



# ALPENGLOW

VISITOR GUIDE



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For information on summer trip-planning please visit our website [www.nps.gov/dena](http://www.nps.gov/dena)

## Welcome to Denali!

Winter is here: time to get busy! There's a rumor that life slows down at Denali during the wintertime. Not so. The busses may stop running and there are fewer people around, but a blanket of snow creates different recreational opportunities, such as cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, skijoring, dog mushing and more. I encourage you to use the *Alpenglow* and the park website [www.nps.gov/dena](http://www.nps.gov/dena) when planning your winter visit to Denali.

In this issue, check out the Winter Trails section with expanded details for mushers along with helpful trip planning tips including guidelines regarding wildlife viewing during this tough season. Additional information and maps are available on our website, including guidelines for snowmachines. Remember, the stove at our Winter Visitor Center at the Murie Science and Learning Center is a great place to warm up after an outdoor adventure.

Denali's first superintendent, Harry Karstens, said that Denali has much to offer those who understand the language of the 'great silent places...' His words seem especially true in winter. Gear up and see you on the trail!



Paul R. Anderson, Superintendent



## Winterfest 2011

Celebrate Winter February 25-27



During this action-packed weekend, indoor and outdoor activities for people of all ages take place in the park entrance area and throughout the communities of Healy, McKinley Village, Anderson, and Cantwell. The activities are free and offerings vary from year to year, but they often include evening presentations, dog mushing rides, avalanche safety training, winter ecology walks, ice carving demonstrations, a snow sculpture contest, events for kids, and much more!

Food and lodging are available in local communities. Riley Creek Campground is open to visitors wishing to camp; however, campers are advised that the water utilities have been shut down for the winter. Vault toilets are available.

Winterfest is a community-wide celebration sponsored by the National Park Service, the Denali Borough, Alaska Geographic, Denali Borough School District, Denali Education Center, and Doyon/ARAMARK Joint Venture. Visit our website in late January to see the developing schedule: [www.nps.gov/dena](http://www.nps.gov/dena) Then, bundle up and join us!



# What to do in the Winter

## Late Fall/Early Winter (mid-September to mid-October)

Depending on snowfall, the Park Road generally remains open to the Teklanika Rest Area at Mile 29, then to Savage River at Mile 15, and finally to a gate at Park Headquarters near Mile 3. Be prepared for winter's arrival anytime and for extreme cold after mid-October.

## Winter (October through March)

**View the Aurora.** The Northern Lights occur when charged particles from the sun interact with a magnetic field 50 to 100 miles above the Earth's surface. The best time to watch is from 10 pm to 2 am.

