

McCarthy Road Guide



The 61-mile McCarthy road offers Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve visitors a unique opportunity to explore interior Alaska. Natural and historic wonders await those visitors willing to accept travel and access on Alaskan terms. This road guide provides the traveller with information and details necessary in planning a trip to McCarthy and Kennicott.

Private Property

Private property adjoins much of the McCarthy road and both McCarthy and Kennicott are private inholdings within Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve.

Please respect the privacy of these areas. Information on federal land access or private property locations is available at park headquarters or the Chitina Ranger Station.

Chitina

All McCarthy/Kennicott visitors are encouraged to visit the ranger station at Chitina. Current road conditions, land status details and general area information are available.

Services available at Chitina include a post office, gas station, food store, tire repair, motel, cafe and telephone. **Services are extremely limited on the road.**

McCarthy Road

Beyond Chitina, the 61-mile gravel road follows the abandoned Copper River and Northwest Railroad bed to the Kennicott River. Please drive slowly as traffic and weather may create ruts and washboard effect. In places, old railroad ties may surface along with anchoring spikes creating unexpected hazards. The road is narrow in places and slower moving traffic is encouraged to allow passing at road turnouts. Under normal summer conditions most two-wheel drive vehicles can make the trip. In wet weather the road often becomes muddy and slippery. Portions of the

road may be subject to washouts after heavy rains. Carry at least one spare tire and an adequate car jack. Allow a minimum of three hours for each leg of the trip. Most people spend a minimum of two days exploring the McCarthy-Kennicott area. Camping is allowed near the end of the road. Lodging is available at McCarthy or Kennicott. Reservations are recommended. Other services available include: guided river trips, food, shuttle service to Kennicott, a saloon and air charters.

Kennicott River

The McCarthy Road ends at the Kennicott River. Visitors may park along the river bank however parking is encouraged in the upper parking area to avoid flash floods. Camping is allowed along the entire river bank area but campers should be concerned about flash flooding. Pit toilets are provided in the upper parking lot but water is not available. Visitors are encouraged to remove their own trash. Access to both

McCarthy and Kennicott is by two hand-pulled cable trams across the Kennicott River. The trams should be attempted only by those capable of pulling their party across distances of several hundred feet. The use of gloves is highly recommended. If you need help or have reservations at one of the lodging facilities, you may use the radio to summon assistance from McCarthy.

What Is A National Park And Preserve?

The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) established Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve in December of 1980. Of the 13.2 million acres managed by the National Park Service, 8.3 million acres are designated as National Park and 4.8 million acres have National Preserve status. **The basic difference between a National Park and a National Preserve is that sport hunting and trapping are permitted**

in the Preserve. ANILCA also provides for subsistence hunting and trapping in the National Park for local rural residents. All hunting and trapping activities are subject to State and Federal laws.

The private inholdings you may encounter pre-date the establishment of the National Park and Preserve, and are treated just like private properties outside of the Park/Preserve boundary.

MILEPOSTS

The following highlights are points of interest as indicated on the map of the McCarthy Road. The mileage begins at the east end of the Copper River bridge and concludes at the Kennicott River.

1. **Mile 0.1** The Alaska Department of Transportation maintains an eight site, free campground with picnic tables, grills, and pit toilets. High winds and blowing dust are prevalent in the area throughout the summer.

2. **Mile 3.9** A pullout with a view of the Chugach Mountains and the Chitina River is located on the right side of the road.

3. **Mile 8.9** A small pullout on the left side of the road provides access to a hiking trail to Strelna Lake, one-half mile away. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game stocks this lake with rainbow trout and silver salmon. Private property adjoins the trail and users are asked to respect the rights of private property owners.

4. **Mile 9.3** The road on the right leads to Silver Lake Campground. This commercial campground provides camping and limited services including gasoline. Silver Lake is stocked with rainbow trout by the state.

5. **Mile 10.9** This turnoff provides access to Nelson's Lakeside Campground where camping, boat rentals and other limited commercial services are available. Sculpin Lake is also stocked by the State of Alaska with rainbow trout.

6. **Mile 13.5** The access road on the left heads north for 2.5 miles to backcountry trailheads for Dixie Pass Trail, Kotsina Trail and Nugget Creek Trail. NOTE: The access road crosses private property homesteads. Please respect owner privacy by staying on the access trail.

7. **Mile 14** Here the road crosses Strelna Creek. Grayling fishing is possible during seasonal migrations.

8. **Mile 17** The Kuskulana Bridge, 525 feet long, spans the Kuskulana River, 238 feet below. This historic railroad bridge was completed in 1910 and upgraded in 1988.

9. **Mile 22.5** This marks the boundary between national park and preserve. Wrangell-St. Elias National Preserve allows both sport hunting and trapping with valid Alaska state licenses.

10. **Mile 28.5** The road passes over the Gilahina River. The railroad trestle on the left stands as a remnant of the Copper River and Northwestern Railroad abandoned in the late 1930's when copper mining ended in the Kennicott area.

11. **Mile 44** Here the road passes over the Lakina River.

12. **Mile 57.3** An overlook on the right side of the road allows a view of McCarthy and a glimpse of the toe of Kennicott Glacier.

13. **Mile 61** The road ends at the Kennicott River. You may park anywhere in the area but are encouraged to use the upper parking lots to avoid flooding. It is a 1/4 mile walk to McCarthy from the second tram and 4 miles to Kennicott.

