DAY ONE: Anchorage

Arrive in Anchorage, Alaska's largest city and the launching point for your Kenai Peninsula Off-The-Beaten-Path Hidden Gems tour.

Pick up a rental vehicle from Innoko Rentals, LLC or ABC Motorhome Rentals.

Optional Activities:

- Learn about Alaska's profound history, traditions and culture at the Anchorage Museum or the Alaska Native Heritage Center
- Visit the Oscar Anderson House Museum or the Alaska Aviation Heritage Museum
- Explore nature and wildlife at the Alaska Zoo or the Alaska Botanical Garden
- Get above it all with a picturesque panoramic view over the city at Flattop Mountain
- Enjoy a scenic walk with fresh air and incredible views at the Tony Knowles Coastal Trail, Kincaid Park or the Delaney Park Strip
- Learn about the local culture and explore all that there is to do in the area with a visit to the local chamber

Overnight in Anchorage at any of these great hotels and motels listed HERE. If you're looking for a resort lodging experience, head down to Girdwood and spend your first night at Alyeska Resort.

Yummy restaurants in Anchorage include Moose's Tooth Pub & Pizzeria, Jen's Restaurant, Table 6, Club Paris, Glacier Brewhouse, and Gwennie's Old Alaska Restaurant. If you choose to overnight in Girdwood, check out the local resort restaurants or try the Double Musky Inn, Jack Sprat, or The Bake Shop.

DAY TWO: Girdwood – Hope (84 miles)

Depart Anchorage for Girdwood, before continuing on to the town of Hope.

Take the scenic Seward Highway heading south towards the Kenai Peninsula. The Seward Highway was voted America's Most Outstanding Scenic Byway by Scenic America, and trust us – it's a phenomenal driving experience.

Hop in your rental car and follow the breathtakingly beautiful Turnagain Arm while enjoying many interpretative rest stops and viewpoints along the way. Depending on the season, it is not unusual to spot beluga whales or Dall sheep from your car window. You might even spot a bear munching on berries or roaming throughout the mountainside.
Stops Along The Way:

- McHugh Creek (Mile 111); enjoy a hike or picnic in the Anchorage foothills of the Chugach State Park
- Beluga Point (Mile 110.5); great opportunities for viewing beluga whales from mid-July through August
- Bird Creek (Mile 101); fisherman's paradise with observation platforms that photographers will love
- Bird Point (Mile 96); a scenic stop where you can enjoy a long hike or bike ride with spectacular views

Stop at the Crow Creek Historic Gold Mine, located 42 miles south of Anchorage. From the Seward Highway, turn left onto Alyeska Highway and veer left onto Crow Creek Road where you will follow the winding path up to the mine. Established in 1896, Crow Creek Mine is one of Alaska's most renowned hydraulic gold mining operations in state history. The mine provides a unique opportunity to relive the historic Gold Rush Era that Alaska is so well known for. Visitors can enjoy a unique blend of historical buildings including the 'Mess Hall' which is actually the oldest building in the Anchorage municipality on the National Register of Historic Places. Other attractions include many antiques, mining equipment, lush gardens, breathtaking mountain scenery and even hiking trails the run along the Historic Iditarod Trail. Plus, you can even explore and prospect the mines' original claims. If you have gold rush fever, this exceptional experience will transport you to the past.

Continue south on the Seward Highway. You'll drive through the town of Portage, which is a sunken ghost town that nature has slowly reclaimed. Prior to the 1964 Good Friday Earthquake, it was a small settlement home to a small number of local residents. After the earthquake, the town sunk 6-10 feet below the high-tide level, making it impossible to survive the devastating floods. Today, visitors can explore the historic area through interpretive boardwalks and can also see partial remains of old homestead cabins right off of the Seward Highway.

For the next 30 miles, you'll wind through the mountainous Turnagain Pass (mile 68.3) passing by the gorgeous east fork of Sixmile Creek (mile 61.7) before crossing the gold-bearing Canyon Creek (mile 56.7). Stop along the way and enjoy the scenic pullouts that your heart desires.

Next, turn right at Hope Junction. Follow the road into the town of Hope, known as the historical mountain hideaway by the sea. Along the way, stop in the Sunrise City Historic District at the mouth of Sixmile Creek, just east of Hope. Mile 17 on Hope Road will bring you to the Hope Historic District which encompasses the surviving elements of the former mining boom town. In the 1980's, the site at Resurrection Creek was where Alaska's first gold rush began. Although the town is much sleepier today, it's home to undeniable amounts of charm.

Visit the Hope & Sunrise Historical and Mining Museum, located on 2nd Street in town. Displays at the museum include a road grader, dog sled, rock crusher, blacksmith equipment and postal boxes. There is also a log museum and a mining bunkhouse as well as a full blacksmith shop to tour.

