



Campers enjoy an open beach on Aialik Bay.

Fireweed thrives along streambeds and on other disturbed ground.

Joseph R. Pearce/DRK Photo

Exit Glacier, near Seward, can be reached by road and hiking trail.

Rugged, rocky, and often steep coasts characterize Kenai Fjords.

Bald eagles both hunt and scavenge, reaping bounties of land and of sea.

Harbor seals ride ice floes in McCarty Fjord.

Stephen J. Krassman/DRK Photo

Dwarf dogwood (bunchberry), a diminutive herb, grows in moist woodlands.

Colorful horned puffins frequent steep cliffs and rocky ledges on the outer coast and at the mouths

of fjords. Puffins abound on offshore islands.

David Wm. Miller

Glacier-carved Valleys Filled with Ocean Waters

The Kenai Fjords are coastal mountain fjords whose placid seascapes reflect scenic icebound landscapes and whose salt spray mixes with mountain mist. Located on the southeastern Kenai Peninsula, the national park is a pristine and rugged land supporting many unaltered natural environments and ecosystems. The land boasts an icefield wilderness, unnamed waterfalls in unnamed canyons, glaciers that sweep down narrow mountain valleys, and a coastline along which thousands of seabirds and marine mammals raise their young each year.

Kenai Fjords National Park derives its name from the long, steep-sided, glacier-carved valleys that are now filled with ocean waters. The seaward ends of the Kenai Mountains are slipping into the sea, being dragged under by the collision of two tectonic plates of the Earth's crust. What were once alpine valleys filled with glacier ice are now deepwater mountain-flanked fjords. The forces that caused this land to submerge are still present. In 1964, the Alaskan Good Friday earthquake dropped the shoreline another 6 feet in just one day. As the land sinks into the ocean, glacier-carved cirques are turned into half-moon bays

and mountain peaks are reduced to wave-beaten islands and stacks.

Though the land is subsiding, a mountain platform 1 mile high still comprises the coast's backdrop. The mountains are mantled by the 300-square-mile Harding Icefield, the park's dominant feature. The icefield was not discovered until early this century when a mapping team realized that several coastal glaciers belonged to the same massive system. Today's icefield measures some 35 miles long by 20 miles wide. Only isolated mountain peaks interrupt its nearly flat, snowclad surface. These protruding nunataks—this Eskimo word means "lonely peaks"—rise dramatically from the frozen clutches of the Ice Age.

The mountains intercept moisture-laden clouds, which replenish the icefield with 35-65 feet of snow annually. Time and the weight of overlying snow transform the snow into ice. The pull of gravity and the weight of the snowy overburden make the ice flow out in all directions. It is squeezed into glaciers that creep downward like giant bulldozers, carving and gouging the landscape. Along the coast eight glaciers reach the

sea, and these tidewater glaciers calve icebergs into the fjords. The thunderous boom of calving ice can sometimes be heard 20 miles away.

The park's wildlife is as varied as its landscape. Mountain goats, moose, bears, wolverines, marmots, and other land mammals have re-established themselves on a thin life zone between marine waters and the icefield's frozen edges. Bald eagles nest in the tops of spruce and hemlock trees. A summer burgeoning of life occurs in the fjords. Steller sea lions haul out on rocky islands at the entrances to Aialik and Nuka Bays. Harbor seals ride the icebergs. Dall porpoises, sea otters, and gray, humpback, killer, and minke whales ply the fjord waters. Halibut, lingcod, and black bass lurk deep in these waters, through which salmon return for inland spawning runs. Thousands of seabirds, including horned and tufted puffins, black-legged kittiwakes, common murre, and the ubiquitous gulls, seasonally inhabit steep cliffs and rocky shores.

Exit Glacier, remnant of a larger glacier once extending to Resurrection Bay, is one of several rivers of ice flowing off the icefield. Active, yet

Background photo: Harding Icefield

retreating, it provides the perfect setting to explore. Here are found newly exposed, scoured, and polished bedrock and a regime of plant succession from the earliest pioneer plants to a mature forest of Sitka spruce and western hemlock.