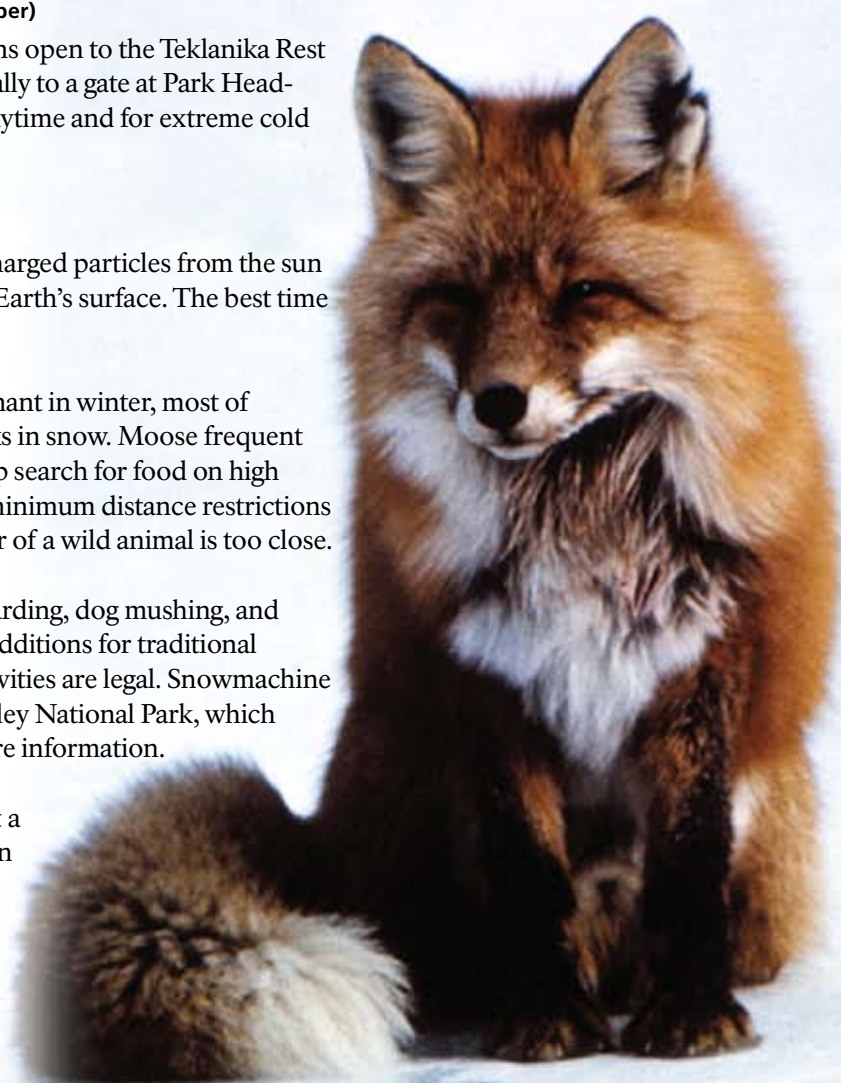
**Watch for Wildlife.** Although many creatures are dormant in winter, most of Denali's resident animals remain active. Watch for tracks in snow. Moose frequent rivers and stream beds to browse willow, and Dall sheep search for food on high ridges where the wind blows away snow cover. While minimum distance restrictions still apply in winter, any distance that alters the behavior of a wild animal is too close.

**Get Out and Go.** Enjoy skiing, snowshoeing, snowboarding, dog mushing, and skijoring. Snowmachines are allowed in the 1980 park additions for traditional activities such as hunting and trapping where those activities are legal. Snowmachine use is not allowed in the original area of Mount McKinley National Park, which includes the Park Road. Please contact the park for more information.

**Tour the Wilderness from Above.** Flightseers can get a bird's eye view of the quiet, snowy stillness of Denali in winter. From a small aircraft, visitors can take in the enormity of the remote park landscape from its gentle foothills, along meandering glaciers, up to the steep, rugged peaks of the Alaska Range. Several commercial flightseeing services based in Talkeetna, Anchorage, and Fairbanks offer winter flight tours of Denali.

## Break-Up (April to mid-May)

Mushers and skijorers generally hang up the harnesses until next winter. River ice is breaking up, rendering rivers and creeks impassable, and snow can be too mushy for travel. Hikers and bicyclists can enjoy portions of the Park Road while it is being plowed in mid-March and not yet open for motor vehicle traffic. More favorable snow conditions may yet be found at higher elevations, particularly once the road opens to Savage River or Teklanika.



### Winter Visitor Center (Murie Science and Learning Center)

Open 9 am to 4 pm daily, except major holidays, the center offers exhibits, bookstore items, restrooms, comfortable seating by a fireplace, and screenings of the award-winning park film, *Heartbeats of Denali*. Rangers can provide information about current conditions, trip planning, and interpretive activities for all ages.

Ranger-guided snowshoe hikes are often scheduled on weekends after the New Year. Check at the center or the park website. Snowshoes are available for visitors to borrow.

# Winter Trails

**Front-Country Trails (Hiking/Snowshoeing):** Easy to moderate wooded terrain with some hills. Packed snow with occasional drifts. Roadside, Meadow View, Rock Creek, Taiga, Horseshoe Lake, and McKinley Station trails.

**Mount Healy (Hiking/Snowshoeing):** Moderate on packed snow to a set of trailside benches. At higher elevations expect deep snow drifts, exposed loose rock, ice accumulation, and high winds.

