

# Valdez Visitor Economy 2025

Prepared for  
CITY OF



**VALDEZ**  
ALASKA



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Prepared by  
Rain Coast  
Data



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# Valdez Visitor Economy Summary



The Valdez tourism sector has fully rebounded from the pandemic years. The 2023 and 2024 visitor seasons closely resembled 2019 levels. The 2025 season is expected to be the busiest in terms of visitor volume since 2001, as large cruise ships continue to return to the community. Valdez is projected to attract more than 117,000 tourists arriving by air, cruise, road, and ferry.

## Tourism Employment and Earnings Trends:

Tourism accounts for 14% of all annualized jobs and 6% of total workforce earnings in Valdez. In 2023, the sector supported an annual average of 376 jobs and generated \$13.2 million in earnings. Projections indicate an increase in 2025. In the spring of 2025, about half (56%) of visitor industry leaders in the community called the tourism business climate good or very good; while 41% called it poor or very poor. About a third of respondents expect tourism to improve over the next year.



## Total Visitor Spending:

In 2024, visitors to Valdez are estimated to have spent \$55.4 million, based on analysis of city accommodation tax records, passenger data, and other sources. This includes \$27.8 million from hotel guests, encompassing both tourists and non-tourism travelers. Campers using RVs, tents, and cabins contributed an estimated \$16.5 million in estimated spending. Visitors staying in short-term rentals spent approximately \$7.3 million, while cruise passengers contributed \$3.9 million.



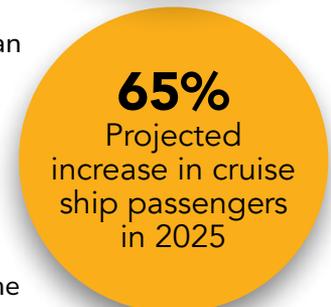
## Tourist Arrivals by Travel Type:

Across all modes of transportation, approximately 98,000 tourists came to Valdez in 2024. That number is projected to grow by 19.5% in 2025, surpassing 117,000 visitors. Road travel remains the primary mode of arrival, with an estimated 68,000 visitors in 2024. Fewer than 3,000 tourists arrived by air, representing a 28% decline from 2023 and an 80% drop compared to a decade ago. However, with Valdez included in the Essential Air Service program since December 2024, subsidized air travel is expected to reverse this trend and boost future passenger numbers. Since 2014, ferry arrivals have declined by 37%; however, an estimated 3,847 tourists arrived by ferry in 2024, more than in any of the three years prior to the pandemic.



## Cruise Projections:

In 2025, Valdez is scheduled to receive 40 cruise ship visits from eight different vessels. If ships sail at full capacity, 42,789 passengers are expected to visit Valdez—a 65% increase over 2024. Last year, ships operated at 93% capacity, bringing just over 25,000 cruise visitors to the community. In 2025, cruise passengers are projected to account for 36% of all visitors to Valdez, generating an estimated \$6.4 million in local spending.



# Overview of Tourism in Valdez

In the summer of 2023, nearly 100,000 tourists visited Valdez. Tourism constitutes an important component of the local economy in Valdez, a community uniquely positioned between the Chugach Mountains and Prince William Sound. The area's abundant wildlife, beautiful landscapes, and rich recreation opportunities attracts visitors seeking outdoor and fishing experiences.

The origins of tourism in Valdez date back to the Klondike Gold Rush of 1898. Valdez emerged as a critical access point for those attempting the "All-American Route" over the Valdez Glacier toward the interior goldfields, thereby establishing early foundations for the region's role as a gateway for travelers and adventurers.

In 2025, visitation to Valdez occurs primarily via road, but also increasingly by maritime transportation and air:

- **Road:** Road-based tourists typically arrive via the Richardson Highway, through areas such as Keystone Canyon and Thompson Pass.
- **Cruise:** Cruise ship tourism is reemerging in significant numbers for the first time since the early 2000s (when 9/11 restrictions led the cancellation of a large-scale cruise sector).
- **Ferry:** Maritime visitors also access Valdez through the Alaska Marine Highway System, providing an immersive coastal experience along Prince William Sound.
- **Air:** Air travel is also making a comeback to Valdez, after the community instituted essential air service in December of 2024, increasing the frequency of air travel, and reducing the cost for passengers.

Sports and recreational fishing are major attractions for Valdez visitors, with salmon returns influencing visitor activity. Anglers from Alaska and around the world are drawn by Valdez's renowned fisheries. The King Salmon (Chinook) season generally runs from May through July, while Coho (Silver) salmon return from mid-July to mid-September. Strong fish runs significantly increase demand for lodging, gear, and guided fishing trips. Coordinated hatchery and fishery efforts play an important role in supporting the economic strength of Valdez's tourism sector.

Other key visitor activities include boat tours, glacier tours, hiking, and learning about cultural history. In addition to summer attractions, Valdez also has a vibrant, smaller winter tourism season. Visitors come to Valdez for snow machining, heliskiing, nordic skiing, ice climbing, cold weather camping, and other winter activities.

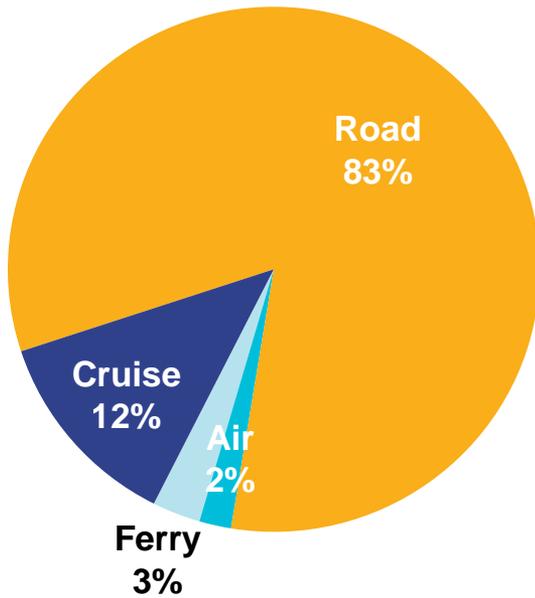
The purpose of this research study is to evaluate and quantify the economic impacts of tourism in Valdez, examining visitor expenditure patterns, employment generated by tourism-related activities, and estimates the economic impact of cruise ships, hotels, short-term rentals, and campgrounds.

## Summer Visitors by Mode of Arrival

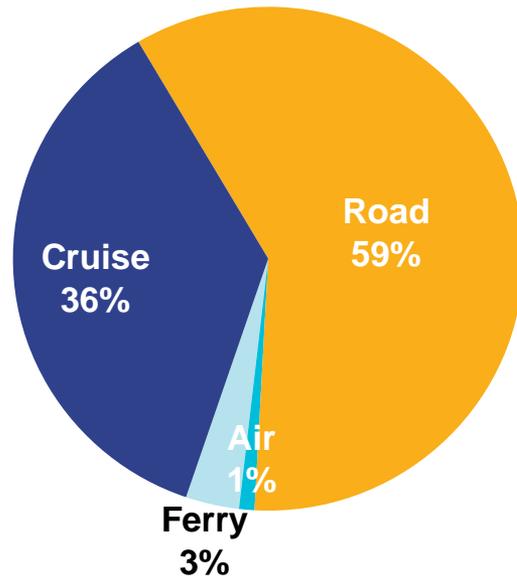
While visitors by road will still represent the highest percentage of tourists in Valdez in 2025, the ratios are changing. In 2025, 36% of all Valdez tourists are expected to arrive via cruise ship as cruise tourism is increasingly becoming a larger part of the Valdez tourism economy, while 59% will arrive by road. Another 4% will arrive by ferry and plane.

In 2019, just 12% of all tourists were off of cruise ships, while 83% of all recreation visitors arrived by road.

### Summer Visitors by Mode of Arrival in Valdez 2019



### Summer Visitors by Mode of Arrival in Valdez 2025

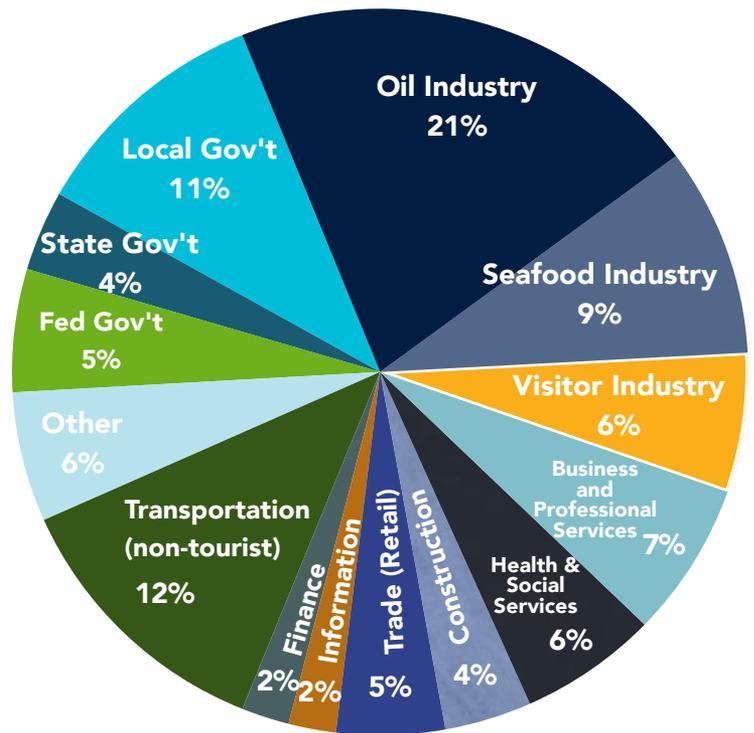
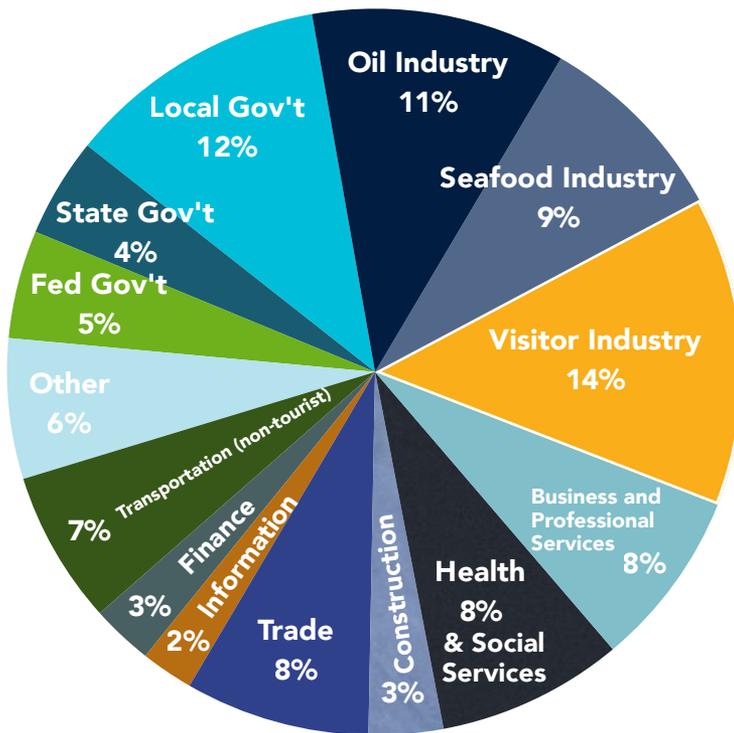


