



K'elt'aeni

2009 Visitor Guide

The official visitor's guide to
Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve



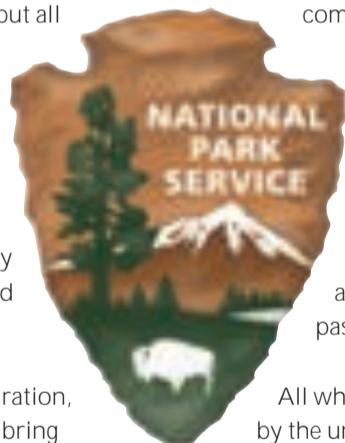
Mt. Blackburn (16390') viewed from the
Richardson Highway, Milepost 88
Neil Hannan photo

Historical Crossroads of Alaska

THE 13.2 MILLION ACRES WHICH COMPRISE Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve have for centuries served as a crossroads of human activity. Russians began to enter the area in the late 1700s. The subsequent United States purchase of Alaska in the 1800s further spurred expeditions, but all of these endeavors came long after people became active in this region 8,000 years ago.

Humans were drawn here to trade with other groups for materials unavailable in their own territories and by dreams of fur trapping, mineral riches, and rivers teeming with salmon. They initially were lured into this wild country of jagged peaks and immense glaciers, swift, cold rivers and active volcanoes to make a livelihood. Now they are also attracted to Wrangell-St. Elias to find solitude, inspiration, and adventure, to test their wilderness skills, and to bring back memories to last a lifetime from America's last frontier.

Since establishment of the park and preserve in 1980, human activities have slowly evolved. Many residents still engage in



traditional subsistence hunting and fishing, but many others who visit our largest national park come for recreation or to learn. They come to face wilderness challenges, such as fording glacial stream or topping an ice-clad mountain. They come to monitor species of concern, such as Kittlitz's murrelets or Mentasta caribou. They come to see the largest glaciers in North America, or to study evidence of past human activity along their receding margins. They come to experience the Kennecott Mill Town, which once extracted the world's richest copper ore, to follow in the footsteps of early stampedes along the Richardson Highway, or to feel the quiet passage of time among the ruins of Chisana City.

All who visit Wrangell-St. Elias are amazed and inspired by the unrelenting efforts of humans throughout history to experience, understand, and benefit from one of the most rugged, yet alluring, landscapes on earth. All who visit can savor a taste of this vast, visually stunning, untamed land.

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16 Backcountry



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Wrangell-St. Elias
NATIONAL PARK & PRESERVE
 (907) 822-5234
www.nps.gov/wrst



K'elt'aeni

Visitor Guide

The name *K'elt'aeni* (kel-TAH-nee), an Athabaskan word for the Wrangell volcanoes, means "The ones that control the weather." This reference is to the clouds and strong storms that often form above and cover these lofty summits.

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Wrangell-St. Elias
National Park & Preserve
Encompassing 13.2 million acres,
Wrangell-St. Elias is the largest unit in the
U.S. National Park System and part of
one of the largest internationally
protected terrestrial ecosystems on the
planet. Magnificent mountain ranges,
grinding glaciers, roaring rivers, abundant
wildlife, and seemingly endless wilderness
await your discovery and exploration.

Superintendent
Meg Jensen

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PO Box 439
Copper Center, AK 99573

Park Headquarters/Visitor Center
(907) 822-5234

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Website
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The National Park Service cares for special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

Superintendent's Welcome

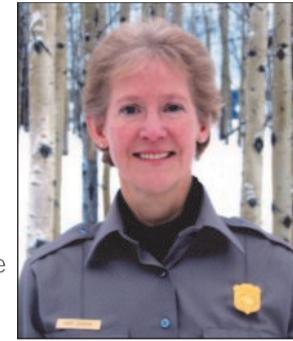
Welcome to YOUR Park

WELCOME TO WRANGELL-ST. ELIAS NATIONAL PARK and Preserve. Encompassing over 13 million acres, this is the nation's largest national park and is larger than the states of Vermont, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island combined! We are pleased you have chosen to visit us.

Here you have the opportunity to experience a wild corner of Alaska on a grand scale. Natural processes are at work all around you: glacial ice carves mountain valleys; caribou, moose and other wildlife roam freely; volcanic activity shapes the land; and rivulets of glacial meltwater converge to form wide braided rivers that flow to the sea. Here you have the opportunity to experience wilderness on a scale you are unlikely to experience elsewhere.

Human beings have been a part of this landscape for millennia. Much of this land has long been home to the Ahtna, Upper Tanana, Eyak and Tlingit peoples, who continue to this day to hunt, fish, and gather foods from the land. Miners passed through, working the land in the search for copper and gold,

and their camps and mine buildings are a fascinating reminder of the challenges of that time. Settlers and pioneers followed, and today the park has many friendly Alaskan neighbors you may meet in your travels.



Superintendent Meg Jensen

The K'elt'aeni Visitor Guide is a tool to help you plan your visit to and navigate this spectacular park. History buffs and wilderness enthusiasts alike will find much to experience here. Since there are fewer facilities here than some of the traditional national parks you may have visited in the mainland U.S., careful planning will help you find safe experiences which will excite, surprise and inspire you. Park staff are standing by to help you make this visit the experience of a lifetime.

Please travel safely in this "Great Land," and may this visit be only one in a lifetime of exploration at Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve.

Meg Jensen



Mount Blackburn (16,390') provides an impressive backdrop for hikers on the Root Glacier.

Something For Everyone

Things To Do

There really is something for everyone in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. For the history buff, there is the Kennecott Mines National Historic Landmark or the Chisana Historic Mining Landscape. Hiking and backpacking opportunities cover a wide range of terrain and difficulty. Raft trips down the many rivers are an exciting way to see the park. Mountaineers find some of the tallest peaks and most challenging conditions in North America. There are places to take your camper or tent and enjoy a few days away from it all. Bird watching, flightseeing, and photography are all popular visitor activities. See Page 4 for suggestions on how to spend your time here.

Guide Services

Many visitors choose to hire guides for river rafting, hiking, glacier trekking, hunting, and fishing. Some backcountry travelers use air taxis to access remote areas.



Air taxis can take you to remote locations

Fishing & Hunting

The National Park Service and the State of Alaska manage the wildlife resources of the park and preserve cooperatively. A state fishing and hunting license is required for all hunters and anglers age 16 or older. Sport hunting is allowed in the preserve only. Subsistence hunting and fishing by qualified local, rural residents is allowed in the park and preserve.

Access

Motorboats, airplanes, and snowmobiles may be used in the park without permits. All-terrain vehicles are allowed on established ATV trails with a permit. Stop by the Slana Ranger Station or Visitor Center in Copper Center for permits and the latest ATV trail conditions, restrictions, and status.

Park Roads

There are two roads into the park: the McCarthy Road (59 miles) and the Nabesna Road (42 miles). Visitors can drive the McCarthy Road or take a shuttle bus from Glennallen, Copper Center, or Chitina. A flightseeing trip or backcountry dropoff by air taxi is another excellent way to explore the park.

Yukutat

Yukutat is served by commercial air service and the Alaska Marine Highway, and is a takeoff point for many visitors to the southern coastal area of the park. Air taxis, a small boat harbor, and guide services are all available. Ocean kayaking and whale watching are just two of the opportunities park visitors can take advantage of while in Yukutat.

Park Facilities

Visitor Centers

WRANGELL-ST. ELIAS NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE HAS VARIOUS visitor contact points. Each of these facilities is staffed by interpretive park rangers who can assist you with a variety of services. In many cases, these rangers are longtime residents of the area. Their first-hand knowledge of the park is a great asset to you as you plan activities and learn about the unique features of the area.

JOIN A RANGER



A full range of interpretive activities are offered throughout the summer. Join a ranger for a guided walk, talk, or evening program. Check the activity schedule posted at all visitor centers.



Park Headquarters is an excellent place to begin your discovery of Wrangell-St. Elias

Park H.Q. & Main Visitor Center



Location
Mile 106.8 Richardson Highway
(10 miles south of Glennallen, AK)
907-822-7250

Hours
All Year: 8:00 am-4:30 pm Mon-Fri
Summer: 9:00 am-7:00 pm daily

Highlights
Exhibit building, nature trail, large park relief map, park orientation film, ranger programs, bookstore, restrooms, picnic tables, trip planning, information desk, subsistence permits, public phone.

Kennecott Visitor Center



Location
Historic Kennecott Mill Town
907-960-1105

Hours
Summer: 9:00 am-5:30 pm daily

Highlights
Located in historic general store and post office building within the Kennecott Mill Town. Exhibits, park films, trip planning, trails, backcountry information, ranger programs, and bookstore.

Slana Ranger Station



Location
Mile 0.2 Nabesna Road
907-822-7401

Hours
Summer: 8:00 am-5:00 pm daily
Winter: call for hours

Highlights
Park Information, trip planning, exhibits, ranger programs, park orientation, ATV permits, subsistence permits, bookstore, public phone, restrooms.

Chitina Ranger Station



Location
Chitina, Mile 33 Edgerton Highway
907-823-2205

Hours
Summer: 9:00 am-5:30 pm Thursday-Monday
May be open other days of the week

Highlights
Historic log cabin. Park information, park movie, McCarthy Road conditions, backcountry information, trip planning, picnic table, subsistence permits.

McCarthy Road Info Station



Location
Mile 59 McCarthy Road
1/2 mile before the end of the road

Hours
Summer: 9:30 am-5:00 pm daily

Highlights
McCarthy-Kennecott area trip planning, maps, and information on local services. Free day-parking.

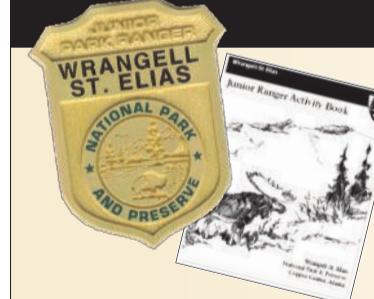
Yakutat Ranger Station



Hours
All year: Hours Vary

Location
Mallot Avenue, Yakutat
907-784-3295

Highlights
Exhibits, information, park video, bookstore, and trip planning.



Hey Kids!
Become A Wrangell-St. Elias

Junior Ranger

If you are between the ages of four and twelve, you can become a Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve Junior Ranger! Stop by one of the visitor centers in the park or ask a park ranger for the Junior Ranger Activity book. Complete the required sections, state the official pledge with a ranger, and you will earn your own badge and certificate.

Throughout the summer, park rangers often present special programs for children. You may get to learn about forests, moose, salmon, or even volcanoes! Ask at a visitor center about any upcoming special Junior Ranger programs.

If you cannot visit the park in person and you have internet access, you can become a National Park Service Web Ranger. Visit the park website at www.nps.gov/wrst



Now That You're Here... What Should You Do?

One Day

Begin your visit by stopping by the Headquarters Visitor Center, located 10 miles south of Glennallen. Explore the exhibits, browse the bookstore, stroll the short nature trail, see the Wrangell Mountains, and enjoy the 20-minute park movie, *Crown of the Continent*. Park Rangers are available to help you discover the park and surrounding area and plan your visit. Interpretive programs are offered daily during the summer. For splendid scenery, drive south to the historic town of Chitina (57 miles). Along the way, stretch your legs on the Liberty Falls Trail and enjoy a panorama of the park's high peaks. After exploring Chitina, continue to the nearby bridge over the mighty Copper River where in summer you can watch busy Alaskans harvesting salmon with traditional fishwheels and dipnets. Another option is to book a flight with a local air taxi service at the Chitina airport for a daytrip to McCarthy and Kennecott.



