



Visiting American Creek



American Creek is a remote, 40 mile long river with excellent fishing and beautiful scenery. Given the remote nature of the area visitors need to plan in advance and come prepared. Those who do are rewarded with fish and scenery that have earned the creek a place in the pantheon of Alaskan trophy fishing waters.

What To Do and When To Come

The best fishing is dependent on the timing of the salmon run. A knowledge of the salmon's life cycle can be beneficial to success. Arctic char tend to follow salmon into American Creek when the salmon spawn. A greater proportion of trophy-sized rainbow trout are caught early in the season before the adult salmon arrive. At this time rainbow trout are feeding heavily on salmon fry. Both arctic char and rainbow trout feed heavily on salmon eggs when the salmon are spawning.

But the river is not just about the fishing. The scenery is also spectacular and hiking can be especially fruitful on the tundra and mountains

near Hammersly Lake. Hikers may want to arrive earlier in the season as it is easier to travel through the occasional patch of alder or willow before the leaves appear.

No roads or trails provide access so most people arrive via float plane. Day fishing trips access the first 5-7 miles of river by plane. The final 6 miles of river are usually accessed via plane and then by jet boat. The middle 25-30 miles of river is only easily accessible on a raft.

Floating the River

Float trips typically begin at Hammersly Lake and take 7 to 10 days. The river changes significantly from beginning to end providing a wonderful variety of water. The bottom of the river is braided and exploring different channels can yield large rainbow trout and abundant arctic char.

Like many rivers, the technical difficulty of the trip is dependent on water levels. Higher water levels or a flooded river can create a more challenging trip. Some sections of American Creek are technical regardless of water conditions.

There are two places of concern. A rapid in the upper canyon of the river can be rated anywhere from a class II to a class III+ depending on water conditions. A social trail exists on river right to portage and line rafts through this section. The lower canyon also has rapids that can have large standing waves but these are usually less technical.

Safety

Given the remote nature of the river, self reliance is necessary. Summer weather is often cool and wet. High winds and rain greatly increase the risk of hypothermia. Poor weather can prevent float plane access for days. Groups relying on a plane pickup should pack extra food in the event that a plane is unable to arrive on schedule. Watch out for log jams and sweepers on the river as they can pose a serious threat.

American Creek is bear country. Brown bears can be encountered anywhere, but people on the river should be especially watchful in narrow channels

where visibility is limited. Park regulations require that all food be stored in an approved bear resistant food container (BRC). BRC's can be borrowed for free from the visitor center in King Salmon. Because of the limited number of containers, please call before arriving to ensure availability.

Food should be cooked, eaten, and stored away from tents. Following Leave-No-Trace principles and keeping a clean camp can lessens the chance a bear will investigate your camp.

Permits and Regulations

An Alaska state license is required for fishing. Backcountry permits are not required. However, it is highly recommended that each group file an optional backcountry planner. These forms are available in the King Salmon Visitor Center.

No search and rescue will be initiated without someone calling the National Park Service headquarters (907-246-3305) to ask for assistance, but in the event of an emergency, these planners can be invaluable to park rangers.

Even along American Creek's remote setting, improperly disposed human waste can a problem. Know how to properly dispose of your waste. This is not only regulation but also courtesy.

While there are a few options for appropriate human waste disposal, digging a cat hole is the simplest and usually easiest method. Simply dig 6 inches in the ground and at least 100 ft. from water, deposit, and cover. Toilette paper should be packed out, never buried. These steps will allow the next person to enjoy the same pristine experience.