# Visitor Industry Employment

The community of Valdez had 2,721 year-round equivalent jobs and \$212 million in workforce earnings in 2023 across all sectors. In 2023, visitor industry employment made up 14% of all private sector employment in Valdez, accounting for 376 annual average jobs with associated workforce earnings of \$13 million.<sup>1</sup> The visitor industry accounted for 6% of total Valdez workforce earnings in 2023. While final 2024 data is not yet available, early data indicates a small decline in the number of Valdez tourism jobs and wages in 2024, primarily associated with air travel and low fishing, but tourism is expected to rebound in 2025.

Annualized **Jobs**  
 2,721 Total Jobs  
 376 **Visitor** Sector Jobs

Employment **Earnings**  
 Total Earnings \$212 million  
**Visitor** Sector \$13.2 million



The Valdez visitor sector is somewhat similar to the state as a whole; the Alaska visitor industry represented 11% of all jobs and 5% of all employment earnings in 2023.

<sup>1</sup> **Sources:** Alaska Department of Labor Employment & Wage data; US Census Nonemployer (self-employment) Statistics. **Notes:** Due to data confidentiality, some figures are estimates by Rain Coast Data, based on all available inputs. Since annual average employment measures monthly jobs on an annual basis, a visitor industry job that lasts three months counts as one-quarter of an annual average job. Therefore total people employed by the visitor industry last year is a much higher number. 2024 data is not yet fully available.

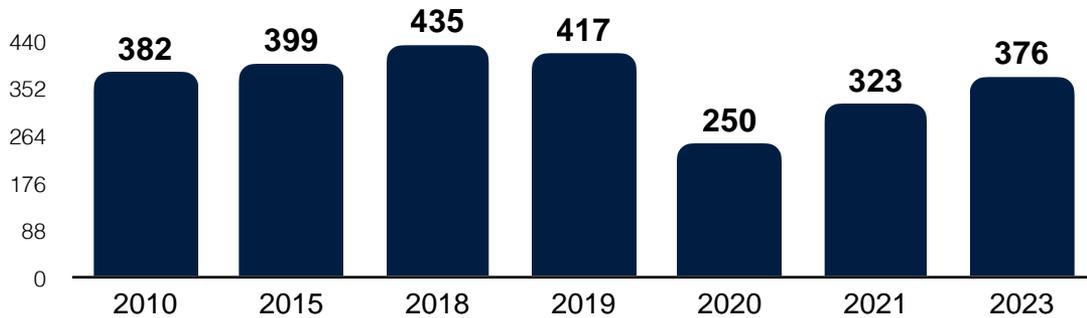
## Annual Visitor Industry Employment 2015-2023

Visitor sector employment in Valdez has been mostly steady, with the exception of pandemic years 2020 and 2021, at around 400 annualized jobs. While peak worker count is significantly higher in peak summer months — growing to around 500 jobs in June, July and August — using an annualized count (year-round equivalent job analysis) allows tourism jobs to be compared across sectors, and is a better way of making annual comparisons. Although 2024 data is not yet available, it is expected to be similar to 2023. The data will be available in July 2025.

Total workforce earnings have increased over time. The average visitor sector wage increased by 63% between 2015 and 2023, while total workforce earnings in that sector increased by 54%. Inflation over that same period increased by 32%.

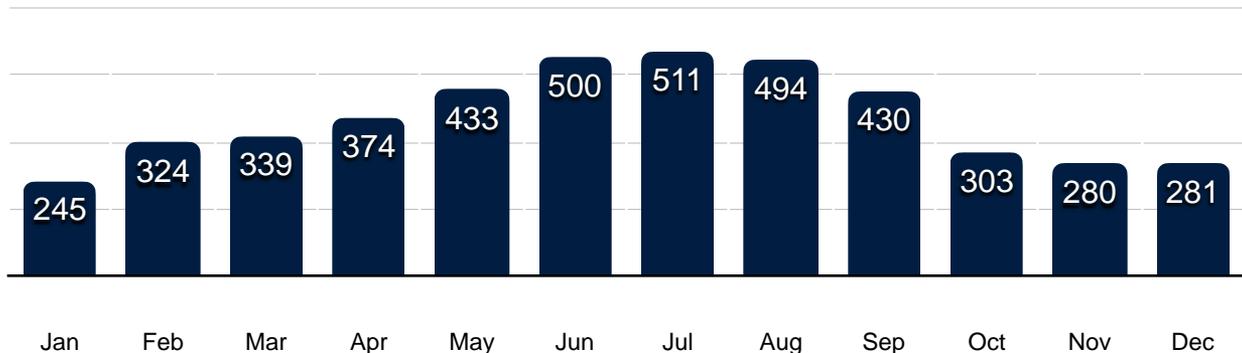
|   | Year 2015   | Year 2018   | Year 2021    | Year 2023    | % Change 2015-2023 |
|---|-------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------|
| Average Visitor Industry Wage             | \$21,470    | \$22,613    | \$32,428     | \$35,027     | 63%                |
| Annualized Visitor Industry Employment    | 399         | 435         | 323          | 376          | -6%                |
| Total Visitor Industry Workforce Earnings | \$8,566,383 | \$9,836,663 | \$10,474,182 | \$13,170,019 | 54%                |

### Valdez Visitor Sector Jobs, Annualized: 2010 to 2023



**Note:** Annualized employment (or year-round employment) tracks total workers each month of the year, sums the monthly total, and divides that number by twelve. **Source:** Alaska Department of Labor and US Census Nonemployer (self-employment). **Note:** 2024 data is not yet available

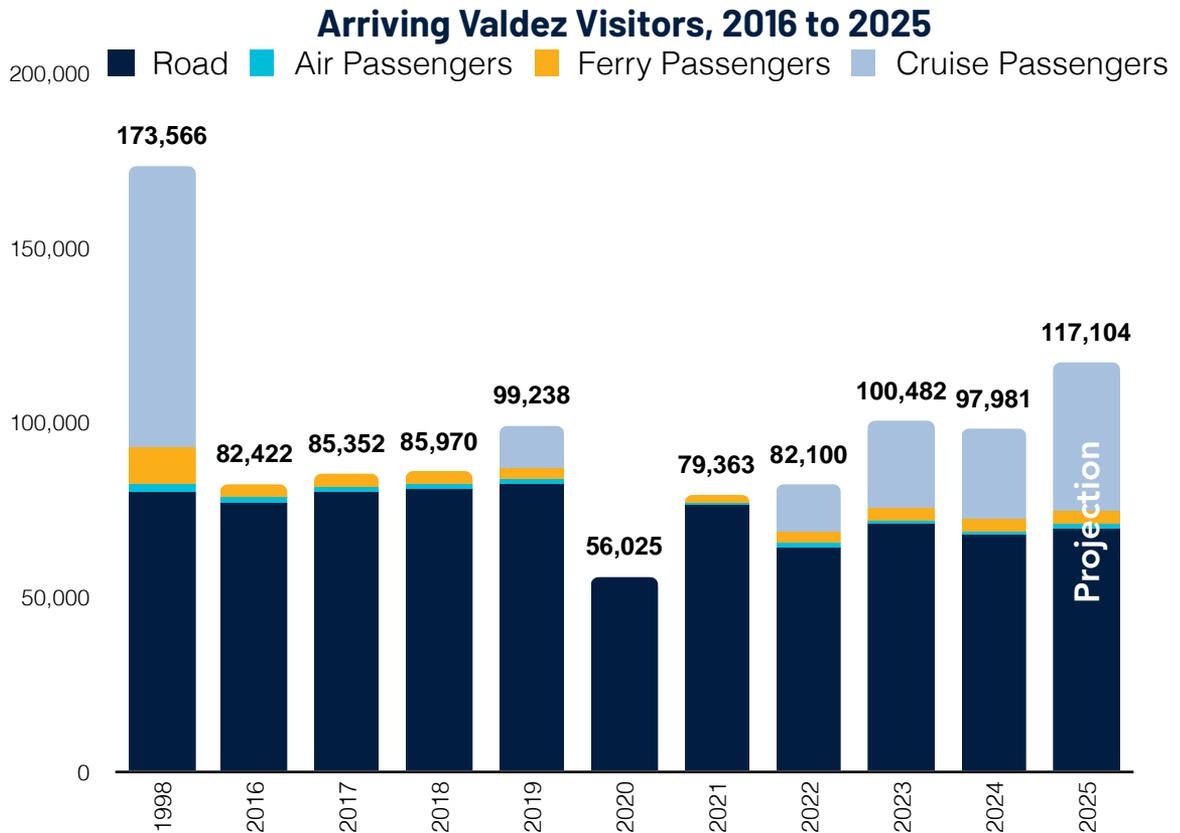
### Valdez Visitor Sector Workforce by Month, 2023



# Change in the Visitor Industry

## Total Passenger Arrivals

In 2024, nearly 100,000 tourists arrived in Valdez. This represents a 2% decline compared to 2023, likely due to the sharp decline in air service the community saw in 2024, along with lower than expected salmon returns. In 2025 total Valdez tourist numbers are expected to increase by 20%.



