National Parks in Alaska

Alaska National Parks
Alaska

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Upper Noatak Valley, Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve

Information

For information about individual parks, contact them directly (see back of this brochure) or visit the National Park Service website at www.nps.gov/akso. For information about national parks or other public lands in Alaska, visit or contact the Alaska Public Lands Information Centers in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Ketchikan, and Tok, or visit their homepage at www.AlaskaCenters.gov.

- Anchorage: 605 West Fourth Avenue, Anchorage, AK 99501-2248, 907-644-3661 or 866-869-6887
- Fairbanks: Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center, 101 Dunkel Street, Suite 110, Fairbanks, AK 99701-4848, 907-459-3730 or 866-869-6887
- Ketchikan: Southeast Alaska Discovery Center, 50 Main Street, Ketchikan, AK 99901-6659, 907-228-6220
- Tok: P.O. Box 359, Tok, AK 99780-0359, 907-883-5667 or 888-256-6784.

Tourist information is available from the Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development, P.O. Box 110804, Juneau, AK 99811-0804, www.travelalaska.com. For information about ferry or railroad travel in Alaska, contact:

- Alaska Marine Highway System, P.O. Box 112505, Juneau, AK 99811-2505, 800-642-0066, www.dot.state.ak.us/amhs
- Alaska Railroad Corporation Passenger Services, P.O. Box 107500, Anchorage, AK 99510-7500, 800-544-0552, www.alaskarailroad.com.

Travel Tips

Alaska's immense size can make travel to and through the state challenging. Some planning is necessary. Just getting to Alaska can be an adventure involving travel by air, highway, and sea. Commercial airlines serve Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, and other towns, while cruise ships ply Alaska's southeastern waters through the Inside Passage. The Alaska Marine Highway transports people and vehicles on ferries from the Lower 48 to towns in Southeast Alaska and between points in Southcentral Alaska. The Alaska Highway, paved in Alaska and most of Canada, is open and maintained year-round. It extends 1,500 miles from Dawson Creek, British Columbia, to Fairbanks, Alaska, and provides a land link with roads to the south.

Once in Alaska, you may have several options for travel to the park lands. Unlike most National Park Service areas in the Lower 48, most in Alaska are not accessible by road. Scheduled air service to towns and villages will put you within air-taxi distance of most of these hard-to-reach parks. Experiencing Alaska's more remote treasures can require significant time, effort, and money and may involve air or boat charters, rafts, kayaks, and hiking. See the back of this brochure for access information for individual parks.

Private Lands: Privately owned lands are located within and next to park boundaries throughout Alaska. These private lands are not open to public use or travel without permission from the owners. Check with park staff to determine the location of private lands and public easements. Unauthorized use or travel across private lands could be deemed criminal trespass.

Uses of Park Lands: Many national park lands in Alaska are designated as national preserves.This designation allows for uses not typical in national parks or national monuments in the continental United States. Within these preserves, sport hunting and trapping are permitted subject to state fish and game laws, seasons, and bag limits; and to federal laws and regulations.

Subsistence hunting, fishing and gathering by rural Alaskans continues on many park lands here. These customary and traditional uses of wild renewable resources are for direct personal or family consumption. Local residency and customary reliance on these uses determines eligibility for continued subsistence uses on national park lands.

Our Lasting Frontier

The United States purchased Alyeshka—the Great Land—in 1867 in a transaction known as Seward's Folly, doing little to reveal the awesome character of this place. The rush for gold that followed created its own colorful images of heroic daring and fortunes won and lost by scalawags. At times, the haunting beauty of the Far North overshadowed the miner's quest for gold. Dreams of quick riches often gave way to making peace with the land and settling in.

The chronicles of explorers and naturalists provide a contrasting mix of impressions: a barren arctic wasteland teeming with herds of caribou; uninhabitable terrain that proved to be the ancestral homeland of cultures harkening back to the end of the last ice age; and winters of deadening cold giving way to balmy summers that draw migratory birds from every state and continent of the world. Alaska has the biggest moose, biggest bears, tallest spruce, and rivers thick with salmon, yet it is our nations' most fragile environment. Could all these descriptions come from one state?

