

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE ARCTIC MISSION EXPERIENCE

Thank you for your interest in an Arctic Mission Experience (AME). Arctic Mission Adventure (AMA), a ministry of the Alaska Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, is a 100% donor-funded ministry which could not operate without volunteer groups like yours.

Your application will be reviewed, and you will be contacted by either the AMA program or development director as soon as possible. Meanwhile here are planning to consider as well as resources to explore.



OVERVIEW

Trip dates must get approval from the Alaska Conference of Seventh-day Adventists before travel. (Yes, we've had groups arrive unexpectedly!) Your group will be appointed an Alaska Conference staff as your point of contact who will confirm details of your trip to Alaska.

Project **objectives** must clearly be defined and understood by your project lead, conference contact and the local organization, i.e., pastor, head teacher, camp director, etc.

All adults, ages 18 and over, who are participating in the AME must have a **background check**. The conference uses Sterling Volunteers as recommended by the North American Division. We suggest you have volunteers start this process immediately! If they have a background screening already in place, all the volunteer needs to do is "share" their report with the Alaska Conference.

All groups interested in participating in an AME should be prepared to **cover all aspects of the trip in terms of cost**, but more on that later!

LOGISTICS

Travel to and throughout Alaska is costly and easily disrupted during winter months. Speaking of winter, in Bush Alaska, winter weather can impact travel from October through April, quite a bit longer than what you may be used to. Your project lead will need to consider:

- Local Transportation:** How will your group move around the community? Bus? Rental Car? Snow machine? Four-Wheeler?

RESOURCES

Alaska.org

Alaska Conference of SDA

Alaska Native Heritage Center

Arctic Mission Adventure Videos

Background Screening

COVID-19 Updates

Traveling Alaska

COMMUNITY INFORMATION

[Anchorage](#)

[Bethel](#)

[Dillingham](#)

[Fairbanks](#)

[Gambell](#)

[Glennallen](#)

[Kotzebue](#)

[Nome](#)

[Savoonga](#)

[Selawik](#)

[Shungnak](#)

[Togiak](#)

[Wrangell](#)

Lodging: Will your group stay in hotels? The local Adventist church or school? Make it a true “wilderness adventure” and camp out? While some of our hub communities—Nome, Dillingham, Barrow—may have hotels, smaller villages may have a church or plan to stay with members.

Meals: Food in Bush Alaska is expensive, and choices are limited. For example, when the Alaska Conference hosts its annual Arctic Camp Meeting or Alaska Camps program, we purchase and transport food to many of our communities as it is less expensive. Is there a source of food at your destination? Can arrangements be made to have food delivered prior to your arrival? Walmart and Costco have a robust Alaska delivery system!

Materials: Another issue to consider when your materials will arrive at your destination site. If your group would like to participate in a building project, do the materials need to be barged from Anchorage? If so, orders need to be placed in advanced (sometimes in the prior year) to ensure delivery. Perhaps you are doing something smaller, a Vacation Bible School. Be prepared to bring snacks, crafts, costumes—everything needed to hold a program—or work with your designated contact to have the items shipped.

Local Leadership: Along with your conference contact, you will be working with local leadership. They are the “boots on the ground” in local communities. Local leadership may be a pastor, AMA worker, teacher, or head elder. They will be key to working out the details of your project, i.e., where will VBS be held, where is the local store, how are items shipped to your community.

Remember, they are a resource. Their role is to help facilitate your project and help trouble-shoot problems but are not responsible for the planning and implementation of your AME.

Sightseeing: Most groups that travel to Alaska want to get in a bit of sight-seeing as part of their AME and there is a lot to see! You will want to see what is available in major cities (the cost will be less and transportation more readily available) before traveling on to your AME destination.

Pre-Planning Trip: Ideally, a planning trip by the project lead would allow the group to answer many of the logistical aspects of travel. While not required, it would provide an idea of the project scope and location firsthand as Alaska is quite different from many parts of the U.S.