In 2025, Valdez is expecting nearly 70,000 tourists arriving by road, more than 42,000 arriving by cruise ship, nearly 4,000 by ferry, and more than 1,100 by air. Air passenger tourism traffic is expected to increase by 160% due to the implementation of essential air service. Cruise passenger numbers are expected to increase by 65% over 2024 numbers as the number of cruise ships visiting Valdez grows. While the arrival of more than 117,104 tourists in Valdez will represent a recent record, tourism numbers are still expected to remain below the tourism levels Valdez experienced in the late 1990s.

## Estimated Valdez Tourist Arrivals by Mode, 1998-2025

| Total Valdez Tourist Arrivals | Road   | Air   | Ferry  | Cruise | Total          |
|-------------------------------|--------|-------|--------|--------|----------------|
| 1998                          | 80,000 | 2,000 | 10,566 | 81,000 | <b>173,566</b> |
| 2016                          | 77,000 | 1,590 | 3,832  | -      | <b>82,422</b>  |
| 2017                          | 80,000 | 1,782 | 3,570  |        | <b>85,352</b>  |
| 2018                          | 81,000 | 1,323 | 3,647  | -      | <b>85,970</b>  |
| 2019                          | 82,000 | 1,923 | 2,915  | 12,400 | <b>99,238</b>  |
| 2020                          | 56,000 | -     | 25     | -      | <b>56,025</b>  |
| 2021                          | 76,000 | 1,202 | 2,161  | -      | <b>79,363</b>  |
| 2022                          | 64,000 | 1,771 | 3,147  | 13,182 | <b>82,100</b>  |
| 2023                          | 71,000 | 1,054 | 3,725  | 24,703 | <b>100,482</b> |
| 2024                          | 68,000 | 439   | 3,847  | 25,695 | <b>97,981</b>  |
| 2025 (projected)              | 69,500 | 1,141 | 3,974  | 42,489 | <b>117,104</b> |



# Valdez Traveler Visitation and Spending Analysis

In 2024, visitors spent an estimated \$55.4 million in the Valdez economy.

While this estimate includes all tourists, it also includes those staying at Valdez hotels and short-term-rentals for other actives, such as work travel. In 2024 an estimated 97,981 tourists came to Valdez, but total visitors was 105,535 — as those using accommodations in Valdez for other purposes, rather than recreation, were also counted.

Visitor spending analysis was conducted by developing estimates for the total number of hotel guests — based on accommodation tax receipts; the number of short-term-rental guests — provided by AirDNA; the number of cruise ship passengers — provided by the City of Valdez (COV); and the number of campers — using a capacity analysis, cross-referenced with highway data counts, and a previous analysis camper count by McDowell Group in 2016.

Spending per person per day per category was estimated using data from Wrangell, and modified for each guest category in Valdez. These categories include food (restaurants, grocery, coffee, bars, etc.); shopping (souvenirs, fishing gear, ice, etc.); transportation (vehicle rentals, fuel, taxis, other paid transportation options); and excursions ( sport fishing costs, gear rental, and other tours and activities). Accommodation spending was provided by COV and AirDNA, while camper spending was estimated.

## Total Estimated Visitation and Spending, 2024

| Estimated Spending by Visitors by Category   | Estimated Spending  | Estimated Visitors |
|--|---------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Total estimated visitor spending</b>  | <b>\$55,369,740</b> | <b>105,535</b>     |
| Spending by Hotel Guests (includes non-tourist uses)   | \$27,745,967        | 32,631             |
| Spending by Cruise Ship Passengers   | \$3,854,250         | 25,695             |
| Spending by Short-Term-Rental Guests (like AirBNBs and VRBO, also includes non-tourist uses) | \$7,311,557         | 10,081             |
| Spending by Campers (RV, Tent, cabin, other vehicle camping)                                 | \$16,457,966        | 36,218             |

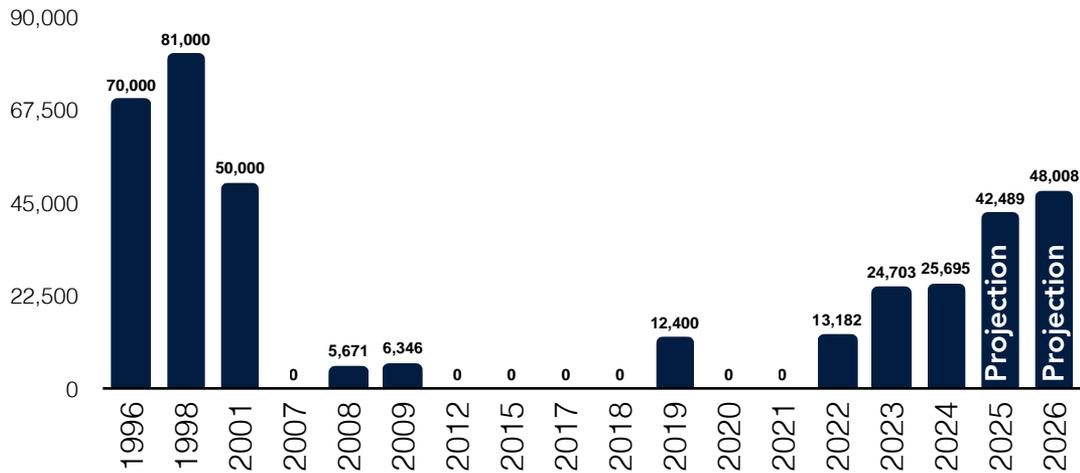
**Note:** All figures presented in this report are based on the best available data at the time of analysis. Estimates were developed using a combination of accommodation tax records, visitor counts, historical trends, industry benchmarks, survey data, and third-party sources such as AirDNA and the Alaska Department of Labor. Where exact data was unavailable, carefully considered assumptions and proxy data from comparable communities were used to model visitation and spending patterns. This model is designed to be adaptable. As new or improved data becomes available—such as updated visitor counts, spending profiles, or tax receipts—these inputs can be incorporated into the model to refine and enhance future estimates. Accordingly, figures should be considered directional rather than definitive, and are best used to understand relative scale, trendlines, and economic impact.

# Cruise Passengers

Valdez was a highly successful cruise ship port in the mid-1990s. At its peak more than 80,000 cruise passengers visited Valdez, representing nearly 15 percent of all cruise traffic to Alaska. Cruise ship traffic in Valdez decreased dramatically following the 9/11 2001 terrorist attack, as visitors were no longer permitted to see active pipeline related activities at the pipeline terminal, which had been the community’s most popular shore excursion. Holland America removed Valdez from its itinerary in 2002 and Carnival followed in 2003. In the decade and a half between 2004 and 2018, hardly any cruise ships visited the community.

The City of Valdez invested in developing a more attractive cruise ship port, spending millions on capital improvement projects. The investment began to pay off in 2019, but cruise ships visits were cancelled in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic. Cruise visitors returned to the community in 2022; however, in June 2023, Norwegian Cruise Line abruptly cancelled all calls to Valdez for the 2023 season, as well as 2024, reducing 2023 passenger arrivals by about half. The Port of Valdez had originally projected more than 57,000 cruise passenger arrivals in 2023.

## Cruise Passengers in Valdez 1996-2026



Source: Cruise Line Agencies of Alaska; City of Valdez. Passenger numbers for 1996, 1998, and 2001 are estimates based on ship arrival counts.

Moving into 2025 and 2026, the long-planned for cruise growth is finally materializing. In 2025, Valdez is expected to receive 40 port calls, which could have 42,489 passengers, if all ships are full. This represents a 65% increase over 2024. If ships are at 93% capacity, as they were in 2023, the community would host approximately 40,000 cruise passengers. In 2026, the number of cruise passengers visiting Valdez is expected to grow by an additional 13% to just over 48,000.

## Cruise Ship Projections 2025

| 2025 Ships             | Port Calls | Passenger Capacity | Total Visitors |
|------------------------|------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Silver Nova            | 8          | 728                | 5,824          |
| Viking Orion           | 12         | 930                | 11,160         |
| Viking Venus           | 14         | 930                | 13,020         |
| Villa Vie Odyssey      | 1          | 924                | 924            |
| <b>Mid-Sized Ships</b> | <b>35</b>  |                    | <b>30,928</b>  |
| Nieuw Amsterdam        | 1          | 2,527              | 2,106          |
| Noordam                | 1          | 1,918              | 1,918          |
| Ruby Princess          | 1          | 3,080              | 3,080          |
| Westerdam              | 2          | 2,018              | 4,036          |
| <b>Large-Ships</b>     | <b>5</b>   |                    | <b>11,561</b>  |
| <b>Grand Total</b>     | <b>40</b>  |                    | <b>42,489</b>  |

**Source:** Cruise Line Agencies of Alaska; City of Valdez.

For the purpose of this analysis, mid-sized cruise ships includes those with 200 to 1,299 passengers per vessel; and large ships have 1,300 passengers or more.

### Mid-Sized Cruise Ships

In 2025, 4 mid-sized cruise ships with an average capacity of around 900 passengers are expected to make 35 port calls, potentially bringing 30,9281 passengers to Valdez if the ships are full.

### Large Cruise Ships

Four large cruise ships — *Nieuw Amsterdam*, *Westerdam*, *Noordam*, and *Ruby Princess* — each carrying between 2,000 and 3,000 passengers, are scheduled to make a total of five port calls to Valdez in the summer of 2025. At full capacity, these visits could bring up to 11,561 cruise passengers. The Ruby Princess will be making its inaugural visit.

### 2026 Projections

Passenger capacity for 2026 is expected to be just over 48,000. Seven mid-sized cruise ships will make 51 visits, and four large cruise ships will make 5 visits. New vessels expected to visit Valdez in 2026 include *Azamara Pursuit*, *Luminara*, *Silver Moon*, *Zaandam* and *Roald Amundsen*. *Silver Whisper* will return, following a two year absence.

## Cruise Visitation and Spending Analysis

In 2024, cruise ship passengers are estimated to have contributed approximately \$3.9 million to the Valdez economy. In 2025 that total is expected to increase to \$6.4 million.