Backpacking in the Wrangells

Three Days

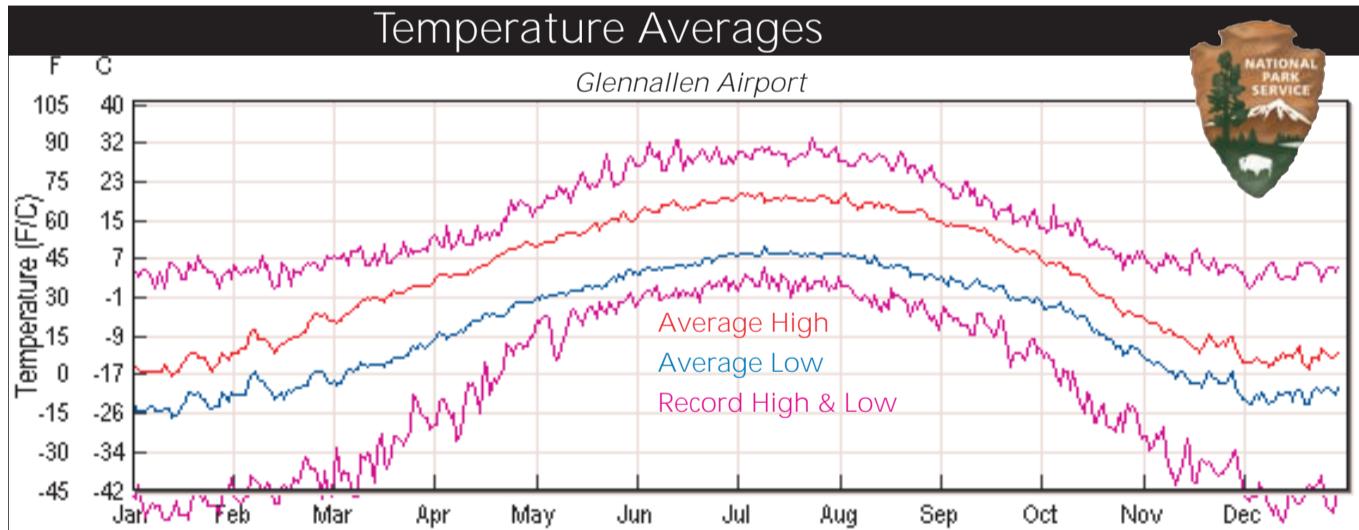
With more time to spend, you can explore the major roads more thoroughly and still have time for some hiking (pg. 16). A drive along the Nabesna Road (pg. 8) will take you to remote corners of the park with great camping, hiking, and wildlife viewing. A trip along the McCarthy Road (pg. 12) allows for leisurely explorations of a rural Alaskan town and the Kennecott Mines National Historic Landmark. (pg. 14). An easy hike along the Root Glacier Trail brings you up close and personal with the area's rich history and the mighty river of ice. More strenuous hikes lead to the mountainside Bonanza and Jumbo Mines. Join a local guide/outfitter service for glacier hikes, mill building tours, and river rafting trips. A flightseeing excursion among the glaciers and mountains will give you a whole new appreciation for the size, wildness, and magnificence of Wrangell-St. Elias. Park Rangers at any visitor center can help you plan such an adventure.

One Week

With a week or more to spend, the whole park is open to you. You will have time to enjoy all of the above, but also to visit more remote locations. The backcountry of Wrangell-St. Elias contains some of the world's most spectacular wilderness (page 16). A short flight on an air taxi from Nabesna, Glennallen, Chitina, or McCarthy can transport you into the heart of the park, where hiking and camping possibilities are virtually endless. Stop by any park visitor center to discuss potential trips with a ranger.

Weather and Climate

The high peaks of the coastal Chugach Range intercept ocean storms and provide a barrier to warmer marine air masses. As a result, with the exception of the coastal strip near Yakutat (150 inches of rain/year), the park has an interior dry continental climate characterized by long, frigid winters followed by short, warm summers. Average snowfall is 50 inches, yet it holds little moisture. Annual precipitation (rain and snow) adds up to only 11 inches.



WINTERS here are long, dark, and extremely cold with highs of 5-7°F and nighttime lows dipping as low as -50°F! Daytime skies are usually clear and on many nights the aurora dances overhead. The temperature may not rise above freezing for more than five months! Exceptionally dry snow covers the ground to a depth of two feet deep.

In SPRING, daylight hours lengthen and the sun's warmth quickly breaks winters hold. By late April, "breakup" is in full swing. Snowmelt has nowhere to go over frozen ground and the resulting flooded landscape briefly makes travel a challenge.

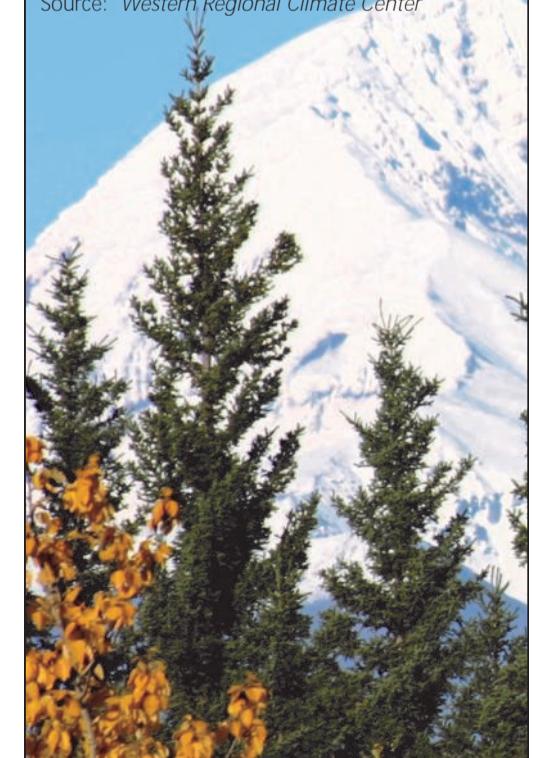
SUMMERS are some of the warmest and driest in Alaska with highs sometimes reaching into the 80s during June and July. But average yearly precipitation is only 11". Mosquitoes are at their peak during June, but usually begin to dissipate by mid July. Prime backcountry season is June 15-September 15 due to snow depths at higher elevations.

FALL arrives early; willows and aspens begin to change color by mid-August. This season can be delightfully clear, spectacular, and mosquito-free, but often too short. First snows often fall in September and "stick" by late October.

Average Temperatures High/Low °F

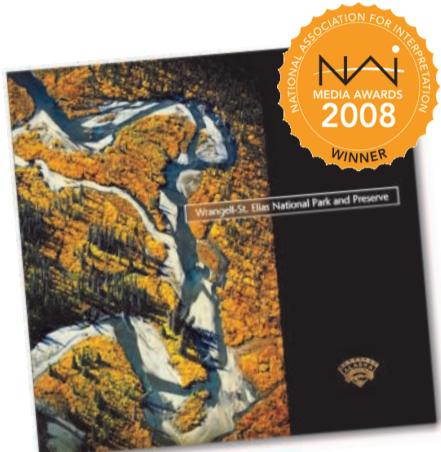
	Summer	Winter
Glennallen:	66 / 44	7 / -11
Records:	91	-58
Slana:	67 / 42	10 / -8
Records:	93	-57
McCarthy:	69 / 39	14 / -5
Records:	89	-55

Source: Western Regional Climate Center



Explore Your Park!

Award Winning Wrangell-St. Elias Book



Four years in the making, the long awaited book exploring the natural and human history of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park is finally available!

This edition is part of a series of books on Alaska's National Parks, a 72-page keepsake is filled with inspirational writing and spectacular photographs. Produced by Alaska Geographic with the assistance of park staff, this book succinctly captures the wild essence of our largest national park.

Look for this item at park visitor centers, or online at www.alaskageographic.org.
10" x 9 1/2", 72 pages, photographs, illustrations \$14.95

Surf The Wrangells



Explore Wrangell-St. Elias from your computer!

- Planning a Visit
- Current Weather
- Press Releases
- Photo Gallery
- Park Maps
- Backcountry Routes
- Commercial Services
- **Kid's Corner**
- Road Guides
- Lesson Plans
- Management Docs
- Bird List
- Online Bookstore
-And MUCH MORE!



www.nps.gov/wrst

Camping along the Nabesna Road

Unlike other National Parks, Wrangell-St. Elias has no developed park service campgrounds...but there are still many great places to camp! One of the best areas is in the northern part of the park, along the Nabesna Road. Here, you will find many pullouts along the roadside that are perfect for a small or medium RV, camper trailer, pickup camper, or tent camping. All sites are primitive and available on a first come, first served basis. No potable water is available after leaving Slana.

Rufus Creek, Milepost 6.1
This site has a picnic table and is surrounded by tall aspen trees. Rufus Creek runs next to the site. Spend a few minutes catching some Dolly Varden for dinner.

Kettle Lake, Milepost 16.6
This site has a picnic table and a million dollar view of the Wrangell Mountains. Follow game trails across the tundra to a small lake. Note: The site is close to the

road and can be a little dusty when traffic passes by.

Rock Lake, Milepost 21.8
This site has a picnic table and vault toilet. It is a small site and close to the road but looks out on a beautiful mountain lake with the Wrangell Mountains visible in the distance.

Twin Lakes, Milepost 27.8
This area has several picnic tables and a

vault toilet. There is room for several vehicles without seeming crowded. The area is surrounded by tall spruce trees and far enough from the road to avoid dust. There are some sites near the shoreline of the lake but the access road is extremely rough and requires high clearance. Enjoy viewing waterfowl and fishing for grayling.

Jack Creek, Milepost 35.3
This area has two picnic tables and a vault toilet. There is room for up to three

vehicles. The road beyond Mile Post 29 receives less traffic so this is often a place to camp in solitude. There are numerous game trails to follow up and down stream as well as a stream of small ponds usually occupied by beaver. Jack Creek is a great spot to catch grayling.

Remember, treat or boil all water, dispose of trash properly, store food safely and be extremely careful with fire. All State of Alaska fishing regulations apply in Wrangell-St. Elias.



Looking for a campsite?
Check out the Nabesna Road



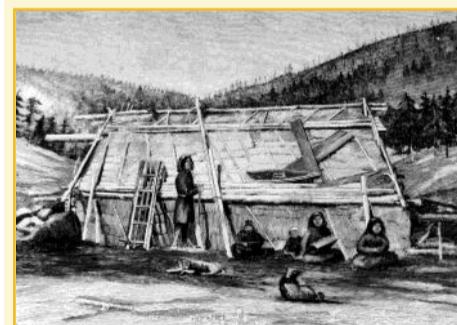
Early Explorations of the Copper Basin

By Geoff Bleakley
Park Historian

EUROPEAN EXPLORATION OF THE COPPER BASIN

Copper Basin began in the early 1780s. During a period of considerable expansion, Russian fur hunters explored the southern coast of Alaska searching for new sources of fur. Not surprisingly, the huge Copper River was noticed relatively quickly. The first written record of that drainage appears in 1783, when a small party under the command of Leontii Nagaev recorded sighting the river's mouth.

Several parties ascended the lower Copper River between 1790 and 1815, but the Russians did not establish a permanent presence until 1819, when Afanasi Klimovskii built a trading post called Copper Fort near the Ahtna village of Taral near present day Chitina. The



Chief Nicolai's house at Taral as seen by Lt. Henry Allen in 1885
Natl. Archives

Russians sent Ruf Serebrennikov to examine the rest of the Copper River Basin in 1847-1848, but his party was massacred by the upper Ahtna, abruptly ending Russian efforts to explore the region.

When the United States acquired Alaska in 1867, the Americans knew little about the region. It first attracted interest in the mid-1880s, when gold strikes in northern British Columbia and southeastern Alaska lured prospectors to the north. Many eventually entered the interior,

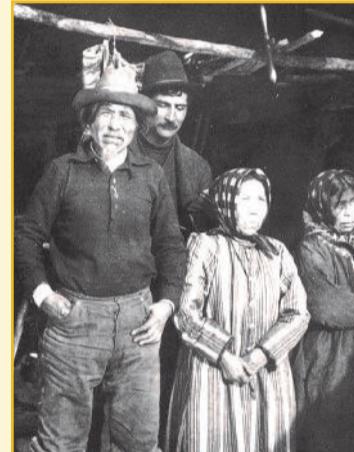
most by way of the Yukon River, but some via Cook Inlet and Prince William Sound.

The American government worried about the potential for conflict between the undisciplined miners and Alaska's Native population. Consequently, the U.S. Army dispatched several military expeditions to reconnoiter the region.

The first, led by Lt. William Abercrombie, attempted to reach the Copper Basin by boat in 1884, but was stopped by the raging rapids on the lower Copper. Abercrombie's report painted a gloomy prospect for further exploration of this region.

Nonetheless, the army sent Lt. Henry T. Allen to finish Abercrombie's work the following year. That March, Allen's party, consisting of himself, Sgt. Cady Roberson, Priv. Fred W. Fickett, and prospector Peder Johnson, began ascending the Copper River. Although they started in canoes, the group soon encountered ice and consequently switched to sleds. But dragging these over soft snow proved exceptionally difficult and the men were forced to abandon most of their gear to keep moving.

Despite these problems, the exhausted and starving men reached the mouth of the Chitina River on April 10. Caching their supplies at Taral and adding a wayward prospector named John Bremner to their party, Allen and his men proceeded up the Chitina, where they located Ahtna Chief Nicolai's camp on



Chief Nicolai was of great assistance to the Allen expedition.
UAF Collection

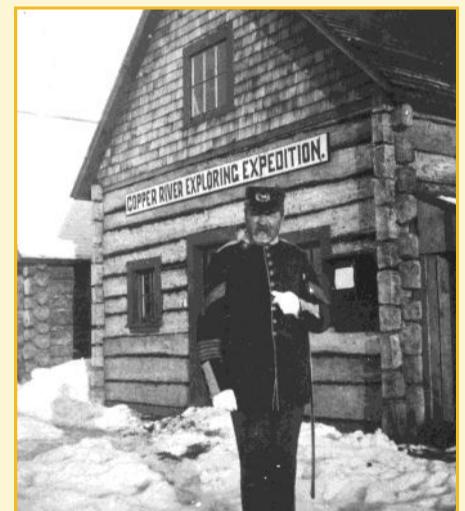
an upper tributary. The group was fortunate to have reached him, as he was able to provide food, a proper boat, and accurate information about how to travel throughout the area. Nicolai showed Allen some copper tools and pure copper nuggets from a nearby source. Allen's record of this encounter inspired later

searches for copper in the area and the eventual discovery one of the richest deposits of high grade copper ever found in North America, and ultimately the development of the Kennecott Mines.

