

ITINERARY
ALASKA FALL GOLDMINE
ROSS'S GULLS IN BARROW
October 7-11, 2021



Many Ross's Gulls move along the coast of Alaska near Barrow in the fall. Our tour is timed to coincide with this movement, and we'll hope for a significant push of these lovely small gulls. Photograph by guide Tom Johnson.

We include here information for those interested in the 2021 Field Guides Alaska Fall Goldmine: Ross's Gulls in Barrow Tour:

- a general introduction to the tour
- a description of the birding areas to be visited
- an abbreviated daily itinerary with some indication of the nature of each day's birding outings

These additional materials will be made available to those who register for the tour:

- an annotated list of the birds recorded on a previous year's Field Guides trip to the area, with comments by guide(s) on notable species or sightings (may be downloaded from our web site)
- a detailed information bulletin with important logistical information and answers to questions regarding accommodations, air arrangements, clothing, currency, customs and immigration, documents, health precautions, and personal items
- a reference list
- a Field Guides checklist for preparing and keeping track of the birds we see on the tour
- after the conclusion of the tour, a list of birds seen

We'll spend three days above 71 degrees North latitude at Barrow (now known officially as Utqiagvik), the US's northernmost point, looking for the legendary Ross's Gull, Snowy Owls, loons, eiders, and possibly even Polar Bear and Ivory Gull.

Few birds in North America elicited more excitement when they were discovered than the diminutive, elegant Ross's Gull of the High Arctic. To see one in the Lower 48, you need to be lucky; you just can't predict when one will show up. This is often not so in Barrow in early October! Barrow is unique in many ways, and one of the more fascinating attributes of this remote site on the Arctic Ocean shore is its geographic position for witnessing the annual fall migration of Ross's

Gulls. It's a migration phenomenon first witnessed here in the late 1800's and first documented in the 1970's and 1980's. Every fall, beginning in late September, the majority of the world's Ross's Gulls migrate past this remote outpost from the Chukchi Sea in Arctic Russia to the Beaufort Sea in Arctic Alaska.

Strong onshore winds often bring these Ross's Gulls within view of land, and local weather conditions sometimes force thousands of these beautiful, pink-plumaged birds close to shore, and some may linger to feed in the coastal habitats at this season. Small numbers of these gulls would be memorable enough, but the chance to bear witness to the spectacle of large numbers (we saw 1,200+ on one of our tours!) is one of the great opportunities of North American birding.

During this fall season, Barrow offers the chance for other prizes as well, including Spectacled, King, and Common eiders, Yellow-billed Loon, Snowy Owl, and perhaps even an Ivory Gull or a Polar Bear. *(Note: Normally this is a two-part tour, with Part 1 going to the Pribilofs, but in 2021 the Pribilofs are closed to groups due to the Coronavirus)*

Bring your jacket, hat, boots, and adventurous spirit, and join us for this special Alaskan quest!

All participants will be required to confirm they will have completed a full COVID vaccination course at least two weeks prior to the tour (if you are getting a two-dose vaccine, this means you must receive your second dose two weeks prior to departure). Having a vaccinated group will greatly diminish but not eliminate the possibility of the group and individual participants being adversely affected by COVID-19. We are requiring all of our staff guides to be vaccinated. Note too that many travel destinations are or soon will be requiring proof of vaccination for entry to bypass testing delays or quarantine, and that entry requirements for a destination can change at any time.



Snowy Owls are common in Barrow, and they can turn up just about anywhere! Photograph by guide Doug Gochfeld.

We want to be sure you are on the right tour! Below is a description of the physical requirements of the tour. If you are concerned about the difficulty, please contact us about this and be sure to fully explain your concerns. We want to make sure you have a wonderful time with us, so if you are uncomfortable with the requirements, just let us know and we can help you find a better fitting tour! Field Guides will not charge you a change or cancellation fee if you opt out within 10 days of depositing.

About the Physical Requirements & Pace:

- **POTENTIAL CHALLENGES:** We will likely stand for long periods to observe birds. In Anchorage and Barrow, getting in and out of vans and walking for short stretches will be the most challenging aspects of the tour. Walking on snow, ice, and uneven ground requires a good sense of balance.

