

## Yakutat

Home for outdoor enthusiasts who love to hike, explore, fish, and even surf, Yakutat is a community of approximately 700 people (City Data). The Chamber of Commerce reports, “Yakutat's economy is dependent on fishing, fish processing, and government with 162 residents holding commercial fishing permits and most residents depending on subsistence hunting and fishing.” Information on housing and salary can be provided by the local church.



### Community:

**Location** – Nestled among the lowlands of the scenic Gulf of Alaska, 212 miles northwest of Juneau, surrounded by Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Tongass National Forest, the adventurer will find Yakutat (Yakutat Chamber of Commerce).

**Travel/Transportation** – The Chamber of Commerce notes, “With no roads into Yakutat most visitors arrive by air. The village is also served by the Alaska ferry system, but the schedule is limited and books up very quickly for transporting vehicles to Yakutat (Check with the Alaska Marine Highway online for detailed information). Unlike many rural Alaskan destinations, the service offered by Alaska Airlines makes it easy to plan your travel. Alaska Airlines serves Yakutat with two daily flights on Boeing 737s. Yakutat is the smallest village with this level of customer service and quality jet service.”

**History** – According to an article in *Travel Alaska*, “Life in Yakutat is rich with the culture of the Native people of the area, which are a mixture of the Eyak of the Copper River Valley to the north and the Tlingit of the Inside Passage area. Here the elders share their knowledge and wisdom through storytelling in the local community gathering place.” *Explore North* noted, “The original settlers are believed to have been Eyak-speaking people from the Copper River area who were conquered by the Tlingits. Yakutat means ‘the place where the canoes rest.’ In the 18th and 19th centuries, English, French, Spanish, and Russian explorers came to the region. Fur traders were attracted to the region's sea otters.” Yakutat saw gold mining and timber booms. In 1889 the Swedish Free Mission Church had opened a school and sawmill in the area. During World War II, a large aviation garrison and paved runway were constructed. Troops were withdrawn after the war, but the runway is still in use. Today fishing drives the economy.

**Population** – The latest data lists 662 residents in Yakutat (City Data).

**Demographics** – *City Data* statistics reveal Yakutat's population is predominately 42.7% white, 38.7% Alaska Native, and 7.8% Hispanic.

**Jobs** – Estimated median household income in 2019: \$69,599. The most common occupations include educational services (13.7%), agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting (11.3%), and public administration (8.9%). The *Chamber of Commerce* reports, “Yakutat's economy is dependent on fishing, fish processing and government with 162 residents holding

commercial fishing permits. North Pacific Processors is the major private employer. Recreational fishing opportunities, both saltwater and freshwater fishing in the Situk River, are world-class. Most residents depend on subsistence hunting and fishing. Salmon, trout, shellfish, deer, moose, bear, and goats are harvested.”

School – There is one school in Yakutat with approximately 125 students, kindergarten through High School.

### **Church History:**

The Assemblies of God was established in Yakutat in 1963 by Donald von Wald. Pastor Don used the FAA hall for meetings and was a man with a rich prayer life who knew how to lead men into a real relationship with God (Alaska’s Spiritual Gold). Ruth and Marlan Schoenleben served in Yakutat from 1973-1988 and went through several building phases, adding to the church structure and building additional components to house a Bible book and gift store and a radio station. The church has been without a permanent pastor for a while.

### **Sources:**

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