On May 28 Allen's party passed the mouth of the Chitochina River and on June 2 reached Batzulnetas, the most important Ahtna village in the upper Copper Basin. The Ahtna fed the explorers when they arrived but refused to sell them any more food, as their own supplies were dangerously low. So Allen continued north. Crossing the Alaska Range through Suslota Pass, he reached the Tanana River via Tetlin.

After rafting down the Tanana, Allen traveled overland to the Koyukuk River, which he ascended beyond the present site of Bettles. He next descended the Koyukuk to the Yukon River, then down the Yukon to Kaltag, from where he portaged to Norton Sound. He continued down the coast, finally reaching St. Michael on August 29 where he was picked up by a steamship. By the time the persistent lieutenant and his men completed their epic journey, they had explored 1,500 miles of uncharted

wilderness and had mapped the courses of the Copper, the Tanana, and the Koyukuk rivers. They were among the first to successfully ascend the Copper River and cross into interior Alaska from Prince William Sound. Although there was little fanfare at the time, the Allen expedition made significant contributions to the understanding of Alaska's landscape and native peoples, and their carefully drawn maps were invaluable to subsequent explorers.



Capt. Abercrombie led the effort to scout and build the Valdez Trail, which became today's Richardson Highway
Natl. Archives

Drawn by stories of gold discoveries in Canada's Klondike district, the first large wave of Americans entered the Copper Basin in 1898. While relatively few were ever financially successful, their mere presence greatly altered local life. The American government sent William Abercrombie, now captain, back to Alaska to scout out and construct the Valdez Trail (see *Alaska's First Road*, p. 18) to serve the flood of prospectors and miners. Soon, roadhouses sprang up along those networks. Many became local hubs and eventually evolved into the Copper River Basin communities we see and enjoy today.

Be Bear Aware

Both black bears (*Ursus americanus*) and grizzly/brown bears (*Ursus arctos*) are found throughout Wrangell-St. Elias. A few simple precautions can keep you safe while camping and hiking, and protect the bears. Once a bear learns to identify hikers, campsites, or cabins as a source for food, there is rarely a happy ending.

AVOID ALL ENCOUNTERS

- Watch for signs of bears such as tracks and scat.
- Be alert to potential food sources such as carrion, salmon spawning streams, and berry patches.
- Make noise, particularly where visibility is limited. Your voice is best—bear bells are not very effective.
- Travel in groups. Groups are noisier and easier for bears to detect.
- Store food, trash, and personal hygiene products by using bear-resistant storage containers. Never store them in your tent.
- Cook and store food at least 100 yards from your tent.

PEPPER SPRAY

containing capsaicin, a red pepper extract, is an effective, non-lethal deterrent against attacks by aggressive wildlife. Sprays have a maximum range of about six to eight yards. If discharged upwind or in a vehicle, they can disable the person using them. Use sprays approved by the EPA that contain at least eight ounces of deterrent.

FIREARMS

are allowed in Wrangell-St. Elias, but should *never* be used as an alternative to common-sense approaches to bear encounters. **If you are inexperienced, you are more likely to be injured by a gun than a bear, and any misplaced shot may enrage the bear further, prolonging an attack.** A rifle of at least .30 caliber or a 12-gauge shotgun with slugs is recommended. Alaska law makes provisions for shooting a bear in self defense if there is no alternative and the attack was unprovoked. The hide and skull must be salvaged and turned over to authorities.

FOOD STORAGE

Appropriate food storage is required in Wrangell-St Elias National Park and Preserve. You can borrow NPS-approved bear-resistant containers (BRFCs) at park visitor centers for backcountry use. A refundable deposit is required.

Keep all food and cosmetics in the BRFC when not in use. Place any snacks, wrappers, lip balm, sunscreen, etc. that were used while kayaking or hiking into the BRFC before entering your tent. At night, store your BRFC and clean cooking gear off of main animal trails, and at least 100 yards from your tent. Prepare and consume food at least 100 yards from your tent site and food storage area. Try to select cooking areas where you can see a comfortable distance to minimize the risk of a surprise encounter with a bear passing through the area.

IF YOU DO ENCOUNTER A BEAR

- If the bear is unaware of you, detour away quietly.
- If the bear sees you, stop where you are. Wave your arms and talk to the bear in a calm voice. Retreat slowly, keeping the bear in sight.
- If the bear follows you, stand your ground.
- If contact by a grizzly bear is imminent, play dead. Lie flat on the ground, face down and legs apart. Protect your neck. Leave your pack on to protect your back and strive to remain face down. If the attack is prolonged, fight back vigorously.
- If it's a black bear, do not play dead, fight back vigorously.



PLEASE REPORT ALL
BEAR ENCOUNTERS
TO A RANGER!



While backpacking, store all food items in an **approved Bear Resistant Food Container**. BRFC's are available for checkout at park visitor centers.



River Crossings

Challenging conditions make river crossings one of the most hazardous elements of backcountry travel in this park. These crossings can be **VERY** dangerous without preparation, patience, and planning. You must carefully evaluate conditions at each river crossing. Never let a deadline rush you into making a poor decision, and always be willing to turn back or wait for a more suitable time if a crossing seems too risky.

Prepare:

Pack sleeping bags and extra clothing in plastic bags or dry-bags inside your pack. Choose polypropylene or nylon clothes that dry quickly and won't trap silt. Leave your boots on—don't cross in socks or bare feet. Loosen pack straps before crossing so that you can slip out of your pack quickly in case of a fall. Change out of wet clothing as soon as possible.

Time:

Area rivers are fed by glaciers and volume can fluctuate dramatically. The safest time to cross is during the cool hours of early morning. As the day progresses, sunlight and warm temperatures increase glacial melt causing water-level to rise.

Place:

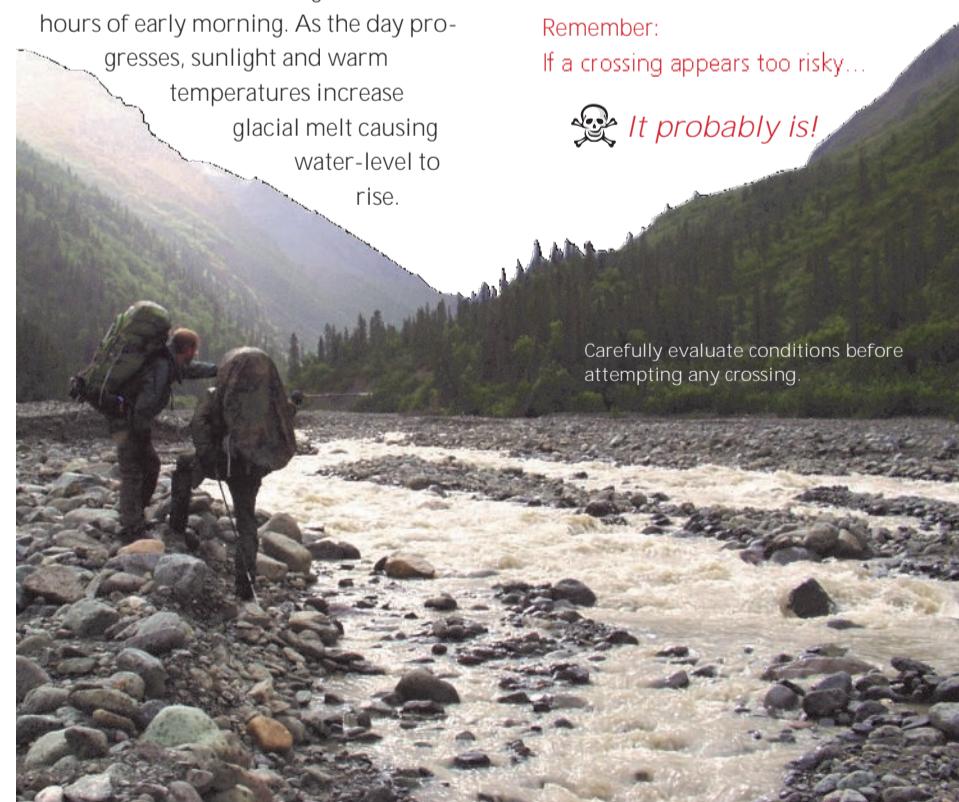
Choose the widest or most braided section for crossing rivers and look for slow-moving water flowing over level ground. These are usually indications of relatively shallow water. Straight channels generally have uniform water flow and depth, while bends often have deep cut banks and swiftly moving water. Stay alert to changing conditions and be prepared to alter your plans. Always proceed with caution: silt obscures visibility making any crossing of a glacial river extremely hazardous.

Remember:

If a crossing appears too risky...



It probably is!



Carefully evaluate conditions before attempting any crossing.

Nabesna Road Guide



The Road Less Traveled Exploring Nabesna Road

THE NABESNA ROAD OFFERS A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLORE INTERIOR ALASKA AND THE NORTHERN reaches of the park. The road begins at mile 60 of the Glenn Highway (*Tok Cutoff*), and soon becomes gravel as it winds 42 miles into the park. The drive is an adventure in the midst of the Wrangell, Mentasta, and Nutzotin Mountains. Along the way, you will find primitive campsites, lakes and streams for fishing, hiking routes, and opportunities for wildlife and bird watching. But you won't find many people, so if you like taking the road less traveled, Nabesna Road may be right for you.

A drive on the 42-mile long Nabesna Road is much the same today as it was when it was built by the Alaska Road Commission in 1934 to connect Nabesna Mine to the port in Valdez. Today, Nabesna Road provides access to the less visited northern part of the park offering the chance to experience true Alaska wilderness.

Before beginning your trip, stop at the Slana Ranger Station to check on current road conditions. Generally, the road is passable by any two-wheel drive vehicle, even most RVs. At times, high clearance and four-wheel drive are recommended beyond Mile 29, where you encounter the first of three creek crossings. Following spring runoff or a heavy rain, these intermittent stream crossings can temporarily become impassable due to high water and deep channels. Please be aware that private property adjoins many parts of the road and that the Nabesna Mine is private. Ask a ranger for information on area commercial services, federal land access, and private property locations.

Mileposts

*The following highlights are points of interest along the Nabesna Road. The mileage begins at the intersection of the Glenn Highway (*Tok Cutoff*) and the Nabesna Road and is based on actual odometer readings.*

- 0.0 Junction of the Glenn Highway (*Tok Cutoff*) and Nabesna Road
- 0.2 Slana Ranger Station

 Stop here for information about the park and local area, exhibits, and ranger led activities as well as an Alaska Natural History Association book store. Always check on current Nabesna Road conditions before beginning your journey.

 Recreational off road vehicles (ORVs) are allowed on established trails. Permits are required and available at the ranger station. *Always check on current trail conditions and any closures that may be in effect.*
- 1.0 Original Slana Roadhouse (*now private property*)

The Slana Roadhouse is visible on the south side of the road. This structure was built in the 1930s, but there has been a roadhouse here since 1912. This roadhouse is one of the few that remain of those that served travelers on the trail from Gakona to Chisana, the site of Alaska's final gold rush (see page 10). It is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

- 1.7 Slana River Access & Primitive Campsites

Rafters often begin trips down the Copper River here. The confluence of the Copper River and the Slana River is less than a mile downstream. The Slana River begins in the Mentasta Mountains, seen to the north.
- 2.7 Entering Federal Land

On the Southside of the road, the start of the "National Preserve" begins.
- 4.0 **Junction with "4-Mile" Road** - Gravel surface begins

"4-Mile" Road leads into the Slana Settlement, created in 1983 when the BLM opened over 10,000 acres north of the road to homesteading. It was one of the last opportunities for homesteading federal land. Eight hundred claims were filed, but most were soon abandoned. Alaskan winters took their toll. Many tried to live in hastily-built cabins and tents, with temperatures down to -60°F. Jobs were scarce and the climate was not suited to farming. Only a little over a hundred claims were eventually patented. Today, about 50 people live in the settlement. Both the north and south side of the road are part of the boundaries of the park.

Nabesna Road Basics

- Begins at mile 60 of the Glenn Highway (*Tok Cutoff*)
- 42 miles, EACH WAY
- This is a remote area with limited services. NO FUEL available in Slana. Fill up either in Chistochina (20 miles south) or Mentasta (15 miles north).
- Drive slowly, carefully, and courteously.
- Carry a full-sized spare and an adequate jack.
- Private land adjoins many parts of the road. Please respect private property.



