

Tips From a AAA Travel Advisor: Brenda Scrivens

Alaska comes to life onboard cruise ship

See the best of 'The Last Frontier' while sailing on high seas



AAA Travel Advisor:
Brenda Scrivens

After 15 years as a postal clerk, I turned my hobby of planning trips for family and friends into my next career. Despite my intensive training, there is no replacement for experiencing and seeing the destination, or a cruise ship firsthand. AAA takes that seriously. In May, it sent a group of Travel Advisors on a one-week cruise to Alaska on Princess Cruise Line's roundtrip cruise from Seattle.

Be sure to sign-up for services ahead of time to make your cruise seamless. The Princess Medallion app speeds up embarkation, unlocks stateroom doors and enables payments. Consider all your dining choices. Princess offers a traditional-dining time – the same table and time nightly, or anytime dining, where you book and customize your dining using the app. The *Royal Princess* offered grill bites, pizza joints and specialty-fee dining, including the Crab Shack – a fun spot cordoned off from the buffet that came with mallets, bibs and buckets; and Sabatini's,



COOL TIMES – A cruise ship glides by Alaska's Margerie Glacier. Image: Brenda Scrivens. AAA.

offering Northern Italian fare. We were offered two specialty desserts daily and enjoyed our Gelato snacks!

The Port of Seattle offers a service called Port Valet, a complimentary luggage transfer from the ship to your airline. Your bag tags are brought to your cabin the night before you disembark. You just secure the tags, put your luggage out

by 8:30 p.m., and you won't see your bags again until you arrive home. This worked well for us, because we disembarked at 7:30 a.m. and didn't fly out of Seattle until later that evening. We took backpacks and were able to spend the day touring Seattle.

Onboard, the *Voice of the Ocean* show brought TV's popular singing competition to the high seas, live and on-stage

complete with blind auditions, mentor sessions, the iconic "I Want You" spinning chairs, three charismatic coaches and a finale performance, where we voted on the winner.

The best part of the cruise was the destination – Alaska. In Skagway, we did a gold-panning and sled tour. In Ketchikan, our small vessel took us on a wildlife excursion six miles out to sea, and we were not disappointed. We saw orcas, humpbacks spouting and spotted a bald eagle taking off from a rock. He soared right over us!

My favorite day was at sea at Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, where two park rangers boarded the ship and provided us with information on the natural scenery, wildlife and conservation efforts within the park. We viewed the ice formations, including the 21-mile-long Margerie Glacier. We watched giant hunks of ice breaking off the glaciers and crashing down into the bay – a process called calving.

My final tip is how to dress?! Bring it all. Our weather ranged from 70 degrees to the 40s in Glacier Bay. So, you can strip off the layers as you go!

To learn about booking a Princess cruise or a trip with another cruise line, visit your nearest AAA branch to speak with a travel advisor or visit AAA.com/Travel.

New AAA online tools make traveling easier

Set meetings with travel advisors to plan dream vacations

Planning a vacation is one of the most enjoyable times of the year. You list destinations of interest, set a budget and begin to dream.

Should we go to the beach? How about a cruise? An African safari? Europe? The options are endless.

One moment, you envision yourself on a Caribbean Island. The next one, you might be standing in front of the Eiffel Tower, the Leaning Tower of Pisa or the Great Wall of China.

Dreaming is such a hoot. It's even better when it becomes a reality – and there is no better way to make that happen than by working with a AAA Travel Advisor. They help clients with all types of situations and are immersed in travel full-time, so they're aware of details of which you might not think when planning on your own. Their knowledge and experience also give them the foresight to prevent potential problems.

To your benefit, AAA simplified the process to connect with a travel advisor. A few mouse clicks can set up an appointment or make a payment – virtually or in-person. It doesn't get much easier.

Members begin by visiting AAA.com/TravelAdvisor. Click Contact a Travel Advisor to reach a page that



MAKE IT HAPPEN – AAA Travel recently introduced new online tools to simplify the process to meet with a travel advisor and build a dream vacation. Image: VadimGuzhva. Adobe Stock.

allows members to find the closest AAA branch office in their area. From there, members can click on a branch to find its address, phone number, hours of operation and an opportunity to schedule an appointment.

Members will be offered a series of

services from which to choose. They include:

- Follow-up Vacation Plans (in-person or virtually)
- Travel Payments/Other Travel Services (in-person or virtually)
- New Vacation Planning (in-person or virtually)

Once members make their selections, a calendar allows them to pick a date and time to meet with a travel advisor. They can choose a specific advisor or have one chosen for them based on availability.

The final page asks for a member's name, email address and phone number, as well as opportunities to set the dates and destinations in which they are interested. Click book to set your appointment.

Existing clients also can be directed to this tool to set up appointments, so they don't have to call or email their advisor.

Travel is a necessary privilege. It allows us to escape our everyday grinds to visit different worlds, experience new cultures or just relax and recharge our batteries.

Take advantage of AAA Travel's online tools to meet with experienced travel advisors. A knowledgeable travel advisor will make personalized recommendations and offer tips on destinations, what to see and do while on vacation, the best and worst times to travel and much more. They'll answer any questions, find the best deals, offer sound advice and make sure you book the perfect vacation.