

The Complete Guide to Cold Bay





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Welcome to the Edge of the Wild

There are few places left in North America that truly feel untouched.

Cold Bay is one of them.

Located near the tip of the Alaska Peninsula between the Bering Sea and the Pacific Ocean, Cold Bay is one of the most remote communities in the United States. It isn't a destination for shopping malls, cruise ships, or crowded attractions.

It is a place where:

- Brown bears roam freely.

- Thousands of birds darken the sky during migration.
- Salmon fill crystal-clear rivers.
- Volcanoes dominate the horizon.
- Weather changes by the hour.
- Nature is still completely in charge.

For hunters, fishermen, photographers, birdwatchers, and wilderness lovers, Cold Bay represents Alaska at its purest.

Where is Cold Bay?

Cold Bay sits approximately:

- 600 miles southwest of Anchorage
- On the Alaska Peninsula
- Between the Gulf of Alaska and the Bering Sea
- Adjacent to the world-famous Izembek National Wildlife Refuge

The town has a permanent population of roughly 50 residents, making it one of America's smallest incorporated communities.

Why Cold Bay is Famous

Cold Bay has become internationally recognized for:

- Waterfowl hunting
- Brown bear hunting
- Salmon fishing
- Wildlife photography
- Bird watching
- Remote wilderness adventures
- One of America's largest migratory bird stopovers

Scientists, wildlife photographers, hunters, military historians, and adventurers all visit for different reasons.

The History of Cold Bay

Long before Europeans arrived, the region was inhabited by Alaska Native peoples who depended upon the sea and tundra.

During World War II, Cold Bay became critically important after the Japanese invasion of the Aleutian Islands.

The U.S. military constructed Fort Randall and one of Alaska's largest airfields. At its peak, nearly 20,000 military personnel were stationed here.

Cold Bay also became the location of **Project Hula**, one of World War II's largest secret military transfer operations between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Today, the massive runway remains one of Alaska's most important emergency airports.

Weather

Cold Bay isn't known for warm weather.

It's known for dramatic weather.

Expect:

- Cool summers
- Mild winters (for Alaska)

- Constant wind
- Frequent fog
- Rain throughout the year
- Incredible cloud formations

Cold Bay averages over 300 cloudy days annually and is often called America's cloudiest community.

The Wildlife





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Wildlife is why most people come.

Brown Bears

The Alaska Peninsula is home to some of the largest brown bears on Earth.

Peak viewing:

- June
 - July
 - August
 - September
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Caribou

The Southern Alaska Peninsula Caribou Herd migrates throughout the region.

Late fall offers exceptional viewing opportunities.

Wolves

Although elusive, wolves inhabit the peninsula and are occasionally photographed by lucky visitors.

Foxes

Red foxes are extremely common around Cold Bay.

Marine Wildlife

Watch for:

- Sea Otters
 - Harbor Seals
 - Orcas
 - Gray Whales
 - Sea Lions
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Birds

This is one of the world's greatest bird migration locations.

More than 200 bird species use the refuge, including:

- Emperor Geese
- Pacific Black Brant
- Tundra Swans
- Steller's Eiders
- Sandhill Cranes
- Numerous sea ducks
- Shorebirds

Hundreds of thousands of birds stop here every migration season.

Izembek National Wildlife Refuge





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This is the crown jewel of Cold Bay.

The refuge protects approximately 315,000 acres of wilderness.

Highlights include:

- Massive eelgrass beds
- Coastal lagoons
- Volcanic mountains
- Tundra
- Salmon streams
- Coastal marshes

One of its greatest features is Izembek Lagoon, one of the world's largest eelgrass ecosystems and an essential stopover for migrating Pacific black brant.

Hunting

Cold Bay is considered by many experienced hunters to be among the finest waterfowl destinations on Earth.

Species include:

- Emperor Geese
 - Pacific Black Brant
 - Harlequin Ducks
 - King Eiders
 - Sea Ducks
 - Ptarmigan
 - Brown Bear (draw/tag regulations apply)
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Fishing







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Anglers travel from around the world for:

- Sockeye Salmon

- Silver Salmon
- Halibut
- Dolly Varden
- Arctic Char
- Rainbow Trout

Many rivers remain lightly pressured because of the region's remoteness.

Wildlife Photography

Cold Bay is a dream destination for photographers.

Subjects include:

- Bears
 - Bald Eagles
 - Puffins
 - Caribou
 - Foxes
 - Whales
 - Sea Ducks
 - Volcanoes
 - Aurora (seasonal)
 - Stormy coastlines
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Volcanoes

Visible peaks include:

- Frosty Peak
- Pavlof Volcano

- Shishaldin Volcano

These active volcanoes create one of Alaska's most dramatic landscapes.

Things To Do

- Wildlife viewing
 - Bird photography
 - Hiking tundra trails
 - Fishing
 - Guided hunting
 - Beachcombing
 - Whale watching (seasonal)
 - Kayaking
 - ATV excursions (where permitted)
 - Photography workshops
 - Northern Lights (winter)
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Getting There

Almost everyone arrives by airplane.

Commercial flights connect Cold Bay with Anchorage.

The community also serves as a transportation hub for nearby villages and charter operations into remote wilderness areas.

Where To Stay

Visitors can choose from several lodging options, including:

- Izembek Lodge — A well-known base for hunters, anglers, photographers, and outdoor travelers, offering guided packages and access to the surrounding wilderness.
- Cold Bay Lodge — Traditional lodging with restaurant services and accommodations for independent travelers.
- Bearfoot Inn — Lodging, supplies, and one of the community's primary gathering spots.

Guided Adventures

One of the area's premier outfitting operations is Cold Bay Safaris, operating from Cold Bay Outfitters.

They specialize in:

- Guided waterfowl hunts
- Brown bear adventures
- Salmon fishing
- Wildlife photography expeditions
- Customized Alaska wilderness experiences
- End-to-end travel logistics for remote visitors

Best Time to Visit

Season

Best For

Spring Bird migration, bears, photography

Summer Salmon fishing, hiking, wildlife

Early Fall Waterfowl hunting, photography

Season**Best For**

Late Fall Caribou, ducks, geese

Winter Solitude, dramatic weather, aurora opportunities

What to Pack

- Waterproof boots
 - Rain gear
 - Layered clothing
 - Windproof jacket
 - Binoculars
 - Camera with telephoto lens
 - Extra batteries
 - Dry bags
 - Polarized sunglasses
 - Bear spray (where appropriate and permitted)
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Why Cold Bay Is Unlike Anywhere Else

Cold Bay isn't built around tourism.

It's built around wilderness.

People don't come here to check attractions off a list—they come to experience one of the last truly wild landscapes in North America. Whether you're standing beneath migrating flocks over Izembek Lagoon, casting into a salmon-filled river, watching a massive brown bear cross the tundra, or simply listening to the wind across the Alaska Peninsula, Cold Bay delivers an experience that few places on Earth can match.

For those willing to travel to the edge of the continent, Cold Bay offers something increasingly rare: authentic, untamed Alaska.