While Valdez-specific cruise spending data has not been formally collected, estimates are based on spending patterns observed in Wrangell—a comparable Alaska community—and adjusted for local conditions. Based on modeling, cruise visitors spend an average of \$150 per person while they are visiting Valdez. This analysis assumes the following average daily spending per cruise visitor:

- **\$91** on excursions (including flightseeing, sportfishing, guided tours, transportation costs, and other activities)
- **\$28** on food and beverage (including coffee, alcohol, and tips)
- **\$31** on shopping (including souvenirs, local goods, museum admission, donations, etc.)

These estimates offer an estimate of the cruise sector’s potential impact on local businesses. The model assumes that some visitors will not partake in all or in some cases any of the spending categories. These assumptions can be updated as better Valdez-specific data is developed.

### Valdez Estimated Cruise Tourist Spending

| Spending by Cruise Visitors by Category        | 2024               | 2025               |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Total estimated cruise tourist spending</b> | <b>\$3,854,250</b> | <b>\$6,373,350</b> |
| Excursions and Transportation                  | \$2,338,245        | \$3,866,499        |
| Food, Beverages                                | \$719,460          | \$1,189,692        |
| Shopping                                       | \$796,545          | \$1,317,159        |



# Air Passengers

The number of air passengers arriving in Valdez gradually decreased through 2019. Following the 2020 pandemic, passenger traffic fell steeply before rebounding to about half of pre-pandemic rates. In 2024, fewer than 3,000 air passengers arrived in Valdez, a 28% decline over 2023 levels, and an 80% decline from a decade earlier.



Source: US Bureau of Transportation Statistics (RITA).

Air traffic into Valdez has experienced several years of turmoil. In 2020, the only commercial air carrier operating in Valdez, RavnAir Group, laid off all its staff and filed bankruptcy. The airline found new ownership under the name of Ravn Alaska and resumed service to Valdez in November 2020. In February of 2024 Ravn Alaska laid off a third of its staff, citing challenges like inflation and labor shortages, and Alaska Airlines suspended its mileage-sharing agreement with Ravn.

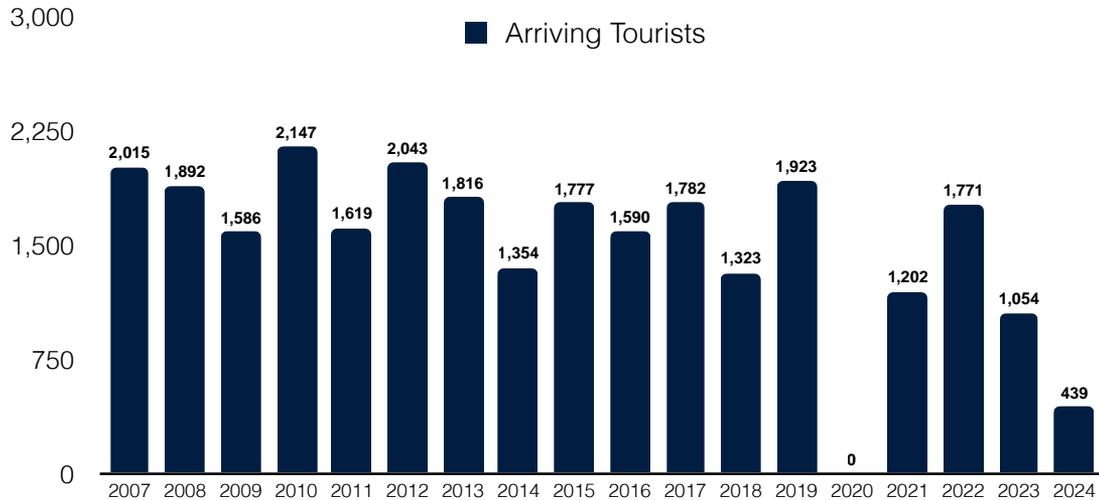
In December of 2024, Valdez was added to the U.S. Department of Transportation's (US DOT) Essential Air Service program, and Ravn Alaska was selected to provide that service. Essential Air Service is a program ensuring that small and rural communities receive commercial air service, even if it's not profitable for airlines. Ravn Alaska will receive \$5.6 million in 2025 and \$5.8 million in 2026, allowing it to operate 14 weekly round trips between Valdez and Anchorage, and reduce the cost of traveling. Ticket prices have decreased to \$89 (one way) compared to approximately \$300 before Essential Air Service began. The number of passengers in the first 3 months of 2025, total passengers arriving in Valdez increased by 160% over the first three months of 2024. While this should provide more aviation security moving forward, the federal government is considering cutting Essential Air Service to Alaska in 2025.

Valdez has a single, asphalt concrete paved runway 6,500 feet long and 150 feet wide.

## Tourists by Air

The number of estimated tourists arriving in Valdez by air has vacillated over the past six years. Between 2007 and 2019, an average of 1,800 tourists arrived by air in Valdez annually. In 2020, that figure dropped to 0, increasing to nearly 1,800 in 2022, before dropping by 75 percent between 2022 and 2024. Some of the annualized fluctuations by year before 2020 can be attributed to changes in the sport fishing harvest levels.

### Airline Tourists Arriving in Valdez



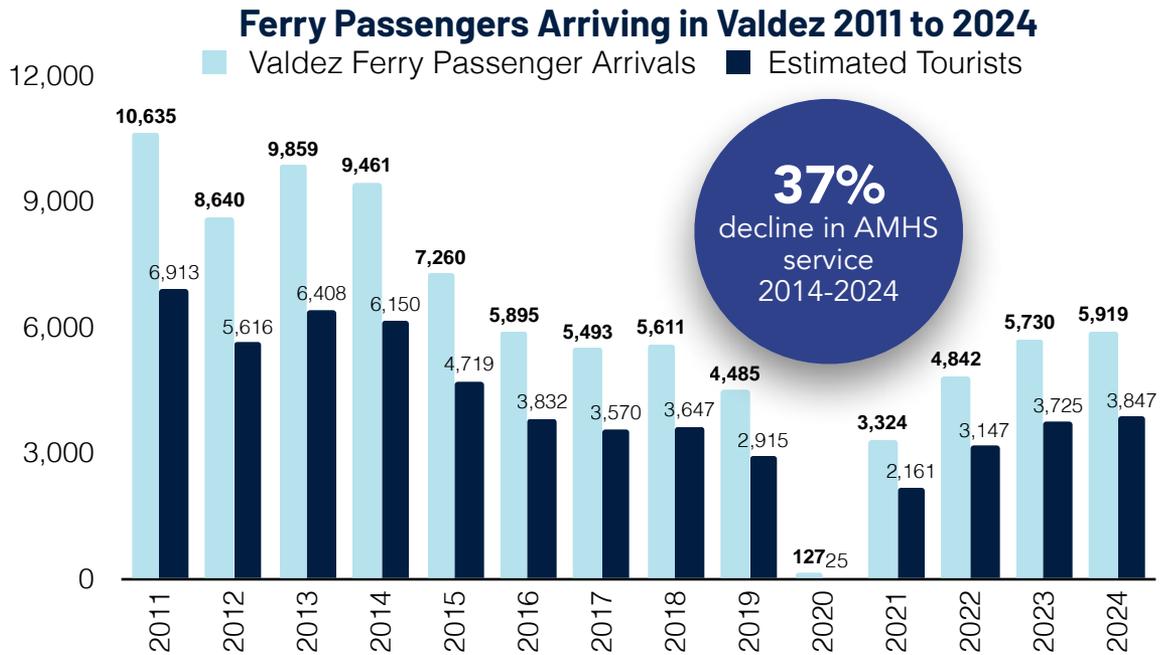
To understand how many tourists arrived in Valdez by air, an average number of air passengers is calculated for the eight non summer months. That figure (for example it was nearly 1,000 in 2015) is subtracted from the four summer month passenger numbers, and the excess summer month travelers are estimated to be tourist travelers. Of course this miscounts some seafood workers as summer tourists, and excludes those flying to Valdez for winter tourism activities, but the resulting estimation provides a good approximation of tourists arriving by air.



# Ferry Passengers

In 2024, nearly 6,000 Alaska Marine Highway (AMHS) ferry passengers arrived in Valdez, and just under 3,900 of those are estimated to have been tourists.<sup>2</sup>

Since 2014, the number of passengers disembarking in Valdez has decreased by 37%. Ridership is approximately half of what it was in 2004. In 2024, the number of passengers disembarking increased by 3% over 2023 disembarkations.



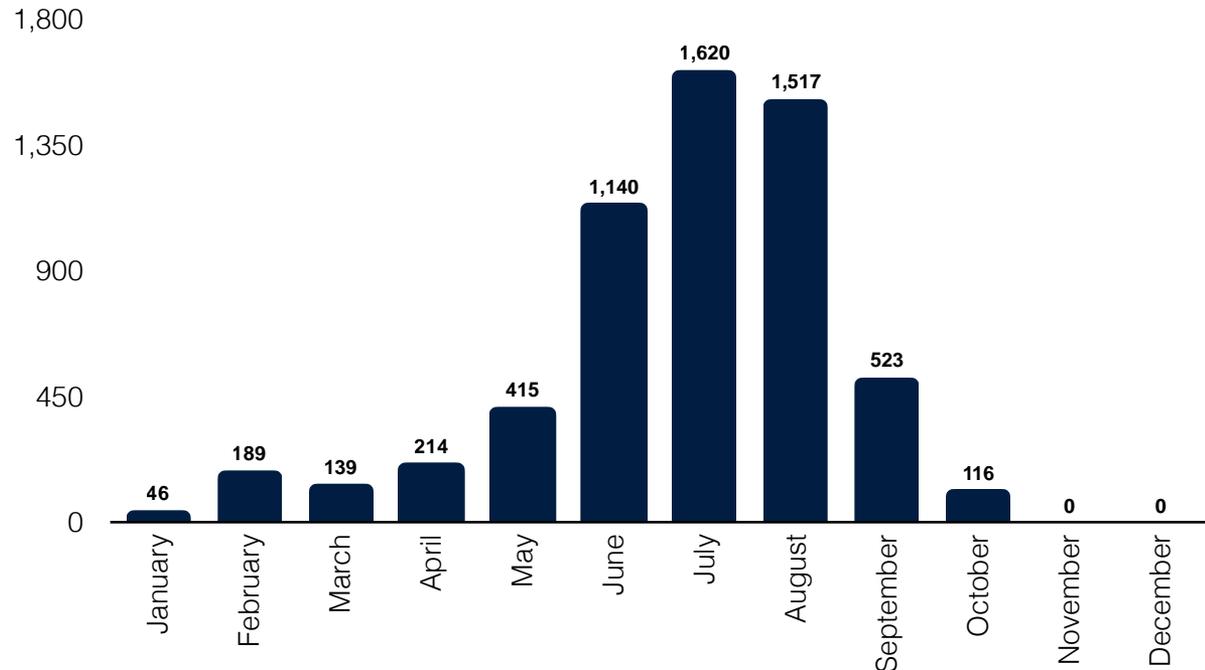
AMHS has been hit hard by state budget reductions, yet Valdez has fared better than other communities. Still, visitor-focused businesses built around serving ferry passengers have been impacted by reduced ferry services.