EXPENSES

Because the AMA Ministry is 100% donor-supported, funds are not available to groups wanting to participate in an AME. That said, we truly appreciate your interest and willingness to help reach the

people of Alaska—we truly could not do it without you! So, let's get to it—here's what your group should expect to cover:

Transportation	Food
Lodging	Conference Application Fee
Pre-planning Travel	Materials*
Travel Insurance	Sightseeing Excursions

**Except for materials pre-arranged to be supplied by the Alaska Conference.*

Conference Project Fee: In addition to the items above, the conference requires a project participate fee of \$150.00 per person. In lieu of this fee, a group may opt to pay an overall project fee as determined by your conference contact.

ALASKA CONFERENCE PROVISIONS

So, as an AME visiting group you probably want to know what the Alaska Conference will provide—here's what you can expect:

- ✓ A conference contact and assignment of a local leader.
- ✓ A list of approved projects and associated expenses.
- ✓ Vetting of AME groups to ensure capability matches project or program.
- ✓ Meeting the group upon arrival to each locale to ensure they arrived at destination.
- ✓ Pre-arrangement with project lead as to what supplies the group will provide and what the conference will provide.
- ✓ Ensure conference-supplied materials are in place in a timely manner.
- ✓ Provide all AME participants with an AME t-shirt.

HEALTH SAFETY

While the state of Alaska does not require vaccines, please note that the history of indigenous people of Alaska has been negatively affected since colonization in the late 1800's. As representatives of the Alaska Conference and the greater Seventh-day Adventist Church, our approach is one of consideration and grace.

Communities have the authority to prohibit unvaccinated individuals, require mask wearing and prohibit gatherings based on community needs. Populations of villages can be very small—less than 300 people with no hospital facility—so coronavirus in a small community can be extremely challenging. We require all participants to adhere to conference and community COVID-19 guidelines. It is the responsibility of the traveling party to familiarize themselves with state, local and conference requirements.

FLEXIBILITY

A key attitude for those participating in a mission trip! While we plan as much as possible for a success trip, things always pop-up unexpectedly!

CULTURAL AWARENESS

It is important when entering rural Alaska to respect and understand traditions. The people of Alaska have successfully lived in a harsh, unforgiving climate for centuries. The following information on outreach to rural Alaska, as well as *Ways of Communication* in the sidebar, is provided by professionals from the Alaska Native Heritage Center:

Here are some things you should know and be aware of if traveling to a village:

- a. Some villagers have strict protocols. Announce in advance you are visiting and the purpose of the visit. It is best to make an announcement before you make a visit to make a connection. You may contact local Native agencies such as the Tribal Government, City Office, Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) Office. You may also want to contact Elders.
- b. Make sure you have your connections in the villages before you travel. Some villages may not welcome you if you don't have your local connections.
- c. Some villages are welcoming. They might put a potluck and/or dance together to make you feel welcome. Do attend if possible. This is their way of telling you, "Welcome and thank you for visiting us". They're opening the door for you and want to get to know you. This is a good opportunity to build a relationship and a connection with the villagers. Some may be offended if you turn away from your invitation. If you're unable to attend, do thank them for the invite. Small things go a very long way in the villages.
- d. Some villagers may bring you artwork to sell to you. During this short visit, some of them might tell you personal stories. Some stories might be a little shocking. If you're interested in buying artwork, bring cash with you. But it's okay to tell them no if you aren't interested.
- e. Alaska is massive. Dress appropriately for the weather. It could be 60 below in the interior of Alaska and 50 degrees in Southeast Alaska at the same time. Check weather status before you travel.
- f. Every season brings different activities and reasons. Before traveling to a village, contact your local connections to see if there are any activities happening in the village. In the summertime, most go out to go fishing to store for the winter. They also travel to gather other resources for survival. So, make sure you make your connections before you travel. You also don't want to travel to a village during whale hunting season. The villagers are very busy during this season.

WAYS OF COMMUNICATION

The following will help individuals to understand and respect each other better. Because of the difference in communication, there is misunderstanding and misconception.

