

## **Alaska Iditarod Tours**

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### **15 Day McGrath Checkpoint & Nome Finish Tour Itinerary March 4-March 18**

**Day One Monday :** Today we fly to the community of McGrath on the Kuskokwim River. You will be emailed flight details 2 weeks before the tour begins, limit your luggage to a 50 lb check-in bag and a 10 lb carry on. We will have a 1:00 pm group lunch at the Iditarod Trail Cafe. After lunch the group will take a guided walking tour to explore the town of McGrath and learn about the history of the Iditarod mining district. Dinner will be held at the Hotel McGrath with seating from 6:00 pm -7:00 pm.

**Day Two Tuesday:** Today we will fly to the Athabaskan community of Nikolai and watch as the lead mushers come in from their grueling travels through the Alaska Range and the Farewell Burn. The 1<sup>st</sup> flight will depart McGrath at 8:30 am. Nikolai is a great place to watch the mushers care for their dogs and experience a bit of life in a remote Native village. It is the furthest community up the Kuskokwim River that was visited by Russian explorers and the Russian Orthodox Church is still active in the community. Lunch will be provided in Nikolai. In the late afternoon we will return to McGrath and spend the evening watching the lead mushers come into the McGrath checkpoint. Dinner will be held at the Hotel McGrath from 6:00 pm -7:00 pm (Continental Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

**Day Three Wednesday :** Today is a day to spend at the checkpoint watching teams entering and leaving McGrath. Many of the teams take their mandatory 24 hour layover at the McGrath checkpoint and being here is a great opportunity to watch how the mushers and vets care for the dog teams. We will have a 1:00 pm group lunch at the Iditarod Trail Cafe. Dinner will be held at the Hotel McGrath from 6:00 pm -7:00 pm (Continental Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

**Day Four Thursday :** This morning is a great opportunity to spend more time at the checkpoint with the mushers and their teams. In the afternoon we will take a walk across the river and explore the remains of Old Town McGrath, the site of the original trading post and community that was abandoned when the Takotna River shifted and the main channel broke through to the Kuskokwim River further downstream. We will have a 1:00 pm group lunch at the Iditarod Trail Cafe. Dinner will be held at the Hotel McGrath from 6:00 pm -7:00 pm (Continental Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

**Day Five Friday :** Today we leave McGrath and return to Anchorage. You will be emailed flight details 2 weeks for the return 2 weeks before the tour begins, limit your luggage to a 50 lb check-in bag and a 10 lb carry on. Clients are on their own for lunch and dinner. Lodging at the Hilton provided (Continental Breakfast)

**Day Six Saturday:** Today is a free day in Anchorage and a good time to visit the local

art galleries and attractions in Anchorage. Clients can also rent a car and take a scenic 60 minute drive along Turnagain Arm to the community of Girdwood and Alyeska Ski Resort. Skiers and snowboarders will enjoy fantastic runs and spectacular views from the mountain. Non-skiers can still take the tram half way up the mountain for a lunch with the same great views or schedule an incredible helicopter tour of the Chugach Mtns or snowmobile tour. These activities can be arranged through the Alyeska Resort Concierge at 1-800-880-3880. Lodging at the Hilton provided.

**Day Seven Sunday : Welcome to the Bering Sea and historic Nome Alaska! Clients arrive into historic Nome Alaska on their own flights. Tour leader will be there to meet you at the airport and bring you to your accommodation. Famous for the Nome Gold Rush of 1898 that saw the population balloon to over 10,000, this rugged town of 3,500 on the coast of Norton Sound is still a magnet for the adventurous and those with gold fever. Even during the winter, evidence of active gold mining can be seen out on the frozen sea where underwater exploration takes place under the sea ice. Clients will be on their own for meals today. **NOTE: CLIENTS BOOK THEIR OWN FLIGHTS TO NOME.****

