JUNEAU, ALASKA

Juneau, Alaska’s capital since 1900, sits at the base of Mt. Juneau. This capital blends its history as a mining town containing old storefronts and saloons with the modern architecture of government and Native corporations.

History

In the late 1800s, gold became the foundation of Juneau. The town contained a variety of gold mines with the Alaska-Juneau, or A-J, mine the most successful. The A-J mine buildings are still visible above town. Other gold mines include the Treadwill Mine complex at Douglas and the Alaska-Gastineau mine south of town. A massive cave-in occurred at Treadwill in 1917 and the mine closed. When gold content dropped below profitable margins in 1921, the Alaska-Gastineau mine closed. The A-J mine continued operations until World War II, when labor shortages and high costs forced its closure.

Visitor Attractions

Walking, hiking, and biking trails abound in and around the Juneau area. Scenic flights take visitors over the spectacular ice fields and the Glacier Bay National Monument. Take an exciting boat ride along Juneau’s wilderness waterways. Tour buses take visitors to Mendanhall Glacier where they can climb moraines left by receding glaciers, hike nearby trails, and visit the U.S. Forest Service observatory where guides and exhibits explain glacier features. Visitors also can reach the glacier by driving or taking a charter flight.

Reminders of Juneau’s past abound in the city. The Davis Log Cabin, built in 1881, was the community’s first church and is now the visitor information center. Consider a visit to the St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church, which was built in 1894 and is considered the oldest original Orthodox Church in Southeast Alaska. Other city attractions include the Juneau Douglas City Museum, the pioneer cemetery, and the Wickersham House.

Museums

Juneau is the proud home to the Alaska State Museum, featuring permanent displays of Eskimo and Southeast Indian artifacts. The museum also offers changing displays of Alaska’s political and natural history.

Visit the Juneau Douglas City Museum and learn about Juneau’s history. Exhibits include features on gold mining and Juneau’s historic past. A small admission fee is charged to adults. Children under the age of 18 are admitted free of charge.

The Alaska Maritime Heritage Foundation, a nonprofit group, is planning to build a tall ship for Alaska. It will be used to train sailors and people with disabilities in seamanship, environmental studies, goodwill trips, and charter work.