**Creeks Riley/Hines (Backcountry XC Skiing):** Non-maintained wilderness trails. May encounter shelf ice and open water that will require route finding.

**Park Road (Mushing/Snowshoeing/Hiking/Skate and Backcountry XC Skiing/Skijoring):** One lane cleared to Mile 7, suitable for skate skiing. Expect to encounter dog teams. May encounter overflow ice.

**Riley Creek Campground:** Open, level ground and loop roads well-suited to family activities and beginner skiing.

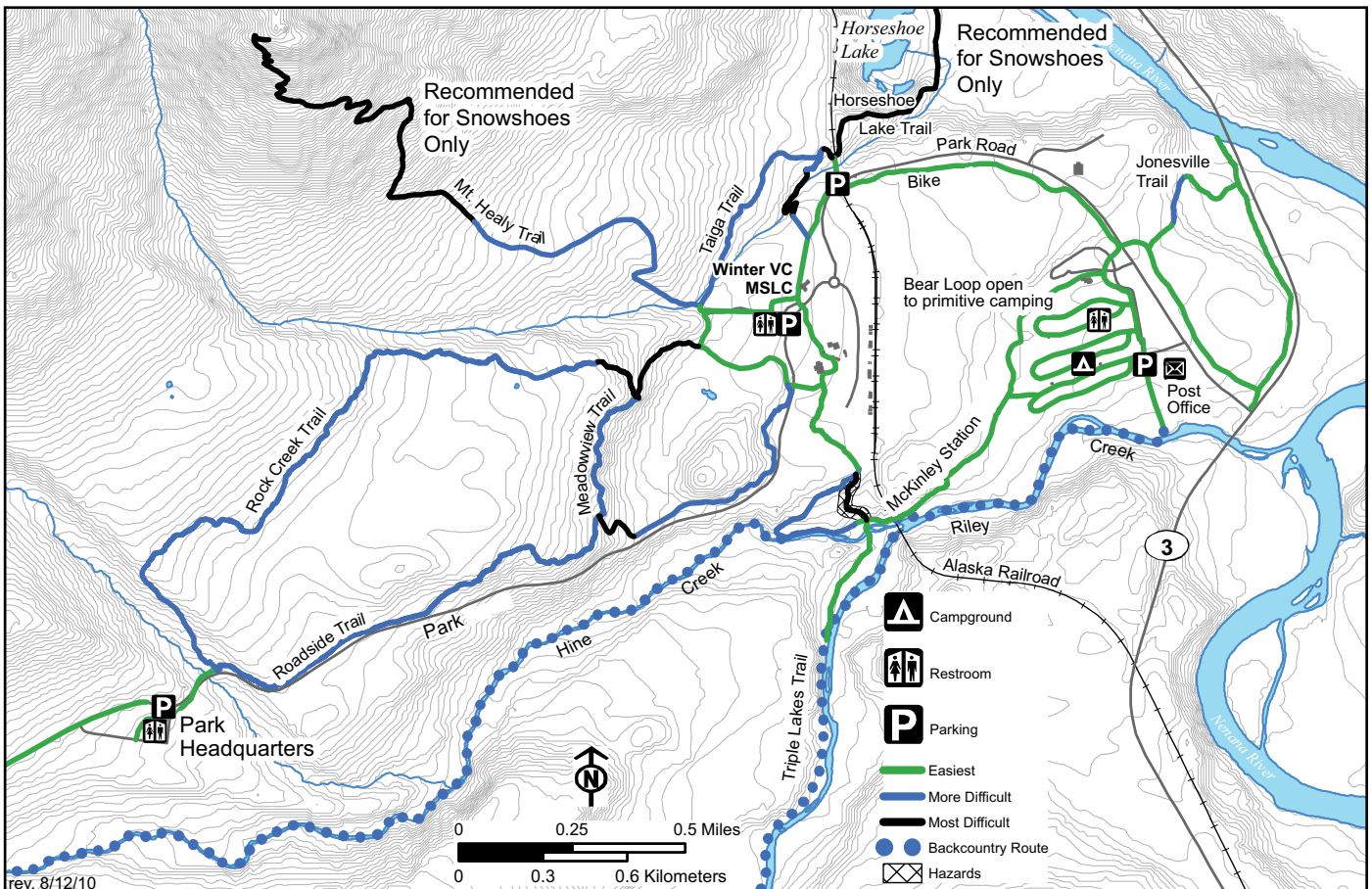
**Triple Lakes Trail (Backcountry XC Skiing/Snowshoeing):** Moderate to strenuous. From the trailhead at McKinley Village, travel north across the three lakes then over the low divide to Riley Creek. Advanced skills required.