<sup>2</sup> Alaska Marine Highway System Annual Traffic Volume Reports. Direct data requests.

## Tourists by Ferry

Most ferry passengers, 88%, that arrived in Valdez in 2024 came during the summer (May through September), with peak passengers arriving in July.

### Ferry Passengers Arriving in Valdez by Month, 2024



Because the primary use of the Valdez ferry system is in the summer, it is more difficult to develop an excess summer month traveler analysis to help estimate the number of those arriving by ferry who are tourists. In lieu of more detailed information, we are using an estimate of 65% tourism traffic. Summer ferry routes to and from Valdez (particularly the Whittier–Valdez run) are heavily used by tourists traveling in RVs, with rental cars, or on foot during peak visitor season (June–August).

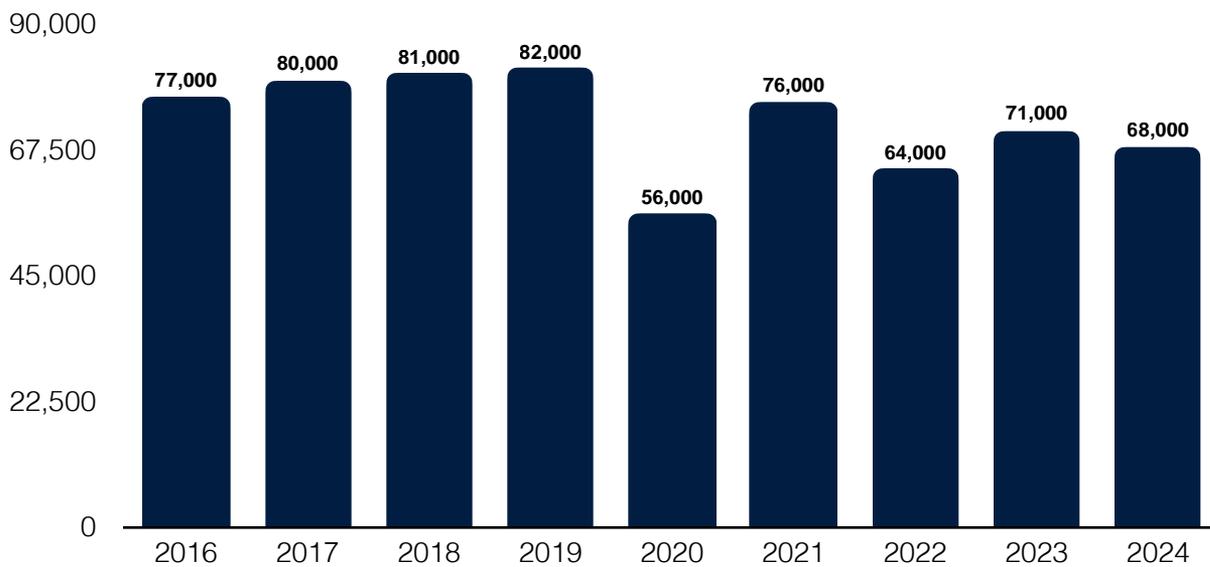


# Tourists Arriving by Road

The Richardson Highway connects Valdez to Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Canada; and is how most people travel to Valdez. By road, it is 305 miles to Anchorage and 364 miles to Fairbanks.

In 2024, Rain Coast Data estimates that 68,000 recreational visitors came to Valdez via road. An estimated 65,000 of these arrived in the summer months. Total arrivals of people by road — including truckers, residents, and workers — is much higher.

### Estimated Tourists Arriving by Road in Valdez 2016 to 2024



While no visitor counts have taken place to estimate highway tourism to Valdez since 2016, using Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) — the total number of vehicles traveling over a given road segment during one 24-hour day — provides a useful measurement of traffic. The analysis assumes that 28% of excess non-truck summer traffic consists of recreational visitors, and that each vehicle contains an average of two tourists.



## Estimated Road Tourists to Valdez, 2016-2024

| Year | Winter Month AADT (assume primarily Locals) | Summer Month Average Additional Daily Traffic | Additional Vehicles Per During summer | Divide by 2 for Exit Trips only | Excluding Large Trucks (using annual %) | Estimated summer visitors (28% tourist, 2 PAX per vehicle, rounded) | Total Road Tourists including Winter (rounded) |
|------|---|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|---|--|
| 2016 | 3,588                                       | 2,147   | 257,640                               | 128,820                         | 112,460                                 | 72,000  | 77,000   |
| 2017 | 3,519                                       | 2,239   | 268,680                               | 134,340                         | 117,279                                 | 75,000  | 80,000   |
| 2018 | 3,619                                       | 2,272   | 272,640                               | 136,320                         | 118,053                                 | 76,000  | 81,000   |
| 2019 | 3,532                                       | 2,338   | 280,560                               | 140,280                         | 124,008                                 | 79,000  | 82,000   |
| 2020 | 3,387                                       | 1,580   | 189,600                               | 94,800                          | 83,708                                  | 53,000  | 56,000   |
| 2021 | 3,403                                       | 1,959   | 235,080                               | 117,540                         | 104,611                                 | 72,000  | 76,000   |
| 2022 | 3,273                                       | 1,817   | 218,040                               | 109,020                         | 96,592                                  | 61,000  | 64,000   |
| 2023 | 3,285                                       | 2,002   | 240,240                               | 120,120                         | 104,264                                 | 67,000  | 71,000   |
| 2024 | 3,327                                       | 1,921   | 230,520                               | 115,260                         | 90,018                                  | 65,000  | 68,000   |
| 2016 | 3,588                                       | 2,147   | 257,640                               | 128,820                         | 112,460                                 | 72,000  | 77,000   |
| 2017 | 3,519                                       | 2,239   | 268,680                               | 134,340                         | 117,279                                 | 75,000  | 80,000   |
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| 2022 | 3,273                                       | 1,817   | 218,040                               | 109,020                         | 96,592                                  | 61,000  | 64,000   |
| 2023 | 3,285                                       | 2,002   | 240,240                               | 120,120                         | 104,264                                 | 67,000  | 71,000   |
| 2024 | 3,327                                       | 1,921   | 230,520                               | 115,260                         | 90,018                                  | 65,000  | 68,000   |

**Source:** The Alaska Department of Transportation's Traffic Analysis data collected from the Alaska Traffic Monitoring Program located on the public roads in Alaska. Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT)- identifies the average volume of traffic for the average one day (24 hour period) during a data reporting year at a specific location. Location 13100001- Richardson Hwy @ Valdez (CCS)(MP 1) City: Valdez. Route number: 4. LRS section: 1100000I000. Functional class: 3R - Principal Arterial - Other (Rural). [https://alaskatraficdata.drakewell.com/sitedashboard.asp?node=AKDOT\\_CCS&cosit=000013100001](https://alaskatraficdata.drakewell.com/sitedashboard.asp?node=AKDOT_CCS&cosit=000013100001) This analysis was informed by research and analysis conducted by Kittelson & Associates. The analysis also uses the McDowell Group 2017 Valdez Visitor Profile and Economic Impact Study. Prepared for the City of Valdez.

# Accommodations Visitation and Spending Analysis

## Total Accommodation Spending Impact Summary

In Valdez in 2024, nearly 80,000 overnight guests are estimated to have stayed in Valdez, including hotel, motel, short-term rental (AirBNB), and camping visitors. These visitors booked more than 116,000 accommodation nights, which includes everything from a house using AirBNB, an RV location at a campground, to staying at a traditional hotel room. Overnight visitors spent \$13.5 million on accommodation alone last year.

Those staying overnight in Valdez spent an estimated additional \$38 million in 2024, on all other costs, including sport fishing (including rentals, fuel, ice, fish processing, guides, and all other associated costs), excursions, food, alcohol, coffee, tips, donations, retail purchases, etc.

Altogether overnight visitors in Valdez are estimated to have spent \$51.5 million in 2024.

## Total Accommodation Spending Impact, Valdez 2024

| Accommodation Type         | Estimated Guests | Estimated Nights Booked | Total Accommodation Costs | Estimated Spending (excluding hotel costs) | Total Estimated Spending |
|----------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| <b>Hotel, Motel</b>        | 32,631           | 58,757                  | \$8,623,947               | \$19,122,020                               | \$27,745,967             |
| <b>Short-Term Rental</b>   | 10,081           | 9,488                   | \$2,441,307               | \$4,870,250                                | \$7,311,557              |
| <b>Camping (all kinds)</b> | 37,128           | 47,780                  | \$2,454,738               | \$14,003,228                               | \$16,457,966             |
| <b>Total</b>               | <b>79,840</b>    | <b>116,025</b>          | <b>\$13,519,992</b>       | <b>\$37,995,498</b>                        | <b>\$51,515,490</b>      |

**Note:** All figures presented in this report are based on the best available data at the time of analysis. Estimates were developed using a combination of accommodation tax records, visitor counts, historical trends, industry benchmarks, survey data, and third-party sources such as AirDNA and the Alaska Department of Labor. Where exact data was unavailable, carefully considered assumptions and proxy data from comparable communities were used to model visitation and spending patterns. This model is designed to be adaptable. As new or improved data becomes available—such as updated visitor counts, spending profiles, or tax receipts—these inputs can be incorporated into the model to refine and enhance future estimates. Accordingly, figures should be considered directional rather than definitive, and are best used to understand relative scale, trendlines, and economic impact.