TEMPO

How fast or slow do you speak? People raised in the Western Culture tend to speak a lot faster than most Alaskan Native people. Especially faster than those raised in Rural Alaska.

PITCH

How high or low do you speak? It's important to "sing" the English language today. Especially when you are trying to "sell" yourself for a job. People raised in Rural Alaska tend to speak down a monotone that's not musical as people who were raised in the Western Culture.

DISTANCE

How far or close do you stand? It varies with different cultures. People raised in the Western Culture tend to stand close to people when speaking to others. They also tend to touch a lot especially when standing close to others. It's also okay for people who were raised in Western Culture to be standing next to a person sitting down while talking to them. For people raised in Rural Alaska, it's uncomfortable when someone stands too close to you when being spoken to. It's found to be intimidating to some people.

VOLUME

How loud or soft do you speak? A lot of people raised in Western Culture speak louder than Alaskan Natives. Especially louder than those raised in Rural Alaska. Some Alaskan Natives might find loud speakers to be offputting depending on a situation.

SHARING YOUR EXPERIENCE

It is important when entering rural Alaska to respect and understand traditions. The people of Alaska have successfully lived in a harsh, unforgiving climate for centuries. The

[Video Tips](#)

[Writing Stories](#)

[Gleaner Style Guide](#)

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Adventist Lifestyle: Each AME is a unique experience and during such, a great need for flexibility. Also remember that we represent the Alaska Conference, the Adventist Church and as Christians, our Lord and Savior. As such, our words should be kind, and our attitude one of service and compassion. Coarse language and judgment should not be part of interactions. Of course, alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other non-prescription drugs are not allowed.

Luggage: Check with your airline of choice for luggage weight and allowances for each portion of your itinerary. We have found less is more, particularly when traveling within Alaska. Most major hubs are served by Alaska Airlines, however flights from hubs to smaller villages can be more challenging and cargo limitations crucial.

Mosquitos & Other Insects: Alaska is known for its oversized mosquitos! To do battle with these beasts, remember bug repellent with at least 30% DEET concentration, wear long sleeves and pants, and avoid areas of standing water.

Travel with Minors: Although we travel throughout the U.S. with children without issue, we do recommend that you bring proof of parent-child relationship or other situations, i.e., divorced, legal guardian, etc.

Worksite Safety: For those working construction projects, safety equipment needed will depend on the project scope and your assignment. Hard hats and closed-toe shoes may be required.

THANK YOU

Arctic Mission
Adventure is a 100%
donor-supported
ministry and would not
be possible without
mission groups
like yours!

PACKING LIST

WARDROBE

- Long work pants
- T-shirts and/or long sleeve shirts
- Construction gloves
- Hard hat (depending on project)
- Sunglasses or safety glasses
- Sturdy shoes

ITEMS TO REMEMBER

- Negative COVID-19 test results
- Minor consent paperwork
- Face mask(s) or covering(s)
- Prescribed medication and items like Tylenol, Band-Aids, Pepto Bismol, etc.
- Shoes and socks
- Underclothes
- Slacks
- Casual Shirt
- Hat for sun protection
- Sleepwear
- Light jacket or sweatshirt
- Personal toiletries (soap, toothpaste, etc.)
- Hand sanitizer
- Insect repellent
- Sunblock
- Lip balm

- Water bottle
- Bible
- Cash



OPTIONAL ITEMS

- Lightweight daypack
- Neck pillow/eye mask
- Journal and pens
- Earplugs
- Snacks
- Small instrument you play
- Binoculars
- Supplemental items for dietary needs

OPTIONAL OUTREACH ITEMS

- Money for purchasing local items (helps the village economy)
- School supplies: pens, pencils, erasers, notebooks, backpacks
- Christian books and pamphlets
- Christian song books
- Group toys (jump ropes, soccer balls w pumps, etc.)
- Feminine hygiene products
- Toothbrushes and toothpastes
- Hair clips