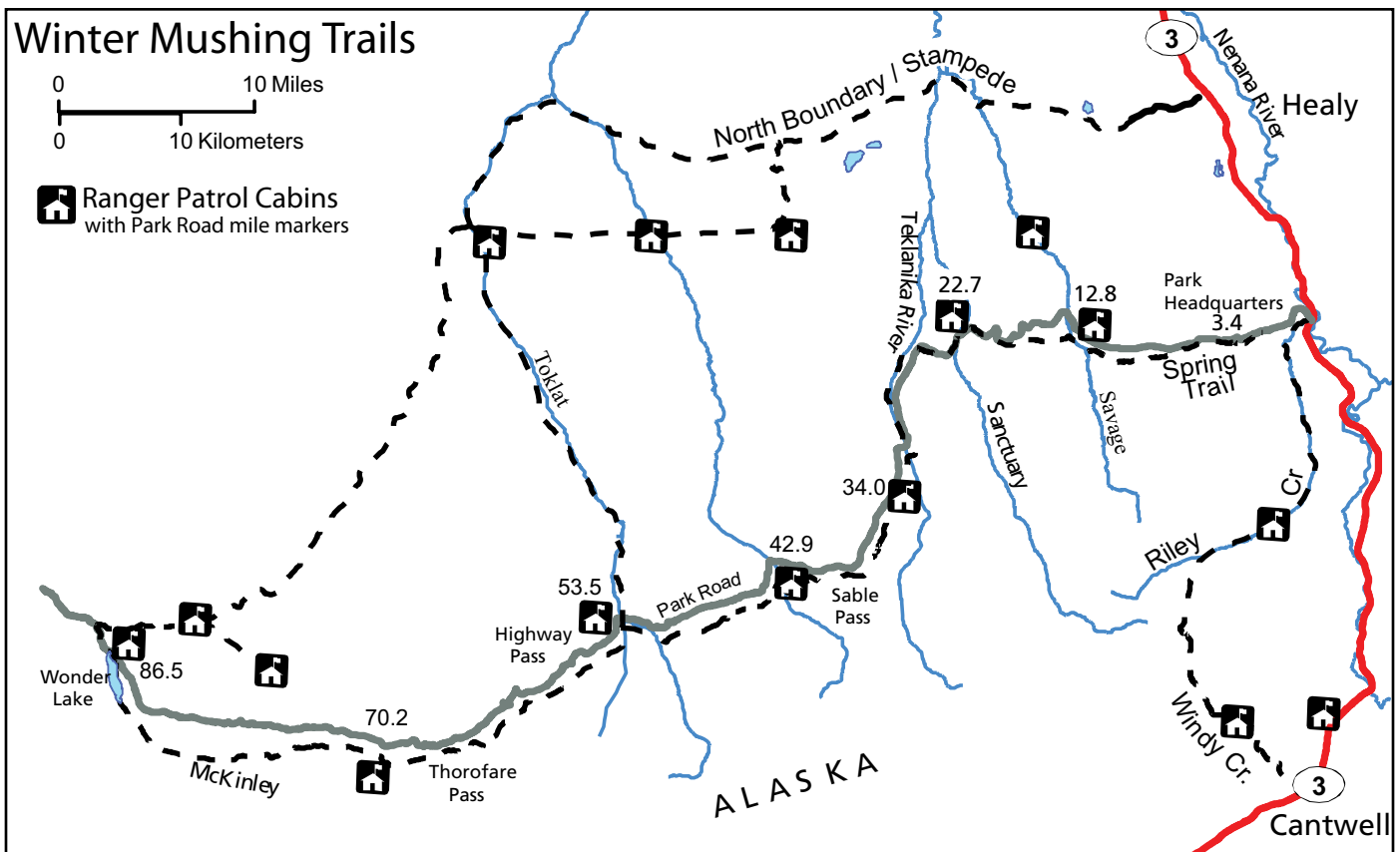
Please avoid walking or snowshoeing on ski tracks – footprints decrease grip and glide.

