

This Alaskan man is making a 14-hour boat trip to Costco every week to supply his small city with groceries amid the pandemic

 edition.cnn.com/2020/05/16/us/alaska-coronavirus-grocer-toshua-supply-trnd/index.html

Now that's one helluva Costco run.

A grocer in a remote Alaskan region that's only accessible by boat or plane is going above and beyond to keep his small city fed during the coronavirus pandemic.

Toshua Parker, owner of Icy Strait Wholesale in Gustavus, has been making a weekly boat trip with his staff to Juneau, the state's capital 50 miles away, to restock on essential food and supplies at Costco. It takes them about 14 hours to complete the journey on a 96 feet long converted military landing craft.

Gustavus is a coastal community that borders Glacier Bay National Park. For the city's 450 residents, the only place to buy groceries is ToshCo, the locals' nickname for Parker's store.

Parker usually has food and supplies shipped from Costco to his store aboard the state's ferry system, but it's no longer running to Gustavus because of the pandemic, as well as damage caused to the city's dock by severe storms.

Without an alternative delivery method and his city quickly running short on food and supplies, Parker decided to take the matter into his own hands.

"It's funny because for us, this doesn't seem like a big deal," the small business owner told CNN.

"Alaskans are fiercely independent and resourceful; you really have to be to survive here. So when a problem arises, we don't typically look to someone else for help, we just find a way to do it."

Working with his employees and local fishermen, Parker has been making the boat trip about once a week since March, scheduling his trips around the tides and weather.

After docking in Juneau, they buy supplies from Costco and load them on the boat.

When storms hit while the team is on their way back to Gustavus -- which has happened a few times -- they return to Juneau, unload the groceries into coolers, and wait for the next weather break before reloading the supplies and attempting the trip again.

While the Gustavus community has been incredibly grateful for Parker's efforts to keep the city running, he gives the real praise to his staff for "going to work every day during this pandemic to make sure our town stays supplied."

No matter the obstacles, Parker said his city will always find a way to survive.

"The town needed to be supplied with groceries so we just did whatever it took to make that happen. Just another day in our world. Next year it will be another obstacle to overcome and we'll buck up and deal with it."