

# Lake Clark

Lake Clark National Park  
Lake Clark National Preserve  
Alaska

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



Set between the Aleutian and Alaska ranges, the Chigmit Mountains divide the park interior

from Cook Inlet. Highest of Chigmits peaks is 10,197-foot Redoubt Volcano.



Hikers and backpackers must be well-equipped and self-sufficient for safe backcountry travel.



Dall sheep haunt alpine ridges and meadows and steep, rocky slopes in the park. It takes

about eight years for a ram to grow its circular horns, characteristic of its species.



The outlet of Lower Twin Lake flows into the Chilikadrotna River, one of the three

national wild rivers in the national park and preserve.



The Dena'ina people have lived around Lake Clark for at least 900 years. Many residents

of the region descend from Dena'ina people who settled and lived in the Kijik area.



Some of the Mulchatna Caribou Herd travels through the park in summer and fall. Large

concave hooves enable caribou to walk on soft and spongy surfaces like snow and tundra.

## Wild, Spectacular Scenic Diversity

Top photo: Island Cove above Portage Creek, Lake Clark. NPS Photo

Dynamic forces of fire and ice have shaped Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. Over many millennia, volcanic eruptions and uplifts of Earth's crust created new landforms that glaciers gouged and shaped. These forces persist as glaciers on shoulders of the park's imposing, potentially active Redoubt Volcano (10,197 ft) and Iliamna Volcano (10,016 ft) on its Cook Inlet coast.

Lake Clark National Park's nearly 2.5 million acres include the rugged Chigmit Mountains bounded by the Aleutian Range to the south and the Alaska Range to the north. Relentless grinding of tectonic plates, uplift, earthquakes, volcanism, and glacial scraping, scouring, and mounding created the Chigmits's awesome, jagged array of peaks. The national preserve, some 1.2 million acres, adjoins the park to the south and west, with rolling foothills, boreal forests, alpine lakes, wild rivers, and sweeping tundra expanses. Park and preserve together, because of this varied topography, support diverse plants and animals and include nearly all representative Alaskan ecosystems.

On their west side the Chigmits descend via tundra-covered foothills to boreal forest and include spectacular wilderness with lakes and wild rivers flowing southwest toward Bristol Bay. The varied topography of the park and preserve creates habitats for a diverse mix of plants and animals. The area supports a variety of large land mammals including Dall sheep, caribou, moose, wolves and, black and brown bears. Lake Clark stretches 40 miles from the end of Lake Clark Pass to Sixmile Lake and the headwaters of the Newhalen River. The Lake Clark watershed provides critical spawning and rearing habitats for sockeye salmon and sustains the Bristol Bay salmon fishery, one of the world's largest sockeye salmon fisheries.

On its west side the park and preserve beckons anglers, river runners, campers, backpackers, and mountaineers. Anglers find world-class fishing for rainbow trout, Dolly Varden, lake trout, northern pike, and arctic grayling. River runners raft or kayak the Tlikakila, Mulchatna or, Chilikadrotna national wild rivers. Campers and backpackers explore high tundra valleys, foothills, and secluded lakeshores in the park's wilderness areas, and some of America's most remote, rugged peaks challenge mountaineers.

East of the Chigmits, Cook Inlet features shallow bays, rocky headlands, and many offshore reefs, populated by marine mammals-harbor seals, Steller sea lions, sea otters, harbor porpoises, and beluga whales. From the Chigmits's eastern flank, rivers cascade to tidewater through coastal rainforests of Sitka and white spruce. En route these rivers create marshes and outwash plains, prime habitat for bald eagles, diverse migratory birds, and resident waterfowl. In spring, brown bears feed in sedge meadows of estuaries, where salt and fresh waters mix, and catch salmon in summer. Coastal cliffs hold not only fossil remnants of 150 million years of sea life but peregrine falcon habitat and rookeries for puffins, cormorants, kittiwakes, and other seabirds.

For thousands of years Native Alaskan peoples have made this richly diverse region their homeland. Dena'ina Athabascan settlements dot today's park and preserve, and areas of Yup'ik Eskimo occupation lie along southern Lake Iliamna. Lakes, rivers, coast, and tundra-all feature archeological sites. Many Dena'ina people now living near Lake Clark have roots at Kijik, a national historic landmark and archeological district, one

a large, multi-village Athabascan community. Kijik, from the Dena'ina, Qizhjuh, means "place people gathered."

The 1980 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) created 10 new National Park System areas, including Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. ANILCA mandates that Alaskan rural residents enjoy priority for subsistence uses of fish and wildlife on federal public lands. Residents of Nondalton, Iliamna, Lime Village, Newhalen, Pedro Bay, and Port Alsworth, and people living in the park, continue to engage in subsistence hunting, fishing, and gathering activities inside the park and preserve under state and federal regulations. These communities and the area in the park are designated resident zone communities because their residents have a long history of using resources in the park for their sustenance and livelihood.

