

January 4, 2011



**SITKA**  
CONVENTION AND  
VISITORS BUREAU

Mayor Cheryl Westover

Sitka Assembly Members: Mr. Larry Crews, Ms. Phyllis Hackett, Ms. Mim O'Connell, Mr. Terry Blake, Mr. Thor Christianson and Mr. Peter Esquiro  
c/o 100 Lincoln Street  
Sitka, AK 99835

Dear Mayor and Assembly Members:

Last October, business representatives from Haines, Hoonah (known as Icy Strait Point) and Sitka, all two second-tier cruise ship ports that – like Sitka – discussed their struggles in recent years as a result of the decline in ship visits to our communities. Discussion centered around the economic hardship this trend has had on businesses and on our communities in general. More importantly, the group began devising a plan to bring a meaningful number of cruise ship visitors back to our ports. We named this plan “Backroads Alaska” and we are having a positive response from tour operators and attractions not only from Sitka, but from other communities as well. They support this marketing idea and want to move forward.

Many people have taken more than one cruise to Alaska, but with only minor exceptions. The cruises offered stops at the same primary ports they visited on their first cruise: Juneau, Skagway and Ketchikan. We believe strongly that more veteran cruisers would return to Alaska if they were given the opportunity to embark on a cruise specially designed to highlight our very-fascinating, but less-visited ports. We also believe this unique cruise ship itinerary would become reality if the representatives of Southeast Alaska’s smaller ports coordinate our efforts to promote a cruise that links our communities together in a way that makes marketing sense, operational sense, and financial sense to one of the large cruise lines.

Since the itinerary planning for 2012 is already in full swing for the cruise lines, our window of opportunity to influence their scheduling decisions is rapidly closing. Time is of the essence. We need support from the Sitka assembly to help participate along with the other cities.

Attached, please find possible itineraries that we would present to the cruise lines. We would put together a professionally printed full color printed booklet that would include photographs and give details for each port including:

1. Natural, historical & cultural attractions
2. Shore excursion tours sold on the ship (with capacities)
3. Shopping opportunities, and activities available for those not on tours
4. Area maps and Visitor Center information
5. Port and dock facilities, including port-use fees and taxes
6. Transportation infrastructure (i.e. local tender services, shuttle buses and taxis)
7. Medical and emergency facilities
8. Important contact numbers (i.e. Mayor, City Administrator, Harbormaster, Tourism Director, etc.)
9. Ancillary services (i.e.: fresh seafood and other locally-available products)
10. Airport facilities for emergency access or client accessibilities
11. Customs and immigrations services
12. Future plans for port improvements that are ongoing or pending more cruise traffic

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The booklet will provide this information in a comprehensive, easy-to-reference format and help the cruise line envision the unique experience their passengers would gain. It would also list who the cruise would appeal to. We feel the Alaska Backroads concept would fit return "cruisers" who want another Alaska cruise, but not the same ports they have already experienced. We feel the concept would also be appealing to cruisers new to Southeast Alaska.

We would like a delegation to present the booklet to all the cruise lines that presently call in Alaska as well as any cruise lines considering adding cruises to Alaska. To do this, we would like to make appointments with cruise officials at Miami's March 2011 SeaTrade, an important international cruise conference attended by key decision makers from the cruise industry.

We request support from the City and Borough of Sitka to offer incentives to enhance the attractiveness and marketability of this concept. For the cruise line that agrees to partner with us on the Alaska Backroads concept, we are requesting a one-year waiver of Sitka's port fees, but only for the ship assigned specifically to operate the Backroads itinerary. We would also like the City to offer a partial-day vehicle traffic closure of Lincoln Street. We think this action would provide the participating cruise line with a great marketing opportunity. It would create a fun and memorable "pedestrian mall" environment that would encourage the guests of the ship to spend time and money in our downtown area.

We thank you for your consideration of this approach to gain additional economic benefit to Sitka.

On behalf of The Sitka Convention and Visitors Bureau Board:  
Tonia Rioux, President, Mary Stensvold, Vice President, John Dunlap, Ron Hauck, Pat Fager,  
Brian Gundaker and Karen Dhillon

Submitted by: Sandy Lorrigan

Cc: City Administrator Jim Dinley

**A Few Possible Sample Itineraries for Alaska Backroads Marketing Concept:**

**1)**

Tuesday	4p	Depart Vancouver
Wednesday	afternoon	Cruising British Columbia's Waterfall Fjords
Thursday	11a-9p	Haines (with opportunity to visit Skagway by Fast Ferry)
Friday	7a-4p	Icy Strait Point (evening sightseeing to Pt. Adolphus to Brady Glacier)
Saturday	7a-11a	Hubbard Glacier (possible exclusive stop in Yakutat 12n-4p?)
Sunday	7a-4p	Sitka (Pedestrian Mall on Lincoln Street until mid afternoon?)
Monday	all day	At Sea
Tuesday	7a	Arrive Vancouver

**2)**

Thursday	4p	Depart Vancouver
Friday	afternoon	Cruising British Columbia's Waterfall Fjords
Saturday	8a-8p	Sitka (Pedestrian Mall on Lincoln Street until mid afternoon?)
Sunday	8a-8p	Icy Strait Point (Evening sightseeing in Icy Strait)
Monday	8a-8p	Haines (with opportunity to visit Skagway by Fast Ferry)
Tuesday	6a-12n	Tracy Arm Fjord and Glaciers
Wednesday	all day	At Sea
Thursday	7a	Arrive Vancouver

Objectives being considered in cruise itineraries:

- Sail from Vancouver, to preclude necessity for making a port call in a Canadian Port
- Schedule port calls to occur on days when there are likely to be no other cruise ships in port
- Schedule the Haines port-call on a day when Skagway is not full (which effects Haines' ability to host a ship)
- Connect the ports together in an order that allows cost-efficient ship operations for the participating line
- An itinerary that allows the ship to transit some of British Columbia and Alaska most beautiful Areas during daylight hours