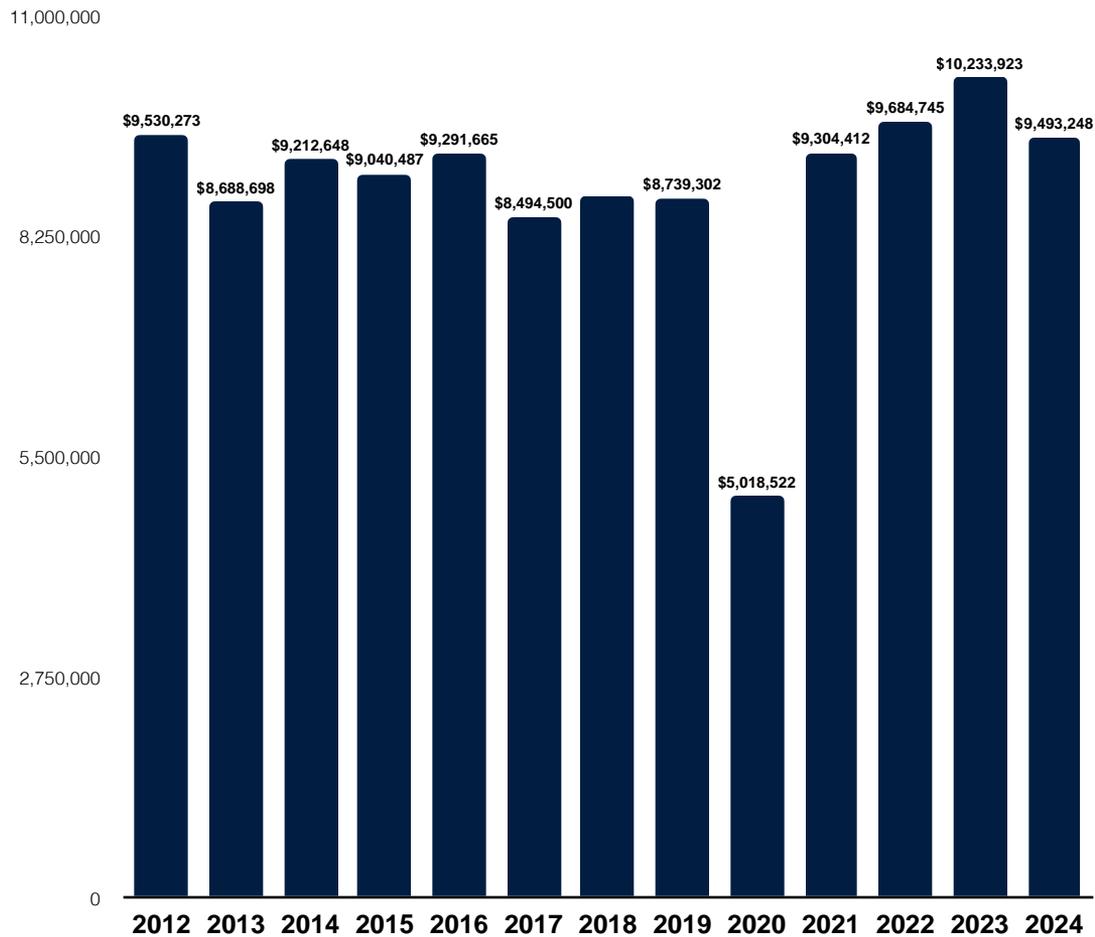
## Accommodation Tax

The City of Valdez imposes a 6% accommodation tax on the rental of temporary lodging, including hotels, bed and breakfasts, and short-term rentals. The City of Valdez currently does not collect on campgrounds or RV's. Based on tax collections, some short-term rental (STR) bed and breakfast type locations are also not currently paying local accommodation tax.

Still, the accommodation tax data is incredibly useful, because it represents a consistent group of taxpayers. For the past 15 years, excluding 2020, average Valdez hotel sales, adjusted for inflation, has been \$9.2 million (this includes \$8.6 million in traditional hotel room sales).

The data suggest that the traditional accommodation sector has not really grown or declined during that entire period; with the exception of the pandemic year of 2020.

### Valdez Estimated Accommodation Sales, Inflation Adjusted



Source: City of Valdez Finance Department

## Hotel Visitation and Spending Analysis

Valdez has approximately 600 traditional hotel rooms across 8 hotels including Best Western Harbor Inn, Totem Inn, Keystone Hotel, Glacier Hotel, Valdez Airport Man Camp, Downtown B&B, Mountain Sky Hotel, and Naswik. In 2024, these traditional establishments booked nearly 60,000 hotel room nights, hosting an estimated 32,631 visitors to Valdez.

While an in-depth study of visitor spending has not been conducted in Valdez, using data from other similar communities makes the following assumptions:

- Visitors spent an average of \$67 per person for food each day (including food, coffee, bars, restaurants, grocery, etc.)
- Visitors spent an average of \$23 per person for shopping each day (including souvenirs, fishing gear, ice, etc.)
- Visitors spent an average of \$16 per person for transportation each day (including vehicle rentals, fuel, taxis, and other paid transportation options).
- Visitors spent an average of \$41 per person for excursions each day (including sport fishing costs, gear rental, and other tours and activities).

Based on this analysis, hotel visitors spent an estimated \$27.5 million in Valdez last year. (Note this hotel analysis excludes campgrounds and short-term-rentals like AirBNBs).

### Total Hotel Economic Impact, Valdez 2024

| Estimated Visitors | Estimated Nights Booked | Total Room Costs | Estimated Spending<br>(excluding hotel costs) | Total Estimated Spending |
|--------------------|-------------------------|------------------|---|--------------------------|
| 32,631             | 58,757                  | \$8,623,947      | \$19,122,020                                  | \$27,745,967             |

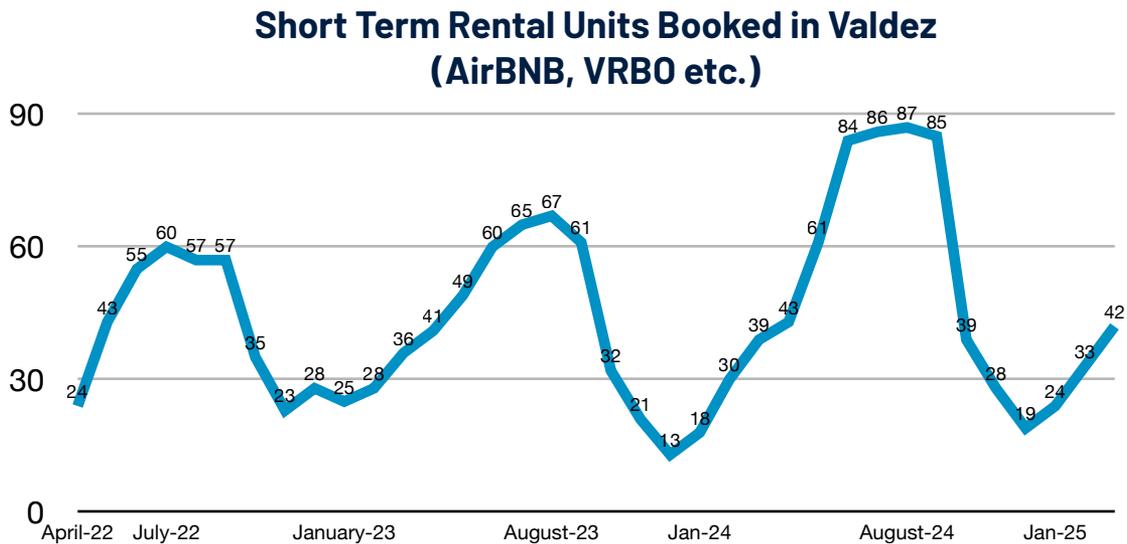


## Short Term Rentals

A total of 102 Valdez units or rooms are currently registered with either AirBNB or VRBO, although many are inactive.

Use of short-term rentals, like AirBNB and Vrbo, rose by 43% from 60 peak bookings in the summer of 2022 to 87 booked units in the summer of 2024. In January of 2025, only 19 short term rental units had bookings.

The average price per night in 2024 was \$258 per night (this is a fully loaded rate that includes the cleaning fee, airbnb fee, and taxes). Properties range from \$50 to \$750 per night. 41% of the listings are for one bedroom homes. Three-quarters (76%) of the listings offer an “entire home,” while 24% offer a single room within a home or more traditional Bed and Breakfast.



The majority (66%) of the active short-term housing listings offered availability on a seasonal basis only (available for a few days to six months of the year only). Just 13% of Valdez listings were available all or most of the year (more than 270 days). The average length of stay at a STR in Valdez in 2024 was 3 days.

An analysis of the data identifies just 10 rental housing units that are being diverted to short-term rentals year-round across 594 total Valdez rental units, or 1.7% of the total rental market. Looking at it another way, 6% of all Valdez housing units are currently registered with AirBNB or VRBO, although 16% of these are inactive listings.

In Valdez there were 1,655 total occupied housing units in 2023.

## STR Revenue

In 2024, the short term rentals in Valdez collectively earned \$2.44 million, an 18% increase over 2023. The City of Valdez has a 6% Public Accommodation Tax which applies to short term rentals, which would have conceptually brought in \$146,500 in tax revenue for the community, if these were fully collected.