Nabesna Road Guide



5.6 Preserve to Park

The north side of the road is "National Preserve" whereas the south side is "National Park." Sport hunting is allowed in the National Preserve but not in the National Park. However, subsistence hunting is allowed in both the National Park and Preserve.

6.1 Rufus Creek primitive campsite (*picnic table*)

12.2 Copper Lake Trailhead & primitive campsite (*picnic table*)

This is a 12-mile trail with access to Copper Lake. Copper Lake has opportunities for Lake Trout, Grayling, and Burbot fishing. The first 2.5 miles are suitable for hiking, then the trail crosses Tanada Creek, which can be high and fast, and trail conditions deteriorate.

15 Views of the Wrangell

to
18



Mt. Wrangell

Mt. Sanford

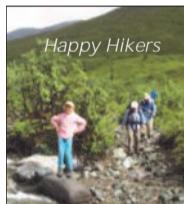
Over the next few miles, enjoy the splendid views of high snow-clad volcanoes of the Wrangell Mountains. Mt. Sanford (16,237') is the tallest mountain that can be seen from the Nabesna Road. To the left of Sanford is the rounded, icy dome of Mt. Wrangell (14,163'). It is the park's only active volcano and occasionally steam can be seen rising from the summit. Wrangell's broad sloping profile is an excellent example of a shield volcano. The jagged summits of Tanada Peak to the left of Mt. Wrangell and Capital Mountain to the right of Mt. Sanford are actually highly eroded remnants of once massive shield volcanoes.

16.6 Kettle Lake primitive campsite (*picnic table*)

17.8 Dead Dog Hill Rest Area

This is a great site to take a break for some wildlife viewing or bird watching. There are views of wetlands, a small lake, and boreal forest. Moose are often seen here and Caribou migrate through this area in the spring and fall. During spring and summer, look for nesting ducks and trumpeter swans.

19.2 Caribou Creek Trail



Happy Hikers

Park at the gravel pit at mile 18.9. The trailhead is at mile 19.2. The trail is approximately 3.5 miles long and offers awesome views of the Wrangell Mountains and the tangles of lakes and rivers below. The trail ends at a run-down shack, but you could easily make this a longer trip by following game trails or striking out on your own.

21.8 Rock Lake Rest Area & primitive campsite (*outhouse, picnic table, trash bin*)

Access to Viking Lodge Public Use Cabin

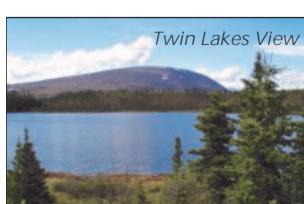
Reservations are required for use of Viking Lodge. Contact the Slana Ranger Station to sign up for this public use cabin. The 1/4-mile trail to the cabin is on the north side of the road.



24.7 Watershed Divide (3,320ft)

You have reached the highest point on the Nabesna Road, and crossed a major watershed divide. All waters flowing west and south from the divide are carried by the Copper River to the Gulf of Alaska. All waters flowing to the east enter the Nabesna River, the Tanana, the Yukon, and ultimately the Bering Sea.

27.8 Twin Lakes Camp Area (*picnic tables, outhouse, trash bins*)



Twin Lakes View

Several picnic tables, vault toilet, fire rings, and ten informal campsites provide a nice spot for primitive camping. Twin Lakes is a great place to fish and view wildlife. A hike of about a half-mile to the south and over the ridge will take you to Jack Lake and more beautiful views of the Wrangell Mountains.

28.1 National Preserve

Both sides of the road are now "National Preserve." Sport hunting is allowed.



BEFORE YOU CONTINUE Road conditions can deteriorate beyond Twin Lakes. Trail Creek (Mile 29), Lost Creek (Mile 30.8), and Boyden Creek (Mile 34.3) may be flowing across the road. Generally, these creekbeds are dry, but during spring runoff or following prolonged rain, high-clearance and occasionally four-wheel drive may be necessary. Carefully evaluate all crossings before driving across.

35.3 Jack Creek Rest Area & primitive campsite (*picnic tables, trash receptacle, outhouse*)

Several nice campsites with picnic tables and fishing along Jack Creek.



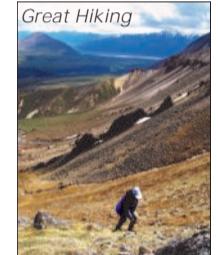
Dall Sheep Habitat

Dall sheep inhabit high altitude ridges, meadows, and extremely rugged "escape terrain." Sheep use these areas for feeding, resting, and to escape predators.

Although they usually stay at higher elevations, in this area they are known to descend to springs and mineral licks and even cross the road. Careful observers can usually spot small flocks on the mountainsides over the next few miles.

36.2 Skookum Volcano Trail *(Hiking trail only)*

The Skookum Volcano Trail/route is 2.5 miles one-way to a beautiful high pass. This trail leads through an extinct, deeply eroded volcanic system with fascinating geology. The elevation at the trailhead is 3,000' and rises to an elevation of 5,800' at the pass. Hikers can explore other routes or expand this hike into a multiple-day trip.



Great Hiking

40.2 Reeve's Field Trailhead

This is a multiple use trail (4.5 miles) with access to the Nabesna River. During 1941, trucks hauled equipment from Valdez to a rustic strip along the river. Pilot Bob Reeve cut everything into pieces, loaded it into his Boeing Trimotor, flew them to Northway, about 40 miles north, and then had them re-welded. This effort was organized to build the Northway Airport, a critical stopover in ferrying lend-lease aircraft to the Soviet Union during WWII. By November, he had transported all the materials for a full-scale airport. It was good timing. One month later, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor gave Northway new relevance, and it became a critical element in the defense of Alaska.

42 End of maintained road



Devil's Mtn. Lodge

The Ellis family lives here. Please respect their property and privacy. Stay alert, and be careful not to park on the airstrip. From here on, the road provides access to private lands at Nabesna Mine, and is not regularly maintained. During wet weather, this section may require four-wheel drive, or become impassable.

Continue on Foot: Miles 42-46 of Nabesna Road make for interesting hiking and the mine buildings and tailings are visible from the road. Park at the Reeve Field trailhead (mile 40.2) and walk from there, or arrange for parking at Devil's Mountain Lodge.

Rambler Mine

Approximately 1/2-mile past the lodge, a trail leads south towards the remains of the abandoned Rambler Mine, an area that was active after WWII. The one-mile trail is steep, but the effort rewards you with superlative views of the Nabesna River and Nutzotin Mountains.



Nice view from the Rambler Mine

46 Nabesna Gold Mine

Carl Whitham staked the claims that became Nabesna Gold Mine in 1925. The mine operated until 1945. By that time over 73,000 tons of gold ore valued at \$1,870,000 had been shipped to the Tacoma, Washington smelter. Limited, small scale mineral extraction has occurred since that time. Nabesna Mine is privately owned.



Alaska Native Connections

NO ONE KNOWS FOR SURE WHEN humans first reached the Copper River Basin of Interior Alaska. About 8,000 years ago caribou hunters began visiting Tangle Lakes, located at the head of the Gulkana River, fifty miles northwest of the park boundary. As glacial ice retreated, people eventually entered the Wrangell Mountains. Archaeological evidence has established a record of continuous human presence in the middle Copper Basin for the past 1,000 years, although it was probably occupied much earlier. Some believe that the area was originally settled by the Eyak. The Ahtna, however, replaced them long ago.

The Ahtna population in the Copper Basin was small and scattered because game was never plentiful enough to support large groups. Most villages contained 20-30 members of a familial clan and were situated where a major tributary entered the Copper River. There were two larger villages: *Taghaelden* (Taral) near the mouth of the Chitina River; and *Nataelde* (Batzulnetas) on Tanada Creek along the primary route leading north to the Tanana and Yukon rivers.

Upper Tanana Indians settled the northern edge of the Wrangell Mountains to the east of Batzulnetas, establishing several small villages along the Nabesna and Chisana rivers: *Tthixaaf Ndiig* (Cooper Creek Village) and *Nachetay Cheeg* (Cross Creek Village).



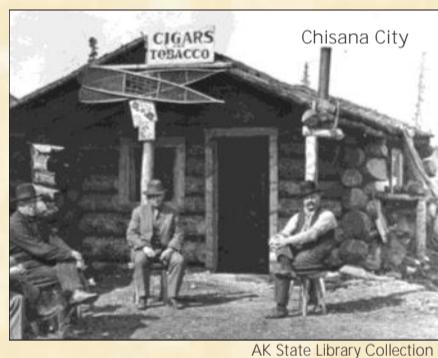
Chief Stickwan and his band along the Klutina River, 1898

Valdez Museum Collection

Most Upper Tanana communities were located further north outside the present boundaries of the park.

Experts believe that the Tlingit originated somewhere east of the Coast Mountains in what is now northern British Columbia. From there they traveled by river to the sea, then spread to the north and west, ultimately occupying the coast as far north as Cape Yakataga. The Eyak emanated from an interior group as well. They moved down the Copper River to its mouth, then southeastward across the Bering Glacier to occupy the coast between Yakataga and Cape Fairweather. The Eyak now occupy two villages just west of the Copper River Delta, Eyak and Alaganik.

Today the Ahtna, Upper Tanana, Eyak, and Tlingit live in or near many of the same villages they did historically. They are shareholders in Native corporations such as Ahtna, Inc., Chugach Alaska Corporation, and Chitina Native Corporation. Under the terms of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971, these corporations obtained title to land within the boundaries of the park. In addition, several local Native villages have government-to-government relationships with the National Park Service. Alaska Natives and local rural residents who have traditionally engaged in subsistence activities within the park continue to pursue those activities today, allowing them to



AK State Library Collection

CHISANA IS LOCATED IN THE WILD northern corner of the park. Quiet today, Chisana (*pronounced Shooshana*) was born overnight as a boomtown in the wilderness and was once the destination for thousands of frantic treasure seekers who made the treacherous journey through rugged country by any means possible. This was a short boom, only lasting a few years, but an important part of the history of this area.

Chisana...The Last Great Gold Rush

It all began when N. P. Nelson, Matilda Wales, and William E. James discovered placer gold deposits at Bonanza Creek in 1913. Their discoveries electrified the region, provoking what many have called America's last great gold rush. The *Cordova Daily Alaskan* proclaimed the strike as "the richest" since the Klondike, causing defections which virtually emptied the Nizina gold camps and even briefly jeopardized the operation of Kennecott. By 1914 there were 400 cabins, four stores, two meat markets, two barbershops, two restaurants, a hotel, and a boarding house. Soon it was known as the "largest log cabin town in the world," but returns from the diggings gradually declined and by 1924 Chisana City was practically deserted.

Placer mining along Bonanza Creek near Chisana, 1914



Photo courtesy of the Tacoma Public Library

The area provides today's visitors with a unique glimpse of Alaska's gold rush era. Unlike many better known and more accessible regions, this area retains extensive evidence of its early mining use, including the deteriorating remains of two towns; numerous tent camps, various water diversion and delivery systems; a full range of hand, hydraulic, and mechanical mining operations; and a well-developed transportation network. It is one feature of the Chisana Historic Mining Landscape, a district listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

As you hike around Chisana you will see ruins of structures and historic artifacts throughout the area. [Please don't remove or relocate anything.](#) They provide important clues to the story of the people who followed the lure of gold to Chisana. Many of the historic structures are located on private property.

Today, Chisana enjoys a seasonal population of about twenty-five. It is accessible by small aircraft. A few persistent placer miners continue to work the district's creeks such as Goldhill. The spiritual heirs of the stampeders, they continue their

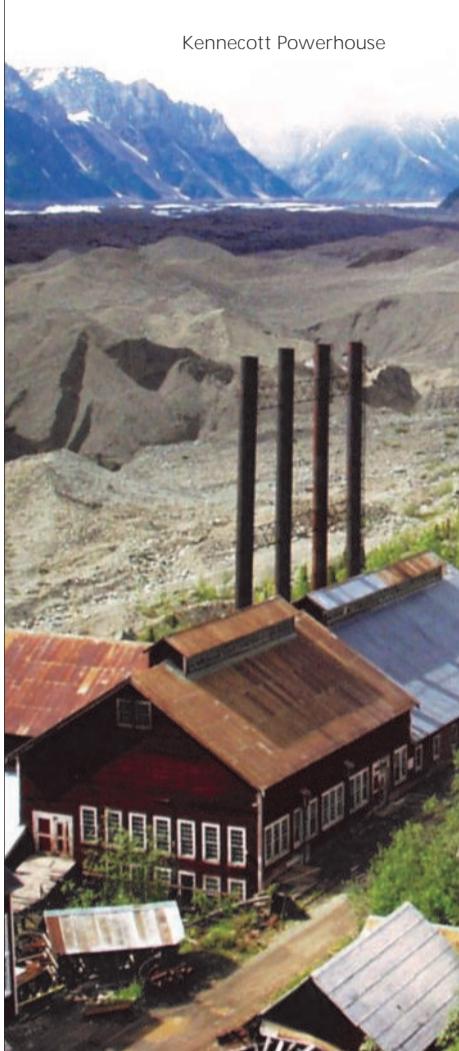
predecessor's quest, ever searching for that one rich strike. Others operate bed & breakfasts and guide/outfitter services.

