

## Passenger Services

The Alaska Railroad (ARRC) offers year-round passenger rail transportation with adventure class and premium *GoldStar* service. Summer service is mid-May to mid-September; Winter service is mid-September to mid-May.

### Passenger Trains

- **Coastal Classic** – Daily summer service between Anchorage and Seward
- **Glacier Discovery** – Daily summer service between Anchorage, Whittier and Chugach Forest whistle stops at Spencer Glacier and Grandview
- **Denali Star** – Daily summer service between Anchorage, Talkeetna, Denali and Fairbanks
- **Hurricane Turn** – Flagstop service to remote roadless areas offered monthly (first Thursday) in winter between Anchorage and Hurricane; and offered Thursday-Monday in summer between Talkeetna and Hurricane
- **Aurora** – Winter weekend and some mid-week service between Anchorage and Fairbanks
- **Special Events/Charters** – The *Grandview Cruise Train* is a chartered summer service for cruise company passengers traveling from Whittier or Seward to Anchorage; timed with cruise



The Coastal Classic train moves along Turnagain Arm.

ship arrivals. The popular *Nordic Ski Train* is chartered to the Nordic Ski Association. Other special event trains include the *Holiday Train*, *Valentine's Day Train*, *Easter Train*, *Fair Train*, *Blues Train*, *Great Alaska Beer Train*, *Hoo Doo Beer Train* (Fairbanks) and *Halloween Train*.

### Passenger Numbers

During 2017, total ridership for the year surpassed a half million for the first time since 2008:

- ARRC carried 505,994 passengers.
- Customers traveling aboard cruise company-owned railcars pulled by ARRC accounted for about 49% (246,376) of 2017 passengers.
- The remaining 51% (259,618) used scheduled service aboard Alaska Railroad trains. Of those:
  - 64,028 rode the *Denali Star*
  - 62,483 rode the *Coastal Classic*
  - 56,490 rode the *Grandview Cruise Train*
  - 44,133 rode the *Glacier Discovery*
  - 10,530 rode the *Hurricane Turn*
  - 11,157 rode the *Aurora* during winter
  - 10,797 rode aboard special event and other charter trains.



Hurricane Turn flag stop service offers remote access.

The railroad partners with travel businesses to offer transportation, along with unique and exciting travel experiences that include lodging, day cruises, adventure activities, sightseeing and more.

## Customer Service

ARRC capitalizes on homegrown talent and a reputation for hospitality born of Alaska's frontier spirit. Each year, customer comments underscore the importance of enhanced customer service as a prime tool for attracting new customers and persuading previous passengers to return.

A cornerstone to customer service is the long-standing Tour Guide Program. In 1981, the Alaska Railroad entered into agreements with Anchorage and Fairbanks school districts to adopt a vocational curriculum to prepare high school students for jobs and careers in the travel industry. At the end of the school year, the Alaska Railroad hires the cream-of-the-crop to serve onboard summer passenger trains as interactive guides. These Alaskan ambassadors delight railroad customers with interesting narrative, personalized attention and a youthful, infectious excitement to experience rail transportation through Alaska.

Future passenger opportunities may stem from additional transportation services. Over the past decade, ARRC has continued to invest in rail research and infrastructure that make additional rail service more feasible. This includes new depots at the Anchorage international airport and Palmer fairgrounds, an upgraded intermodal transportation facility in Ship Creek, and straighter (faster) track between Anchorage and Wasilla.

## Passenger Equipment

ARRC's passenger service fleet includes 44 railcars (excluding locomotives). All are maintained in a state of good repair with the experience and safety of passengers in mind:

- **Business Cars** – The restored *Denali Car* and the *Aurora Car* offer unique meeting space. *Fleet: 2 cars*
- **Diners** – Dining cars with various seating/dining configurations. *Fleet: 6 cars*
- **Passenger Coaches** – Coaches feature large windows, hand carry storage, and reclining seats facing with a card table in between. Six built in 1989. Five built in 1950 were subsequently updated. *Fleet: 11 cars*
- **Vista Dome Coaches** – Coaches feature 36-38 reclining seats, plus 24 seats under a dome in the middle that offers 360-degree views. Built in mid-1950s and subsequently updated. *Fleet: 6 cars*
- **Low-Level Dome Coaches** – Coaches feature large dome glass windows, and seat (68-76) arranged around four-top tables, small galley and service bar. Four built in the 1950s and subsequently updated. Three built in 2006-2007. *Fleet: 7 cars*
- **Bi-Level Ultradomes** – Double-deck first-class dome cars feature glass-domed upstairs including an outdoor viewing platform and 72 reclining seats. Downstairs includes a full-service kitchen and dining area with 36 seats at tables. Built in 2005, 2007 and 2008. *Fleet: 6 cars*
- **Bi-Level DMU** – The *Chugach Explorer* self-propelled railcar is suited for whistle stop and commuter services, with 112 seats, kitchen and baggage area. Built in 2009. *Fleet: 1 car*
- **Baggage Cars** – Cars store luggage and include generators to supply electrical power to coaches. Built in 1961-62 and subsequently rebuilt. *Fleet: 6 cars*

**Ridership aboard the Aurora Winter Train (below) nearly doubled between 2013 and 2017. (photo by David Blazejewski)**

