage, AK 99504 907-330-8000 [alaskanative.net](#)

## Northern Alaska Tour Co.

This Alaskan-owned tour operator based in Fairbanks takes advantage of its northerly headquarters to explore Alaska's Arctic cultures. Its "Barrow Adventure" takes visitors to meet Inupiat Eskimo people in the United States' most northerly city. The tour includes a program of ceremonial song and dance at the Inupiat Heritage Center, traditional games and demonstration of local crafts. A separate tour visits Anaktuvuk Pass, an isolated Nunamiut Inupiat village just north of the

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Brooks Range that provides a view of rural Native life. Visitors can also  
 tour Beaver Village, 110 miles north of Fairbanks, whose mixed  
 Gwitchin/Koyukuk and Inupiat Eskimo pursue subsistence activities--  
 hunting, fishing, berry collecting--to survive in the Far North. Northern  
 Alaska Tour Co. P.O. Box 82991-W Fairbanks, AK 99708 800-474-1986  
 907-474-8600 [northernalaska.com](http://northernalaska.com)

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**About the Author**

Award-winning writer Rogue Parrish has written two travel books and  
 worked at the National Institutes of Health, at "The Baltimore Sun"  
 Business Desk and at "The Washington Post." She began writing  
 professionally in 1975. Parrish holds a summa cum laude Bachelor of  
 Science degree in journalism from the University of Maryland.

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