

'Constituent fare' to Juneau makes the trip affordable

By Scott McMurren

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Juneau is a great destination in the summer. You can fly from Anchorage, of course. Or you also can drive 748 miles to Haines, then take the ferry for the last 60 miles. That way, you can cruise around town in your own car. Highlights include the Mount Roberts tram, which leaves from downtown and takes you to the top of a mountain -- where you can hike around for lots of million-dollar views of downtown, the Gastineau Channel and neighboring islands.

If you travel this time of year, though, the biggest attraction is our very own state Legislature. It's quite a show, of course. And the whole town rolls out the red carpet.

Alaska Airlines offers a special "constituent fare" so Alaskans can make one trip to Juneau. The discounted rate varies by the originating city. But from Anchorage, you can get a round-trip ticket for about \$300. That's a good deal, compared to last-minute fares of more than \$500 round trip.

To get the constituent fare discount, you have to have a frequent flyer number with Alaska Airlines, as well as an online account. Once you have those, Alaska Airlines will drop a "discount certificate" into your account that you can use to apply the discount.

As the recent presidential caucuses reveal, Alaskans are taking an active interest in politics. This year in Juneau, legislators are debating the ever-elusive gas line, a huge budget surplus, the state's transportation infrastructure and other important issues. Here's a head's up: legislators want to hear what you think.

So, plan a trip to Juneau and let your legislators know how you feel about important state issues. At least three hotels are offering special deals in conjunction with the constituent fares:

Located downtown, the Driftwood Lodge is a small motel with free parking and free wireless Internet access. The price is \$39 per night. Call 800-544-2239.

The Juneau Hotel is located near the Juneau-Douglas bridge. The rooms are big, with new furnishings. The price is \$69 per night. Call 907-586-5666.

The Frontier Suites are located out by the airport. The cost is \$79 per night. Call 800-544-2250.

Because of the Legislature, of course, Juneau is a year-round destination. For adventurers, Eaglecrest Ski Area offers great opportunities for skiers and snowboarders. Another great opportunity for Nordic skiers is the area around Mendenhall Glacier. Last week, we went for a hike right up to the face of Mendenhall Glacier. We saw a bunch of ski tracks, as well as some bicycle tracks.

There is no shortage of great places to eat in Juneau, either. I called my friend Sharon Gaipman, who lives in Juneau. "For breakfast, I love the cafe in the Baranof Hotel," she said.

My favorite spot for breakfast is the Sandpiper Cafe, next to the Driftwood Lodge. For lunch, I drive across the bridge to Douglas to the Island Pub. They offer great house-made pizzas cooked in their wood-fired oven.

If you're headed up to Capitol Hill, you need a good cup of coffee. In Juneau, all roads lead to Heritage Coffee. The main cafe is on Franklin Street. Then, there's another cafe near the corner of Second and Seward Street. There's also a drive-in coffee stop near the airport.

Any way you look at it, there are plenty of opportunities to stay awake in Juneau.

Whether you're schmoozing with your legislators or skiing at Eaglecrest, relax at the end of the day at Rejuvenation Day Spa. "I love getting a facial there," Gaipman said.

Don't wait for summertime to visit Juneau. Head south during the session and let your legislators know how you feel about Alaska's important issues.

Scott McMurren is an Anchorage-based travel marketing consultant. E-mail him at zoom@toursaver.com.

Scott's tips

- SANDPIPER CAFE: The scrambles are delicious. The pancakes also are popular.

www.sandpipercafe.com

- HERITAGE COFFEE: It's the best coffee in Juneau.

www.heritagecoffee.com

- REJUVENATION DAY SPA: Stop in for a massage or a facial.

www.seventhheavendayspa.com

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