- **PACE:** No early mornings (sunrise isn't until after 9:00 a.m.), but we will utilize the few daylight hours available for birding, weather permitting.
- **WEATHER:** Average temperatures in Alaska in October are cold, in the 20's F at Barrow. Strong winds and humid air can make air temperatures feel much colder. The Information Bulletin for this tour has information on recommended cold-weather clothing and gear.
- **VEHICLE SEATING:** So that each participant has equal opportunity during our travel, we employ a seat rotation system on all tours. Participants will need to be flexible enough to maneuver to the back of the vehicle on occasion. Those who experience motion sickness will need to bring adequate medication for the duration of the tour, as we are not able to reserve forward seats for medical conditions.
- **BATHROOM BREAKS:** Bathroom stops at indoor restrooms will be made regularly; comfort stops in nature are also possible, should the need arise.
- **OPTING OUT:** Participants can easily opt to sit out a day or sometimes a half-day except on travel days.

If you are uncertain about whether this tour is a good match for your abilities, please don't hesitate to contact our office; if they cannot directly answer your queries, they will put you in touch with your guide(s) for the tour.

About the Birding Areas

Anchorage area – Anchorage is the largest city in Alaska and the hub for all of our birding activities in the state. Around 300,000 people live in the Anchorage area, roughly 40% of the state's population! On our day here, we'll search for boreal landbirds like northern finches (crossbills, Pine Grosbeak, redpolls), Bohemian Waxwing, Black-backed and American Three-toed Woodpeckers, Spruce Grouse, American Dipper, and other specialties. Finding the nomadic woodpeckers may involve driving in a van to the north, rounding the Knik Arm, and heading to a recently burned patch of forest near Willow where we've had good success in recent years. We may also check several of Anchorage's lakes and coastal hotspots in pursuit of waterfowl and gulls.



Barrow - The land near the far-northern town of Barrow (now officially known by its native name of "Utqiagvik" — *oot-kay-ahg-vik*—after a 2016 vote) is a flat, watery expanse in the grip of permafrost. The landscape is fractured into a maze of giant, ice-wedge polygons, a pattern resulting from the continual freezing and thawing of the surface of the land. The "aufeis," overhanging shelves of ice formed by overflow waters of northflowing rivers, look like rivers of ice from the air. And "pingos," or ice blisters—frozen hills formed by ice forced to expand upward in drained depressions—contribute further to the unique and fascinating aspect of Alaska's North Slope. Our flights from Anchorage take us across 570 miles of northern Alaska and leave us on the coast of the Arctic Ocean at 71 degrees 20 minutes North latitude, more than 300 miles above the Arctic Circle! Clearly, Point Barrow, the northernmost point in Alaska, is off the beaten track. This is not hard to

understand, for Barrow is a place of extremes, where the summer sun does not sink below the horizon for 67 days straight (and it is not dark for another 52 days!). On the other side of the coin, the sun does not shine on the town for 67 days straight in the winter; the weather is calm only 1% of the year; and annual precipitation is a meager 5 to 8 inches, the lowest in Alaska.

Many of you are familiar with the bounty of birds to be found here during the breeding season from taking springtime tours to this fine destination. Breeding shorebirds, loons, eiders, Snowy Owls, Snow Buntings, and others highlight a visit here in late June. By early October, when the daylight hours have been reduced from twenty-four to about ten, nearly all of Barrow's summer residents have long since headed south for the winter. Still, some species linger in the open waters offshore and the Ross's Gull migration, the object of our visit at this season, is well underway. With some luck, we could encounter a few small groups of Spectacled Eiders among the much more common King and Common eiders, good numbers of Yellow-billed Loons, or maybe even an Ivory Gull among the more common Glaucous Gulls. Most of our birding here will be from our comfortable vans or along the roadside. We may also include an afternoon foray to Pt. Barrow to search for Polar Bear if the conditions are right and if local reports indicate that it would be worth our while. Temperatures are likely to range from lows in the 20's or high teens to highs in the low to mid-30's.



*While we are searching for Ross's Gulls, we'll see flocks of migrating sea ducks like these Common Eiders.
Photograph by guide Doug Gochfeld.*

Itinerary for Alaska Fall Goldmine: Ross's Gulls In Barrow

Day 1, Thu, 7 Oct. Arrival in **Anchorage**. You can take the free courtesy shuttle to the Coast Inn at Lake Hood. We will meet in the lobby of the hotel for dinner at 6 PM and will go over the tour plan before getting a good night's sleep. Night in Anchorage.