Alaska recalls our sense of adventure reminiscent of an earlier time in our westward expansion when uncharted frontiers helped shape the American image. The inspiring landscapes of Alaska fired our ancestors' spirits through risk and hardship. Alaska also offers further proof of a uniquely American idea, born at Yellowstone in 1872, that certain places are special, above the marketplace, and worthy of lasting protection. The first national park area in Alaska was established in 1910 at Sitka in commemoration of the Tlingit culture and early European settlers of Russian America. By the time Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park was established in 1976, such well-known landmarks as Mount McKinley (1917), Katmai (1918), and Glacier Bay (1925) had entered the rolls.

Statehood in 1959 brought an entitlement to the state of 106 million acres of public lands potentially rich in oil and gas, minerals, and coal. Congress settled similar claims from Alaska's Native people in 1971 by awarding them nearly 44 million acres of federal land and more than $962 million. Amid such rapid change, our Last Frontier could have easily slipped away, as did our first. The push to preserve more land continued.

After years of intense debate and pressure from President Carter, Congress finally passed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act in 1980. The act more than doubled the size of the National Park System nationwide. It established 10 new units of the National Park System in Alaska and expanded Glacier Bay, Katmai, and Mount McKinley (renamed Denali). Alaska now contains more than 54 million acres in national parks, or 13 percent of the state's 375 million acres.

Alaskan in scale, with towering mountains, vast glaciers, wild rivers, and bountiful wildlife, these parks also reflect the human values of the Last Frontier. Many of the new parks were created, in part, to protect lands used traditionally by Alaska Natives. Consequently, rural Alaskans continue to engage in hunting, fishing, and gathering within these park areas. National preserves were established to allow for the continuation of sport hunting and trapping.

Alaska's National Parks also protect a vast sweep of history, from the artifacts of the first North Americans found in Bering Land Bridge National Preserve and other northwestern parks to the buildings and belongings of the turn-of-the-century gold seekers in Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park. For present and future generations, the National Parks in Alaska comprise the finest natural and cultural resources in public ownership—an enduring frontier for all the world.

National Parks in Alaska

Alaska Public Lands Information

The Alaska Public Lands Information Centers are interagency visitor centers providing information, education, and trip-planning assistance on behalf of nine state and federal agencies. Through this consolidated effort, visitors can learn about how to have meaningful, safe, and enjoyable experiences on all public lands and how to protect the fragile resources they will encounter along the way. Visitors may also enjoy excellent interpretive programs and exhibits at each location.

Alaska's public lands account for more than 300 million acres—an area almost twice the size of Texas. Public lands include state and national parks, forests, refuges, wild rivers, historical areas, and more. Offering stunning landscapes and habitats ranging from southeast rainforests to arctic tundra, public lands provide recreational opportunities unsurpassed anywhere else in the world. They protect entire ecosystems as well as our nation's unique cultural and historical treasures.

Four centers are strategically positioned throughout the state to serve visitors and residents alike. Each center has a regional emphasis but also represents the state as a whole. Visit us in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Ketchikan, and Tok. The adventure begins here!

More Information: See front of brochure for locations and contact information.

Aleutian World War II

In 1996, Congress designated the Aleutian World War II National Historic Area to interpret the history of the Unangan or Aleut people, the defense of the Aleutians and the United States in World War II, and to educate and inspire present and future generations about it. The 1942 bombing of Unalaska by Japan precipitated the internment of 880 Aleuts in derelict cannery buildings in Southeast Alaska. The Historic Area encompasses the nation's highest-elevation coastal defense site. The Ounalashka Corporation privately owns this cultural landscape of World War II era command centers, bunkers, and trails. The gun mounts and lookouts are among the most intact in the nation. A Visitor Center in Unalaska contains extensive displays of artifacts from the war.

Access: Daily jet service from Anchorage to Unalaska. Ferry service is seasonal. **Size:** 134 acres. **More Information:** Ounalashka Corporation, P.O. Box 149, Unalaska, AK 99685-0149; Aleutian World War II Visitor Center 907-581-9944 or the National Park Service at 907-644-3661; www.nps.gov/aleu.