In ANILCA, Congress also designated 2,470,000 acres of the park as wilderness to preserve the area's natural conditions and wilderness character in perpetuity as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System.

### Access

No roads reach Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. Access is mostly by small aircraft. Float-planes land on rivers and lakes; wheeled airplanes

use private airstrips in or near the park or open beaches and gravel bars. Scheduled commercial flights between Anchorage and Port Alsworth provide direct access, and flights from Anchorage to Nondalton and Iliamna put you near the park.

The park's field headquarters and visitor center in Port Alsworth provides visitor information and basic emergency services. Several remote cabins throughout the park are staffed in summer to assist backcountry travelers.

### Information

Lake Clark National Park and Preserve General Delivery Port Alsworth AK 99653 907-781-2218 www.nps.gov/lac

Field headquarters at Port Alsworth offers detailed area information, topographic maps, park guides, and lists of accommodations and local services.

An administrative office is at 240 West Fifth Avenue, Anchorage, AK 99501 and a field office is at 2181 Kachemak Drive in Homer, AK 907-XXX-XXXX.

### What to See and Do

The park's 2.6 million acres and the preserve's 1.4 million make up a vast undeveloped area with four of Alaska's five biotic communities that offers varied opportunities to experience its ecosystems.

For most activities you must either be well equipped and self-sufficient when you arrive or make advance arrangements with a guide, outfitter, or lodge operator. Air services based in Port Alsworth, Anchorage, Kenai, and Homer offer flightseeing or day trips for fly-in fishing and bear-viewing on the

park's Cook Inlet coast. Three hiking trails from Port Alsworth that provide access to Tanalian Mountain, Tanalian River Falls, and Kontrashibuna Lake are suitable for day hikes and short backpacking trips. There are no other developed trails in the park or preserve.

Mountainous areas are steep, rugged, and subject to inclement weather all year. Lowlands can be boggy, wet, and dotted with dense thickets of alder and willow scrub. If you want to explore the backcountry, consider backpacking in the

western foothills where you can travel on open, relatively dry tundra.

Three national wild rivers-Tlikakila, Chilikadrotna and Mulchatna-offer float trips and sport fishing. Sport fishing is allowed in both park and preserve, and the preserve is open to sport hunting under State of Alaska regulations. The park is closed to sport hunting.

**Note:** Winter travel can only be recommended to those experienced at cold-weather camping and survival techniques.

### Weather, Precautions, and Safety

June through August temperatures in the park's eastern region near Cook Inlet average between 50° and 65°F, with a lot of precipitation. The park's interior—west of the Chigmit Mountains—and the preserve are warmer and drier in summer. Temperatures occasionally reach 80°F.

Frost and snow can occur in September and October—anticipate frost even in mid-summer evenings. Snow permitting, March and early April are best for cross-country skiing. From mid-April to late May thawing streams

and lakes make all travel difficult and dangerous. Strong winds can occur at any time and may be severe in and near mountain passes. Winter temperatures in the interior can plummet to -40°F, and occasionally lower.

Know and test gear before you arrive and possess backcountry skills for wilderness survival. Filter all drinking water, treat it chemically, or boil for one minute. Leave your itinerary with someone before you head out and notify them when you complete your trip.

Brown and black bears, moose, caribou, wolves, and other animals are wild and not used to humans. Stay at a safe distance; don't approach closely. Get information on wildlife encounters at the visitor center in Port Alsworth and be familiar with it before you start your trip.

**Special Note:** Local residents carry on the subsistence way of life in the national park and preserve, with camps, fish nets, and other equipment. Please be courteous and respect private property.

### Guides, Outfitting, Supplies, and Map Warning

Few places sell equipment and supplies in the park. Stores in Nondalton and Iliamna—air access only—sell limited foodstuffs and gear. Plan to outfit in Kenai, Homer, or Anchorage and bring adequate food and gear so you are self-sufficient and prepared for changing weather and potential emergencies.

Merchants and lodges on the Cook Inlet coast and at Lake Clark, and in Nondalton, Iliamna, and Port Alsworth offer rooms, cabins, meals, and guide and outfitter services. These services are limited, so make

your arrangements well ahead. Also ask air and boat charter operators about guides and rental equipment. Call the park at 907-271-3751 for a list of licensed operators.

You are generally on your own and dependent on your own resources here. Bring high-quality clothing and gear: synthetic pile and wind-proof outerwear, thermal underwear, rain gear, tents with rain flies and mosquito netting and able to withstand strong winds. Insect repellent and sunscreen are highly recommended. All

food, toiletries, and garbage should be carried and stored in bear resistant containers. These may be checked out at the visitor center in Port Alsworth.

Always carry emergency food rations because bad weather can delay your scheduled pick-up.

**Do not use the map in this brochure for backpacking or navigation.** U.S. Geological Survey topographic maps that cover the park and preserve are: Lime Hills, Lake Clark, Iliamna, Kenai, Seldovia, and Tyonek.

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