

Katmai

National Park and Preserve
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



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Brooks Camp Hiking Trails



The Brooks Camp area has several established hiking trails offering a wide range of experiences including bear viewing, cultural history, quiet forests, alpine tundra, and rugged mountain scenery. All distances listed are one-way.

Brooks Falls Trail

Distance: 1.2 mi (2 km)
Difficulty: Easy, wheelchair accessible

This is the most popular trail in Katmai. It contrasts a quiet walk through the boreal forest with the intimidating and exciting presence of brown bears. The Brooks Falls Trail begins across from the vault toilets .3 mi (.5 km) from the Lower River Platform.

During July, the Brooks Falls Trail rewards visitors with superb bear viewing opportunities. At the end of the trail, two raised platforms offer a bird's eye view of bears fishing in the Brooks River. Bear viewing at the Falls is best during the July salmon run. Brooks Falls creates a temporary barrier to migrating salmon, making them more accessible to predators.

This hike can be intimidating with frequent bear encounters along its entire length. Bears are commonly encountered walking and sleeping along the Falls Trail especially in July and September. Hikers must exercise caution and be prepared to move off of the trail in order to let bears pass.

Cultural Site Trail

Distance: .1 mi (.2 km)
Difficulty: Easy

This easy, self guided trail leads from the Brooks Camp Visitor Center through several prehistoric camps to a reconstructed native dwelling, a traditional semi-subterranean home sometimes referred to by its Russian name, barabara.

Brooks Camp is part of the Brooks River National Historic Landmark, which has one of the highest concentrations of prehistoric human dwellings in North America. Over 900 depressions, indicating the remains of semi-subterranean homes and campsites,

line both sides of Brooks River.

Beginning at the visitor center every day at 2 PM, a park ranger-naturalist leads a short .25 mile (0.4 km) walk providing information about the human history of Brooks River Archeological District and National Historic Landmark. The walk lasts about an hour and ends at the reconstructed native dwelling.

Lake Brooks Road

Distance: 1 mi (1.6 km)
Difficulty: Easy

This road leads to a large, glacially carved lake and the head of the Brooks River.

The road begins at the Lower Platform and passes the Brooks Falls trail junction. The Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes Road begins .7 mi (1.1 km) from the platform. At this junction, keep going straight and continue to Lake Brooks.

There is a covered picnic area, food cache, and vault toilet at Lake Brooks. The outlet of Lake Brooks is a good salmon viewing area during spawning season in August and September and bears will occasionally fish for salmon at this spot. Anglers may use this area for access to the upper Brooks River.

Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes Road

Distance: 23 mi (37 km)
Difficulty: Moderate

For those who like to walk, this is the primary access for exploring the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes. This road begins .7 mi (1.1 km) from the Lower Platform along the Lake Brooks Road. Three stream crossings are necessary to hike its entire length.

The majority of the road cuts its way through dense boreal forest. Particularly scenic views can be found at mile 7.5 (12 km) and frequently beyond the first stream crossing at mile 12 (19 km).

Along its entire length, the road provides opportunities for short walks, long hikes, and access to a number of rewarding side trips for those who wish to get off of the beaten path. The Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes at road's end is a must see.

Dumpling Mt. Trail

Distance: 1.5 mi (2.4 km)
with longer options
Difficulty: Moderate to
Strenuous

This moderately strenuous hike climbs 800 feet (244 m) over 1.5 miles (2.4 km) to an overlook above Brooks Camp with expansive views of Naknek Lake, Brooks River, and Lake Brooks.

The trailhead is located in the Brooks Camp Campground. Hikers have the option to continue beyond the overlook to reach the summit of Dumpling Mountain (2440 ft/744 m), another 2.5 mi (4 km)

beyond the overlook.

Once the overlook is reached, the trail offers spectacular views of the park and points beyond. The trail climbs through several habitat communities on its way to the Dumpling Mountain summit including boreal forest, subalpine meadows, and alpine tundra.

Things to Know Before You Go

A little preparation before any hike in Katmai will make your experience much more comfortable and safe.

Bring a rain jacket and rain pants on every hike. Conditions change rapidly and could spoil the day for the unprepared. Cold, wet conditions can be experienced throughout the summer. Protect yourself from hypothermia.

Bears and moose can be encountered anywhere around Brooks Camp. Make noise appropriately to avoid surprising these animals.

Be sure to follow proper food and gear storage regulations wherever you go. Contact a ranger for specific information.