Humans have had little lasting impact on this environment, although the park includes a few Native American archeological sites and isolated gold extraction locations. The park's overwhelming significance is as a living laboratory of change. Plants and wildlife subsist here amidst dynamic interactions of water, ice, and a glacier-carved landscape relentlessly pulled down by the Earth's crustal movements. The Harriman Expedition, a steamship-borne venture visiting the fjords in 1899, predicted this area's future value as a scenic tourist attraction. To protect this life and landscape, a national monument was proclaimed in 1978, and the 580,000-acre Kenai Fjords National Park was established in 1980.

About Your Visit

Getting Here The park lies south and west of Seward and 130 miles south of Anchorage via the Seward Highway. Bus and commuter flight services connect Seward and Anchorage. The Alaska Marine Highway (ferry) connects Seward with Homer and Seldovia



via Kodiak, providing service to Valdez and Cordova. The Alaska Railroad serves Seward from Anchorage during the summer. The park's headquarters and visitor center is in Seward's small boat harbor. In summer Exit Glacier can be reached by road. The Harding Icefield can be reached by air or trail. Air

and boat charters provide access to the fjords.

Visitor Center The visitor center in Seward offers exhibits, slide programs, maps, publications, and information. It is open weekdays year round and also weekends from Memorial Day to Labor Day, with extended hours. There is a ranger station at Exit Glacier.

Weather and Clothing Overcast and cool days are frequent in this maritime climate of abundant rain. May is the driest month; successive months see increasing precipitation. Summer daytime temperatures range from the mid-40s

to low-70s°F. September initiates the wet, stormy fall. Wool or synthetic clothing and sturdy rain gear—pants, coat, and hat—are essential.

What to See and Do Authorized commercial guides provide camping, fishing, and kayaking services. Air charters, available in Seward or Homer,

fly over the coast for sightseeing and access to the fjords. Boat tours and boat charters are available from Seward. In summer boat tours ply the coast observing calving glaciers, seabirds, and marine mammals. Boat charters offer overnight fjord trips and fishing trips to the fjords and Resurrection Bay. Saltwater fish include halibut, lingcod, and a variety of rockfish; freshwater fish include Dolly Varden and silver, red, chum, and pink salmon.

Accommodations There are no lodging or food services in the park. Seward provides full tourist services, including campgrounds. Exit Glacier has 10 walk-in summer camping sites. Four backcountry public use

cabins for summer visits along the park's coastline are located in the fjords at Holgate Arm, Aialik Bay, Delight Spit, and North Arm. The cabins are accessible by boat, kayak, or small plane. In winter a public use cabin at Exit Glacier is available. Cabin stays are limited to 3 days. You must obtain reservations and permits in advance.

Backcountry Travel This rugged wilderness requires good physical condition, proper equipment, and reasonable precautions. In planning a backcountry trip without a guide, get current specific information from the park staff before setting out. To challenge the Harding Icefield, be prepared to face sudden storms, high winds, blind-

ing sunlight, and extreme temperature changes. Winter travelers to Exit Glacier may face deep snow and cold temperatures. Know the symptoms of hypothermia and their treatment.

Bears are dangerous. Keep a wide distance from black bears and brown/grizzly bears. Make noise when hiking, so you don't startle them. Keep food supplies separate from your campsite and equipment. Food and scented items, such as toothpaste, must be hung or stored in bear-proof containers. Feeding wildlife is unsafe and sets up behavior patterns that may endanger future travelers.