Aniakchak

Midway down the wild, remote, and mostly roadless Alaska Peninsula lies one of the nation's most fascinating recent volcanic features. One of the least-visited national parks, Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve surrounds a large caldera formed by the collapse of a 7,000-foot volcano. Set inland in a place of frequent clouds and fierce storms, Aniakchak was unknown to all but area Natives until the 1920s, and had its last eruption in 1931. Nestled inside the caldera is Surprise Lake, a remnant of a much larger lake that catastrophically drained about 2,000 years ago. Warm springs, melting snow, and glaciers feed Surprise Lake, which in turn gives rise to the Aniakchak Wild River.

This narrow stretch of the Alaska Peninsula boasts a rich human story. Volcanoes, earthquakes, and tsunamis have interrupted the human story, yet the land abides as a wild place where humans can sense not just independence but interdependence—kinship, even—with the whole of the natural world. Life has persisted here in the face of catastrophic change.

Access: Scheduled air service puts you within charter flight distance via King Salmon or Port Heiden. Peninsula weather can be severe at any time of the year. **Approximate Size:** 600,000 acres. **More Information:** P.O. Box 245, King Salmon, AK 99613; 907-246-3305; www.nps.gov/ania.

Bering Land Bridge

Set aside to provide opportunities for the study of the former land bridge that connected Eastern Asia with North America, Bering Land Bridge National Preserve is a little known national park with a huge story. Located on the Seward Peninsula, the preserve is a remnant of the land bridge that was once exposed by lowered sea levels more than 13,000 years ago. Paleontological and archeological resources abound. Ash explosion craters and lava flow, which are rare in the Arctic, mark the landscape.

Wildlife species in the region include grizzly bears, reindeer, gray wolves, wolverines, muskox, and foxes. Seabirds, shorebirds, and waterfowl are abundant in summer in the preserve, and because of its proximity to Asia it is often home to species rare or unknown in the rest of North America. Traditional subsistence activities such as hunting and trapping are permitted in the preserve, continuing the traditional use of the area as it has been used for generations.

Access: Small aircraft during the summer and snow mobile in the winter are the best methods for accessing the preserve. Some visitors base themselves at Serpentine Hot Springs, where there is an unimproved airstrip. **Approximate Size:** 2.7 million acres. **More Information:** P.O. Box 220, Nome, AK, 99762; 907-443-2522; www.nps.gov/bela.

Cape Krusenstern

Cape Krusenstern National Monument is a coastal plain with big lagoons, backed by gently rolling, limestone hills. Archeological sites trace 5,000 years of human use of its coastline by prehistoric peoples who occupied it seasonally to hunt marine mammals, especially seals. As big storms and regular wind and wave action formed new beach ridges, camps were made on those close to water. Oldest sites are on beach ridges farthest from the ocean. Over centuries this made a timeline giving a definite, datable outline of northwest Alaska's cultural succession and development. The Cape Krusenstern area is a designated Archeological District in the National Register of Historic Places and a National Historic Landmark.

Today, as for centuries, primary human use of Cape Krusenstern is subsistence hunting, fishing, and gathering by Inupiaq Eskimos of nearby villages. Wildlife includes muskox, grizzly bears, wolves, red foxes, and vast birdlife, with seals and whales found offshore at various times of year.

Access: Daily jet service from Anchorage to Kotzebue; chartered air taxis from Kotzebue to the monument. **Approximate Size:** 675,000 acres. **More Information:** P.O. Box 1029, Kotzebue, AK 99752; 907-442-3890; www.nps.gov/cakr.

Denali

As North America's highest mountain at 20,320 feet, massive Mount McKinley is the centerpiece of the glacierstrewn Alaska Range. The Athabascan people call it Denali, "the High One." Under its shadow in Denali National Park and Preserve (known as McKinley until 1980) are barren-ground caribou, grizzly bears, wolves, moose, Dall sheep, and other wildlife. Glacier-born rivers laden with silt meander across their wide, flat valleys. Much of the park's scant tree growth lies in the river valleys. At higher elevations are large expanses of the tundra's fascinating world of dwarfed shrubs and miniature flowers. This alpine ecosystem is increasingly threatened by climate change, as warmer temperatures allow trees to grow higher up the mountainsides, crowding out these small, delicate plants.