Day 2, Fri 8 Oct. Anchorage to Barrow. Off to the Far North! We'll take an early afternoon flight across the Arctic Circle to Barrow, where we'll have the whole afternoon to bird after we pick up our rental vans and check into our hotel.

Days 4-5, Sat-Sun, 9-10 Oct. Birding the Barrow area. Birding in Barrow. The air temperature will be cold, but we'll stay warm with excitement and regular intervals in the heated vans and indoors for meals. Prepare to search for Ross's Gulls, Yellow-billed Loons, multiple species of eiders, and Polar Bear. Meals and lodging will be at the luxurious Top of the World Hotel. Depending on conditions and vehicle availability, on one day here, we might be able to take an off-road, 4x4 tour of Point Barrow (though this has not been an option for the past couple of years). Nights in Barrow.

Day 6, Mon, 11 Oct. Barrow to Anchorage; departure for home. We will bird most of today in Barrow. Our flight to Anchorage departs at 4:25pm, arriving in Anchorage at 6:10pm. We will have breakfast and lunch in Barrow and the group will stop for snacks before your flight to Anchorage. You may schedule your departure from Anchorage anytime after 9:00 p.m. A lot of the flights out to Anchorage depart late in the evening or in the early am hours. If you would like to stay in Anchorage for the night of October 11th, we can arrange that for you.

About Your Guide

Cory Gregory started learning birds on flashcards at the age of three, but it wasn't until the ripe age of ten that things started to get more serious. Since then he has traveled to Central and South America, Australia, and all 50 states to try to get his fill of birding (and it hasn't worked yet!).

Cory earned a B.S. in zoology in Michigan, where he also worked for Whitefish Point Bird Observatory for several seasons. He then ventured to Iowa State University, where he earned a M.S. studying Long-billed Curlews in Nebraska. As an avid shorebird ecologist, he has handled more than 2000 shorebirds of more than 30 species.

After finishing school, Cory worked for several organizations as a shorebird ecologist and guided on St. Paul Island in the Pribilofs of Alaska for the 2014 and 2015 seasons. It was on St. Paul that his dream of stumbling on a first North American record was finally fulfilled. Cory is currently based out of Missouri where, when not on tour, he pursues his interest in birds, butterflies, and dragonflies with abandon.

Cory has co-lead Field Guides groups to Arizona, Cape May, Colorado, Maine, Texas, Newfoundland, Costa Rica, Oaxaca, Colombia, Peru, France, and Australia and has a busy and wide-ranging schedule coming up, adding Oregon to his portfolio of tours.

*“Cory was wonderful. He surely knows his birds, and his calm presence and dry sense of humor made the trip a lot of fun - and very productive as well. I would absolutely take another tour with him.”
S.S, Arizona Nightbirds*

Financial Information

FEE: \$2925 (this includes the flight from Anchorage/Barrow/Anchorage)

DEPOSIT: \$300 per person

FINAL PAYMENT DUE: July 9, 2021

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT : \$525

LIMIT: 7

(Normally this is a two-part tour, with Part 1 going to the Pribilofs, but in 2021 the Pribilofs are closed to groups due to the Coronavirus)

Special Note: Tour fees may be subject to change due to the global economic effects of COVID-19.

We have published the itinerary and price for this tour with the understanding that during these uncertain times we are likely to encounter unforeseen changes. Some of our tours may incur higher costs due to increases in currency exchange rate fluctuations or COVID-19 related fees imposed by countries and/or suppliers. Travel and hospitality companies all over the world have been adversely affected by the pandemic, and there is no guarantee that all of the lodging and transportation we have booked for this tour will still be available at the time of departure. We hope to maintain our services as indicated in our itinerary as well as our published tour fee. However, if changes are required we will make every effort to maintain the quality of the itinerary as it is published with the most appropriate substitutions available. Should any necessary changes or other unforeseen causes result in an increase in service rates to us, we reserve the right to pass on those increases in fees to the tour participant.

Other Things You Need to Know

TOUR MANAGER: The manager for this tour is Karen Turner. Karen will be happy to assist you in preparing for the tour. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call her!