Today, most visitors seek out another type of treasure. Their rewards are exploring the area's rich history,



Too Much Johnson Cabin

wilderness, and remote adventure. The NPS has restored four log buildings in the original townsite, including the Too Much Johnson Cabin, which is available for public use. Several extended backpacking routes start or end in Chisana, including trips to Goldhill, the White River and Solo Mountain, Beaver Creek, and Cooper Pass. Each year a few hikers even retrace the steps of the early stampeders and make the trek from McCarthy to Chisana. There is a public use cabin at Goldhill that is available on a first-come first serve basis.

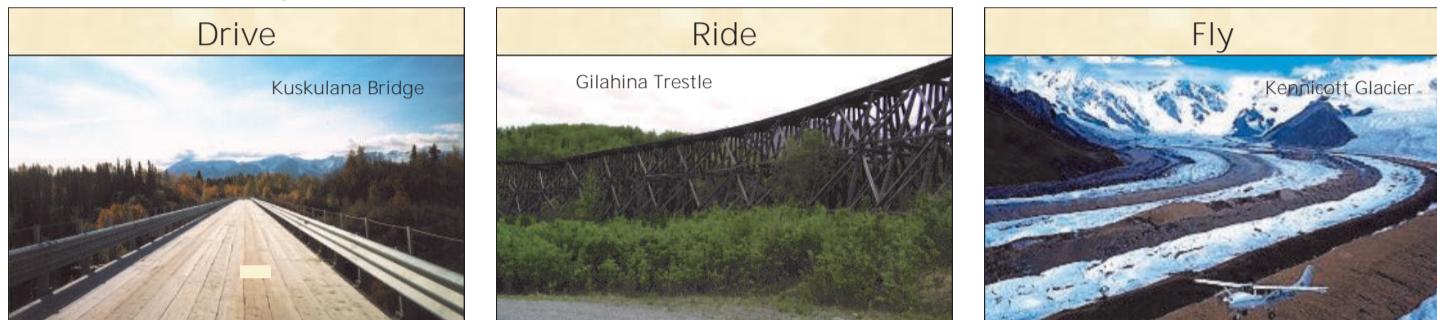


Kennecott Powerhouse

Getting There is Half the Fun!

Majestic mountains, merging glaciers, and rich, fascinating history await visitors to this beautifully rugged oasis of civilization, nestled in the midst of the Wrangell Mountains.

Today, a visit to Kennecott and McCarthy is an awe-inspiring scenic adventure and a step back in time. Whether meandering the dirt streets of quaint McCarthy, absorbing the enriching history of Kennecott, or exploring the nearby glaciers and ridges, it's an unforgettable Alaskan experience that you won't want to miss!



Following in the path of the Kennecott ore trains, the gravel McCarthy Road extends 60 miles from the town of Chitina to a pedestrian bridge at the Kennicott River, near McCarthy. Allow for 3 hours each way. Although most vehicles are adequate for the journey, those in excess of 24 feet in length are discouraged. Always get a road update before heading out. Please note that the town of Chitina is your last opportunity for fuel. A full-sized spare tire is highly recommended.

A private transportation service provides daily shuttles between Glennallen and McCarthy. Vans depart each morning, arrive around noon, and return again that day.

Backcountry Connection
(Departs daily from Glennallen)
www.kennecottshuttle.com
1-866-582-5292

Based in McCarthy, *Wrangell Mountain Air* provides three scheduled flights between Chitina and McCarthy on a daily basis. For further information phone 1-800-478-1160.

Other flight services which offer regular charter flights to McCarthy include:
McCarthy Air 907-554-4440, and
Copper Valley Air 1-866-570-4200

McCarthy

John Barrett's Gamble

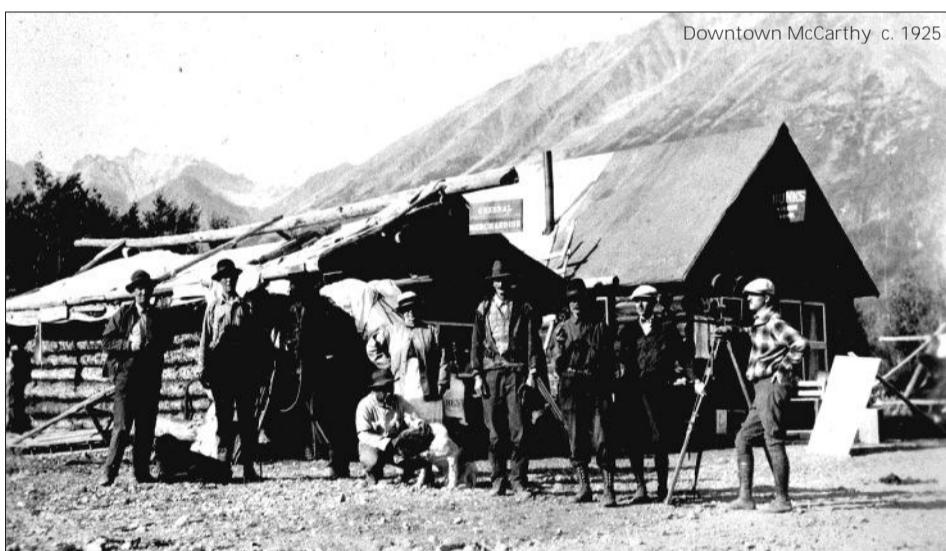
John Barrett recognized that the new railroad under construction in Kennecott would need a way around the Kennicott Glacier. One flat spot between the glacier and McCarthy Creek seemed the most likely route, so in 1906, he staked that piece of land for a 296-acre homestead. His gamble paid off and by 1908 McCarthy had grown into a lively community. Visitors, Kennecott employees, and Chisana gold stampeder flooded the new town. During its height, over 100 people lived in McCarthy, and it was the supply and recreation stop for thousands.



Photo by George Herben

into a sleepy, isolated town. The Copper River bridge washed out in 1939, cutting McCarthy off from Chitina and many long-time residents, including John Barrett, moved out. For the next 40 years, a handful of rugged individuals lived in the town and surrounding valleys. Increasing tourism and the NPS acquisition of Kennecott has resulted in the rediscovery of this amazing area.

Today, McCarthy is still the gateway to Kennecott, but now it welcomes park visitors rather than miners. It retains much of the flavor of a turn-of-the-century mining town thanks to landowners who have preserved and restored historic buildings for use as businesses or private homes.



Downtown McCarthy c. 1925

Kennecott Kids Collection



Downtown McCarthy 2006

McCarthy Road Guide



Gateway to Adventure!

The McCarthy Road

The 60-mile McCarthy Road winds deep into the heart of Wrangell-St. Elias. Once the gateway to tremendous fortunes, it is now your gateway to spectacular scenery, vast wilderness, and adventure. For those willing to leave the pavement behind and brave the ruts and dust, this road provides access to the many natural and historic wonders of our largest National Park.

Born On Rails

Today's road originated in 1909 as a railway constructed to support the Kennecott Copper Mines. Over 200 million dollars worth of ore was hauled from the Kennecott Mill 196 miles to the port of Cordova. When large scale mining ended in 1938, most of the rails subsequently were salvaged for scrap iron, and no longer maintained, the bridge over the Copper River was soon destroyed by flooding. In 1971 a new bridge was constructed over the Copper River, and the rail bed was covered with gravel, creating today's road surface.

What To Expect

Narrow and winding, the road still reflects its railway origins. In places, remnants of railroad ties may surface, along with the occasional spike, creating unexpected hazards. Please drive slowly, carefully, and courteously. Although traffic and weather often result in ruts and washboarded surfaces, under normal summer conditions, most passenger vehicles can make the trip. Please allow faster vehicles to pass by using turnouts. Soft shoulders have led to numerous accidents and vehicle damage.

A Park Service information station is located near the end of the road. Park Rangers can assist you with trip planning and area information. The road ends at the Kennicott River, a half-mile short of McCarthy and five miles short of historic Kennecott. Public parking is limited but additional parking is available from private vendors. Cross the footbridge over the river, then continue on foot, by bicycle, or shuttle (see "The End of the Road" page 14).

Chitina

Pronounced, "Chit-Na," this railroad town sprang to life in 1910. Busy during the summer fishing season, this town was once bustling as the major stopover and service point for the trains that carried ore from Kennecott to waiting ships in Cordova. Restrooms and informational panels can be found at the downtown wayside.



During the summer months, the historic Chitina Ranger Station is staffed by a park Ranger. This log cabin, which was constructed in 1910 by the Ed S. Orr Stage Company to house its local superintendent, serves as an enduring reminder of Alaska's colorful transportation history. One of Chitina's oldest surviving buildings, it was recently rehabilitated by the National Park Service and now serves as a visitor contact station. Stop in for road updates and park information. Be aware that Chitina is the last chance to obtain fuel and supplies before you enter Wrangell-St. Elias.

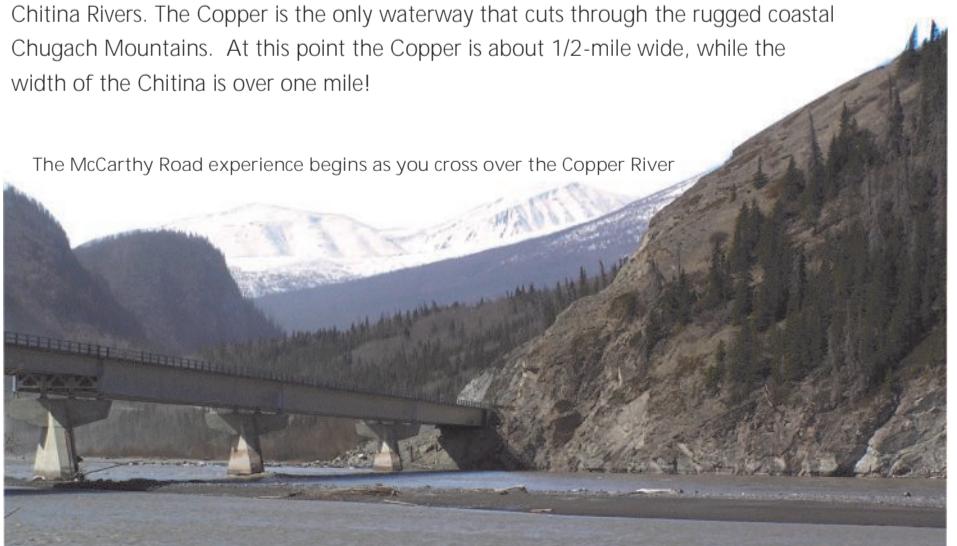


Chitina, 1914

Copper River Bridge

Several small pullouts here provide great views of the confluence of the mighty Copper and Chitina Rivers. The Copper is the only waterway that cuts through the rugged coastal Chugach Mountains. At this point the Copper is about 1/2-mile wide, while the width of the Chitina is over one mile!

The McCarthy Road experience begins as you cross over the Copper River



McCarthy Rd. Basics

- Begins at mile 33 Edgerton Highway at Chitina.
- 60 miles, 3 hours EACH WAY
- NO FUEL available past Chitina.
- Drive slowly, carefully, and courteously.
- Carry a full-sized spare and an adequate jack.
- Most people spend a minimum of two days exploring the area.
- Private land adjoins many parts of the road and McCarthy - Kennecott areas.
Please respect private property.
Ask a ranger about public land access and private property locations.



McCarthy Road Guide



Mile
0

Crossing the Bridge



As you cross the bridge, you will notice that these rivers are dirty...but they are not polluted. These flowing waters begin as flowing "rivers of ice." Millions of tons of rock dust are scoured off of distant mountains by glaciers and carried downriver each year. The resulting silty waters hide salmon swimming up these rivers to spawn.

Fishwheels on the Copper River

Copper River "Reds" (*sockeye salmon*) are world-renowned. In summer, look for busy Alaskan residents catching red, silver, and king salmon with dipnets and fishwheels. How well do you think these fishing methods would work in a crystal clear river?

The large snow covered mountain visible to the north is volcanic Mount Drum (12,010'), part of the Wrangell Mountains.

The McCarthy Road begins as you cross the Copper River bridge
Look for the mile-marker posts and follow along with this guide

5.0 Chitina River Scenic Vista

Stop here and enjoy the view. The Copper and its tributaries (including the Chitina) drain an area of approximately 24,000 square miles. Much of this drainage basin lies within Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve and almost 17% of it is covered by glaciers. Because of this glacier influence, high water in the Copper River typically occurs not during the snowmelt of spring, but summer hot spells that cause rapid ice melting. Low water usually occurs in late winter when everything is frozen. The Chitina River is a popular rafting trip from McCarthy. Several rafting companies operate out of McCarthy.

