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The birds are at it again, and I know this not because I am looking out the kitchen’s French doors at their activity but because I hear them from up here at my desk in the den. The feeder frenzy outside has begun.

It starts about an hour after sunrise every morning. Chickadees, pine grosbeaks and assorted other small birds flock to the feeders in numbers often exceeding 50 at a time. Does it matter that I haven’t bothered to identify them — that I just like looking at them? I feel like I should be educating myself on these avian acrobats, not just staring, but it’s what I do.

They flit so quickly it’s impossible to get an accurate count. Occasionally, a squirrel will join the mix, sending our Gordon Setter into paroxysms of hunting anxiety. I find myself standing by the doors, wasting valuable time watching them. I wonder if somewhere in the near future, area biologists are going to notice a spike in the bird population on a certain 2.5-acre parcel of land in Chugiak, and fund studies to find out what the fuss was all about. I wonder if the birds will find it so nice here that they’ll stick around this summer and perhaps help eradicate our mosquito population. I waste far too much time with these birds.

Yet I love them. This gluttonous feeding of every bird that lives within a five-mile radius of our home has become a slight addiction on my part. I spend more money on bird seed than I do milk and eggs for the family. I fret when I leave the house, knowing the feeders are getting low and the greedy birds are going to be disappointed. I nag my husband daily to refill the feeders, even when I’m out of town and checking in by phone.

The feeders will go away come spring thaw, when curious bears begin to awaken, but for now I’m fully engaged in the birds’ antics. The birds, to me, are proof that we really don’t have to hunker down all winter and that if we prepare mightily, we will be ready for all that awaits us this spring and summer. The birds do it, plucking seeds from the feeder and secreting them into tiny pockets of trees, along the woodshead’s rooftop crevices and into cracks along the driveway’s rock wall. They are getting ready for spring and summer, maybe even storing those morsels for hard winters yet to come. They, like us, are making plans.

This month, Coast is in full-planning mode, too. We’re included our annual State of the Trails profile on Pages 21-23. This information-packed primer shares the best hiking/biking/riding trails to be found, and this year we’ve also made it a handy pullout to detach and take with you on your next adventure.

We’ll also help you line out your summer of racing. Triathlon season gets under way soon, starting with the Gold Nugget, which on March 5 quickly filled to its 1,500-woman capacity. Find out more about it on Page 8.

If you’re like me, and have a soft spot for our winged friends, see what Lisa Maloney suggests for birding outings locally in her Apres column, Page 11. Or plan your own educational trip to one of several birding festivals held in the spring (Page 6).

For those who still aren’t ready to say goodbye to the snow, that too can be tackled this month. Read Mike Buck’s fascinating story on biking to Knik Glacier (Beginning on Page 14), a surprisingly accessible spring outing just a day trip away from Anchorage.

As for me, I’m looking fully forward to sunshine — hiking mountains, riding bikes, running a few races and yes, if the mood strikes, maybe even getting out a bird book and identifying a few warm-weather species here to join the summer fun, too. ◆
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Cover: A hiker takes a break to enjoy a view of Turnagain Arm. MICHAEL DEYOUNG / ALASKASTOCK

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Spring migration draws birders to the shore

When Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival-goers last year heard there was a bristle-thighed curlew lurking in Anchor Point, they dropped everything to go see if they could spot it. While more common to such far-off locales as the Pribilofs and Seward Peninsula, it’s not unheard of to see such a species on the Kenai, but definitely a rare treat.

That’s one of the reasons the annual festival’s Big Spit Plus Bird Challenge has extended its hours. Once a half-day event, the challenge now spreads over three days, said festival coordinator Debbie Dauphinais.

“They’ve expanded their (birding) boundaries and now start at 12:01 a.m. Thursday (May 9) and end at 1 p.m. on Saturday (May 11),” Dauphinais said. “I think what they were running into with the shorter event was that a lot of people were having a hard time with wanting to go to festival events and only have so many daylight hours to do their birding,” she said. “This way, they will have more time and still get to do the other things we have at the festival.”

The Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival features more than a birding contest, though. There will be birding experts from across the country — including Jeffrey Gordon, president of the American Birding Association, and Phillip Hoose, author of several books, including “Moonbird: A Year on the Wind With the Great Survivor B95.” Workshops and field presentations will be available, as well as guided bird outings and three photography classes.

“Some of the more popular events are the boat tours,” Dauphinais said. “They sell out quickly.”

Also new to this year’s event are sack lunches for purchase from area cafes and restaurants, Shorebird Festival clothing, such as T-shirts and sweatshirts, and an online registration system that will allow birders to secure spots in their favorite events.

Across Prince William Sound, the community of Cordova also is gearing up for its annual festival. The Copper River Delta Shorebird Festival celebrates its 23rd year with a weekend of activity, including birding outings, workshops, a quilt show, birders
The Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival is May 9-12, with a pre-festival Junior Birder event on May 8. Keynote speaker is Jeffrey Gordon, president of the American Birding Association. For details, visit www.homeralaska.org or contact 907-235-7740.

The 23rd annual Copper River Delta Shorebird Festival is May 2-5 in Cordova with keynote speaker Guido Berguido, from the Panama Audubon Society. For details, visit cordovachamber.com or call 907-424-7260.

At the Kachemak Bay Shorebird Festival, there are a wide variety of educational, hands-on events to satisfy all levels and ages of birders (even nonbirders).
Alaska women get a kick out of Gold Nugget

On March 5, women across Southcentral stopped whatever they were doing to rush to their computers. They needed to be online at precisely 8 p.m. because that’s when registration officially opened for the coveted 1,500 spots available in the 31st annual Gold Nugget Triathlon.

“It took 16 minutes to fill up,” said race director Claire Norton-Cruz. “Our web master sets this thing so that it instantaneously changes once you hit 1,500 signed up, to switch over and say you’re in the lottery pool.”

The Gold Nugget has become the premier triathlon for female athletes, and it kicks off a season of racing that has women and girls from ages 8 to 88 out swimming, biking and running their way to fitness. This year’s event is scheduled for May 19, beginning with the swim portion at Bartlett High School. Norton-Cruz said the bike and run portions will be on a course that has been run in previous years, off base.

“People want to have a permanent course,” Norton-Cruz said, “and we want to provide it. We have to do what is safest and consider costs.”

In 2011, the course was moved onto the military base, allowing bikes to be returned to Bartlett for the beginning of the run portion. But military regulations limited race planners last year, so they’ve added a more remote course, which requires U-Haul shuttling of bikes back to the school.

The Gold Nugget includes a 500-yard swim, 12-mile bike ride, and 4.1-mile run. Once the swim portion is over, competitors race onto their bikes, taking to the bike path along the Glenn Highway, north toward Joint Base Elmendorf Richardson. After ditching their bikes, they race along the Tank Trail on...
Fort Rich property that loops them back to the school. Last year’s winner, Amber Stull, completed the race in a blistering 1 hour, 8 minutes, 49 seconds. But that doesn’t mean this is a fierce-competitors-only event. Mother-daughter teams are frequent, and groups name themselves and race as a pack. There will probably even be a few costumes out there, although the triathlon format is not too conducive to such antics. For some, the race will take more than 4 hours, but in the end, everyone can celebrate their success in completing.

“The Gold Nugget mission is to ‘improve the lives of women and girls through athletics,’ ” Norton-Cruz said. “So other than setting aside seeded slots to the top 50, that’s the only thing we do to cater to the elite racers. Every year we have 500 newbies, so we’re really proud that ours is the safe, the supportive, the fun one.”

An awards banquet is set for 6 p.m. May 20 at Begich Middle School, 7740 Creekside Center Drive. For more details on the race — or to help volunteer — go to www.goldnuggettriathlon.com.

Get Cracking at the Kodiak Crab Festival

Kodiak is bustling with preparations for the 2013 Crab Festival, a favorite event in this community of just over 6,000 residents. Scheduled for May 23-27, the festival is five days of feasting, frivolity, and seafaring fun on the Emerald Isle, centering around a theme of “Powered by Nature.” Known as Kodiak’s signature celebration, the Crab Festival has been a springtime staple since the first event held in 1958, drawing thousands of visitors from across the state and around the world.