### Revenue by STR Unit Type, Valdez 2024

| Month                                       | Unique   | B&Bs     | Apts      | Houses    | Total Revenue      | Total Nights |
|---|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|--------------------|--------------|
| <i>Registered<br/>(not all active)</i>      | 8        | 9 Rooms  | 23        | 62        |                    |              |
| January                                     | \$493    | \$1,845  | \$5,213   | \$26,264  | <b>\$33,815</b>    | <b>167</b>   |
| February                                    | \$1,443  | \$2,273  | \$14,353  | \$50,170  | <b>\$68,239</b>    | <b>270</b>   |
| March                                       | \$3,837  | \$10,319 | \$23,257  | \$68,287  | <b>\$105,700</b>   | <b>390</b>   |
| April                                       | \$6,459  | \$16,743 | \$22,724  | \$75,868  | <b>\$121,794</b>   | <b>483</b>   |
| May   | \$14,841 | \$16,781 | \$47,736  | \$119,821 | <b>\$199,179</b>   | <b>816</b>   |
| June  | \$22,083 | \$31,873 | \$90,026  | \$257,238 | <b>\$401,220</b>   | <b>1,499</b> |
| July  | \$27,874 | \$42,511 | \$125,248 | \$347,592 | <b>\$543,225</b>   | <b>2,029</b> |
| August                                      | \$29,642 | \$43,188 | \$124,040 | \$336,779 | <b>\$533,649</b>   | <b>2,009</b> |
| September                                   | \$12,718 | \$22,366 | \$64,780  | \$174,785 | <b>\$274,649</b>   | <b>1,113</b> |
| October                                     | \$731    | \$8,235  | \$9,311   | \$55,847  | <b>\$74,124</b>    | <b>341</b>   |
| November                                    | \$786    | \$1,512  | \$8,322   | \$47,100  | <b>\$57,720</b>    | <b>249</b>   |
| December                                    | NA       | \$2,118  | \$354     | \$25,521  | <b>\$27,993</b>    | <b>122</b>   |
| <b>Total Short Term Rental Revenue 2024</b> |          |          |           |           | <b>\$2,441,307</b> | <b>9,488</b> |

**Note:** Unique rentals include boats, tents, and tiny homes, for example.

A total of 9,488 room nights were booked in Valdez in 2024 using AirBNB or VRBO, (the equivalent of a 26-room hotel being fully booked for a year). The total revenue for these stays was \$2.44 million, a figure that includes cleaning, but excludes the Valdez accommodation tax.

## STR Visitation and Spending Analysis

In Valdez in 2024 there were 3,151 STRs units booked, resulting in 9,488 room nights (see previous table), and resulting in \$2.44 million in total spending to these local accommodation providers. AirDNA also provides the total length of stay by month for Valdez. An analysis of “people per booking” for Juneau STRs was used to understand total visitors. Based on available data an estimated more than 10,000 visitors stayed at STRs in Valdez in 2024. In addition to spending on accommodation, they spent an additional estimated \$4.9 million on food, excursions, shopping, and transportation. (In lieu of quality Valdez data, Wrangell visitor spending daily estimates were used). Based on the full analysis, visitors using STRs spent \$7.3 million in Valdez in 2024.

### Total STR Economic Impact, Valdez 2024

| Month         | Length of Stay | STR Units booked | People Per Booking | Total people  | Total Room Costs   | Estimated Visitor Spending (excluding STRs) | Total Estimated Visitor Spending in Valdez by STR users |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|---|---|
| January       | 5.54           | 30               | 2.1                | 62            | \$33,815           | \$31,537                                    | \$65,352  |
| February      | 4.47           | 60               | 3.0                | 179           | \$68,239           | \$73,633                                    | \$141,872   |
| March         | 3.73           | 105              | 3.7                | 385           | \$105,700          | \$132,038                                   | \$237,738   |
| April         | 3.81           | 127              | 2.8                | 361           | \$121,794          | \$126,472                                   | \$248,266   |
| May           | 2.9            | 281              | 3.1                | 864           | \$199,179          | \$445,367                                   | \$644,546   |
| June          | 2.89           | 519              | 3.7                | 1,894         | \$401,220          | \$972,419                                   | \$1,373,639   |
| July          | 2.81           | 722              | 3.7                | 2,683         | \$543,225          | \$1,339,783                                 | \$1,883,008   |
| August        | 2.77           | 725              | 3.0                | 2,154         | \$533,649          | \$1,060,394                                 | \$1,594,043   |
| September     | 3.17           | 351              | 2.5                | 861           | \$274,649          | \$485,121                                   | \$759,770   |
| October       | 3.17           | 108              | 2.7                | 291           | \$74,124           | \$84,789                                    | \$158,913   |
| November      | 3.2            | 78               | 2.8                | 217           | \$57,720           | \$78,487                                    | \$136,207   |
| December      | 2.72           | 45               | 2.9                | 131           | \$27,993           | \$40,209                                    | \$68,202  |
| <b>Totals</b> |                | <b>3,151</b>     |                    | <b>10,081</b> | <b>\$2,441,307</b> | <b>\$4,870,250</b>                          | <b>\$7,311,557</b>                                      |

**Sources:** Length of Stay; STR Units booked; and Total Room Costs provided by AirDNA for Valdez. People Per Booking used Juneau STR data, provided to Rain Coast Data by local operators. Estimated Visitor Spending (excluding STRs) was developed using hotel guest spending in Wrangell Alaska. All analysis is developed by Rain Coast Data.

# STR Valdez Dashboard

The following STR dashboard tools are available for the Valdez area.

Listings by Annual Availability



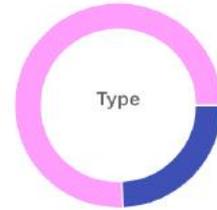
- 1-90 nights (25%)
- 91-180 nights (39%)
- 181-270 nights (23%)
- 271-365 nights (13%)

Listings by Rental Size



- 1 Bedroom (41%)
- 2 Bedroom (28%)
- 3 Bedroom (22%)
- 4 Bedroom (3%)
- 5+ Bedroom (6%)

Listings by Rental Type



- Entire Home (76%)
- Private Room (24%)

## Map of Short-Term Rental Locations Near Downtown Valdez



## Camper Visitation and Spending Analysis

Valdez offers a wide range of camping options, with more than 600 campsites available across both public and private facilities. Notable locations include Allison Point Campground, Bear Paw RV Park, Blueberry Lake Campground, Eagle's Rest RV Park & Cabins, Valdez Glacier Campground, Valdez KOA Journey, and Valdez RV Park. In addition to these designated sites, some RV and vehicle travelers choose to camp outside formal campgrounds, a practice known as boondocking.

While campsite availability is concentrated during the roughly 100 peak days of summer, the visitor impact remains significant. The following assumptions were used to estimate the economic contribution of campers:

- Campsites are occupied 60% of the time
- Average stay: 3.43 nights
- Average group size: 2.6 people per site
- Daily spending per camper:
  - **\$19** on accommodation (campsite fees - a specific fee was calculated for each campsite)
  - **\$39** on food and drink (including coffee, alcohol, and tips - reduced for specific sites)
  - **\$16** on transportation (including fuel; and vehicle and boat rentals - reduced for specific sites)
  - **\$23** on shopping and gear (includes bait and ice - reduced for specific sites)
  - **\$39** on excursions and activities (includes fishing guides and fish processing - reduced for specific sites)

Based on this analysis, campers contributed an estimated \$16.5 million to the Valdez economy in the past year.

### Total Camping Economic Impact, Valdez 2024

| Estimated Visitors | Estimated Nights Camping | Total Estimated Spending |
|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 37,128             | 48,980                   | \$16,457,966             |

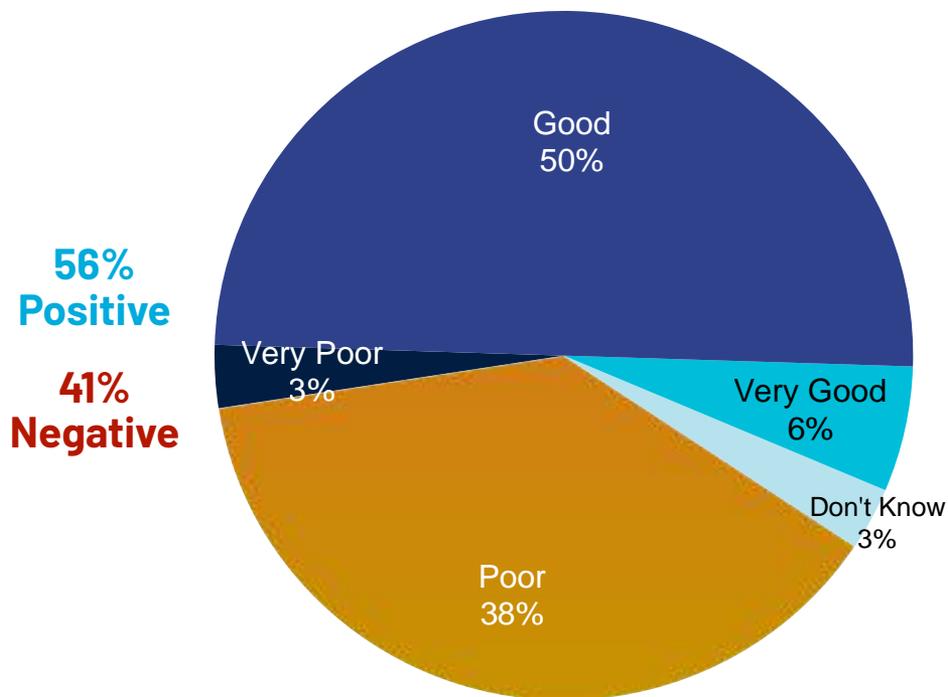


# 2025 Visitor Sector Business Climate Analysis

## Valdez Visitor Industry Leaders

The City of Valdez conducted a business climate survey in 2025 to track business confidence. In the spring of 2025 a total of 41 Valdez business owners and operators in visitor related industries (tourism, restaurants, other food and beverage businesses, hotels, excursion providers, and others providing services to visitors) responded to the survey, representing a total workforce of 260.

### How do you view the overall business climate right now?



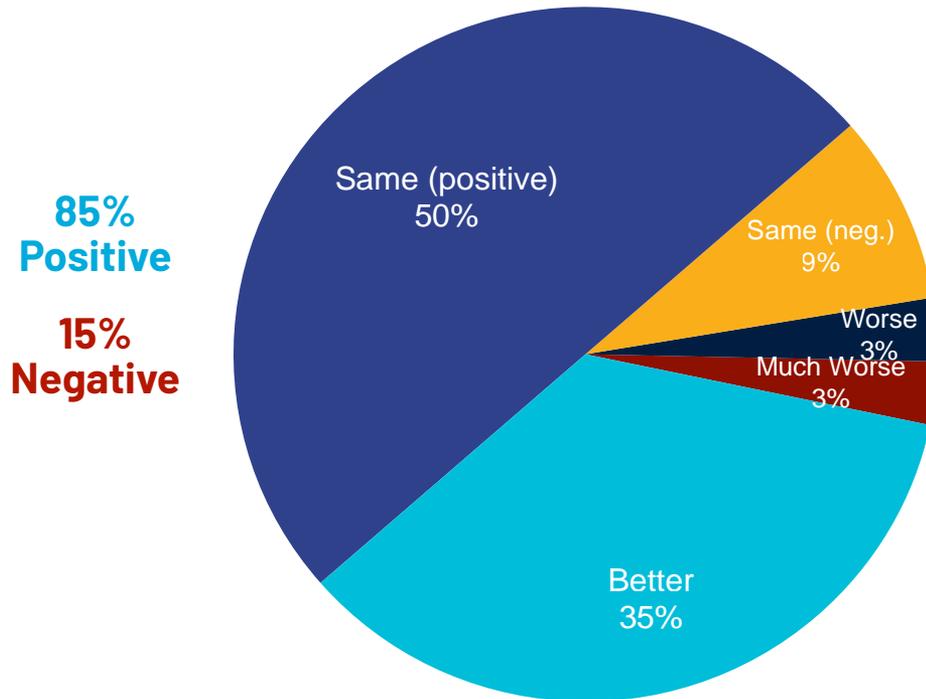
### Valdez Visitor Economy Now: How do you view the overall business climate right now?