10 Strelna Lake Trail

A small pullout on the left provides access to a 1/2-mile trail to Strelna Lake. The Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game stocks this lake with rainbow trout.

10.7 Silver Lake

Foot access to Silver Lake for trout fishing.



14.5 Backcountry Trailheads

The access road on the left leads 2.5 miles to the trailheads for Nugget Creek and Dixie Pass. These primitive routes offer abundant wilderness adventure. Ask a park ranger for more information and route descriptions. Nearby Strelna was once a bustling supply stop along the railway and provided support for area mines.

15.9 Entering Federal Land

The road is now entering Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve.

17



Kuskulana River Canyon & Bridge

A spectacular achievement, the Kuskulana Bridge was constructed during the winter of 1910. Imagine riding high in a heavily loaded ore train across the two icy rails. Perched 238 feet above the raging Kuskulana River, this single-lane railroad bridge is for many the most hair-raising part of the entire drive. The muddy Kuskulana River reflects its origins from melting glaciers that drain Mt. Blackburn. The Kuskulana Wayside 0.1 miles up from the bridge offers toilets and exhibits..

29 Gilahina Trestle

This wooden structure was originally 890 feet long and 90 feet high, required one-half million board feet of timber, and was completed in eight days in the winter of 1911. Due to the rugged landscape, over 15% of the entire railway was built on trestles such as this. A wayside here offers toilets and exhibits.

34.7 Crystalline Hills Trail



A trailhead on the left marks the start of this 2.5 mile loop trail through dense spruce forest to the base of the Crystalline Hills and a nice view of the Chitina River Valley.



Historic Trestle

44 Entering Non-Federal Lands

The road is leaving Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve.



Winter spawning

45.2 Long Lake

Each year, an average of 18,000 sockeye salmon struggle up the silty Copper and Chitina Rivers to spawn in this lake. This is a unique run. Salmon begin entering the lake as late as September and spawning continues until April.

55 State Wayside

Toilets and exhibits.

57.8 Entering Federal Lands

The road is re-entering Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve.

58.5 National Park Service Information Station



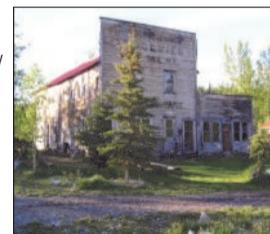
The McCarthy Road Information Station is open daily during the summer. Park and volunteers are available to answer questions about the area and help plan your visit to McCarthy/Kennecott.

58. Entering Non-Federal Lands

The road is leaving Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve.

59.2 Kennicott River-Road's End

You've made it to the end of the road, but in many ways, your adventure is just beginning. See "End of the Road," page 10 to explore your options.



The "hardware store"

McCarthy

Homesteaded in 1906, McCarthy quickly grew into a lively community with a story all its own. McCarthy served as the supply and recreation stop for the entire Kennecott mining district. Town history is well portrayed by the local museum and guide services. Today, McCarthy retains much of its original flavor. Accommodations, dining, guide services, and air taxis are just some of the services available here.

Kennecott Mines National Historic Landmark

Like a time capsule, the impressive structures and artifacts left behind when the mines were depleted represent an ambitious time of exploration, discovery, and technological innovation. Currently, the National Park Service is stabilizing and rehabilitating many of the old buildings.

A National Park Service Visitor Center is located within the Kennecott Mill Town. Park Rangers and local guide services conduct history programs and building tours daily. This area is overflowing with history. Trails lead to the Root Glacier and the remains of several mountains



The End of the McCarthy Road...Now What?

Once you've successfully negotiated the 60-mile McCarthy Road, your adventure in many ways is just beginning. The road ends at the banks of the raging Kennicott River. The town of McCarthy lies one mile beyond, and the Kennecott Mines National Historic Landmark is another five miles up the old railroad grade. It can be confusing. Where should I park? Where can I camp? Is there a shuttle to Kennecott? What land is park? What land is private? We suggest making the McCarthy Road Information Station your first stop.

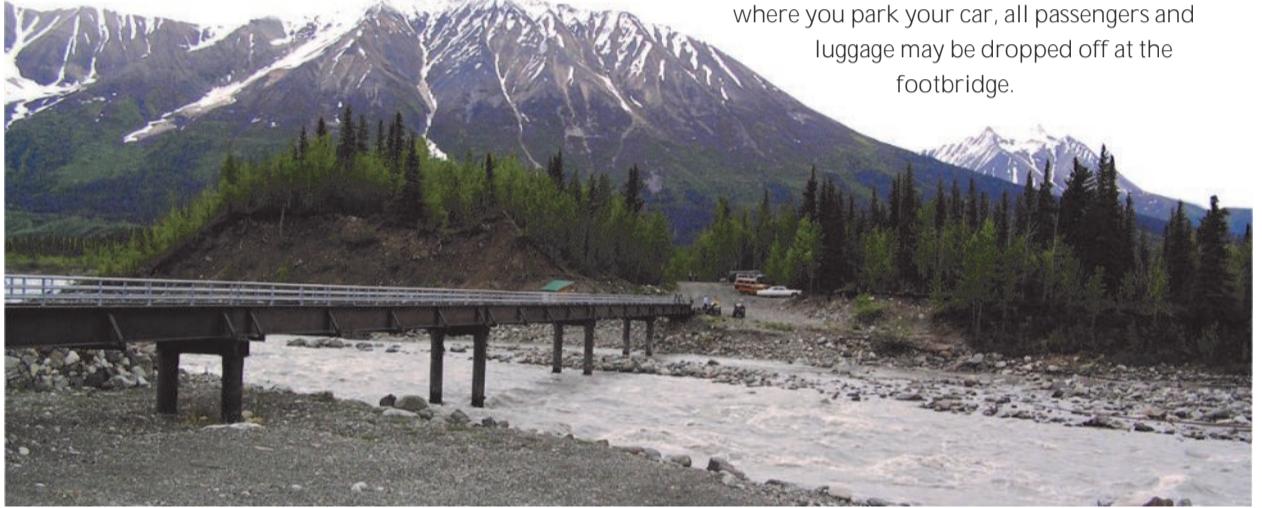


McCarthy Road Information Station

Upon arrival, up-to-date information on parking, shuttles, Kennecott, McCarthy, park access, and activities can be found at the McCarthy Road Information Station. Located at Mile 59 McCarthy Road, this site also has day-use parking and restrooms. Park Rangers are available to help you plan a visit to McCarthy and Kennecott.

Parking

Free public day-use parking is available at the McCarthy Road Information Station. Overnight parking is available for a fee in one of several private parking lots near the end of the road. Generally, parking is less expensive the further from the footbridge you park. Regardless of where you park your car, all passengers and luggage may be dropped off at the footbridge.



Footbridge over the Kennicott River

Kennicott River Footbridges

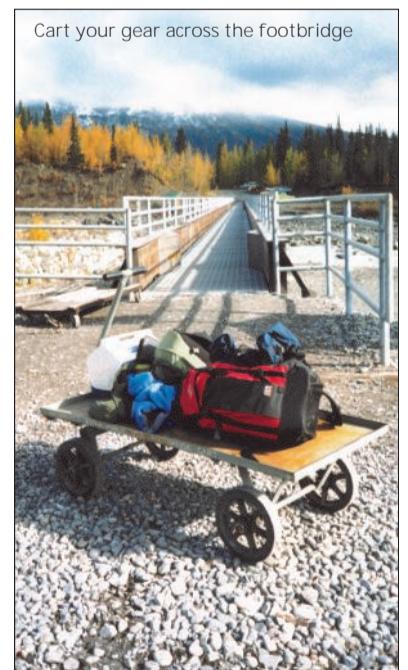
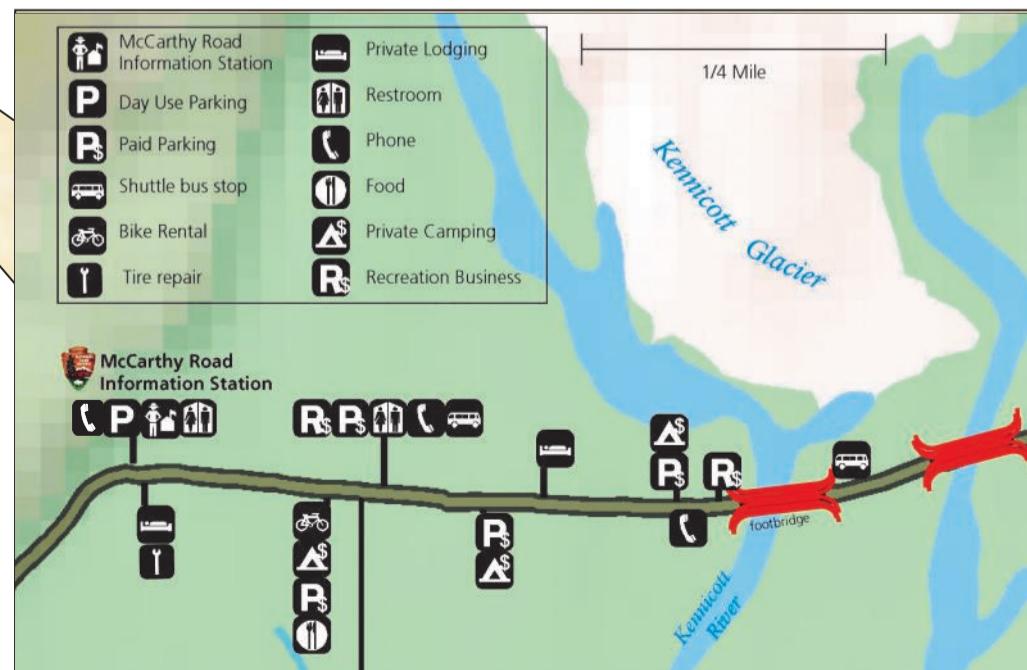
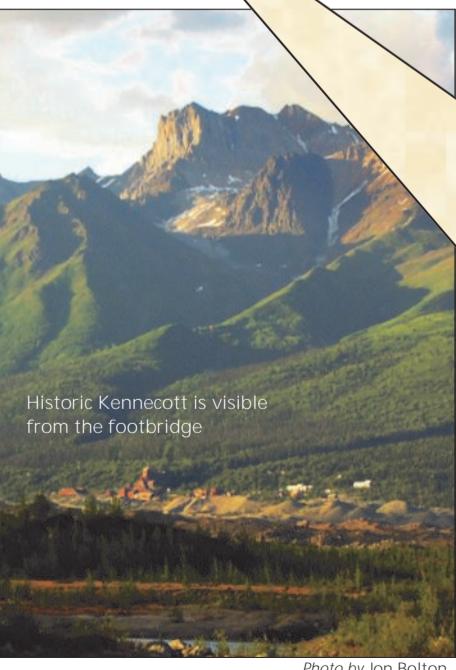
Two footbridges span the east and west channels of the Kennicott River. Except during the annual glacial outburst flood, the east channel is dry and the road travels through its bed. To cross the footbridges, drop off passengers and luggage directly in front of the footbridge. There you will find hand carts to help haul your luggage across the river.

Shuttle Service

Private companies operate shuttle services from the footbridge to McCarthy and Kennecott. Current shuttle schedules can be found at the McCarthy Road Information Station, the shuttle stop and other locations around town. Walking to the shuttle stop and purchasing your ticket directly from the next shuttle to arrive, rather than purchasing tickets from vendors on the west side of the Kennicott River, may be the most efficient way to arrange transportation. Shuttle tickets are approximately \$5/one-way.

Lodge Guests:

Lodges on the other side of the river generally provide transportation for their guests. Follow the lodge's directions for contacting them.



A Link To History

THE KENNECOTT MILL TOWN AND MINES ARE AN EXTRAORDINARY RELIC from America's past. The impressive structures and artifacts that remain represent an ambitious time of exploration, discovery, and technological innovation. They tell stories of westward expansion; World War I politics and economy; the lives of the men, women and children who lived there; and the rise of a multinational corporation. Each link in the historical chain connects to another until we realize that this remote, Alaska mining venture was intricately connected to the world around it.

The Kennecott Mines National Historic Landmark includes the land and mining claims that formed the foundation for the Kennecott Copper Corporation, later the Kennecott Minerals Company. The operation had two components: the mill town where ore was processed and the mines that extracted the ore. From 1911 to 1938, nearly \$200 million worth of copper was processed. At the peak of operation, approximately 300 people worked in the mill town and 200-300 in the mines. Kennecott was a self-contained company town that included a hospital, general store, school, skating rink, tennis court, recreation hall, and dairy.

By the late 1920s, the supply of high-grade ore was diminishing and Kennecott Copper was diversifying into other North American and Chilean mines. Declining profits and increasing costs of railroad repairs led to the eventual closure of the Kennecott operation in 1938. By then, the corporation was on the way to becoming a multinational giant.

Flooding Damages Kennecott Mill Town

Prone to flooding, National Creek has been a challenge for managers of the Kennecott Mill Town since the mining days. Born amid snow and ice high on Bonanza Ridge, it weaves between historic bunkhouses, hospital, assay office, and under the trestle in the center of town.