Optional Activities:

- Enjoy a leisurely outdoor activities such as hiking, fishing or beach combing
- If you're looking for a thrill, hop on a whitewater rafting excursion down Sixmile Creek; book a tour HERE

Overnight at the Seaview Café, which also has great food. Another delicious dining option in town is Tito's Discovery Café. For additional lodging options in town, contact the local chamber for more ideas to suit your every need.

DAY THREE: Moose Pass (28 miles)

Head out on the one road leading into Hope and make your way back towards the Seward Highway. A quick 28 mile drive will lead you to your next destination.

Spend one night at the picturesque Summit Lake Lodge in the community of Moose Pass. Located in the heart of the 6,908,540-acre Chugach National Forest, visitors here are rewarded with the majestic opportunity to relax and unwind in a lush wilderness setting. Enjoy a historic room with a lakefront view, or a private cabin in the woods. Watch the sunset hit the shores and reflect over the towering mountains, while you capture once-in-a-lifetime photo opportunities and create lifelong memories.
With a full-service restaurant located on premise, you won’t even have to leave. Hang up the car keys, turn off the cell phone, and soak in every last minute of this exceptionally charming retreat in the woods.

**DAY FOUR: Cooper Landing (20 miles)**
Depart Moose Pass and head to Cooper Landing, accessible via the Sterling Highway cutoff.

Go fly fishing at Cooper Lake. To access Cooper Lake, turn left onto Snug Harbor Road (the first left after you cross over the only bridge in town that goes passes by Kenai Lake and the Kenai River.) Snug Harbor Road turns into Cooper Lake Road after nine miles. Just 2.5 miles further to the trailhead of the parking area. Bring a kayak or raft, or fly fish right from the rocky shores. This is also a great area to soak in scenic views while walking the shoreline, shipping rocks, or having a picnic on the beach.

**Optional Activities:**
- Take a scenic stroll on the shores of Kenai Lake down Snug Harbor Road
- Go gold prospecting in historic streams or enjoy a scenic wilderness float with Prospector John’s
- Guided mountain biking or stand-up paddleboarding in Chugach National Forest with Adventure GURU.
- Venture to the Russian River and enjoy walking the well-maintained trails or fishing for trout and salmon
- Take a two-mile hike up to the Russian River Falls where you’ll likely find bears feasting on salmon
- Enjoy guided fishing or scenic floats on the spectacular Kenai River; book a tour HERE

Spend one night in Cooper Landing. Click HERE and choose from a list of exceptional lodges, resorts, and cabins to spend your next two nights. If you prefer the more intimate setting of a Bed & Breakfast, consider staying at The Hutch B&B.

The historic roadhouse at Gwin’s Lodge is an excellent place to grab any meal of the day. Sackett’s Kenai Grill is a great local place to grab lunch or dinner, while the restaurant at Kenai Princess Wilderness Lodge offers decadent cuisine with million dollar views overlooking the Kenai River.

**DAY FIVE: Nikiski (81 miles)**
Depart Cooper Landing for Nikiski. Once you make it to the second stoplight in Soldotna (at the “Y” intersection), turn right on the Kenai Spur Highway. Follow this route the rest of the way. Along the way, you’ll be spoiled with enchanting views overlooking Cook Inlet and active volcanoes in the Aleutian Mountain Range. Once you arrive in Nikiski, continue all the way to the far end of the Kenai Spur Highway to Captain Cook State Recreation Area. Once you arrive, you’ll quickly notice that you’ve stumbled upon a virtually undiscovered gem on the Kenai Peninsula.

This historic spot at the end of the road is named after Captain James Cook, the English mariner who first explored (what is now known as) Cook Inlet back in 1778.

Area activities include canoeing and boating on Stormy Lake, beach combing on the tide-swept shores for agates, birding, berry picking, and incredible opportunities to view wildlife. Fish for rainbow trout or arctic char on Stormy Lake. If you visit during the winter, try ice fishing. Area wildlife that have been spotted include moose, bear, coyote, wolves, harbor seals beaver, bald eagles, sandhill cranes, trumpeter swans, loons, and even beluga whales.

**Optional Activities:**
- Visit the tasting room at Kassik’s Brewery and sip on delicious micro-brews while chatting with the locals
- Go flightseeing with Alaska West Air and experience world-class bear viewing up close & personal
- Bring the kids to North Peninsula Recreation Service Area to enjoy the indoor pool with waterslide, playgrounds, ice rink, trails, and disc-golf course

Spend one night in Nikiski. Stay in the secluded lake cove at Daniels Lake Lodge, or the scenic wilderness escape at Grouchy Old Woman B&B. A stay in the private cabins at Alaska West Air is also highly recommended.

