



Design a Boat

People have been using oceans and rivers to travel around Alaska for thousands of years

Try designing, building, and testing your own boat!

Note: Always supervise children when near water

Materials Needed:

Shallow container of water, various floating materials (plastic, wood, containers, popsicle sticks, aluminum foil, foam, egg cartons, birch, bark)

Water Travel in Alaska

People have been traveling by water for centuries, and one of the most common ways to travel is by water. Oceans and rivers are filled with water, and there are many different types of watercraft (use to travel on water!)

Many people use small boats to travel on rivers in Interior Alaska. These boats are usually around 20 feet long and made of aluminum. Some boats have roofs to protect passengers from the weather, while others are open to the elements. People use these boats for fishing, hunting, traveling to seasonal camps and other communities, and recreation.

Boats on the Nowitna River. Photos by Emily (r) 5.5 520.87 Td [(tr)-3(ave)5(li)-:

In the late 1800s and early 1900s,

In many regions of Alaska, people use kayaks (also spelled qajaq) to travel through ocean waters, hunt, fish, and transport supplies. Kayaks are small lightweight watercraft that could hold one, two, or three people. They are traditionally made from driftwood covered in seal or sea lion skins. Different regions and communities have different kayak designs, each suited to their particular needs. Today, kayaks are made from plastic or fiberglass. Kayaking is a common recreational activity.

Yup'ik style kayak, pre-1966. UA87011-0002.

NPS Photo © K. Miller

Many people in coastal communities rely on ferries for transportation. These large boats carry people, vehicles, and cargo on a regular schedule. In Alaska, the state ferry system currently provides service to over 30 communities across southern Alaska. Some ferries make daily trips to neighboring communities while bigger ferries sail thousands of miles from Alaska to British Columbia and Washington. Larger ferries might have cabins for overnight stays, observation lounges, and even restaurants.

MV Malaspina in 2013. Photo courtesy of Alaska Department of Transportation.

Winter Travel

Frozen rivers make