Regulations All land and waters within Kenai

Fjords National Park are closed to hunting and trapping. An Alaska state fishing license is required. At Exit Glacier, dogs are allowed only in the parking lot; they are not permitted on any of the area's trails. In the rest of the park, dogs must be on a leash no longer than 6 feet. No overnight parking is allowed in the Exit Glacier parking lot. Campers in the tents-only campground must camp in one of the 10 established sites; there is no overflow camping. Sleeping in vehicles is prohibited. To minimize bear encounters, cooking is permitted only at the central cooking area. Food must be secured out of sight in vehicles or hung securely from the bear line provided. Elsewhere in the

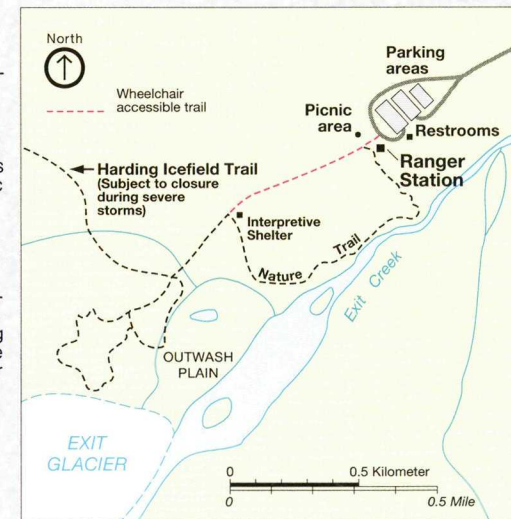
park, cook, eat, and store food at least 200 feet from sleeping areas. Hang food at least 15 feet high and between 2 trees when possible.

Information For information write: Superintendent, P.O. Box 1727, Seward, AK 99664-1727; or call, 907-224-3175. Maps and publications are sold by the nonprofit Alaska Natural History Association at the visitor center. For Seward area information write: Seward Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 749, Seward, AK 99664-0749.

Visiting Exit Glacier

Exit Glacier is the most accessible park area. A gravel road at mile 3.7 of the Seward Highway leads 9 miles to the Exit Glacier Ranger Station. The area offers exhibits on the glacier and Harding Icefield, interpretive programs, and hikes. Rangers provide information daily in the summer. An easy ½ mile walk will take you to the glacier's terminus; the first ¼ mile is fully accessible. A steeper trail continues across moraines and bedrock. You may return to the ranger station by a nature trail. Exit Glacier descends 2,500 feet over its nearly 3-mile length. The 3-mile Harding Icefield trail, which follows the glacier's flank to an overlook of the icefield, is day-use only; overnight

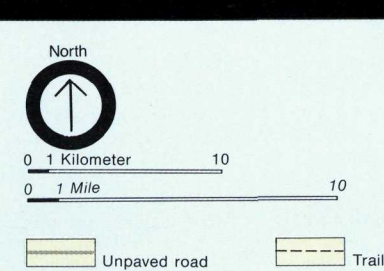
backpacking is prohibited. Check bulletin boards for trail conditions; heavy rains may result in trail closure. Stay off the ice; the glacier is active, and calving ice is dangerous. The area beyond the warning signs is strictly off limits. A public use cabin is available in winter; permit required. Winter travel to Exit Glacier and the cabin is by cross-country ski, snowmobile, dogsled, or snowshoe. Scenic flights give views of the vast Harding Icefield. Landings can be arranged for dayskiing or expeditions. See Regulations for more information on Exit Glacier.