Access: By highway, railroad and chartered air service. To protect wildlife and to preserve the park's wilderness character, private vehicle use is restricted on much of the Denali Park Road. A shuttle bus system operates in Denali along the 92-mile road from the park entrance to Kantishna. **Approximate Size:** 6 million acres. **More Information:** P.O. Box 9, Denali Park, AK 99755-0009; (907) 683-2294; www.nps.gov/dena.

Gates of the Arctic

Lying entirely north of the Arctic Circle, Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve is the premier wilderness park within the National Park system. Roughly the size of Switzerland, it does not contain any roads or trails. Visitors traveling through this vast landscape discover intact ecosystems where people have lived with the land for thousands of years. The natural rhythms continue. Wild rivers meander through glacier-carved valleys, caribou migrate along age-old trails, endless summer light fades into aurora-lit night skies of winter. It remains virtually unchanged except by the forces of nature.

The park straddles the crest of the Brooks Range, the northernmost extension of the Rocky Mountains. Its southern flank samples the boreal forest of Alaska's Interior. Its north slope gives way to low shrubs, grassy tussocks, and fragile, yet hardy, low-growing tundra plants. Two distinct cultures live here today: the Koyukon Athabascan of the spruce-taiga forests and the Nunamiut Eskimo who hunt caribou in the high valleys. Both cultures continue traditional subsistence lifestyles within the park and preserve.

Access: From the Dalton Highway or Anaktuvuk Pass, or via charter flights out of Bettles or Coldfoot. **Approximate Size:** 8.4 million acres. **More information:** P.O. Box 30, Bettles, AK 99726; 907-692-5494; www.nps.gov/gaar.

Glacier Bay

The extreme topography of Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve reveals that it is a landscape driven by immense energies. Located along the collision zone between the North American and Pacific plates, coastal mountains here reach almost 3 miles into the sky, and are still rising. The high summits of the Fairweather Range feed numerous glaciers, some nourished by enough snowfall to extend all the way to tidewater and calve icebergs into the sea. Glacier Bay is truly a place where one can still glimpse the age of ice.

Glacier Bay is known worldwide for its large, contiguous, intact ecosystems, still dominated by natural processes. It is a living, thriving wilderness home to brown and black bears, mountain goats, moose, whales, seals, eagles, puffins, and more than 200 other bird species. The bay has experienced at least four major glacial advances and retreats, resulting in an ideal living laboratory providing unparalleled opportunities to observe and study life returning to once barren landscapes. With diverse plant communities ranging from glacial barrens to lush temperate rainforest, nowhere is the story of plant succession more richly told than at Glacier Bay.

Comprised of 3.3 million acres of rugged mountains, dynamic glaciers, temperate rainforest, wild coastlines, and deep sheltered fjords, Glacier Bay National Park is a highlight of Alaska's Inside Passage and part of a 25-million acre World Heritage Site—one of the world's largest international protected areas.

Access: Glacier Bay National Park has no road access, but a visit can be arranged via commercial cruise ship, tour boat, or by scheduled air or ferry service from nearby Juneau and other Southeast Alaskan communities. **Approximate Size:** 3.3 million acres. **More Information:** Bartlett Cove, Gustavus, AK 99826-0140; 907-697-2232; www.nps.gov/glba.

Inupiat Heritage Center

The Inupiat Heritage Center in Barrow, Alaska, preserves and promotes traditional Inupiat culture and history through exhibits, collections, research, education and outreach. As an affiliated area of the New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park, New Bedford, Massachusetts, the center commemorates the contribution of Alaska Natives to the history of commercial whaling in the United States. The center and the park collaborate on cultural exchange programs between Barrow and New Bedford to produce exhibits, conferences, and educational materials and to sponsor visiting scholars and cultural demonstrations. The center's exhibits and cultural events are open to the public.

Access: Daily jet service from Anchorage and Fairbanks to Barrow, which offers lodging, restaurants, and tours of the town and vicinity. Song and dance demonstrations are often presented in summer. **More Information:** 907-852-0422; www.nps.gov/inup.

