

# Budget Travel

## Why brave Alaska's chilly autumn?

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Credit: Brian Adams/Alaska Travel Industry Association, [alaskatia.org](http://alaskatia.org)

One tempting reason is that you'll have a good chance of witnessing the aurora borealis, or northern lights, filling the late-night and early-morning sky with brilliant streaks of purples, greens, blues, and yellows. The area outside Fairbanks, about 110 miles south of the Arctic Circle, is one of the best spots for viewing the natural phenomenon (which can seem like something out of a sci-fi thriller!).

The Geophysical Institute of the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, tracks day-by-day visibility levels throughout the state on its website, [gedds.alaska.edu](http://gedds.alaska.edu). One affordable place to stay is the Northern Sky Lodge, a seven-room log B&B offering dog sledding tours.

Autumn is foliage season in Alaska, too, and leaf peepers can get their fill at Denali National Park, home to Mt. McKinley and located about a two-and-half-hour drive south from Fairbanks. The park's lodges have created a new series of six guided three-hour hikes, in addition to their tours of the taiga forest and rolling tundra and heart-pounding whitewater rafting excursions.

And as the temperatures drop, so do Denali's room rates. From August 28 to September 18, the fall foliage special allows guests to stay at any of the lodges--McKinley Chalet Resort, McKinley Village Lodge, Denali Bluffs Hotel, or Denali Grande Lodge--for half the price with a 50 percent discount on any Denali excursions. A two-night stay with two tickets to any excursion starts at \$329 per room, based on double occupancy. For more details and bookings, contact Denali Park Resorts, 800/276-7234, [denaliparkresorts.com](http://denaliparkresorts.com).