While one may encounter trails of previous users, no trail or creek is maintained or groomed.

## For Extended Trips

- Obtain a free backcountry permit at the Winter Visitor Center.
- Consult with park rangers for an update on conditions.
- Straw is not allowed within the wilderness boundaries. Cedar chips and foam pads are acceptable.
- Dogs must always be in harness or staked out to minimize wildlife disturbance.
- All cabins are for ranger patrol use only.
- Practice standard trail etiquette when passing other teams.
- Leave No Trace: Scatter feces away from structures, camps, and water sites. Pack out all used dog bedding material.





## Mushing Trails

Trails within the wilderness boundary of the park are put in and maintained by dog team only. They are narrow and have potentially soft, deep snow. Trails are not marked. Be prepared and able to put in your own trail and safely navigate the terrain without a trail to guide you. You may encounter willow and alder thickets. Trail clearing or cutting is NOT allowed within the park. For additional information on rivers, overflow ice, *aufeis*, glaciers, and avalanches, go to [www.nps.gov/dena](http://www.nps.gov/dena) and see the dog mushing section.

### Spring Trail: Difficult to Moderate.

Steep and narrow. Winding through large trees with several stream crossings. Snow cover may not be adequate for travel until spring.

### Park Road: Easy to Moderate.

Wide, open travel. Prepare for *aufeis*, side hilling, and windswept bare areas. West of Savage River the trail is mainly OFF the Park Road. Heavy equipment can be on the road from Miles 3-7.

### Wonder Lake/Kantishna Area: Easy to Difficult.

Trail opportunities are highly varied. Please speak with a kennels staff member for details.

### Windy Creek: Easy.

Cantwell entry trails are frequented by snowmachine and dog team. Beyond the Denali wilderness boundary the trail may be less traveled or nonexistent.

### Riley Creek: Moderate from Park Headquarters to Riley; Expert over the pass to Windy.

Riley Creek/Park Headquarters area trails are frequented by skiers and snowshoers. Prepare for shelf ice, jumble ice, holes, and open water in the narrow Riley Canyon. Avalanche terrain.

### North Boundary/Stampede Road: Easy.

Traveled, packed trail used by snowmachines and dog teams. Several side trails cross the main trail. Trapline trails exist with traps in the trail.



## Backcountry Planning

**Backcountry Permits** for overnight use are available at the Winter Visitor Center from 9 am to 4 pm seven days a week, excluding holidays. Backcountry permits are free and required for all overnight use.

**Leave No Trace** practices should be followed at all times within the park.

- ❖ Camp at least 100 feet from summer water sources and developed areas.
- ❖ Although winter fires (October 15th - March 31st) are permitted using dead and down wood, camp stoves are recommended as down wood is scarce. Cutting green boughs for bedding is not allowed.
- ❖ Dispose of human waste at least 100 feet from summer water sources and developed areas. Scatter waste into available brush.
- ❖ Pack out all trash, including toilet paper.

## Safety Concerns

**Traveling alone** increases risk. Any incident that immobilizes a solo traveler can easily become fatal. Traveling in groups is always recommended.

**Hypothermia** occurs when the body's core temperature lowers to a critical level. Avoid hypothermia by eating high calorie foods, drinking water, and staying dry. (Symptoms: shivering, numbness, slurred speech, loss of coordination, drowsiness, and exhaustion.)