Katmai

On June 6th, 1912 residents of the northern Alaska Peninsula experienced one of the largest volcanic eruptions in recorded history. Thirty times greater than the 1980 eruption of Mount Saint Helens, the eruption at Novarupta volcano sent ash over 100,000 feet into the atmosphere, led to the collapse of Mount Katmai, and created the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes.

Katmai National Monument was established in 1918 to protect the volcanically devastated region surrounding Mount Katmai and the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes. Today, Katmai National Park and Preserve is still an active volcanic landscape, but it also protects 9,000 years of human history as well as important habitat for runs of salmon and the thousands of brown bears that feed on them.

Katmai is a rugged and diverse land where bears are plentiful, salmon leap waterfalls on their journey to spawn, steaming volcanoes serve as a reminder of the earth's power, and the stories of past cultures continue to live on.

Access: Scheduled jets from Anchorage serve King Salmon on the park's west boundary year-round. Daily commercial flights operate between King Salmon and the Brooks River area from June through mid-September. Air charters from King Salmon, Homer, Kodiak, Anchorage, and other communities operate from May through October. See the park's website for a complete list of charter operators. **Approximate Size:** 4.1 million acres. **More Information:** P.O. Box 7, King Salmon, AK 99613-0007; 907-246-3305; www.nps.gov/katm.

Kenai Fjords

At the edge of the Kenai Peninsula, Kenai Fjords National Park preserves a complex ecosystem where mountains, ice, and ocean meet. The 700-square-mile Harding Icefield, a remnant of the last ice age, crowns the Park and is the source of at least 38 glaciers that flow over and sculpt the land. Along the coastline, retreating ice reveals dramatic fjords where active tidewater glaciers calve and crash into the sea. At Exit Glacier—the only part of the park accessible by road in the summer—you can explore the trails, get close to an active glacier, and learn about life in this land of constant change on a ranger-led hike.

Wildlife abounds here. Moose, bears, mountain goats, and an array of bird-life occupy the narrow band of ice-free coastal land in the park. Offshore, Steller sea lions, harbor seals, porpoises, sea otters, and whales have adapted to life in the chilly waters of the fjords. Thousands of sea birds, including puffins, murres, cormorants, and black-legged kittiwakes nest on rugged sea cliffs.

Access: Seward is located 126 road miles south of Anchorage. Regular bus and train services connect Anchorage and Seward. Exit Glacier, about 11 miles from Seward, can be reached in summer by road or in winter by skis, snowshoes, or snowmachine (with restrictions). Air and boat charters provide access to the fjords. Located in Seward's small boat harbor, the Information Center offers area information, films, exhibits, and a bookstore. The Nature Center at Exit Glacier has maps, books, exhibits, and offers ranger-led programs in the summer. **Size:** 669,983 acres. **More Information:** P.O. Box 1727, Seward, AK 99664-1727; 907-422-0500; www.nps.gov/kefj.

Klondike Gold Rush

Like those who braved the unknown over a hundred years ago, today's "gold seekers" arrive in Skagway, Alaska to find riches of rugged landscape and a slice of North American history—the Klondike gold rush. Reliving the dreams of gold can be had without the discomfort and challenges facing the hardy souls who rushed north as gold was discovered in 1897–98. Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park preserves the historic districts of Skagway and Dyea as well as portions of the Chilkoot Trail and White Pass units. The National Park Service and Parks Canada together capture the era in a chain of parks and heritage sites that commemorate the event and invite visitors to find their own grand adventure.

The park offers interpretive programs and town tours from the visitor center in the restored White Pass and Yukon Railway buildings at Broadway and Second Avenue. Hikers may obtain orientation and permits at the Trail Center across the street for the international Chilkoot trail from Dyea, Alaska to Bennett, B.C.

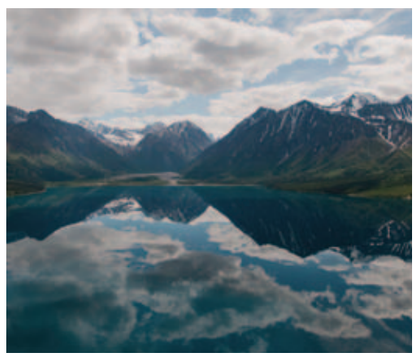
Access: By ferry, cruise ship, scheduled airline, air taxi or road (South Klondike Highway). **Approximate Size:** 13,000 acres. **More information:** P.O. Box 517, Skagway, AK 99840-0517; 907-983-9213; www.nps.gov/klgo or Parkscanada.gc.ca/chilkoot.