AIR ARRANGEMENTS: Field Guides is a full service travel agency and your tour manager will be happy to assist you with flights to join this tour. Field Guides does not charge a service fee for these services to clients booking a tour. However, we understand that tech-savvy clients often prefer to shop online or that you may wish to use mileage to purchase tickets. Regardless of which method you choose, your tour manager will be happy to provide assistance regarding ticket prices and schedules, along with rental cars and extra hotel nights as needed.

Please be sure to check with your tour manager prior to purchasing your ticket to make sure the flights you have chosen will work well with the tour itinerary and that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate. Once purchased, most airline tickets are non-refundable and carry a penalty to change. Field Guides cannot be responsible for these fees.

Also, it is imperative that we receive a copy of your comprehensive flight itinerary—including any and all flights not covered in the tour fee—so that we may track you in the event of missed connections, delays, or other mishaps.

LUGGAGE: Please be aware that many airlines have recently modified their luggage policies and are charging additional fees for checked bags. Updates could easily occur before your departure, so you may wish to contact your airline to verify the policy. Additional charges for bags on any flights, whether these flights are covered by the tour fee or not, will be the client's responsibility.

TOUR INCLUSIONS/EXCLUSIONS: The **fee** for the tour is **\$2925** for one person in double occupancy* from Anchorage. It includes all lodging from Day 1 through Day 5, all meals from dinner on Day 1 through lunch on Day 5, *all flights within Alaska as outlined in this tour itinerary*, all ground transportation, entrance fees, baggage handling, and the guide services of the tour leader(s). Tipping at group meals and for drivers, porters, and local guides is included in your tour fee and will be handled for the group by your Field Guides leader(s). However, if you would like to recognize your Field Guides leader(s) or any local guide(s) for exceptional service, it is entirely appropriate to tip. We emphasize that such tips are optional and not expected.

The above fee does **not** include your airfare to and from Anchorage, airport taxes, any checked or carry-on baggage charges imposed by the airlines, any taxi hire to or from the airport, any alcoholic beverages, optional tips to local drivers, phone calls, laundry, or other items of a personal nature.

The **single supplement** for the tour is **\$525**. Our tour fees are based on double occupancy; one-half the cost of a double room is priced into the tour fee. The single supplement is calculated by taking the actual cost of a single room and subtracting one-half the cost of a double room (plus any applicable taxes).

*If you have a trusted friend, relative, or significant other with whom you wish to share a room on tour, please let us know and your tour manager will make that assignment. However, due to recommendations from the CDC, Field Guides is not currently pairing roommates who do not know each other, and the single supplement will apply if you do not have a roommate. As of this writing (July 29, 2021), we are reviewing these CDC recommendations carefully and often and will let you know if that changes.

TOUR LIMITS: Our limits are firm and we don't exceed the limit by one to accommodate a couple when only one space remains open. However, on occasion, we will send along a guide in training on a tour. In these cases one seat in the van or bus will be taken by the guide in training. Our guides will have a rotation system within the vehicle so that clients share the inconvenience equally. We hope this minor inconvenience will be more than offset by the advantages of having another guide along.

TOUR REGISTRATION: To register for this tour, please [contact our office](#). Our office will be in touch with you by email by the next business day (Mon-Fri) with instructions on how to complete our new electronic registration form and medical questionnaire. (We are no longer accepting the paper version.)

Please mail your **deposit of \$300** per person, or see our Payment Options at <https://fieldguides.com/payment-options/>. **Full payment** of the tour fee is due 120 days prior to departure, or **by July 9, 2021**. **We will bill you for the final payment at either 120 days or when the tour has reached sufficient subscription to operate, whichever date comes later.**

Please note that if you are traveling on a tour **outside your country of domicile** (for example, outside the US for US residents), we will require **proof of travel insurance**. Since the cost of your trip insurance and airline tickets is generally non-refundable, please do not finalize these purchases until you have received final billing for the tour or have been advised that the tour is sufficiently subscribed to operate by your tour manager.

SMOKING: Almost all of our clients prefer a smoke-free environment. If you smoke, please be sensitive to the group and refrain from smoking at meals, in vehicles, and in proximity to the group on trails and elsewhere.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Refund of deposit and payment, less \$100 handling fee, will be made if cancellation is received up to 120 days before departure. If cancellation occurs between 119 and 70 days before the departure date, 50% of the tour fee is refundable. Thereafter, all deposits and payments are not refundable.