In 2025, Valdez visitor industry business leaders were nearly divided as to the state of the Valdez business climate. Just over half (56%) of visitor industry business leaders called the business climate good or very good; while 41% called it poor or very poor.

An additional 3% said they did not know, however, a lack of business certainty regarding the economy is primarily a negative response when it comes to business.

## Valdez Visitor Sector Economic Outlook

**What is the economic outlook for your business/industry over the next year (compared to the previous year)?**



### **Valdez Visitor Economy Outlook: What is the economic outlook for your business/industry?**

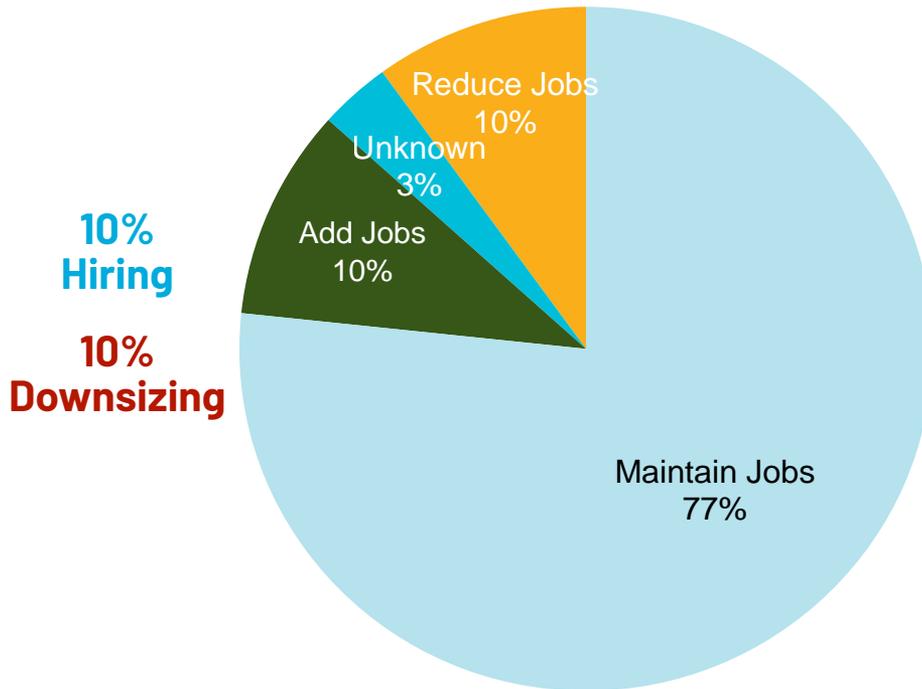
**Economic Future:** In 2025, 85% of respondents describe the economic outlook for their business or industry over the next 12 months as positive; while 15% have a negative outlook.

Just over a third of survey respondents expect their prospects to be better (35%) over the next year, none expect business to be much better, while half of tourism business leaders say their business outlook is similar to current operations, in a positive way.

Just 6% of the tourism business leaders expect business to be worse or much worse in the coming year, while an additional 9% say that operations are already going poorly and no change is expected.

## Valdez Visitor Sector Hiring Projections

Over the next 12 months, do you expect your organization to add jobs, maintain jobs, reduce jobs, or are you unsure?



### Employment changes in the next year

When asked about staffing expectations, more than three-quarters of visitor sector business leaders (77%) expect to maintain job levels in the coming year.

10% of business leaders expect to reduce staffing levels, while another 10% anticipate adding jobs.

## Valdez Visitor Sector Economic Outlook: Open-Ended Responses

In the spring of 2025, Valdez visitor industry business leaders were asked to describe their economic outlooks in their own words. These comments were primarily regarding their expectations of the 2025 season.

Valdez visitor industry businesses expressed a mix of optimism and concern about the 2025 season. Some operators are excited about community improvements, growth in visitation, and opportunities to enhance visitor experiences, especially if the city invests in infrastructure and collaborates with local businesses. Others are worried about declining fish counts, labor shortages, rising operational costs, and an unreliable cruise ship market. Concerns about Valdez's aesthetics, lack of winter attractions, and limited tourist amenities—like restrooms and signage—were noted.

### The full comments are below:

- *Concerns are the fish counts. Many of our guests come here to fish. With the rapid decline in numbers we are receiving more comments about guests not coming back to Valdez. The City needs to fund or help the hatchery fund a King program in Early May and June.*
- *While I believe more cruise ships are expected this year than last, I don't feel like I can trust them. They have canceled ships in the past and I can't rely on them for staffing/revenue. Also, they have gotten pickier and are requiring more and more of vendors on the insurance front which cuts into profits. Other aspects of our business will likely be steady but not significantly changing our outlook.*
- *We are hoping to expand on seating for the business to help accommodate more tourists through cruise ships and RV travel. Concerns are the city not upholding the beautification aspects and property codes of businesses around town (we have neighbors that blocks the street view of our business and others around us).*
- *We have had small steady growth, and hope that continues.*
- *We hope to expand our business a little more with added jobs. Our goal is to scale but not sure how we will get there.*
- *Tourism is definitely down. We will see how season plays out.*
- *Our business will continue to do well, we are very versatile in that we cover lots of different aspects in Valdez.*
- *As a Food Truck Operator/owner it is hard to find a year-round location with a good foot traffic/tourist especially in summer. I hope the city will find a way to have some spots or location near the harbor to get food trucks setup for summer when tourist season is prime. This will help tourist have more and dining options.*

- *With the current political and economic climate on the national stage I do see that we will have a probable dip in bookings this summer. We generally stay full, but things are looking at to fill slower this year.*
- *Concerned about loss of business because less fisherman and less revenue.*
- *Due to the economic climate, we plan to pull back in the employee sector and cut back on programming to stabilize the ongoing increase in cost of good and possible risk of lack of travelers.*
- *There is a great deal of uncertainty with the decisions being made Federally when it comes to travel both domestically but specifically internationally and that driving through Canada. Therefore some international sales are declining and/or unknown right now.*
- *Looking ahead to the next year, I see strong potential for growth and improvement within my business. There are actionable steps I can take to expand offerings, elevate the customer experience, and create more opportunities during the busy tourist season. Equally important is focusing on ways to enhance the space and offerings that positively impact the local community during the quieter winter months. However, there are ongoing challenges—particularly rising operational costs such as rent, utilities, and general upkeep. Being in a commercial space I don't own, it's a constant balancing act between investing in improvements that benefit the business, while also increasing the value of a property I don't own, especially as rent continues to climb. Another concern is the limited number of tourist attractions in the area, which can impact visitor traffic and overall business during peak months. Despite these concerns, I remain optimistic and committed to making thoughtful changes that strengthen both the business and its role in the community.*
- *My concern would be that if there is a global economic downturn, there will be people cancelling reservations or just not making reservations, which would cause a decrease in revenue for me and others in the accommodations business. I always am interested in helping my guests enjoy their stay while in Valdez, so I appreciate the new trails on Meals Hill. Hopefully there will be new maps that will help visitors see the new trails. I would support the idea of having even more trails. Having the snow trails groomed has been a blessing for my guests and my family for walking and cross-country skiing. Keep up the good work with that. Having festivals and other events that bring in more guests has been good. Having even more in the winter would bring in even more guests that need accommodations. Having the tournaments with swimming and basketball have helped some. More events in the winter when we have slow months would bring in more income for us.*
- *Need to drive more visitors to Alaska for winter recreation and tourism*

- *We get a lot of questions about getting to Alaska from Canada with today political climate. We advise them of no changes to cross the border and that the people of Canada are still super friendly and welcoming. Some customers advise waiting another year before making the trip from the lower 48 to Alaska. Another concern we hear is the cost of travel to Alaska is increasing faster than other areas of the country. While there is an understanding that Alaska is more expensive, it is out pacing the expense of the rest of the country.*
- *We have plans to grow but lack of labor is slowing us down. It's very difficult to find help and to find anyone for seasonal work, with no experience we have to offer \$25 an hour as we are competing with City's temporary wages. It's complicated to get the supplies needed and the shipping costs are huge. We also feel that City is not progressive and open to ideas, which shuts down creativity and progress. Permits and business registrations process takes a long time. All might look good in summer with lots of fun places to eat, lots of people and things to do, but Valdez has nothing going on in the winter. People can't walk in the winter because basic services like clear sidewalks are not available. Also City organizes "free BBQ" a few times each summer which competes with local businesses. Instead of providing "free food", spending money on trailers and BBQs and storage would be much better if city worked with local restaurants to provide food for those events. Valdez has amazing location, and you can't beat the nature, but town is no cohesive and lacks character.*
- *It's difficult to find workers. The businesses in Valdez can't grow and have to reduce services because it's impossible to find help even if you will train them. When hiring full time workers we can't compete. City, downtown area looks unattractive, no cute downtown area, parks in town are in the bad shape, lack of code enforcement effects businesses. Lack of services at popular tourist/local attractions like Valdez Glacier Lake and Robe Lake. There is a huge need for toilets and dumpsters. Traffic at VGL is huge and people have no place to go to use the bathroom, so they use bushes. Because of workforce we are planning to reduce services for our 2 businesses or redirect to businesses that do not require employee input. This is not only problem for us but also a problem for other business owners in Valdez. Often small business owners will hire and train employees, provides them with few years of valuable experience and they will leave for other jobs. I think soon Valdez will see less businesses that provide services.*