Kobuk Valley

Enclosed by the Baird Mountains on the north and the Waring Mountains on the south, Kobuk Valley National Park occupies a broad valley along the Kobuk River in northwest Alaska. The boreal forest reaches its northern limit here, resulting in an open woodland of small trees in a mat of thick tundra. The dry, cold climate still approximates that of late Pleistocene times, supporting a remnant flora once covering the vast Arctic steppe bridging Alaska and Asia. Sand created by the grinding of glaciers has been carried to the Kobuk Valley by winds and water. The Great Kobuk Sand Dunes—25 square miles of shifting dunes where summer temperatures can exceed 90ºF—is the largest active dune field in the arctic latitudes.

People have lived in the Kobuk Valley for at least 12,500 years. This human use is best recorded at the extensive archeological sites at Onion Portage. The Kobuk Valley remains an important area for traditional subsistence harvest of caribou, moose, bears, fish, waterfowl, and many edible and medicinal plants. The Western Arctic caribou herd, numbering 340,000 migrates to and from their calving grounds through the park every spring and fall. The gentle Kobuk River is popular for fishing, canoeing, and kayaking. The Salmon River is a designated National Wild River.

Access: Daily jet service from Anchorage to Kotzebue. Scheduled air service to nearby villages, and chartered air taxis for remote landings in the park. In summer, with advance arrangement, boat charters may be available. **Approximate Size:** 1.7 million acres. **More Information:** P.O. Box 1029, Kotzebue, AK 99752; 907-442-3890; www.nps.gov/kova.



Lake Clark

Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, where the Alaska and Aleutian ranges meet, is a landscape shaped by the dynamic forces of fire and ice. Set in the heart of the Chigmit Mountains along the Cook Inlet coast, the park encompasses great geologic diversity created by explosive volcanic eruptions, uplifts of the Earth's crust, and the relentless grinding and gouging of glaciers. These contrasting forces are at work today as glaciers and snowfields envelop the park's imposing and periodically active volcanoes, Redoubt (10,197 ft) and Iliamna (10,016 ft.), and feed the tributaries that flow into Lake Clark, the sixth largest lake in Alaska.

At over 40 miles in length, Lake Clark provides critical spawning and rearing habitats for one of the world's largest sockeye salmon fisheries and is home to a variety of other fish including Arctic grayling, pike, and lake trout. The vast undeveloped areas of the park and preserve also support brown and black bears, caribou, moose, Dall sheep, wolves, bald eagles, and numerous other bird species.

Access: Scheduled commercial flights from Anchorage and chartered air service from Anchorage, Kenai, Homer, Iliamna and Port Alsworth. Lodging is offered by private operators in the park and preserve. Flightseeing, wildlife viewing, and guided fishing and hunting services are also available in Anchorage, Kenai, Homer, Iliamna and Port Alsworth. **Approximate size:** 4 million acres. **More Information:** 240 West 5th Avenue, Suite 236, Anchorage, AK 99501; 907-644-3626 or the Port Alsworth Field Headquarters, Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, General Delivery, Port Alsworth, AK 99653; 907-781-2218; www.nps.gov/lacl.

Noatak

Noatak National Preserve, in the western Brooks Range, encompasses over 280 miles of the Noatak River and protects the largest untouched mountain-ringed river basin in the United States. It provides a benchmark for measuring future environmental health. Recognizing the value of this vast wilderness, the preserve has been named an International Biosphere Reserve. The river basin provides outstanding opportunities for scientific research, environmental education, and subsistence and recreational activities.