Created to honor a booming king crab fishery discovered in the 1940s and 50s, the Kodiak Crab Festival continues despite the fishery’s closure after the 1982 season. Even though king crab are no longer harvested commercially in the area, plenty of opportunities exist during the Crab Festival for delving into the history of this sea-born delicacy. Find multiple vendor booths featuring a variety of seafood samples, including crab, then take time to visit local museums that offer tours of the waterfront area and boat harbor. Athletes can take part in the U.S. Coast Guard-endorsed survival suit races or Pillar Mountain Race, both rugged examples of fitness in this lush wilderness paradise.

Kids will enjoy the Golden Wheel Amusements carnival and Grand Parade, and everyone can take a moment to honor local fishermen and women during the annual Blessing of the Fleet and Veterans’ Memorial Service, including performances by the Kodiak Island Drummers.

Alaska Airlines (www.alaskaair.com) and Era Aviation (www.flyera.com) both offer daily air service to Kodiak, and the Alaska Marine Highway System ferries travel to Kodiak from Homer (www.ferryalaska.com). Accommodations are limited during Crab Festival weekend, so advance booking is a must. Try the Kodiak Chamber of Commerce and Convention and Visitors Bureau for information about lodging, dining, and other Crab Festival events (www.kodiak.org).

– Erin Kirkland
COAST magazine will be publishing the exclusive and official guide to The Alaska Airlines Cup Soccer Tournament.

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I’m a poop nerd.
No, really. As soon as I see wild-animal poop, I rush to poke it with a stick, dissecting it to see what’s inside, what made it, how long it’s been there. Fortunately for me, several organizations exist solely to facilitate that sort of experiential learning. Although many of their programs are geared toward kids, quite a few welcome adults, too.

After all, getting outside is more than just going as far as you can as fast as you can; it’s about engaging with your surroundings, too. In honor of that, here are some adult-friendly opportunities to get out there and learn what’s beneath the melting snow.

**EAGLE RIVER NATURE CENTER**

“Our naturalists are conducting field trips with school classes in April and May, so on the weekends we have quite a nice lineup of guests,” writes Asta Spurgis, executive director of the Eagle River Nature Center. April highlights include a chance to learn about and participate in a study on the affects of the ornamental, invasive “May Day” chokecherry on moose browsing behavior (April 14).

For the urban (or not-so-urban) homesteaders among you, Elizabeth Manning and Tony Carnahan of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game will discuss how not to attract bears while raising livestock (April 21). This presentation includes a hands-on demonstration of electric fencing. (Pun not intended – I hope.)

For those with kids, Chugach State Park ranger Tom Crockett will help you “lost-proof” them with an indoor/outdoor presentation and exercises that cover how not to get lost in the first place, plus how to get found if it does happen.

May programs weren’t available at press time, but Spurgis says you can expect one of the very popular hikes led by Nature Center volunteers Bob and Ann Fisher. She also points out the center’s new Yukla Yurt – two miles down the Crow Pass trail – as an opportunity to get away from it all without going all that far. The Yukla Yurt sleeps six, has a large outdoor deck, and rents for $65/night for nonmembers, $55 for Nature Center members.

Center hours are 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Fridays-Sundays in April and May. However, the trails are always open, so visit at your leisure to listen for great horned, boreal, and saw-whet owls, and keep your eyes peeled for the lynx, coyotes and wolverine staff have recently reported seeing or hearing. See ernc.org for directions, program listings and additional information.

**CAMPBELL CREEK SCIENCE CENTER**

The Campbell Creek Science Center tends to cater to the school crowd, but it also hosts a popular series of adult-friendly fireside chats throughout the winter; the last chat, on April 17, will cover cold war radar sites in mid-20th-century Alaska.

Another seasonal, all-ages highlight is the series of early-morning bird walks co-hosted by the Anchorage Audubon Society. This year’s walks are held 6:30-8:30 a.m. every Thursday in May (May 2, 9, 16, 23 and 30). Dress for chilly mornings on the trails, watching and listening as songbirds return to their summer mating and breeding ground. Hot cocoa and coffee are offered in the Science Center afterwards; call 267-1241 with questions.

The Alaska Native Plant Society hosts its monthly meeting at the Science Center, 7 p.m. April 1 (and May 6) at the Campbell Creek Science Center. The April speaker is Peggy Hunt with the Alaska Plant Material Center; May’s speaker is the Society’s own Beth Baker. For more Plant Society summer activities, go to the group’s website at aknps.org.

While still a ways off, this is worth mentioning: On June 1, the Science Center celebrates National Trails Day, an opportunity for the entire family to get out and get their hands dirty, helping maintain the Science Center and the trails around it. There’s something for every ability level – in past years volunteers have painted, planted and performed trail maintenance; made new friendships; and, rumor has it, eaten quite a lot of pizza afterward.

**ANCHORAGE AUDUBON**

In addition to the Science Center-hosted walks, the Anchorage Audubon Society co-hosts the annual Hawkwatch Weekend with the Mat-Su Birders April 13-14. Details were still being finalized as of press time, but expect a weekend of watching migrating raptors stream through the mountains. You don’t have to be an expert birder to attend – in fact, this is a great opportunity for novices to wet their feet. See anchorageaudubon.org for details.

**Integrating education**

Why not have fun outdoors **and** learn a thing or two?

By Lisa Maloney
The target in the Alaskan high kick at the Native Youth Olympic Games isn’t impressive by itself. It’s a little ball suspended above the ground. In the early rounds, it’s below eye level if you stand beside it. But the athletes in this event won’t be standing. They are seated and launch themselves into a one-handed handstand to deftly touch the ball with one foot. The best competitors can reach targets suspended well above the heads of everyone in the audience. The world record is around 8 feet. These are the kind of athletic feats that make the NYO Games special: seemingly simple tasks stretched to the most extraordinary limits of human physical ability.

Started in 1972, the NYO Games, known in the early years as the Native Youth Olympics, include 10 events based on games past generations of Alaska Native people played as a way to hone their hunting and survival skills, increase strength and maintain endurance, agility and the balance of mind and body. The Eskimo stick pull, for instance, is based on a strengthening exercise that Native hunters would do to prepare themselves for pulling seals out of the water. Although events are based on traditional Alaska Native activities, the competition is open to all Alaska students from seventh to 12th grade, regardless of ethnicity.

It’s an insight into Alaska’s rich cultural heritage and a friendly competition for Alaska kids all at once. About 500 students from across the state assemble in Anchorage each spring to demonstrate their skills. This year’s games will be held April 25-27 in the Dena’ina Civic and Convention Center. Admission is free, so come cheer on the athletes.

There’s a reason the NYO Games can inspire a hushed awe; the concentration is extreme, and you won’t see athletes in any other sport accomplish what some of these kids can do. The best can hop 150 feet across a hardwood floor on their knuckles (the seal hop), hang on to a stick with only a bent wrist for minutes as their teammates carry them (wrist carry) or balance all their weight on a single hand while stretching for a ball suspended almost 6 feet over their head (one-hand reach). And if you’re thinking, “I could do that,” well, I dare you to give it a try.

The premise of each event seems simple – touch the ball, jump high, hold on for as long as you can – but as the height of the target increases or the distance required to advance widens, the skills quickly approach the superhuman. Attempting an event yourself might leave you breathing hard, but watching these young men and women compete will almost certainly take your breath away.

NATIVE YOUTH OLYMPICS
The Native Youth Olympic Games is set for April 25-27 at the Dena’ina Civic and Convention Center in Anchorage. Admission is free. For more details, go to citci.org/event-programs/nyo-games.