Kenai Fjords

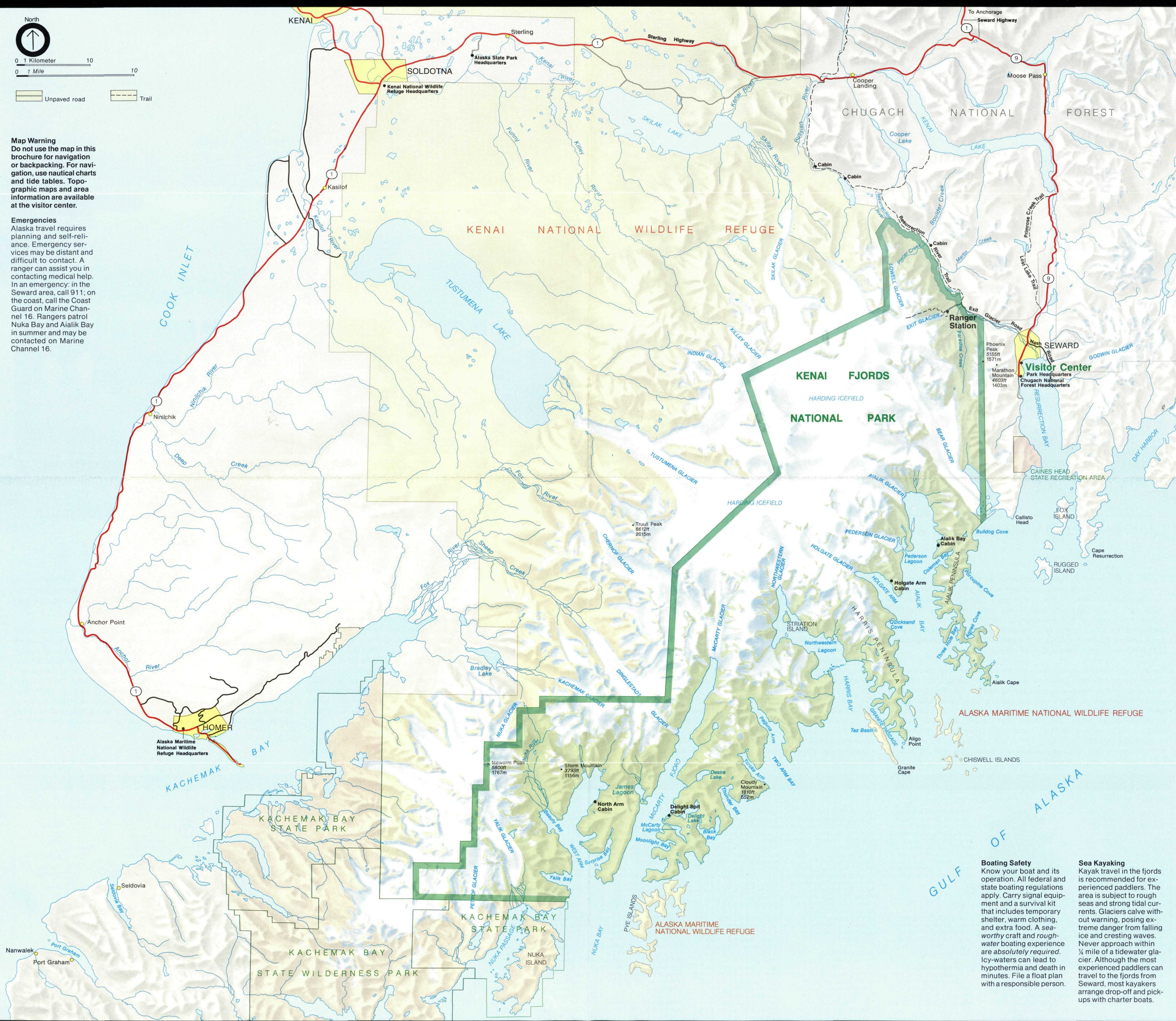
Kenai Fjords National Park
Alaska

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Map Warning
Do not use the map in this brochure for navigation or backpacking. For navigation, use nautical charts and tide tables. Topographic maps and area information are available at the visitor center.

Emergencies
Alaska travel requires planning and self-reliance. Emergency services may be distant and difficult to contact. A ranger can assist you in contacting medical help. In an emergency, in the Seward area, call 911; on the coast, call the Coast Guard on Marine Channel 16. Rangers patrol Nuka Bay and Aialik Bay in summer and may be contacted on Marine Channel 16.



Boating Safety
Know your boat and its operation. All federal and state boating regulations apply. Carry signal equipment and a survival kit that includes temporary shelter, warm clothing, and extra food. A *seaworthy* craft and *rough-water* boating experience are *absolutely required*. Icy-waters can lead to hypothermia and death in minutes. File a float plan with a responsible person.

Sea Kayaking
Kayak travel in the fjords is recommended for experienced paddlers. The area is subject to rough seas and strong tidal currents. Glaciers calve without warning, posing extreme danger from falling ice and cresting waves. Never approach within 1/4 mile of a tidewater glacier. Although the most experienced paddlers can travel to the fjords from Seward, most kayakers arrange drop-off and pick-ups with charter boats.