**Frostbite** occurs quickly at temperatures below freezing. Drink plenty of water and protect skin from exposure.

**Overflow, thin ice, and weak snow bridges** along waterways can cause an unexpected icy plunge. Carry dry socks, clothes, and emergency fire starter in a waterproof container.

**Overconfidence** increases risk. Be aware of the exertion required to travel in snow. Do not count on going more than a few miles each day.

**Moose** may fiercely guard winter trails. Please give moose the right-of-way.

**Avalanches** do occur. Be aware of high danger areas and avoid suspect slopes and drainages.

## What to Bring

The level of self-reliance required of winter travelers sets Denali's visitors apart from adventurers elsewhere. Visitors should take the cold seriously and arrive prepared with quality gear and the knowledge of how to use it.

### Clothing

- ❖ Wind gear and neck gaiter
- ❖ Cold-weather parka with hood
- ❖ Wool/fleece pants and shirt
- ❖ Wool/fleece jacket and hat
- ❖ Balaclava or other face mask
- ❖ Wool/fleece mittens and gloves
- ❖ Long underwear
- ❖ Wool/synthetic socks (plus extras)
- ❖ Cold-weather boots and gaiters

### Camping Off Trail

- ❖ Four-season tent
- ❖ Winter sleeping bag and sleeping pad
- ❖ Stove and enough fuel to melt all your water
- ❖ Snow shovel and snow saw

### Trail Items

- ❖ Plenty of high-calorie food
- ❖ Ski gear, snowshoes, or other travel gear
- ❖ Pack with water-resistant cover
- ❖ Map and compass
- ❖ Headlamp with extra batteries and bulb
- ❖ Water bottles and insulator
- ❖ Chemical hand warmers
- ❖ Sunscreen and sunglasses

### Emergency Items

- ❖ Lighter, matches (waterproof container)
- ❖ First-aid kit
- ❖ Repair kit
- ❖ Avalanche beacon, probe, and shovel, if traveling on steep terrain
- ❖ Waterproof bag

## Emergencies

- Dial 911.
- Be prepared to give your location as Denali National Park and Preserve.
- There are no phones west of Park Headquarters and cell phone service is unreliable. Notify someone of your planned itinerary and expected time of return.
- Self-reliance and ability to self-rescue are essential.

# Park Partners



As the primary nonprofit education partner of Denali National Park and Preserve, Alaska Geographic connects people to Alaska's magnificent wildlands through experiential education, award-winning books and maps, and by directly supporting the state's parks, forests, and refuges.

Since 1959, Alaska Geographic has donated more than \$20 million to help fund educational and interpretive programs throughout Alaska's public lands.

To find out more, become a member, or browse our selection of Alaska books, maps, and films, stop by any Alaska Geographic bookstore or visit our website at [www.alaskageographic.org](http://www.alaskageographic.org)

Alaska Geographic also supports the education and research programs of the Murie Science and Learning Center. Located at the park entrance, the MSLC offers hands-on learning opportunities and works with the park and other partners to enhance science-based education, scientific research, and science-informed management decisions. Learn more at [www.murieslc.org](http://www.murieslc.org)



The Denali Education Center partners with the National Park Service through the Murie Science and Learning Center on educational programs for adults and children. Visit [www.denali.org](http://www.denali.org)



Doyon/ARAMARK Joint Venture is Denali's concessioner and provides its support to many park programs and events.



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Denali National Park Concession Joint Venture



The Denali Borough School District provides technical support and equipment to Denali and is a frequent partner in grant writing opportunities that make many park programs possible. Visit <http://denali.ak.schoolwebpages.com>

The University of Alaska partners with Denali in research and educational activities. For information visit [www.uaf.edu](http://www.uaf.edu)



The National Park Foundation provides support to parks throughout the United States, including Alaska. For more information visit [www.nationalparks.org](http://www.nationalparks.org)

Visit the bookstore in the Winter Visitor Center to find these useful guides. In addition to books, visitors will also find maps, journals, posters, field bags, and more.