Athletes in the NYO Games test their mettle at such challenging events as the one-hand reach. ROY NEESE
CHEER ON MORE THAN 500 ALASKA ATHLETES AS THEY COMPETE AT THE NYO GAMES APRIL 25–27, 2013. FOR MORE INFORMATION ON ALL THE ACTION VISIT BIGWILDLIFE.COM/NYO

CELEBRATE TRADITIONS
My wife, Teri, and I had been watching the weather and it looked favorable for clear skies and little wind. This, we have found, is the key to a successful trip. If the wind howls down the Knik River Valley, a trip here can be miserable. On a clear, calm day, it is heaven. The ride itself is an adventure, but at Knik Glacier Lake, the vastness of the Chugach Mountains offers a panorama of spectacular peaks, flowing glacier valleys and giant, floating icebergs.

We had a false start from the Old Glenn Highway where we quickly encountered open water and had to opt for a start closer to the glacier. It is only about 16 miles round trip from a pullout on Knik River Road, four miles south of the Old Glenn, where we parked the car.
Teri Buck negotiates giant ice slabs during a spring biking adventure at Knik Glacier.
We rode around, over and inside of these giant chunks of ice, humbled with the realization that these behemoths were nearly 10,000 years old.

After stashing a few snacks, drinks, safety gear and a spot tracker device in case of an emergency, we headed up valley. Our fat-tired snow bikes easily negotiated the braided river, and we rode smoothly, not always knowing if we were pedaling atop the river ice or over one of the many gravel bar islands created by the meandering river.

Still, we stayed ever-vigilant to the fact that we were traveling on a river, and at any time there could be thin ice or open water, especially near outlets to streams or lakes. We rode along packed snowmachine tracks, keeping our eyes equally peeled for potential open water but also keen on the stunning blue skies and mountains around us. At the Knik Glacier Lake outlet, we saw open water, and water bubbled to the surface along a pressure ridge along one section of the lake. Otherwise, it was smooth sailing.

Big, blue icebergs jetted up out of the lake, some the size of a truck and others the size of an apartment complex. Teri and I rode around, over and inside of these giant chunks of ice, amazed by the clear, blue color and humbled with the realization that these big behemoths were nearly 10,000 years old. We marveled at the remnants of a moulin, carved as a perfect circle into the ice, and I boosted Teri up to sit inside for a picture.
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Sadly, April marks the end of the ski season at Alyeska Resort. Luckily, the month is packed with events and festivities that will let skiers and riders enjoy the long days of spring and give those diehards a chance to get enough runs on their favorite chairlifts to hold them over until next winter.

What April does bring, though, is the hugely popular Alyeska Resort Spring Carnival and Slush Cup. This is the largest celebration of the winter season and now in its 36th year, the event is bigger and rowdier than ever. This year’s Spring Carnival will span Friday, April 19 to Sunday, April 21.

The Slush Cup, Spring Carnival’s signature event, has grown so popular that for the third year in a row KWHL’s morning deejays Bob and Mark will choose half of the event’s 50 competitors at a costume party held at the Sitzmark the night before Slush Cup. Participant slots will be awarded based on quality of costume, and judges will score costumes based on originality, flare and style. The remaining 25 openings will be awarded on Saturday at the pond skim venue.

If you’ve never been to Slush Cup, it’s a must-see competition in which people in wacky costumes attempt to ski or snowboard across a pool of frozen, slushy water. Most don’t make it, and their spectacular failures are all part of the fun. Arrive at the venue early to claim a front-row spot.

Prior to Slush Cup is the Idiot Swim-Across, where brave souls voluntarily jump into the 100-foot-long glacier-cold pond and swim across for the audience’s entertainment. Slush Cup will begin at 4 p.m. Special guest judges include Ariel Tweto from the Discovery Channel’s Flying Wild Alaska, and this year’s winner will take home a 2013-14 season pass from Alyeska Resort.

The festivities continue on Sunday, April 21, with the Dummy Downhill and XTRATUF Tug o’ War competitions. Participation is free, and the top prizes are worthy. The Dummy Downhill is one of the most creative competitions at the resort involving home-made works of art designed for optimal flight down a ski run.

The Tug o’ War competition consists of teams of five competing head-to-head in single elimination rounds. Last year’s teams included not one, but two, representatives for ‘Girls Gone Girdwood’ and the bikini-clad tough gals were a crowd favorite. Like it or not, all losing teams must get into the pond.

The party is just getting started once the sun goes down, and Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons will perform at the Sitzmark for three nights over Spring Carnival weekend, April 18-20. Get your tickets early, because Spring Carnival weekend always sells out. Tickets cost $10 and can be purchased in advance at TheSitzmark.com.

Spring Carnival usually falls on the last weekend of ski season, but this year there will be one extra week to get your turns in. For skiers and riders, the resort will continue operating chairlifts from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. through Sunday, April 28. Local favorites the Photonz will perform at the Sitzmark April 26, 27 and 28.

The aerial tram will close for the season on April 21. There will be no May skiing or riding this season. Alyeska Motor Madness, an Alaska Motor Mushers Club snowmachine racing event will take place May 3-5.

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### SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

**Friday, April 19**
- 7 p.m.: 3rd annual KWHL Costume party
- 10 p.m.: Live at the Sitzmark: Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons; $10 (21 and older)

**Saturday, April 20**
- 11 a.m.-3 p.m.: Event registration
- 3:30 p.m.: Idiot Swim-Across
- 4 p.m.: 36th annual Slush Cup
- 10 p.m.: Live at the Sitzmark: Jerry Joseph & the Jackmormons; $10

**Sunday, April 21**
- 11 a.m.-2 p.m.: Event registration
- 12 p.m.: Dummy Downhill
- 1:30 p.m.: XTRATUF Tug o’ War
follow the spring sun

#SLUSHCUP

GIRDWOOD, ALASKA

SPRING CARNIVAL

April 19-21

Friday
7 pm  KWHL Costume Contest at the Sitzmark
10 pm  Live at the Sitz: Jerry Joseph & the JackMormons

Saturday
3:30 pm  Idiot Swim Across
4 pm  36th Annual Slush Cup
10 pm  Live at the Sitz: Jerry Joseph & the JackMormons

Sunday
12 pm  Dummy Downhill
2 pm  XTRATUF Team Tug-of-War
8 pm  Sitzmark Industry Night

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As I drove along Turnagain Arm on a mid-March afternoon just a few weeks ago, I once again was surprised at how the snow along the south-facing slopes had already disappeared. I could’ve stopped the truck, gotten out and hiked for miles without hitting any snow, yet I’d just come from two days skiing in the backcountry in snow that reached my thighs.

This, of course, is what makes Alaska so incredible. It’s a place that beckons us to explore its backcountry from every angle. It doesn’t matter if there is snow, wind or rain, or the sun is shining high, leaving the mountaintops kissed in warmth. We just can’t help but delve deeper, to see the sights and appreciate the beauty – because, no matter how cliché it sounds, there really is no place like our great Alaska home.

With even more snow receding this month, the trails are unveiling themselves yet again, and we want to share a few of our favorites in Southcentral Alaska. These places beckon a variety of trail users – hikers, mountain bikers, horse folks and more. Take your pick, pack your car and get outside. There’s a lot of Alaska to see, and only a few short summer months in which to do it.

Alaska: The Great State of Trails

The problem is not finding a hike, but choosing from so many

By Melissa DeVaughn
ANCHORAGE AND EAGLE RIVER

EKLUTNA LAKESIDE TRAIL

From a paved parking area with outhouses, you can access both the Twin Peaks trail, which is a hike-only trail, and the Lakeside Trail, which gets the most use. With a gentle topography, the lakeside trail follows the north shore, offering gorgeous mountain and water views. Beware recent storm damage from 2012. ATVs are permitted Sundays through Wednesdays, April 1-Nov. 30.

Camping: Eklutna Lake
Campground has 50 sites and 15 overflow sites. Camping is $10 per night. Backcountry sites are available off the Eklutna Lakeside Trail as well as the Alaska State Parks’ Yudtihn Cabin, available for rent at $40-50 per night, depending on the time of year.

Boating: Nonmotorized boat access, with hand-carry boat launching area from parking lot. Kayak rentals available from Lifetime Adventures, an onsite concessionaire. www.lifetimeadventures.net.