The Noatak River flows from glacial melt atop Mount Igikpak in the Brooks Range out to Kotzebue Sound. Along its 425-mile course the river has carved out the Grand Canyon on the Noatak. The river basin contains most types of arctic habitat, as well as one of the finest arrays of flora and fauna. The Western Arctic caribou herd, numbering over 340,000 animals, migrates to and from its calving grounds through the broad expanse of the preserve. Other large mammals include brown bears, moose, wolves, lynx, and Dall sheep. More than 150 songbirds species migrating from Asia and the tip of South America yearly pass through the preserve, providing spectacular bird watching. The slow-moving, gentle Noatak River offers excellent fishing, canoeing, and kayaking. Opportunities for wilderness backpacking and photography are plentiful.

Access: Daily jet service from Anchorage to Kotzebue. Scheduled air service to nearby villages, and chartered air taxis for remote landings in the park. **Approximate Size:** 6.5 million acres. **More Information:** P.O. Box 1029, Kotzebue, AK 99752; 907-442-3890; www.nps.gov/noat.

Sitka

Sitka is one of Alaska's most scenic and historic cities. Sitka National Historical Park preserves the site of the Battle of 1804, which marked a major resistance of the Tlingit Indians to Russian colonization. The park displays a fine collection of totem poles, and visitor center exhibits illustrate the art and traditions of the Tlingit and Haida people. The park also preserves the 1842 Russian Bishop's House.

The Tlingit Kiks.ádi clan settled at Sheey At'iká, as they called Sitka, on an island surrounded by abundant natural resources. For thousands of years they enjoyed a rich culture esthetically and spiritually. This was interrupted by the arrival of the Russian-American Company. Alexander Baranov established Sitka as the headquarters for the company's fur and trading operations. This new town, called New Archangel, would serve as Alaska's economic and cultural center for half a century.

Access: By ferry, commercial cruise ships, and daily airline service. **Size:** 113 acres. **More Information:** 103 Monastery Street, Sitka, AK 99835-7665; 907-747-0110; www.nps.gov/sitk.

Wrangell-St. Elias

Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve abuts Canada's Kluane National Park. With its neighbors to the south, Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve and Tatshenshini-Alsek Park in British Columbia, this 24-million acre wilderness is a World Heritage Site and the world's largest internationally protected area. This is North America's mountain kingdom. Here the Wrangell, St. Elias, and the Chugach mountain ranges converge. The park and preserve contains North America's largest assemblage of glaciers and its greatest collection of peaks more than 16,000 feet in elevation. One glacier, the Malaspina, is larger than the state of Rhode Island. Mount St. Elias, at 18,008 feet, is the second highest peak in the United States.

The area abounds in opportunities for wilderness backpacking, lake fishing, car camping, river running, cross-country skiing, and mountain climbing.

Access: Park headquarters in Copper Center is 210 miles east of Anchorage by road. Two primitive roads enter the park. Under normal summer conditions most two-wheel-drive vehicles can make the 59-mile trip from Chitina to McCarthy and the historic Kennecott townsite and the first 29 miles of the Slana-to-Nabesna Road. Air taxis provide access to more than 200 bush airstrips throughout the park and preserve. **Approximate Size:** 13 million acres. **More Information:** P.O. Box 439, Copper Center, AK 99573-0439; 907-822-5234; www.nps.gov/wrst.

Yukon-Charley Rivers

Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve contains 115 miles of the historic Yukon River and the entire 106-mile Charley River basin. Old cabins and relics recall the Yukon's importance in the gold rush era. Archeological and paleontological sites in the preserve provide knowledge of both thousands and millions of years in the past.

The two rivers are quite different. The broad and swift Yukon flows with glacial silt. The smaller Charley flows crystal clear and is considered one of Alaska's finest recreational streams. They merge between the early-day boom towns of Eagle and Circle. Cliffs and bluffs along the two rivers provide nesting habitat for peregrine and gyrfalcons. Beyond the riverbanks, grizzly bears, Dall sheep, and moose may be seen. Floating the Yukon—by raft, canoe, or powerboat—is a popular way to see wildlife and scenery. The Charley River demands more advanced river skills.

Access: By Taylor Highway (summer only) to Eagle or Steese Highway from Fairbanks to Circle. Scheduled flights serve both towns from Fairbanks. **Approximate Size:** 2.5 million acres. **More Information:** P.O. Box 167, Eagle, AK 99738-0167; 907-547-2233; www.nps.gov/yuch.

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