## Planning Your Trip



### Heartbeats of Denali

Narrated by

Terry Tempest Williams

View one of America's wildest landscapes and experience nature undisturbed.

DVD 28 minutes

\$14.95



### Sled Dogs of Denali

By Karen Fortier

Experience the fascinating history of Denali's dogs and the park's pioneering rangers as you head out on patrol with the team in this award-winning book.

\$8.00

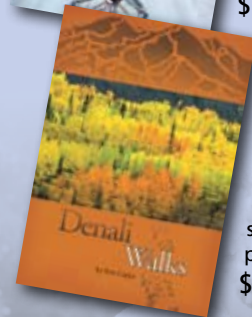


### Winter Patrol: Denali by Dogsled

Discover the challenges, techniques, and tradition of dog mushing in Denali as sled dogs and rangers patrol Denali's spectacular winter landscape.

DVD 25 minutes

\$14.95



### Denali Walks

By Kris Capps

A comprehensive guide to the established year-round trails in the park, from short strolls to adventurous excursions by ski or snowshoe. With full-color maps, photos, and illustrations.

\$6.95



Also available online at [www.alaskageographic.org](http://www.alaskageographic.org)

# Where to Stay

**Riley Creek Campground**, located at the park entrance, is open for primitive camping in the Bear Loop area all winter. Registration is not required. Toilets are provided and barrels are on-site to dispose of dog feces. Snow can be melted or creek water boiled for drinking. Water is also available at the Winter Visitor Center/Murie Science and Learning Center (Mile 1.3 on the Park Road). While the park still has an entrance fee, there is no charge for camping in winter.

**Local Accommodations** are offered year-round in Healy, 12 miles north, and Cantwell, 27 miles south of the park entrance. For more information on Healy area facilities, call the Denali Chamber of Commerce at 907 683-4636. The nearest large grocery store is in Fairbanks, but both Healy and Cantwell have small convenience markets and gas stations. There is no rental equipment available in the Denali area.


**The park entrance fee and backcountry camping permits are required year-round.**

## Entrance Fees

7 Day Pass: Individual .....	\$10
7 Day Pass: Vehicle .....	\$20
7 Day Pass: Motorcycle .....	\$15
Denali National Park Annual Pass .....	\$40

## America the Beautiful Interagency Passes

Annual .....	\$80
Senior .....	\$10
Access .....	Free

**ALPENGLOW**  
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# How to Get Here

## By Car

Take Alaska Highway 3 south from Fairbanks or north from Anchorage to the park entrance at Mile 237.

## By Train

The Alaska Railroad arrives at the Denali Depot northbound on Saturdays and southbound on Sundays throughout the winter. Contact 800 544-0552 or 907 265-2494 in Anchorage, or visit [www.akrr.com](http://www.akrr.com)

## By Plane

The Denali Park Airstrip is open for private, non-commercial planes on skis or wheels during the winter, although weather conditions and limited plow availability may mean that the airstrip is not plowed for wheeled landings at times. Parking is minimal. Please phone ahead to check on current conditions.

The Kantishna Airstrip at the west end of the Park Road is available for ski-equipped planes, but the strip is not maintained.

# For More Information

Denali National Park and Preserve  
P.O. Box 9, Denali Park, AK 99755

Call 907 683-9532 or email [denali\\_info@nps.gov](mailto:denali_info@nps.gov)  
[www.nps.gov/dena](http://www.nps.gov/dena)

## For topographical maps and publications

Alaska Geographic  
P.O. Box 230, Denali Park, AK 99755  
907 683-1272 or [www.alaskageographic.org](http://www.alaskageographic.org)

## For information on mushing trips

EarthSong Lodge Dog Sled Adventures  
Jon Nierenberg  
P.O. Box 89, Healy, AK 99743  
907 683-2863 or [www.earthsonglodge.com](http://www.earthsonglodge.com)

## For support for a ski or skijoring trip

Denali Dog Freight Expeditions  
Eric Jayne  
P.O. Box 482  
Healy, AK 99743  
907 683-1008