Trail length: Lakeside Trail, 12.8 miles one way; Twin Peaks Trail, 2.5 miles one way

Difficulty: Lakeside Trail, easy; Twin Peaks Trail, moderate to difficult

Use: Multiuse

Information: Chugach State Park, dnr.alaska.gov/parks

HILLSIDE TRAIL SYSTEM/CHUGACH STATE PARK

Chugach State Park, at a half-million acres, is Southcentral’s back yard and one heck of a playground. The Hillside Trail system includes some of the most widely used trails in the state – from simple strolls to major mountaineering.

Three of our favorites include the ever-popular Flattop – because you just can’t visit, or live in, Alaska without seeing the city from up there at least once; Rabbit Lakes Trail, because the destination is supremely serene; and Powerline Pass, because what won’t kill you will make you stronger.

Camping: Backcountry and backpacking permitted.

Access: Park at the end of Lower Canyon Road for Rabbit Lakes access; Hillside Drive to Upper Huffman and Glen Alps parking lot offers access to Flattop and Powerline Pass

Trail length: Flattop, 3 miles, round-trip; Rabbit Lake, 4.4 miles one way; Powerline Pass, 6 miles one way.

Difficulty: Flattop, short but difficult, only because of steepness at end; Rabbit Lake, easy to moderate; Powerline Pass, moderate to difficult.

Use: Hiking, biking, skiing, horseback riding

Information: Chugach State Park, dnr.alaska.gov/parks

MATANUSKA PEAK TRAIL

A Matanuska Peak adventure begins in Butte, near Palmer. Travelers can follow a steep hillside that passes Lazy Mountain or walk along a more gradual road and the McRoberts Creek Trail. Once you get above treeline, the hiking is more moderate with outstanding views of the farming community below. Like Pioneer Ridge, it’s considered a June-September hike.

Camping: Backcountry and backpacking permitted.

Access: From Palmer, drive east on Old Glenn Highway, and turn left on Smith Road. Follow it to the end to access the trailhead.

Trail length: 8.2 miles round-trip

Difficulty: Moderate to difficult

Use: Hiking, backpacking, horseback on McRoberts Creek

Information: Mat-Su Borough, www.matsugov.us/communitydevelopment/trails/trail-guides

MAT-SU HIKES

PIioneer RIDge TRAIL

With an elevation gain of more than 5,000 feet, this impressive goat scramble provides incredible views of the Matanuska Valley and Knik Glacier. It’s a June-September outing; during winter, very few venture here. Start early. The trip might not seem like an all-day outing, but it is.

Camping: Backcountry and backpacking permitted, although terrain not best suited.

Access: Take the Old Glenn Highway toward Palmer, veer right on Knik River Road when the Old Glenn veers left toward the bridge. Drive about five miles, and look for the parking area on your right.

Trail length: 9 miles round-trip

Difficulty: Difficult

Use: Hiking

Information: Chugach State Park, dnr.alaska.gov/parks

TURNAgAiN ARm

Numerous trails can be accessed along the Seward Highway and Turnagain Arm. This is one of the first places to lose snow and become dry enough for hiking. Some of our favorites include the Turnagain Arm Trail from Potter Marsh to Windy Corner; Indian Creek Pass Trail, which cuts deep into Chugach State Park; Bird Ridge, which is also the site of one of the state’s most popular mountain-running races; Bird Creek, in the valley below; McHugh Lake Trail, and the Bird to Gird bike path, which is a scenic, strolling, 12-mile roadside path from Bird to the entrance to the ski town of Girdwood.

These hikes range from easy to strenuous, and all are excellent ways to explore the wilderness, yet still be home in time for dinner in town. Be on the lookout for plenty of wildlife, including moose, bear, Dall sheep and more.

Information: Chugach State Park, dnr.alaska.gov/parks
KENAI PENINSULA

CAINES HEAD TRAIL

This coastal hike heads from Lowell Point Beach, already a fantastic place to stop for a stroll, and follows the Tonsina Creek Trail and the shore during low tide to Caines Head, a point of land that can be seen expanding out into Resurrection Bay. You’ll pass through a northern rainforest of mossy spruce and cross streams with migrating fish. Be on the lookout for otters, eagles and plenty of migratory birds and shorebirds.

**Camping:** Backcountry and backpacking permitted

**Access:** From downtown Seward, pass the Alaska SeaLife Center and follow Lowell Point Road to the end. A parking area is off to the right, offering access to the trail. Be sure to check road conditions and pay attention to the tides.

**Trail length:** 9 miles round-trip

**Difficulty:** Easy to moderate

**Use:** Hiking and backpacking

**Information:** Caines Head State Recreation Area, dnr.alaska.gov/parks/units/caineshd.htm

TUTKA LAKE TRAIL

This Kachemak Bay State Park and Wilderness trail is a little-known treasure in this, our favorite coastal recreation locale in Southcentral. In fact, there are countless trails in and around Kachemak Bay that warrant investigation, including the China Poot Trail, Emerald Lake Trail and Sadie Knob Trail. Tutka Lake just happens to be one of the least traveled, leading from a point near the Sea Star Cove Public Use Cabin up and through a spruce forest, along Tutka Lake, dead-ending near the Kachemak Bay State Wilderness Park boundary, showcasing the Tutka Creek waterfalls.

**Camping:** Tent platforms, public-use cabin or yurt rental (available through Nomads Yurts at 907-235-0132)

**Access:** From the Homer Spit, travel by boat to Tutka Bay, with access at Sea Star Cove.

**Trail length:** 2.9 miles end to end

**Difficulty:** Moderate

**Use:** Hiking, backpacking, camping, boating, fishing

**Information:** Kachemak Bay State Park and Wilderness Area, http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/units/kbay/kbaytrs.htm

RESURRECTION PASS TRAIL

This Chugach National Forest hike is one of the jewels of longer hikes in Alaska, and it draws users from not only across the state, but also the world. As such, it can be a populated place, yet there is room for everyone. Start in Hope or Cooper Landing for this end-to-end hike – we’ve done both, and still can’t decide which way is best.

**Access:** From the Homer Spit, travel by boat to Tutka Bay, with access at Sea Star Cove.

**Trail length:** 38 miles end to end

**Difficulty:** Easy to moderate

**Use:** Hiking, backpacking, biking, horseback riding (closed to horses April 1-June 30), camping

**Information:** Chugach National Forest, www.fs.usda.gov/activity/chugach/recreation/hiking/?recid=4832&actid=51

The hike takes you up and over the Kenai Mountains, meandering through forests, open meadows, mountain passes and high-altitude lakes. You get it all. In late summer, there are blueberries galore; in early summer, look for snow at the pass.

**Camping:** Tent platforms and public-use cabins

**Access:** For north-end access: From Seward Highway, take the Hope Road, and at Mile 15, turn left on Resurrection Creek Road. For south-end access: Take Seward Highway to Sterling Highway, veering left and passing through Cooper Landing. Trailhead is at Mile 53.2 of the Sterling Highway, on the right.

**Trail length:** 38 miles end to end

**Difficulty:** Easy to moderate

**Use:** Hiking, backpacking, biking, horseback riding (closed to horses April 1-June 30), camping

**Information:** Chugach National Forest, www.fs.usda.gov/activity/chugach/recreation/hiking/?recid=4832&actid=51
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For more details, please browse www.jgsconcepts.com
Whether you want to bike race or participate in a tour or a charity ride, a training plan based on sensible training principles will make efficient use of your time and yield the best results. And now is the time to start.

A well-designed training plan is based on the principle of periodization. You must overload or stress your body and allow it to recover and rebuild itself stronger than it was before. A four-week training block consists of three weeks of progressive overload followed by one week of recovery. Fitness gains are made during recovery phases.

Here is an eight-week spring training plan to get you ready for a summer of fun on the bike. Athletes who use heart rate or have a power meter to measure watts are familiar with training zones, but you don’t have to go high tech to be able to train as an athlete.