Click HERE for an exceptional list of dining options in the nearby town of Kenai.
DAY SIX: Soldotna – Funny River – Kasilof (74 miles)
Depart Nikiski and have a scrumptious breakfast in Soldotna at Odie's Deli or Bucket's Sports Grill.

After breakfast, take Funny River Road out to mile marker 12 where you’ll pull into Funny River Campground. This small campground and day use area is located at the confluence of Funny River and the world-renowned Kenai River. If you’re an avid angler, this is an excellent spot to reel in sockeye and silver salmon from July through September. Have a picnic by the glacial fed shores and soak in one of the Kenai National Wildlife Refuges most underrated hidden wilderness gems.

Depart Funny River and head to the Crooked Creek State Recreation Area in Kasilof. Park and enjoy an after-lunch nature walk down the well-traveled trail to the confluence of Crooked Creek and the Kasilof River. Be advised that if it has been raining, the trail can get pretty muddy and slippery – so be careful and cautious. During May and June, this is a great place to fish right from the bank of the Kasilof River for king salmon (when the regulations allow). Additional area fisheries include a small steelhead run in the spring and fall months, in addition to Dolly Varden, sockeye salmon and silver salmon during the summer months. Beware of wildlife species such as moose, black and brown bear, lynx, squirrels, and hares as they inhabit the area.

Continue further down to the end of North Cohoe Loop Road to the incredible Kasilof Beach. This place is filled with fishing enthusiasts during the peak summer months, but is otherwise a quiet and secluded beachfront oasis. Enjoy panoramic mountain views at the mouth of the Kasilof River and the shores of Cook Inlet.

Visit the Johnson Lake State Recreation Area in Kasilof. This scenic campground and day-use area is a great place to have a campfire, kayak, canoe or paddleboard on the lake, or fish for rainbow trout. Enjoy excellent opportunity to view wildlife and soak in spectacular scenic views as far as the eyes can see. This heavily wooded nature escape is an easily accessible place to soak in sunshine and enjoy endless outdoor adventure.

DAY SEVEN: Clam Gulch – Ninilchik (27 miles)
Wake up and enjoy breakfast in Kasilof at Rocky’s Café, which is located off the Sterling Highway at Mile 109. Enjoy scrumptious homemade plates and a selection of yummy grab-and-go pastries for later. Located in the same building, the Kasilof Mercantile is a one-stop-shop for all of your traveling needs. Stock up on groceries, fishing gear, hardware, clothing, hand-crafted items, and more!

Depart Kasilof and head south on the Sterling Highway towards Clam Gulch, roughly 10 miles away.

Spend one night in Kasilof. Click HERE for a list of great resorts. Click HERE for a couple of great Kasilof area restaurants, or HERE for a list of restaurants in the nearby town of Soldotna.
Visit the Clam Gulch State Recreation Area and prepare to experience the most insanely beautiful panoramic views of your life. This incredible beach escape is without a doubt, one of The Kenai’s most underrated gems. Have a picnic in the raised parking and day-use area on the bluffs, overlooking the scenic Cook Inlet. Take a long walk on the beach while soaking in views of the Aleutian Mountain Range and its three tallest peaks; Mount Iliamna, Mount Redoubt, and Mount Spur.

Continue south on Sterling Highway to Ninilchik, located roughly 18 miles away.

Make your way south on the Sterling Highway towards the town of Ninilchik. Here, be sure to stop and check out the Holy Transfiguration of Our Lord Chapel, which is located on the bluff and has panoramic vistas overlooking mountains and ocean views as far as the eyes can see. This building was constructed in 1901 and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978.

Optional Activities Near Ninilchik:

• Head up into the Caribou Hills to enjoy ATV’ing, wildlife viewing, hiking and more
• Enjoy a guided freshwater or saltwater fishing excursion for halibut, salmon and more; book a tour HERE
• Scenic pullouts at Falls Creek, Ninilchik River, Deep Creek, Stariski Creek, Whiskey Gulch or the Anchor River

Spend the last night of your trip in Ninilchik. Any of these great lodges, resorts, or cabins listed HERE is a great choice for area accommodations. Click HERE for some great local restaurant recommendations. Keen Kow Thai Food is another mouthwatering dining option that serves up authentic Thai cuisine for a very affordable price.

DAY EIGHT: Return to Anchorage (187 miles)

Depart Ninilchik heading north on the Sterling Highway towards Anchorage. You’ll need to turn left once you hit the Seward Highway Junction just past Tern Lake. Continue on through Turnagain Pass until you reach the city.