High Water in Kennecott
Photo by P. Sennhauser

In fall of 2006, Alaska experienced a major flood event. Days of rain overloaded streams and rivers. Rising water damaged many homes, bridges, and roads. National Creek, now a deluge, rushed through the assay office and took two walls with it. The trestle was also hit hard and sustained enough structural damage that it has been closed to all traffic.

Stabilizing a Landmark

MANY OF THE BUILDINGS IN Kennecott have been abandoned for sixty years. Some are in need of immediate stabilization to keep them standing, while some have deteriorated beyond the point of saving.

The National Park Service, along with the local community and Friends of Kennicott, has engaged in an ongoing planning effort to identify buildings that will be stabilized or rehabilitated and those that will not receive any attention at all. The goal is to protect the historic integrity of the mill town so that future generations will also be able to explore Kennecott.

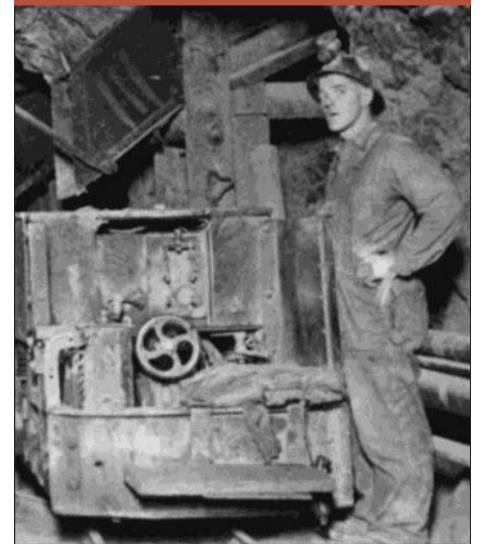
A few buildings will be rehabilitated for modern use. The Recreation Hall was



T. Chapdelaine

Explore the Kennecott Mill Town in the heart of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park

Watch Your Step!



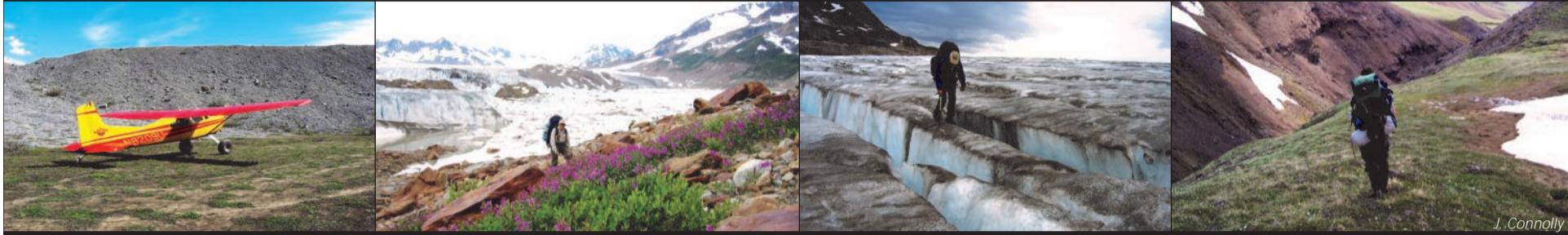
The Kennecott Mill Town is fascinating and almost begs for exploration. However, it is an abandoned industrial site and hidden dangers abound. Please keep children under close supervision.

The historic buildings are in various stages of collapse and disrepair. Please do not enter buildings. Feel free to explore, but be aware that debris is scattered throughout the area. Do not attempt to walk on decks or stairs attached to buildings, as many of the boards are rotten and unsafe. Avoid the steep slopes where loose debris may be hidden by overgrown brush, and keep to the gravel paths.

Hazards at an industrial mining site include chemicals used in the milling process and petroleum products used to operate and maintain machinery. On-going cleanup efforts continue today, but some contaminants, like lead paint, still exist. For your own safety, please do not remove any materials or debris.



Crews work to stabilize Kennecott's oldest structure, the General Manager's Office



J. Connolly

Backcountry

A trip into the backcountry of Wrangell-St. Elias is a great way to experience this remote national park. Advance planning is the key to a safe and enjoyable trip. Park rangers are ready to assist you with all aspects of planning a backcountry trip, including selecting an appropriate route and logistical details. Stop by any visitor center to begin your backcountry discovery.

- CHOOSE A ROUTE that is within your ability.
- PACK appropriate gear including specialized equipment such as crampons for glacier travel. Plan for delays by packing extra food and supplies.
- WILDERNESS SURVIVAL SKILLS including compass & map reading are vital to your safety. Don't rely on gadgets. Your cell phone won't work in much of the park and any GPS may malfunction. Help may be days away: you must be self-sufficient.
- ITINERARY FORMS are available at all visitor centers. You will need to provide a description of your party, your route, and emergency contact information. Always let someone reliable know of your plans.

- BEARS are found throughout the park. Protect yourself and bears by avoiding encounters. *Please read the bear safety guidelines on page 7.*
- HYPOTHERMIA is a year-round threat. Dress in layers, keep yourself and your gear dry, stay hydrated, and eat high-calorie snacks.
- TRAVEL IN GROUPS to be safe. Solo travel in the backcountry puts you at much higher risk for accident and injury.
- EXPLOSIVES and other hazards may be scattered throughout the backcountry. If you find explosives, chemicals, or barrels with suspicious contents, leave the area and report the location to a park ranger.



Day Hiking

Along Main Roads



Even if you don't have the time for an extended backpacking trip, there are still many great places to stretch your legs and explore the park and surrounding area. The following is a small sampling of shorter hikes and easier walks found in various parts of the park. Ask a ranger for more details on these routes, or to learn about even more hiking opportunities.

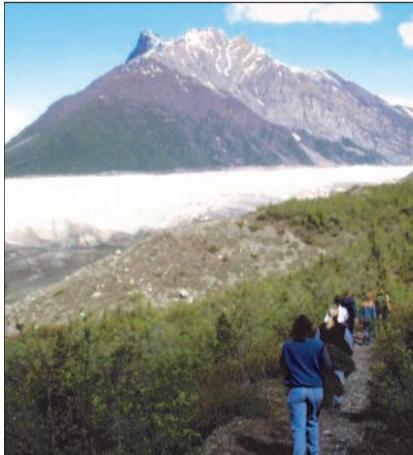
Trail	Roundtrip Length	Comments	Trailhead Location
Boreal Forest Nature Trail	0.5 mile	Level, partly paved, and handicap-accessible loop. Great mountain views and Forest habitat.	Wrangell-St. Elias Visitor Center 8 miles south of Glennallen
Aspen Interpretive Trail <i>(Glennallen Community Trail)</i>	1.0 mile	Nice trail through an aspen/spruce forest and meadows. Constructed by community volunteers and students.	Mile 0.25 Co-op Road, in Glennallen, AK.
Tonsina River Trail	2.0 miles	Easy hiking to a bluff above the Tonsina River. Good trail for wildflowers and birdwatching.	Mile 12.3 Edgerton Highway,
Liberty Falls Trail	2.5 miles	Hike through forest to spectacular views of the Wrangell and Chugach Mountains. Camping nearby.	Mile 24.8 Edgerton Highway, 100 yards before Liberty Falls campground
Old Copper River Railway <i>(Remains of the CR & NW Railroad)</i>	varies	State right-of-way follows the remains of the railway along the Copper River. Great hiking & biking. Passable for 20 miles.	South from Chitina along the O'Brien Creek Road.

Nabesna Road



Trail	Roundtrip Length	Comments	Trailhead Location
Fishwheel Trail	2.5 miles	Easy walking through boreal forest to the banks of the Copper River. Watch fishwheels in action and enjoy great views	Slana Ranger Station, Mile 0.2 Nabesna Road
Caribou Creek Trail	8.0 miles	Easy hiking through forest and tundra. Watch for wildflowers, wildlife, and great views of surrounding peaks.	Mile 19.5 Nabesna Road
Skookum Volcano Trail	5.0 miles	Trail climbs 2,500' through intricate volcanic geology. Watch for Dall sheep and alpine plants. Panoramic views.	Mile 36.8 Nabesna Road

McCarthy Road-Kennecott Area



Trail	Roundtrip Length	Comments	Trailhead Location
Crystalline Hills	2.5 miles	Forested loop trail that reaches the base of rocky cliffs. Views of the Chitina valley and Chugach Mountains.	Mile 35.8 McCarthy Road
Kennecott Walking Tour	0.5 miles	Pick up a guide at the Kennecott Visitor Center for a tour of the National Historic Landmark's buildings and history.	Kennecott Mill Town
Root Glacier Trail	3-7 miles	A great day hike with access to the Root Glacier and splendid views of surrounding mountains.	Kennecott Mill Town
Bonanza Mine	9.0 miles	Follow an old road up to the mine remains. Views and interesting history await you. (3,800' climb) <i>See facing page</i>	Kennecott Mill Town
Jumbo Mine	10.0 miles	Strenuous hike up (3,400' climb) to the ruins of the Jumbo Mine. Great views and mining history abound.	Kennecott Mill Town

A Hike to the Bonanza Mine



Photo by Jon Bolton

The Bonanza Mine is the most straightforward of the historic Kennecott Mines to visit. Many of the mine buildings are still standing and evidence of mining litters the landscape. It is a place where one's imagination might run wild wondering what a miner's life might have been like living and working high on the ridge. It is also a place of spectacular vistas of the Wrangell, St. Elias and Chugach Mountains.

Distance/Difficulty:

The trail begins in Kennecott. It is straightforward but strenuous. Be prepared for approximately 9 miles round trip with a 3,800 feet elevation gain to the mine. This is an all-day hike, requiring 4-5 hours up, and 2-3 hours back down.

Route:

To reach the Bonanza Mine from the Kennecott Visitor Center, walk through the Kennecott Mill Town towards the Root Glacier. About a half mile beyond the visitor center the road will split. The trail to the Root Glacier will continue out along the glacier edge. To get to the Bonanza Mine turn right and start up the hill. At the top of the first switch-back turn left following the road up the hill. If you find yourself at the top of the large Kennecott mill building you missed the turn.

This road constructed by Wrangell Consolidated in the 1950s in an unprofitable but industrious effort to extract the remaining copper ore from the Bonanza Mine site. It goes almost to the mine itself. Follow this road approximately 3.5 miles to the breakover tram tower. On a clear day, spectacular vistas of the Chugach Mountains, Mt. Blackburn and the Kennicott Glacier can be seen from almost the entire route, particularly from above tree line. The road is steep, climbing 3,800 feet



Air photo of the trails to the Bonanza and Jumbo Mines

from the mill town to the mine buildings. Although views are limited by brush and trees for the first two miles, eventually you climb above treeline and everything opens up. On a clear day you will be rewarded by spectacular vistas of the Chugach Mountains, Mt. Blackburn and the Kennicott Glacier far below you. The road is steep, climbing 3,800 feet from the mill town to the mine buildings.

Hazards:

The buildings at the Bonanza Mine have not been stabilized and historic artifacts are scattered on the landscape. Please do not enter the buildings and explore the site with care.

The "glory hole," one of Kennecott's most prized ore bodies, was mined starting at the ridge behind the mine buildings and is apparent from the yellowish colored pillars of rock still standing. Be careful in this area as the rock may be unstable.

Bears and evidence of them are often seen along this route. The thick vegetation along

the first two miles make it an easy place to surprise a bear, so make noise and take standard precautions for hiking in bear country (see page 7). Talk with a ranger in the visitor center if you have any questions or concerns.



Artifacts

Take nothing from Kennecott but inspiration for your soul, questions for your mind, and photographs for your memories. The Bonanza Mine and the other historic sites at Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve are part of YOUR historic heritage. They have been saved by the American people and are protected by the National Park Service so that they might be explored and enjoyed today as well as by future generations. The removal of artifacts from the site and the destruction of historic buildings are prohibited. Please explore them in ways that will allow others to enjoy them in the future.



Alaska's First Road

By Neil Hannan
Park Ranger



Early treasure seekers crossing Thompson Pass by foot, horse, dogsled, and even bicycle!

Bleakley Collection

IT WAS A GRUELING CLIMB FOR BOTH MAN AND BEAST. HOPEFUL prospectors, driven by the lure of adventure and riches, slogged through waist-deep snow as they led their burdened horses up the 7-mile, 2,500' ascent towards Thompson Pass. The year was 1899. Recent gold discoveries in Canada's Klondike, coupled with prospects of mineral wealth in the Copper River region, had spawned a tidal wave of treasure seekers to the tiny tent city of Port Valdez. Arriving by steamship, travelers set forth on a freshly established, 5-foot wide pack trail along the steep walls of Keystone Canyon, over Thompson Pass, past Worthington Glacier, and to the lucrative riches beyond. Such was the birth of the Richardson Highway, the only access route to interior Alaska for the next 43 years. Today, this historic road, originally called the Valdez Trail, traces the route of those adventurers of long ago and leads you to the Copper River Valley and Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve.