Training zones can be as simple as paying attention to your Rate of Perceived Exertion, or RPE. RPE is a fairly subjective measure of exercise intensity that rates how hard you feel you are working, with 1 being the easiest and 10 being the hardest (see the accompanying training chart for more details on judging your RPE).

Unless otherwise specified, you should ride at endurance pace, RPE 4-5. Warm up at least 10 minutes before doing any intervals. Recovery between intervals (RBI) should be at recovery pace, RPE 1-3. The duration of the workout depends on your goals, fitness level, time available and the weather. For instance, the training chart suggests a four-hour ride by the seventh week of training. However, if this is still too difficult, or time is an issue, simply shorten the ride.

Janice Tower is a certified USA Cycling Level 1 Coach and has been coaching athletes since 2004. Visit Janice at www.towercoaching.com.

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**EIGHT-WEEK TRAINING PLAN**

Improve your strength with this eight-week training plan, and be ready for the first bike race of the season.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRAINING ZONE</th>
<th>PERCEIVED EFFORT</th>
<th>FEELS LIKE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recovery (REC)</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>No pressure on the pedals. Easy schmeazy!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endurance (END)</td>
<td>4-5</td>
<td>Just riding along with your friends while talking,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tempo</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Moving a little quicker, late for dinner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steady State (SS)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Hey, wait up! I’m starting to get out of breath!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lactate Threshold (LT)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Huff puff! Can’t… talk…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Trial (TT)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Okay, gloves are off. I’m going to beat you!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VO2 max</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Full throttle. Somebody call the coroner.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**WEEK 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>WORKOUT</th>
<th>RPE</th>
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<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Rest Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 hr</td>
<td>2x10 min. Tempo; RBI 5 min.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>END</td>
<td>4-5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 hr</td>
<td>2x10 min. Tempo; RBI 5 min.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Rest Day</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 hrs</td>
<td>Hilly Ride; Ride flats at END, Hills at Tempo</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 hrs</td>
<td>Flat Ride at END</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 hours</td>
<td>Total time</td>
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USA Cycling Level 1 coach Janice Tower paces Darcy Davis in the Soggy Bottom 100.

By Janice Tower
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK 2</th>
<th>TIME</th>
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<td>Rest Day</td>
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<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>3x10 min. Tempo; RBI 5 min.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>END</td>
<td>4-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>3x6 min. SS; RBI 5 min.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Rest Day</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>1.5 hrs.</td>
<td>Hilly Ride; Ride flats at END, Hills at Tempo</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>2 hrs.</td>
<td>Flat Ride at END</td>
<td>4-5</td>
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<td>Total time</td>
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<td>Rest Day</td>
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<td>END</td>
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<td>3x7 min. SS; RBI 7 min.</td>
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<td>Saturday</td>
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<td>Hilly Ride; Ride flats at END, Ride hills at SS</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
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<td>Flat Ride at END</td>
<td>4-5</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3x8 min. SS; RBI 8 min.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>END</td>
<td>4-5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>5x6 min. LT; RBI 5min.</td>
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<td>Friday</td>
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<td>Rest Day</td>
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<td>Saturday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>2.5 hrs.</td>
<td>Flat Ride at END</td>
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<td>Tuesday</td>
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<td>2x10 min. SS; RBI 10 min.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>END</td>
<td>4-5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>4x6 min. LT; RBI 6 min.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>2 hrs.</td>
<td>Hilly Ride; Long hills at SS; Short hills at LT</td>
<td>7-8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>2.5 hrs.</td>
<td>Flat Ride at END</td>
<td>4-5</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
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<td>Hilly Ride; Long hills at SS; Short hills at LT</td>
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<td>Sunday</td>
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<td>Tuesday</td>
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<td>END</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>END</td>
<td>4-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>3x8 min. LT; RBI 8 min.</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
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<td>Rest Day</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>2 hrs.</td>
<td>Hilly Ride; Long hills at SS; Short hills at LT</td>
<td>7-8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>3 hrs.</td>
<td>Flat Ride at END</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
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<td>Rest Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>END</td>
<td>4-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>2x10 min. Tempo; RBI 10 min.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>END</td>
<td>4-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Rest Day</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>Hilly Ride at END</td>
<td>4-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>1 hr.</td>
<td>Flat Ride at END</td>
<td>4-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total time</td>
<td>5 hours</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
So many choices for spring

**Surly**

- 5” tires! – Ride anywhere!
- Disc brake touring – go travel!
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- Fat bikes from $1849!
- 29” Full suspension on Sale!
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40 YEARS AGO JAY HAD A GREAT IDEA

Bristol Bay Fisheries Reserve introduced by then Senator Jay Hammond in 1972.

Forty years ago the Alaska Legislature recognized the importance of this region by establishing the Bristol Bay Fisheries Reserve to protect wild salmon by requiring legislative approval of permits to develop oil and gas leases within the Reserve. It was a process that made perfect sense. Given the importance of the Reserve, and given the potential of a metallic sulfide mine to pollute the waters of the Reserve, the people of Alaska believe that large scale mining projects should live up to the very same standards that have been applied to oil and gas development since 1972.

The rivers, streams and lakes of the Bristol Bay region support a system that produces one-third of the world’s wild sockeye salmon and feed and employ residents from across the state. For thousands of years, these wild salmon have sustained the subsistence lifestyles of Alaska Natives. If the Bristol Bay watershed is damaged this could all end. The risk is too great.

The draft Watershed Assessment of Bristol Bay Report has concluded that even without a major accident, a mine the size of Pebble will eliminate or block up to 87 miles of salmon streams and remove or bury 4200 acres of wetlands. At a minimum, it would create a more than 1300 acre mine pit and a 3600 acre tailings lake to store toxic waste behind a 685 foot high earthen dam. Let’s make sure that we really know the impact of developing the largest open pit mine in the United States in a sensitive area like the Bristol Bay Fisheries Reserve.

Let’s finish the work that Senator and Governor Jay Hammond began.
SAFETY MATTERS

Split-second slip
One woman’s small misstep turns family outing into emergency

MONICA DUFOUR packed the car for a weekend outing in Hatcher Pass last spring, excited to get out and enjoy the unseasonably warm spring day. She quickly tossed in a picnic lunch and a few extra things she figured they might need for the day.

Once in the pass, the small group of hikers set out across the patches of snow still covering the ground to stretch their legs and explore. They had traveled a little more than an hour from the car and were soaking in the sunshine when they made their first tragic mistake.

“We decided to hike down to the Little Susitna River because the water was flowing and with the ice dams breaking up, it just looked beautiful,” she explained. “I was just planning to snap some photos but what I didn’t realize is just how slippery the rocks are near the water.”

Dufour was in for a startling surprise when she lost her footing and fell into the ice cold water, quickly getting sucked downstream by the fast moving current. Without a life jacket, she found herself terrified and suddenly fighting for her life.

“I was horrified at how fast everything happened. My poor husband was so shocked he just stood there for a minute not sure what to do.”

Fortunately for Dufour, instinct kicked in and her husband raced downstream to try and get ahead of her as she shot toward a drop off. Grabbing onto a small tree for balance, he managed to reach out and snag her jacket just before she plunged over the fall. Pulling her to shore, the couple collapsed in exhaustion on the rocky bank.

“I was so cold when I finally made it to shore I couldn’t stop shivering. My whole body was just convulsing.” That’s when Dufour realized they hadn’t brought anything with them on their hike. Their lunch, water, and extra clothes were all in the car more than an hour’s hike away.

“My husband sent our kids, who were 9 and 11 at the time, to try and find help. Then he peeled off his shirt, which was pretty wet from helping me out of the water, and...
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wrapped it around me to try and warm me up. It didn’t work very well but it was better than nothing.”

As the next hour ticked by and the sun started setting, the temperature dropped, adding to their fear.

“My husband was also freezing by this point and totally regretting sending the kids in search of help when we heard a park ranger calling out. I have to tell you, I have never been so happy to see another adult in my life. It was just fortunate that the kids found him near the road and were able to find their way back to us.”

