



**USA
TODAY**

NATIVE AMERICANS

2025

CELEBRATING NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH



\$4.95



Future of Education

Tribal school funding +
mascot makeovers

Indigenous Integrity

AI may be key to
cultural preservation

Artistic Appreciation

Artisans weave tradition
Into handiwork

ALASKA



The Alaska Region is home to a dynamic mix of more than 180,000 members who make up the 229 tribes covering 663,268 square miles of land.

Hoonah, Alaska, is the nation's largest Tlingit village with 978 residents who welcome visitors and share their ancestral ways. ICY STRAIT POINT

A New Cruise Destination

Icy Strait Point, Alaska, welcomes you

By Kit Bernardi

Pristine Tongass National Forest wilderness, spread across 23,040 acres of Alaska Native Tlingit land, greets cruise ship passengers at Icy Strait Point on Chichagof Island, North America's first — and only — privately owned Indigenous cruise port destination, located approximately 70 miles from Juneau. Opened 21 years ago, Icy Strait

Point, which is owned by Huna Totem Corporation, also welcomes guests who are not aboard cruises to book port excursions on days when ships call.

Tyler Hickman, Icy Strait Point senior vice president, says that in 2025, the destination hosted more than 4.5 million guests sailing on all the major cruise lines, and expects to exceed 5 million visitors next year when MSC, Virgin Voyages, Explora Journeys and The Ritz-Carlton start including the port in their

ALASKA



Tlingit artisans in Hoonah, Alaska, share their woodworking skills with visitors.
PROVIDED BY ICY STRAIT POINT (4)



Residents of the Tlingit community share Native music and art with guests.



The Timber Tiger Adventure Course at Icy Strait Point is built for young people to enjoy.



Kayaking is a popular pastime at Icy Strait Point. RICHARD DALTON III/ICY STRAIT POINT

itineraries.

Once the ship pulls into the Icy Strait Point port, there's no busy downtown to navigate or tour bus to board. Instead, more than 30 exhilarating outdoor adventures are offered by Tlingit guides.

An electric-powered gondola system whisks visitors around the port, while the Sky Peak Gondola takes people up Hoonah Mountain where trails twist through an old-growth rainforest. Then there's the ZipRider, a zooming zip line that goes 60 mph down the mountain.

During whale watching tours, guides guarantee that humpback or Orca whales will be spotted and if they're not, patrons get their money back. Visitors can hook salmon, halibut or trout on guided fishing excursions or stay on land and explore the island by hopping in an ATV or Jeep for local expeditions. During the port's guided wildlife tours, eagles and coastal brown bears abound. There are around 1,700 brown bears on Chichagof Island, outnumbering island residents.

Huna Tlingit people living in Hoonah, Alaska's largest Tlingit village with 978 residents, educate guests on their ancestral lifeways through cultural programs showcasing dugout canoe and totem pole carving, making native plant-based salves and cooking salmon over an open fire. Port restaurants serve locally sourced crab and Icy Strait Point Brewing



An orca breaches at Icy Strait Point.

Company features its craft beers.

The restored 1912 salmon cannery houses a museum and Tlingit artisan shops. Students run the Hoonah High School bookstore, which generated \$23,000 last year to support school sports activities.

"Everything we do here creates opportunity for our people and perpetuates our culture," Hickman says. "We're proving that tourism can be done sustainably, respectfully and in partnership with local communities."