Many braved the dangerous rapids in handmade wooden boats.

Bleakley Collection

It wasn't always this easy. Prior to blazing of the Valdez Trail, the only feasible American path to interior Alaska involved crossing the treacherous Valdez Glacier. During the spring of 1898, four thousand prospectors landed at Port Valdez and attempted this perilous journey. Dragging heavily-loaded sleds across the crevassed glaciers, the danger of falling, snow-blindness, and avalanches haunted the persistent travelers. Overcoming those obstacles, many attempted to float hand-made wooden

boats down the raging Klutina River. Only about 300 men and women actually managed to make it to the confluence of the Klutina and Copper Rivers, forming the settlement of Copper Center. The Valdez Glacier Route was a disaster!

Thus, in June of 1898, the U.S. Army sent Captain William Abercrombie to find an alternative route to the Copper River Valley and beyond. Abercrombie worked quickly and before summer's end had found a feasible 93-mile route from Valdez to Copper

Roadhouses sprang up to serve travelers, and eventually spawned communities

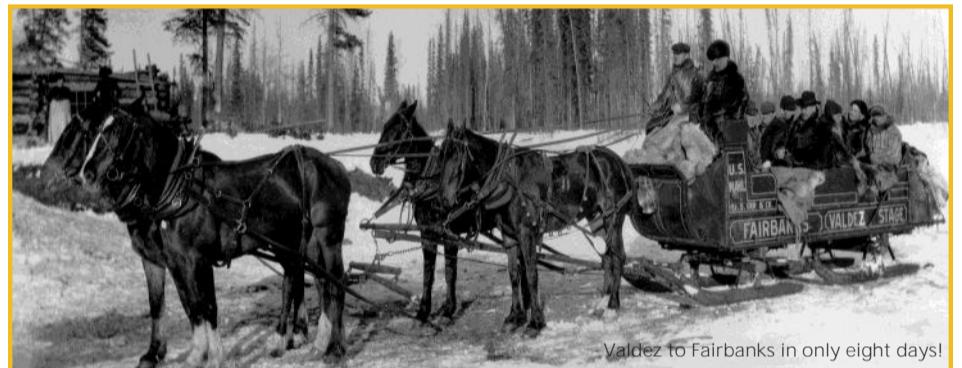


University of Alaska, Fairbanks collection

Center. Construction on the pack trail began the following spring. By June, the partially completed trail was already filled with prospectors. By the end of summer in 1899, crews had over 200 miles of trail cleared, the first 93 miles being suitable for pack horses. The Valdez Trail, embryo for today's Richardson Highway, was becoming a reality.

Construction continued, and by 1901, the trail had been extended 409 miles to Eagle, the American base for Klondike gold explorations. Discovery of gold in the Tanana Valley in 1902 resulted in the trail forking at Gakona, with a spur running north through the Alaska Range, then along the Tanana River to Fairbanks. By 1903, this branch had become the dominant route and soon, the Valdez Transportation Company was offering 9-day passenger service to Fairbanks for the exorbitant fee of \$150. Just

months later, President Teddy Roosevelt established the Alaska Road Commission, naming major Wilds Richardson as president. By 1905, enterprising individuals had established "roadhouses," providing food and lodging along the route. Several of these historic relics, such as the Copper Center Roadhouse, still operate and provide a glimpse of days gone by. By 1907, the Ed S. Orr Stage Company boasted winter bobsled



Valdez to Fairbanks in only eight days!

Museum of Science & Industry, Seattle

service, complete with fur robes and carbon-heated foot warmers, from Valdez to Fairbanks in just eight days. Averaging only 9 mph, the first automobile completed the journey in 1913. Others quickly followed. The Valdez Trail had evolved into the Richardson Highway.

During World War II, the Alaska Highway linked up the Richardson to the North American highway system at Delta Junction. At the same time, the Glenn Highway was also built, linking Anchorage to the Richardson at Glennallen. The Valdez Trail, a

primitive 5-foot wide pack animal route in its infancy, had come a long way. In 2005, highlighting its rugged beauty, much of the Richardson was officially designated a State Scenic Byway.

Today, the Richardson Highway not only provides access to Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, but also offers an exciting and scenic journey down the historic path of Alaska's early pioneers. Roadhouses, ancient autos, rustic log cabins, and other relics of days gone by dot the route. Stroll one of the few surviving remnants of the original pack trail at Wrangell-St. Elias' Copper Center visitor facility. And nearby, the Copper Center Roadhouse still offers good meals and a comfortable place to stay. As you ascend Thompson Pass, Alaska's heaviest snowfall region, envision man and beast, 100 years past, struggling for the summit. Echoes of history reverberate along the Richardson Highway, the oldest road in Alaska.



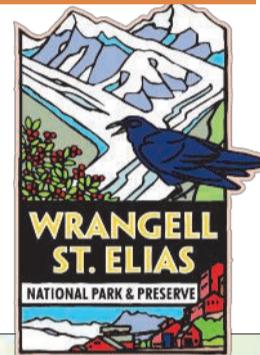
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Alaska Geographic is more than just bookstores; we are a nonprofit organization dedicated to sharing Alaska's rich natural and cultural heritage. Purchases made in park visitor centers and ranger stations directly support a variety of educational and interpretive activities here at Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve. Thank you.

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Alaska Geographic

Featured Selections

Visit the Alaska Geographic bookstores located at visitor centers throughout the park to find these useful items. In addition to books, you will also find a wealth of maps, journals, and field guides, all carefully selected to help you enjoy your visit.

Wrangell-St. Elias National Park



Wrangell-St. Elias is a place where glaciers surge and calve into the sea, rivers weave braided beds, and steam escapes from a slumbering volcano. For thousands of years, people have lived in and explored these isolated lands and coast, yet many mountains, creeks, rivers, and glaciers remain uncounted, unnamed.

Today's visitors come to explore the vast, untamed wilderness that still exists here, in a territory larger than six Yellowstones. The lyrical writing and stunning photographs in this book--one in a series about Alaska's national parks--reveal the drama of the molten lava and flowing ice that sculpted the landscape and the mighty rivers that set patterns of life here. The abundance of wildlife and plant species found here and the fascinating history of the Native peoples and miners who first called this area home are also included.

Only two gravel roads and few established trails penetrate Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve, which is larger than Denmark or Costa Rica, and even larger than Vermont and New Hampshire combined. Some areas are designated as park, some as preserve, but all are part of one of the largest internationally protected ecosystems on earth. \$14.95



Crown of the Continent DVD

This is the award winning film shown in the main park visitor center. Breathtaking scenery, music, and narration combine to highlight the amazing size and beauty of this national treasure. DVD Includes bonus feature on the history of the Kennecott Mill. \$14.95



Sister's (Recommended Reading)

In 1926, beautiful Aileen Gallaher came to join trapper "Slim" Williams in the wild Copper River Valley. Theirs was a perilous existence spent in isolated cabins, heavy snows, uncertain river ice, and fierce cold. This lively and honest story details life in a strange land. \$14.95



Trails Illustrated Topographic Map

Produced by National Geographic, this is a waterproof and tear resistant topographical map of the whole park. Popular routes marked. Detailed insets of Kennecott/McCarthy and Nabesna Road areas. The perfect map for planning your park adventure. Scale 1:375,000 \$9.95



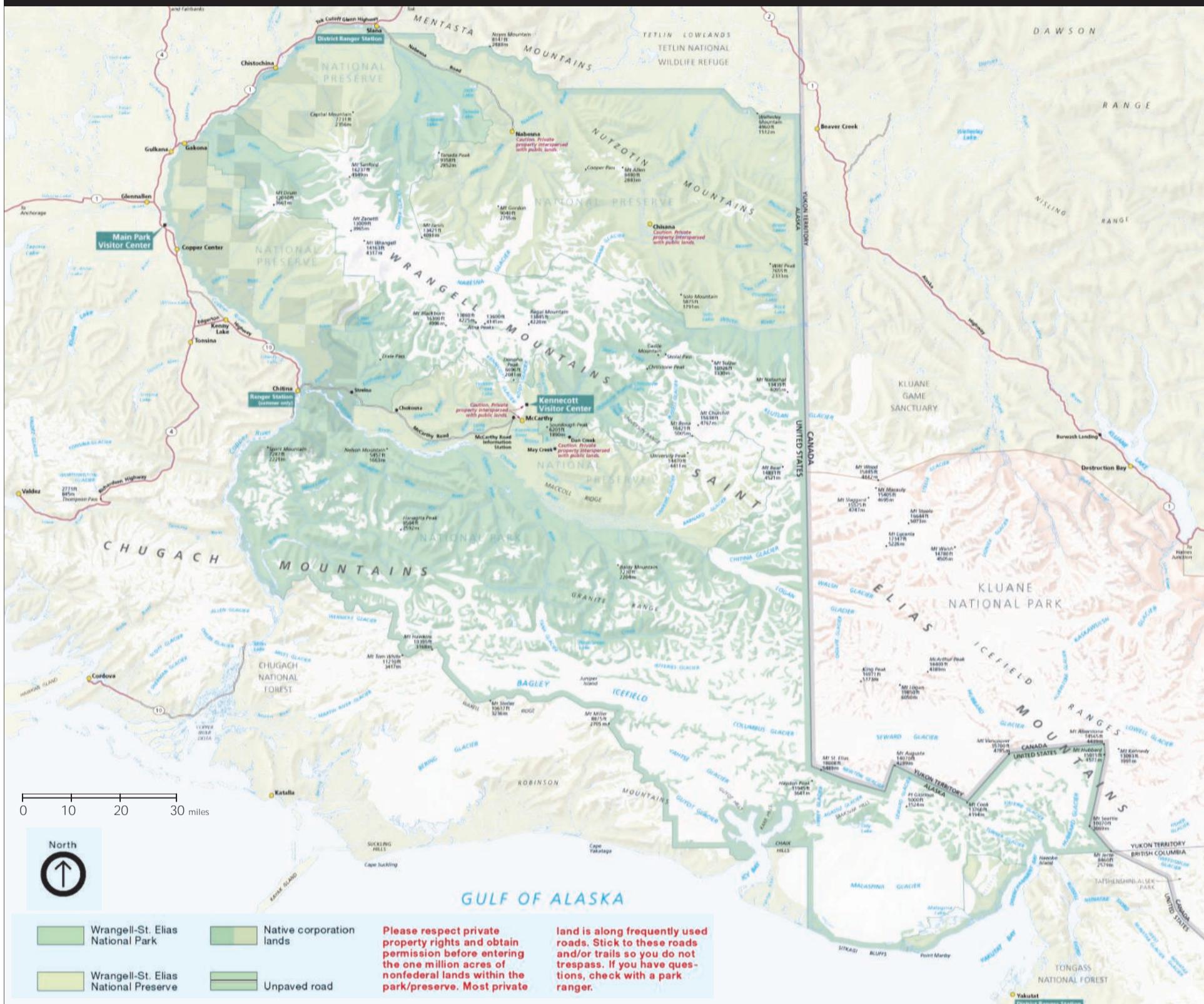
Hiking in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park

Hiking Alaska's Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve guides hikers through the pristine beauty and wilderness of the largest U.S. national park. Detailed information helps you navigate fifty of the best hiking routes throughout the park's 13.2 million acres. \$18.95

\$18.95

Wrangell-St. Elias

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

Wrangell-St. Elias
National Park & Preserve
Headquarters & Main Visitor Center
Mile 106.8 Richardson Highway
PO Box 439
Copper Center, AK 99573
907-822-5234 [headquarters](#)
907-822-7250 [visitor center](#)
[www.nps.gov/wrst](#)

Kennecott Visitor Center
Kennecott Mines National Historic Landmark
907-554-1105 (Memorial Day to Labor Day)

Slana Ranger Station
Mile 0.2 Nabesna Road
Box 885 Slana, AK 99586
907-822-7401

Gulkana Hangar/Park Operations Center
Gulkana Airport, Mile 118 Richardson Hwy
907-822-7425

Yakutat Ranger Station
P.O. Box 137
Yakutat, Alaska 99689
907-784-3295

Other Offices and Agencies:

Alaska State Parks
Dept. of Natural Resources
Div. of Parks & Outdoor Recreation
550 W 7th Ave, Suite 1260
Anchorage, AK 99501-3557
(907) 269-8400
[www.alaskastateparks.org](#)

Copper Valley Chamber of Commerce
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Glennallen, AK 99588
(907) 822-5555
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Bureau of Land Management
P.O. Box 147
Glennallen, AK 99588
(907) 822-3217
[www.ak.blm.gov/gdo](#)

Chugach National Forest
Cordova District
P.O. Box 280
Cordova, AK 99574
(907) 424-7661
[www.fs.fed.us/r10/chugach](#)

Kluane National Park and Reserve
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