The ranger was able to provide a warm jacket and he had a radio to call for further assistance. By the time Dufour and her husband reached the hospital, her core body temperature had dropped to 87 degrees and he was hovering around 90 — both were moderately hypothermic.

“I learned a valuable lesson that day,” Dufour said. “If you’re going to even be near water, you should have a life jacket on because falling in happens in the flash of an instant. And take at least basic survival gear with you even if you only plan to walk for a short distance. I was so grateful when it was all over that it was me that fell in and not one of my kids. That would have been so much worse.”

Spring offers a wonderful opportunity to ride the hills, tear across the slopes and burn out the last of the carbon before putting away your skis, sleds and boards. It’s also a great time to attend exciting events like Arctic Man, Tailgater and the Mountain Man Hill Climb.

It’s also the perfect time to take a wilderness medical class to learn skills you might need when out recreating. The North America Outdoor Institute offers national certification courses for Wilderness First Aid and Wilderness First Response (WFA and WFR) through Stonehearth Open Learning Opportunities (SOLO).

These are interactive, fast-paced courses that let you practice the skills learned and experience first-hand, the challenges that could be faced if a wilderness emergency occurs more than an hour from medical care.

FOR A FULL SCHEDULE of North America Outdoor Institute courses and to register, visit BeSnowSmart.org or call (907) 376-2898.
AK ON THE GO

Take to the open road
Alaska’s beautiful highways are destinations in and of themselves

The family road trip is a rite of passage. When the 1950s brought automobile ownership to nearly every household, car trips became the preferred way to vacation, and even Alaska was included in this rush to see America. Indeed, many residents fondly recall memories of traveling north up the dusty, bumpy Alaska-Canada Highway, and today, driving the 49th state is a popular way to explore the Last Frontier for both visitors and Alaskans, especially those who enjoy flexible schedules.

Alaska’s road systems are a bit unique, though, meaning the entire family must be vigilant and independent. I make sure we’re ready for emergencies with a plastic tub that includes food, water, sleeping bags, first aid kit, bug spray, a smartphone car charger, and cash. In the event of a major delay or breakdown miles from the nearest town, we won’t starve, go thirsty, freeze, or be eaten by mosquitoes. And, when we do need help, we’ll have cash to pay for goods or services in places that might not have credit card capabilities.

We utilize the Alaska Department of Transportation’s 511 system (http://511.alaska.gov), with descriptions of current road conditions and delays around the state. Alaskans joke about two seasons, winter and construction, and either could mean trouble for the unprepared.

Where do we like to roam? The state is our oyster, but we do have favorites. Below are a few excellent choices for families.

SOUTHCENTRAL
Anchorage to Seward (www.seward.com), or Anchorage to Homer (www.homeralaska.org), on the Kenai Peninsula. Find Seward 127 lovely miles south of Anchorage, along the Seward Highway, a designated All-American Road. While many people do take advantage of the convenient two-hour drive for day trips, I highly recommend spending at least one night, taking in a glacier cruise, guided kayak trip, or family hike in Kenai Fjords National Park. Homer is reached via the Sterling Highway, a jog to the right just after Turnagain Pass. Situated at the southern tip of the

By Erin Kirkland

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Kenai Peninsula, Homer is 227 miles and approximately five hours from Anchorage, depending upon the season and number of RVs on the road. Plan at least three days of recreating around scenic Kachemak Bay. With plenty of hiking, wildlife viewing, beachcombing, and fishing, Homer is a delightful spot to vacation with kids.

**INTERIOR**

Fairbanks to Denali National Park. Denali (www.nps.gov/dena) is more than a drive-through. The George Parks Highway, a National Scenic Byway, takes travelers through the heart of Alaska wilderness, with Mt. McKinley looming in the background. While the Park’s periphery, known as “Glitter Gulch,” can be overwhelming, take advantage of National Park entrance area activities, like the Murie Science and Learning Center, sled dog demonstrations, guided nature walks, or a rafting trip down the Nenana River (www.denaliraft.com).

**FAR FLUNG**

McCarthy/Kennecott Mines. This drive is rugged, but with 65 miles of dirt road and scenic landscape on the way to the village of McCarthy (www.coppervalleychamber.com), it’s also beautiful. Kennecott Mines National Historic Landmark, in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, is five miles beyond McCarthy, and both places are inaccessible by car, so visitors must park at the Kennicott River and take a shuttle. Allow at least four days for this trip; it takes an entire day to get there and back, and one must hike, mountain bike, or flightsee around glaciers and the interesting mining community (http://www.nps.gov/wrst/historyculture/kennecott.htm).

Wherever you go, celebrate the journey, because getting there is half the fun, especially in Alaska. •

Erin Kirkland is a freelance writer and publisher of AKontheGO.com, a website dedicated to family travel and outdoor recreation in Alaska. She lives in Anchorage with her family.
The Way Fitness Should Be

Spring cleaning
Time to clean up that out-of-shape body and get ready for the season

Ahh, yes, springtime: one of the most beautiful seasons of the year. On the coattails of winter, spring is the transition into different outdoor activities, sports and attire. It prompts anticipation of long runs on the Coastal Trail with the beautiful midnight sun over your shoulder, hiking with man’s best friend in fresh mountain air, and games of ultimate-Frisbee with friends in a gorgeous park.

If you’ve packed on a few pounds over the winter, now is a good time to start preparing for an active summer. Don’t let a winter of inactivity weigh you down during the long days of our oh-so-short summer season.

It’s important to remember that spring is what you make of it, and, more important, what you make out of your time spent physically preparing for your favorite activities or sports. Every drop of sweat created in the gym will make returning that volley much easier.

Every drop of sweat created in the gym will make returning that volley much easier. Every forced rep of bicep curls that you didn’t know you had in you will make Sally much more impressed when you’re dressed up in that spray tan sitting on the beach.

Are you ready to start a fitness journey that will prepare you for whatever summer may hold? Start by asking yourself, “What sports will I be playing? What activities will I be participating in? When is that next vacation?” Once you know this, it’s time to make a game plan to give you optimal results for summer fun.

Welcome to spring training.

There are many reasons for spring training. The athletes of the world are seeking improved performance. Vacationers are looking to get lean and shed some winter weight in order to get into that swimsuit they’ve been eyeballing for months. Outdoor enthusiasts want to improve their agility, strength and endurance in order to climb higher, hike farther, bike longer and roller-blade into the sunset of a perfect summer’s day. Though some want it all, the best way to get what you want is to make specific goals based on your choice of activity.

If I have an athlete who needs to increase his vertical leap for basketball, we work on legs, and more legs. OK, we might be doing a little core, but the majority of our training for this athlete will be focused on leg training: a lot of jumping, squatting and lunging to improve his vertical performance.

Here are some hypothetical goals and training routines to help meet them.

• For a muscle-bound beach body, follow a body-building routine. This means a strict diet, weight training and low-intensity cardio.
• If your goal is sports oriented, focus on sport-specific movements. Exercise for power, strength, speed and agility. Power movements are explosive and usually incorporate plyometrics like jumps squats. Strength is performing controlled movements with weights for lower repetitions, usually in the 1-5 range. Speed is performing a movement with quickness, like sprints. Agility is the ability to move nimbly with great proprioception, or awareness one’s body position in relation to its surroundings. Find an agility-ladder for this.

• What about outdoors enthusiasts? Again, train for specificity. Hikers can benefit from stair steppers, even wearing a backpack while working out. Spending time out on the lake? Get in the pool. Think about your activity and try to mimic the movement in the gym with vigor and a plan.

To reach your summer fitness goals, keep your focus on the day’s workout, be diligent and before you know it another summer will be here and a new you will be ready to make the most of it.

Jamie Cash is fitness director at The Alaska Club.
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It was perfectly formed, about 5 feet in diameter and the size of a large, duplex apartment.

At other points in the ride, we traversed passageways wedged between iceberg boulders, listening to the plinking of water dripping in the springtime thaw. On the south-facing passages, we had to ride carefully on the slicked-over ice, but otherwise, the gentle weather made for an ideal spring biking outing.