**Day Eight Monday :** With the Iditarod Race finish getting closer, you will be excited and primed for your dog mushing excursion with The Dog Lot Kennel. Here is an opportunity to see sled dogs up close, watch how experienced dog handlers interact with the dogs and appreciate how fast and powerful a team of sled dogs are as you negotiate the winding trail with your dog team handler. Later we will get a greater appreciation for the history of Nome with a guided tour at the Nome Museum and the Cultural Center at 12:00 pm and will also visit the Native Arts and Craft Fair with fine examples of fur hats, mittens gloves, ivory carving etc... by local artists.  
( Continental Breakfast, Dinner)

**Day Nine Tuesday :** Today is the day that the Nome party usually clicks into high gear as the leaders approach the finish line. In the afternoon we will visit the Nome Museum and listen to an informative talk about the history of the Iditarod Race presented by Howard Farley. Howard was one of the organizers of the Iditarod Race and one of the first mushers to run the race. Late evening or early Wednesday morning is when the 1st musher usually arrives in Nome and we will be there to cheer on the top finishers as they strut their stuff down Front St. to claim their place in Iditarod history. ( Continental Breakfast, Dinner )

**Day Ten Wednesday:** Morning flight along the coast of the Bering Sea to the picturesque village of White Mountain. This is a great opportunity to watch mushers care for their teams as they take a mandatory 8 hour layover. ( Continental Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner )

**Day Eleven Thursday :** Today clients will take a scenic helicopter ride to the Safety Roadhouse checkpoint. This 90-minute ride along the coast is always the highlight of

the tour as it gives us more opportunities to view the mushers heading to Nome along the Iditarod Trail and at the roadhouse. We often spot muskox in the surrounding hills on this flight. Your flight time will be determined on Wednesday (Continental Breakfast, Dinner)

**Day Twelve Friday :** Today we will get a feel for the history of Nome on a guided tour with local resident Carol Gales of Roam Nome. This informative tour will show you interesting points around town, such as Gold Dredge #7 and will explore Nome's vibrant gold mining history. See why the Nome Gold Rush drew such noted personalities such as Wyatt Earp to its shores. With a history of settlement for thousands of years by the Inupiat people of Alaska, and headquarters for the Sitnasuak Native Village Corporation and the Bering Straits Regional Native Corporation, Nome is a perfect place to see the integration of modern society into the lives of its traditional inhabitants. Clients will continue cheering arriving dog teams as they cross the finish line. ( Continental Breakfast, Dinner)

**Day Thirteen Saturday :** Saturday morning is when clients can attend the musher meet and greet for autographs and photos. Clients can also participate in teams AIT will organize for the Bering Ice Golf Classic, definitely the most unusual and challenging course you will ever play. Mushers will still be arriving into Nome and this is your last chance to pickup that beautiful fur hat, muskox scarf or incredibly warm fur mittens you have been admiring at the Art and Craft Fair.( Continental Breakfast, Dinner)

**Day Fourteen Sunday :** St Patrick's Day!!! Each year our clients join the community in Celebrating St Patricks Day by participating the parade down Front St. to the Burl Arch. Later in the afternoon we will attend the Iditarod Finishers and Awards Banquet, recognizing mushers for their accomplishments during the race. This is a great opportunity to get a more personal understanding of the mushers and their experiences along the trail. You will hear fantastic stories as the mushers tell their tales from the race. ( Continental Breakfast, Dinner)

**Day Fifteen Monday :** Clients return to Anchorage on their own flights.  
( Continental Breakfast)

**Getting around Nome:** AIT will shuttle clients around as time and our schedule allow, but most clients walk around town or use one of the many taxis to get around.

### **Physical Requirements for this tour:**

**In Nome-** The streets and sidewalks of Nome are always icy. It is recommended you wear grippers on your boots while walking around town. Clients staying at the Sluicebox Inn have a ½ mile walk to the finish line on Front St.

**In White Mountain-** The airport runway is on a hill 1/2 mile from the checkpoint. There is no cab service and clients should plan on walking this distance. In the past

we have been able to secure snowmobile rides for people who need them to the checkpoint,back to the runway from the checkpoint, but it is not something we can guarantee.