This policy only applies to payments made to Field Guides for tour fees (and any services included in those fees). Airline tickets not included in the tour fee and purchased separately often carry penalties for cancellation or change, or are sometimes totally non-refundable. Additionally, if you take out trip insurance the cost of the insurance is not refundable so it is best to purchase the policy just prior to making full payment for the tour or at the time you purchase airline tickets, depending upon the airlines restrictions.

Field Guides reserves the right to cancel any tour prior to departure, in which case full refund will constitute full settlement to the passenger. The right is reserved to substitute in case of emergency another guide for the original one.

TRIP CANCELLATION & MEDICAL EMERGENCY INSURANCE: We strongly recommend you consider purchasing trip cancellation (including medical emergency) insurance to cover your investment in case of injury or illness to you or your family prior to or during a trip. Because we must remit early (and substantial) tour deposits to our suppliers, you acknowledge and agree that we will not issue a refund when cancellation occurs within 70 days of departure, and only a partial refund from 70 to 119 days prior to departure (see CANCELLATION POLICY). In addition, the Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. US medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Furthermore, US Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties. When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or whether you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur.

US citizens will receive information from us regarding optional tour cancellation/emergency medical insurance. Our agent, CSA, will insure for trip cancellation and interruption, medical coverage, travel delay, baggage loss and delay, and emergency medical transportation. If you purchase the insurance prior to, or within 24 hours of making final payment for the tour, and cover all non-refundable parts of the trip (including any non-refundable flights and in some cases, other arrangements), pre-existing conditions are covered. You may purchase your CSA policy on-line by visiting our website at <https://fieldguides.com/trip-cancellation-insurance/> and clicking the link to CSA. The CSA webpage also includes a contact number.

Currently we are unable to offer CSA insurance policies to residents of New York and Hawaii. We have had clients provide positive feedback after acquiring insurance thru InsureMyTrip (<https://www.insuremytrip.com/>) in the past, and would suggest that company as an alternative. When purchasing insurance with a company other than CSA, you will want to understand whether the timing of your purchase will affect coverage before paying your first deposit. Insurance purchase requirements can vary from company to company, and such requirements could limit your options if you do not look into this until making your final payment for your tour. Please let us know if you have any questions about this.

Please note, once the insurance is purchased it is non-refundable, so please check with your tour manager prior to making the purchase to assure the tour will operate as scheduled. Citizens of other countries are urged to consult their insurance broker.

RESPONSIBILITY: For and in consideration of the opportunity to participate in the tour, each tour participant and each parent or legal guardian of a tour participant who is under 18 agrees to release, indemnify, and hold harmless Field Guides Incorporated, its agents, servants, employees, shareholders, officers, directors, attorneys, and contractors as more fully set forth in the Release and Indemnity Agreement on the reverse side of the registration form. Field Guides Incorporated acts only as an agent for the passenger in regard to travel, whether by railroad, motorcar, motorcoach, boat, airplane, or other means, and assumes no liability for injury, damage, loss, accident, delay, or irregularity caused by defect in such vehicles or for any reason whatsoever, including the acts, defaults, or bankruptcies of any company or person engaged in conveying the passenger or in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. You acknowledge and agree that Field Guides Incorporated is not responsible for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, quarantine, or other causes. The tour participant shall bear all such losses and expenses. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to substitute hotels of similar category for those indicated and to make any changes in the itinerary where deemed necessary or caused by changes in air schedules. Field Guides Incorporated reserves the right to decline to accept or to retain any person as a member of any tour. Baggage is at owner's risk entirely.

Participants should be in good health and should consult a physician before undertaking a tour. If you have questions about the physical requirements of a tour, please contact our office for further information. Participants should prepare for the tour by reading the detailed itinerary, the information bulletin, and other pertinent matter provided by Field Guides. Each participant is responsible for bringing appropriate clothing and equipment as recommended in our bulletins.

THE RECEIPT OF YOUR TOUR DEPOSIT SHALL BE DEEMED TO BE CONSENT TO THE ABOVE CONDITIONS. EACH TOUR PARTICIPANT AND EACH PARENT OR LEGAL GUARDIAN OF A TOUR PARTICIPANT WHO IS UNDER 18 SHALL SIGN AND DELIVER THE RELEASE AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT AT THE TIME OF REGISTRATION.

NCP 7/2020

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