As we rode toward the northwest corner of the lake, trails were becoming sparse and the snow off trail was too deep and soft to maneuver. We decided to loop around near the glacier when we saw a pressure ridge. These pressure ridges on glacier lakes often have open cracks down to the water, and this one was no exception. The ice had raised two feet on one side, and the short side had exposed water down about one foot. Several years previous, I had a close friend fall into one of these cracks, and he could not get out by himself because the ice was too slick. Fortunately, we were able to pull him up and out of the crack using a rope, and what could have been a deadly fall now serves as a cautionary tale. Needless to say, I am very cautious around these pressure ridges and diligent about bringing safety gear. As Teri and I maneuvered the ridge in front of us, I was reminded of my friend, and we took great care in stepping across the 12-inch gap using our bikes as extra support.

As is one of the drawbacks to spring snow biking, the gloriously warm sun can also create punchy snow – an annoyance we were willing to accept for this all-day outing. So, with the afternoon sun at its full strength, we left the glacier behind and headed back down the valley a bit slower in the softer snow, toward our car. As I knew it would, this trip did not disappoint. I have been exploring glaciers in Alaska for more than 30 years, yet it still amazes me every time I touch one; the power, the beauty, and the massive size of these valley glaciers is unparalleled. Paired with our bikes and good weather, it is a trip to remember – a fantastic fat-tire day trip you must add to your list.

**IF YOU GO**

Even a simple day trip in Alaska requires planning. Once you’re off the road system, minor – or major – emergencies can strike anytime. So come prepared. Here’s a list of safety gear to bring with you on your snow biking trip:

- Warm, layered clothing
- Helmet
- Face mask
- Glasses or goggles
- High-energy food
- Drinks
- First-aid kit
- Repair kit
- Pump
- Communication device – spot, sat phone, cell phone (service can be iffy out there)
- Extra windproof layer (jacket and pants)
- Safety throw rope 50 feet, 5 to 7mm for ice rescue
- Basic survival kit: fire starter, signal device, matches, duct tape, knife, etc.

**Directions to Knik Glacier:** From Anchorage, head north on the Glenn Highway and take the Old Glenn Highway exit before the Knik River Bridge. Go about 5 miles on the Old Glenn Highway, then stay right at the “Y,” which puts you on Knik River Road. Drive about 5 miles to the Hunter Creek bridge parking on the east side of the bridge. Biking begins as you pedal down the creek from the west side of the bridge and then head up the Knik River to the Glacier.

* Spring Breakup, continued from page 16

Ice boulders dot the landscape, dwarfing visitors, at Knik Glacier. MIKE BUCK
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APRIL 5-7  
NSAA Ski Tour/Denali View Chalet 10:30 a.m., Kincaid Park  
The Nordic Skiing Association of Anchorage hosts free backcountry ski tours for members. The April tour is set for a rustic Alaska lodge on Krotol Lake south of Mount McKinley. Ski eight miles into the lodge with just a day pack. Great views, fantastic company, exquisite cuisine, sauna and skiing. Space is limited. Contact the Association for more details. (www.anchorageandridicski.com)

APRIL 6  
Alaska’s Wood Frog 2 p.m., Eagle River Nature Center  
Did you know that the area’s only local amphibian is the wood frog? Frogs can be good indicators of changing environmental conditions. Join Marian Stively from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to learn more about frogs and how citizens can help monitor frog populations in Southcentral. Free program; $5 parking for nonmembers. (www.ernc.org)

APRIL 7  
Meet the Author of “Cold,” “Heat” 2 p.m., Eagle River Nature Center  
Bestselling author Bill Streever, author of “Cold,” is back to warm readers up with his brand-new book “Heat,” which starts where “Cold” left off. Streever will share tales of fever, the first fires on earth and the (much later) first use of fire by humans, his own attempts to start fires without matches along the banks of Eagle River, the burning of peat and coal and oil, volcanoes, thermoneutral weapons, and the surprising temperatures that prevailed in the first moments after the big bang. He will stay to autograph copies of his book. Free program; $5 parking for nonmembers. (www.ernc.org)

APRIL 10  
Map & Compass Navigation Basics class 6-7:30 p.m., REI, Anchorage  
Learn basic navigation skills using map and compass to find your way. Also learn how to read a topographic map in tandem with the compass. $20 for nonmembers. (www.rei.com/stores/anchorage.html#classesandevents)

APRIL 11  
Tomorrow Kilimanjaro 6-7:30 p.m., REI, Anchorage  
Tomorrow Kilimanjaro tells how one charity is making a difference in the lives of urban youth. Join Big City Mountainers climber Annissarolo on a photo journey of a climb of Mount Kilimanjaro. Free program. (www.rei.com/stores/anchorage.html#classesandEvents)

APRIL 12  
BCA Volunteer Roundup 6-8 p.m., Midnight Sun Brewery  
April 10-16 is National Volunteer Week, and Bicycle Commuters of Anchorage celebrates with its second annual Volunteer Roundup. Volunteers can sign up to help staff events, and also to help coordinate them.

APRIL 13  
BCA Second Saturday Ride  11 a.m.-1 p.m., Goose Lake  
Join the Bicycle Commuters of Anchorage and REI for a second Saturday ride for a winter ride in Anchorage. Ride the Chester Creek Trail to Fire Island Rustic Bakeshop for a treat before returning back to the lake. REI provides trail treats as well. Helmets required. (www.bicyclanchorage.org)

APRIL 14  
Moose Browse and Invasive Species 2 p.m., Eagle River Nature Center  
What happens when an ornamental tree that contains cyanide invades the same habitats that moose forage in? You can help scientists find out. Learn about monitoring moose winter foraging ecology, winter tree identification, and invasive species ecology. Invasive plants instructor Gino Graziano, University of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service, is working with Anchorage School District students to collect data on how moose foraging behavior is affected by the May Day chokecherry (Prunus padus), a common, but invasive, ornamental tree. This is your opportunity to participate in an ecological study concerning an invasive tree and moose, an icon of Alaska. Free program (indoors, followed by a walk, so dress for the weather); $5 parking for nonmembers. (www.ernc.org)

APRIL 17  
Mountaineering Club of Alaska monthly meeting 6:30 p.m., BP Energy Center, 900 East Benson Blvd.  
The group’s monthly meeting usually features a slideshow presentation. This month’s meeting is TBA. General announcements will precede the event from 6:30 to 7:15. The presentation will begin at 7:30. Free. (www.mtnclubak.org)

APRIL 18  
Get Ready for the Clean Air Challenge 6-7:30 p.m., REI, Anchorage  
Do you love Chugach State Park and the trail system there? Learn more about them during a free program on trails in Alaska. (www.rei.com/stores/anchorage.html#classesandEvents)

APRIL 19  
Sustainable Trails 101 4-9 p.m., BP Energy Center, 900 E. Benson Blvd.  
Alaska Trails teaches an introductory course on sustainable trail building in Alaska. Learn how to build permanent trails and also the importance of using a clinometer. Light dinner is included. $50. Register at 334-8049 or office@alaska-trails.org.

