



Arrigetch Peaks National Natural Landmark



Photo by Andrew Ackerman

The 40-square miles encompassing Arrigetch Peaks National Natural Landmark includes a wide spectrum of ecologies: mountain terrain, alpine glaciers, tundra, high altitude rock desert and boreal forest.

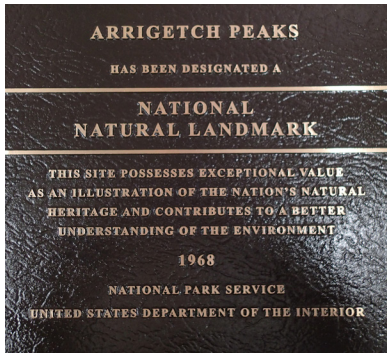
Our Natural Heritage

National Natural Landmarks are sites that possess exceptional value in illustrating the natural heritage of our nation and present an unspoiled example of natural history. The 40-square-mile area encompassing Arrigetch Peaks, considered to be of outstanding national importance, was declared a National Natural Landmark many years before Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve came into being around it.

The Arrigetch Peaks

The Arrigetch Peaks became a National Natural Landmark in 1968, six years after it was initially suggested by a geologist doing studies in the central Brooks Range. Considered an exceptional example of geologic formations, processes and history, and

including multiple ecological communities, it was also recognized for its spectacular scenic attributes. Under the Bureau of Land Management at the time, it eventually became one of the iconic landmarks of Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve.



Made of solid bronze and weighing in at over 25 pounds, a new plaque commemorating Arrigetch Peaks National Natural Landmark within Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve finally replaces the original bronze plaque that had been in the old ranger station in Bettles, which was melted by the fire that demolished the station in 2004.



Photo by Joe Wilkins

The area encompasses a wide spectrum of ecologies in a 40-square-mile area: mountain terrain, alpine glaciers, tundra, high altitude rock desert and boreal forest. Formed by glacial ice and running water, which lowered the

surrounding uplands, the Arrigetch Peaks are an excellent example of alpine glacier activity. Some of the oldest spruce trees in Alaska have been found here, in isolated sites untouched by wildfire.

“The Fingers of the Hand Outstretched”

Long before early geologists came to survey the area, the inland Nunamuit Eskimos called the place Arrigetch, meaning “the fingers of the hand outstretched.” They told a story of a mighty hunter who taught them to survive in the harsh arctic landscape. He showed them

the best animals to hunt and which plants to use. Before he left he threw down his gloves and transformed them into the towering granite spires of the Arrigetch, so that the people would always remember him.

Still Inspiring Visitors

Today the area is still inspiring awe in visitors. The two day trek into the peaks from the Alatna River presents the hiker with one scenic vista after another, increasing in grandeur with the altitude. Boreal forest becomes tundra, the tundra changes to rock desert, and granite

rock faces rise as much as 4,000 feet above the adjacent valleys. The jagged peaks and sheer rock walls of this area are some of the most spectacular in northern Alaska. It is truly a natural national treasure.

For more information about the Arrigetch Peaks National Natural Landmark within Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve, please contact our Interpretive Park Ranger in Bettles, DaleLynn Gardner, at (907) 692-6100, or email her at DaleLynn_Gardner@nps.gov.