APRIL 20  
Friends of Eagle River Nature Center’s annual Spring Auction 5:30-9 p.m., Bridge Seafood $50 per person; tables of 4 and 8 available. Auctioneer Rayne Reynolds. Check online for reservations. (www.ernc.org)

APRIL 21  
Living and Recreating in Bear Country 2 p.m., Eagle River Nature Center  
Are you considering keeping chickens or other livestock in your backyard? Do you worry about hiking, running or camping in bear country? Elizabeth Manning and Tony Carnahan from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game will discuss how to stay safe and what you can do to keep from attracting bears while raising livestock, including a how-to lesson in electric fences. Free program; $5 parking for nonmembers. (www.ernc.org)

APRIL 22  
Electric Fences in Bear Country 6-7:30 p.m., REI, Anchorage  
Tips presented by Elizabeth Manning of Alaska Department of Fish and Game on the use of fences in bear country. Free program. (www.rei.com/stores/anchorage.html#classesandEvents)

APRIL 25  
Birding Basics 6-7:30 p.m., REI, Anchorage  
Birding is more than just watching birds. It is a fun, year-round pursuit all ages can enjoy. If you’ve ever been interested in birding but didn’t know how to get started, then this class is for you. Free program. (www.rei.com/stores/anchorage.html#classesandEvents)

APRIL 27  
Dew Lake Guided Hike 11 a.m.-3 p.m., Eagle River Nature Center  
Join volunteers Bob and Annie Fisher for a 6.75-mile round trip hike to scenic Dew Lake, starting from the Nature Center. Hikers should be in good shape, but may be beginners. The trail is fairly level with a total elevation gain of about 800 feet. Hikers are advised to bring a backpack with snacks, water, wind/rain/snow clothing. The hike is limited to the first 12 people (at least 18 years old) who register by calling 894-2108. Free program. $5 parking fee for nonmembers. (www.ernc.org)
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If you’re a king salmon crusader, you might want to rethink your budgets and time before planning your big-fish safari this year. Forecasts and insider whisperings indicate another down year for kings, because the fish numbers are materializing in saltwater, so it would be wise to look elsewhere for action.

This is the original “bait and switch.” You bait your hook, and switch to another species. It’s easy to do.

Here are a few of my favorite destinations and species that I enjoy as much as kings.

The upper Chena River outside Fairbanks offers world-class, catch-and-release grayling fishing. The nearby Chatanika River and the Delta Clearwater River near Delta Junction also offers some of the interior’s finest grayling fishing on the road system. I’ve routinely caught ample, 18-inch-plus grayling at these locations. If you’d like to do the same, plan a trip from mid-June through early September.

Saltwater pinks and chums offer outstanding action and lots of fun in and around the streams of eastern Prince William Sound. When it comes to kids and fishing, it’s important to have junior easily catching fish every other cast rather than sitting for the 20 to 30 hours on average required to catch a Kenai king. Mid July to early August offers excellent fishing for these species in saltwater, where the fish are strong enough to max out eight-weight rods. Regardless of the species, that kind of salmon fishing is always fun.

Fly-out fishing opportunities for northern pike offer a good adventure, especially those options with an overnight cabin. An air charter will provide the flight to and from the cabin, a stove, and boat. You supply all the fishing gear and food. Voracious pike provide the fun.

If you are driving a motorhome or RV, consider a custom fishing adventure along the road system. Big rainbows on the Kenai, as well as char are available via do-it-yourself or guided trips. I’ve enjoyed good trout action at various streams along the Parks Highway. Stop at Montana Creek, any Talkeetna River tributary, Willow Creek or the Little Susitna River for the best action. A caveat; the lack of king salmon last year did not see the rainbows in the Susitna streams in July as in years past. Wait for the chums and pinks to show up, and you’ll find good action fishing an egg pattern behind these fish.

Halibut and bottom fishing day trips are fun, and there are many charters eager for your business. I prefer overnight charters because they provide more fishing time for the buck. Of these, a long-range trip to Montague or Middleton islands for big halibut, weather and tide permitting, are my favorites. An excursion to the outer islands and pinnacles scattered throughout Prince William Sound is my choice for lings and rockfish.

Each year, I reserve the last week of August through mid-September for flyfishing for coho salmon. I fly fish small streams and catch and release ample coho salmon weighing 8 to 20 pounds. It’s enough to spoil an angler to most any other type of fishing. For the brightest fish, you’ll want to focus on Alaska’s coastal regions such as the intertidal areas of the Little Su, Valdez, Kenai or Seward or the fly-out opportunities in Prince William Sound or the Alaska Peninsula. You’ll enjoy success where fresh fish are coming in on the tide. The best fishing begins in early August in some areas, mid to late August in others, and continues until well into mid-September for larger fish.

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Birthday bicycling

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The back road from Hana on the eastern tip of Maui to the bustling urban center of Kihei starts out on smooth pavement, but turns rough as Alaska’s Denali Highway not far past the grave of the famed aviator Charles Lindbergh. It’s only a lane and a half wide and hugs the mountainside above the Pacific Ocean, and though it can be dicey, it is nowhere near as intimidating as driving the Copper River Highway back in the day when the late Gov. Wally Hickel was trying to punch a road south from Chitina to Cordova.

That is, of course, all history now. There was a landslide across the road in 2001 and geological experts concluded the cliffs along Wood Canyon would slide again. Bureaucrats took that as an excuse to abandon the road, and since then the state hasn’t had a governor with the courage to tell them to reopen it.

Hawaii seems somewhat better off in this regard. A landslide also closed the back road from Hana, which connects the South Hana and Piilani highways to wrap around the island’s dry side, in 2006. When talk of abandoning it began, some Hawaiian lawmakers had the courage to say that was nonsense, and the road was reopened.

But this is not about the failings of Alaska politicians. No, this is about how I’ve come to celebrate my April birthday over the past decade.

I get on a bike and ride.

Fifty-five was supposed to put me at the 10,023-foot summit of Maui’s Haleakala Volcano. Bicycling down the Haleakala volcano is a major tourist activity in Maui. For $89, the Haleakala Bike Co. will rent you a bike, fit you with a serious downhill helmet, drive you 6,500 feet from Haiku to the boundary of Haleakala National Park, and drop you off for a 23-mile bike ride that snakes through 29 big switchbacks on the way back to where the trip began.

I decided to ride up from Hana via the Piilani, which about triples the distance. It would have been fine if I’d taken enough fluids and eaten enough along the way and maybe not started pounding out mile after mile at a 25-mpg tempo when the rough and potholed Piilani became smooth, fast pavement near something called “Virginia’s Place.”

Needless to say, too little nourishment and too much effort in the heat of Hawaii resulted in one big bonk on Haleakala. A little more than halfway to the top, I pulled to the side of the road, collapsed into a ditch and called for a ride. It was one of the happiest moments of my life when Robbie arrived to save me from more torture.

So last year, I elected to ride from home to Hope then back to Girdwood for birthday dinner. Comparing the two rides, all I can say is that Alaska clearly trumps Hawaii for cycling.

We can start with the weather. It’s still a little chilly in Southcentral in April, but you can always counteract it by putting on clothes. All you can do about heat is sweat and sweat until you’re as dried out as a prune and feeling about the same.

Besides, the heat and I have never gotten on particularly well. I sun-stroked several times as a child, and every bad bonk I can remember as an adult came in the heat.

Second, while the scenery on the arid side of Maui is nice, the view along Turnagain Arm is downright spectacular. People tend to forget this when they’ve lived here for years. Maybe they should get on bikes and slow down enough to notice things again. The scenery along this fiord between the snow-capped Chugach and Kenai mountains is world-class spectacular, even without the frequent Dall sheep, beluga, moose and even grizzly bear sightings.

Third, Turnagain Pass is a pretty easy climb, and the high-speed run down the other side to the Hope Cutoff (or to the Placer-Portage-Twentymile rivers delta going the other way) is grit-your-teeth-and-go fun. The only so-so part of the ride is the 18 miles from the Seward Highway to the old mining town on the south side of Turnagain Arm. The undulating Hope Road, hemmed in by forest, gets a little old before you’re done with it, but it’s not bad.

Fourth, the New Orleans-style pepper steak to end the day at the Double Musky in Girdwood is seriously tasty food. This ain’t no wimpy “nouvelle cuisine” nonsense to leave you wondering if you’ve really eaten. This isn’t the kind of thing you eat when in training and trying to cut weight. It’s the kind of food cyclists gorge themselves on during the Tour de France.

And hey, if there’s a risk of the beef being tainted with performance-enhancing drugs as former Tour champ Alberto Contador claims his was, I’m not going to complain. Just thinking about it now is enough to make me want to do the Hope ride again, but for variety this year I’m thinking about maybe going north to Talkeetna for birthday dinner at the Wildflower Cafe. Between the glowing reviews I’ve heard of the place, and its 25 microbrews on tap, it sounds like the perfect place to rehydrate and wait for the designated driver to join me with the sag wagon.
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