

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

Waterfall at Midnight Cove, McCarty Fjord.
Jeff Gnass

Harbor seals ride ice floes in McCarty Fjord.

A stand of Nootka lupine at Nuka Bay.
Jeff Gnass

Dwarf dogwood or bunchberry grows in the moist woodlands.

Horned puffins like steep cliffs and rocky ledges.
David William Miller

Three Hole Point in Aialik Bay.
Fred Hirschmann

Cover: Nunataks and the Harding Icefield above McCarty Fjord. Fred Hirschmann

Life on the Edge

Ice stretches as far as the eye can see, interrupted by an occasional jagged nunatak, Eskimo for “lonely peak.” The Harding Icefield’s expanse covers more than half of 607,805-acre Kenai Fjords National Park and conceals a mountain range under ice several *thousand* feet thick. Named for President Warren G. Harding, who visited Seward in 1923, the Icefield is a relic from the last ice age. It gives us a glimpse back to when ice covered much of North America. But Kenai Fjords is no static window to the past . . . as the ice recedes, it uncovers glacially carved valleys that fill with sea water to form the stunning fjords (pronounced *f’yords*). Visitors witness nature’s raw power sculpting this landscape. House-sized ice masses crash from tidewater glaciers into the sea, stirring up plankton to attract throngs of hungry seabirds. Along the coast Earth’s crustal plates collide head on: the denser Pacific Plate slips under the North American Plate. This subduction drags the Kenai Mountains into the sea and deepens the fjords. It causes frequent earthquakes, too. In 1964 the Good Friday Earthquake dropped the shoreline six feet in 3.5 minutes.

Plants and animals adapt to incredibly dynamic conditions to survive in the fjords. In this strange and wonderful place birds swim better than they fly. Ice-worms exist on frozen glacier surfaces. Mammals are better adapted to life in frigid salt water than on land. Puffins, kittiwakes, otters, sea lions, orca, salmon, and sea stars: the diversity of life in these seemingly inhospitable fjords is beyond our wildest imagining. Throughout the year storms drop hundreds of inches of snow on higher elevations. Snowflakes compact into dense glacial ice and feed 32 glaciers that flow from the Icefield. Rivers of ice, they creep downhill like giant bulldozers, carving out bowl-shaped cirques and broad U-shaped valleys. At Exit Glacier—the only part of the park reached by road—you can get close enough to peer into deep blue glacial crevasses. Keep a safe distance though! Although retreating, Exit Glacier is active. Large blocks of ice calve from its face without warning. The short stroll to Exit Glacier is like a trip back through time. Here the story unfolds of how plant life reclaims barren rocky land exposed by

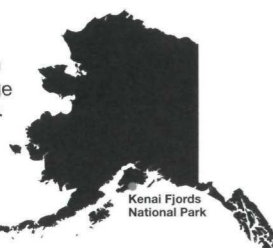
the glacier’s retreat. The Sitka spruce-and-hemlock forest you first encounter gives few clues that less than 200 years ago ice covered the area. Closer to the glacier you see earlier stages of growth—cottonwoods, alders, and willows—preparing the way for the ‘climax’ forest. Finally, in the area most recently exposed, you find pioneer plants—mosses, lichens, and bright pink fireweed—struggling to gain footholds in the aftermath of nature’s great bulldozer. These colonizers start the progression from glacial till to the temperate rain forests that cloak the edges of the Kenai Fjords.

Wedged between the sea and the Icefield, wildlife flourishes in this narrow slice of temperate rain forest. Mountain goats pick their way along precipitous slopes. Moose browse hedged of willow and alder. Bears forage for grasses and berries. Wolverines, marmots, and songbirds also make homes here. Some species span both worlds: bald eagles fish in the fjords and nest in the tops of spruce or hemlock trees.

Native peoples hunted and fished in the fjords for years. Russian fur-traders and gold seekers passed through. Most evidence of these humans fell victim to this harsh environment, but the park includes a few Native Alaskan archeological sites and gold mining sites. The National Park Service manages Kenai Fjords to preserve its natural and cultural resources, ensuring that people can enjoy this dynamic place while leaving it unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations. Established as a national monument in 1978, Kenai Fjords became a national park under the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) in 1980. But the story of Kenai Fjords is far from finished. The Earth’s crustal movements keep tugging the mountains into the sea, and changes in temperature and precipitation cause glacial advance and retreat. If you return, the park won’t look quite the same—in Kenai Fjords the only constant is change. Here mountains and the sea struggle for balance, glaciers advance and retreat, wildlife adapts, and nature is always a work in progress.

About Your Visit

Getting Here
The park is south and west of Seward and 130 miles south of Anchorage via the Seward Highway. Buses and commuter



flights go between Seward and Anchorage. The Alaska Marine Highway ferry connects Seward with Homer and Seldovia via Kodiak, serving Valdez and Cordova. In the summer the Alaska Railroad serves Seward from Anchorage. Park headquarters and the visitor center are in Seward’s small boat harbor. In the summer Exit Glacier is reached by road. Harding Icefield is reached by air

or trail. Both air and boat charters give access to the fjords.

Travel to Exit Glacier in winter is by crosscountry skis, snowmobile, dog-sled, or on snowshoes. Scenic flights give views of the vast Harding Icefield. Landings can be arranged for day-skiing or expeditions. See the Exit Glacier inset map on the reverse of this folder.

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

Weather and Clothing
Overcast and cool days are frequent in this maritime climate of abundant rain. May is driest, and successive months see increasing precipitation. Summer daytime temperatures range from the mid 40s to low 70s°F. September initiates wet and stormy fall. Wool or synthetic clothing and sturdy rain gear—pants, coat, and hat—are essential.

Information
For information contact: Superintendent, Kenai Fjords National Park, P.O. Box 1727, Seward, AK 99664-1727; call, 907-224-3175; or visit us at www.nps.gov/kefj on the Internet. Detailed maps and publications are sold by the nonprofit Alaska Natural History Association at the visitor center. For information on the Seward area write to: Seward Chamber of Commerce, P. O. Box 749, Seward, AK 99664-0749, or call 907-224-8051.

What to See and Do
Authorized commercial guide services offer camping, fishing, and kayaking experiences. Air charters from Seward or Homer fly over the coast for sight-

seeing and access to the fjords. Hire boat tours and charters in 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. Fish include: saltwater halibut, lingcod, and a variety of rockfish; freshwater Dolly Varden and silver, red, chum, king, and pink salmon.

Accommodations
There is no food service or lodging in the park. Seward offers complete tourist services, including campgrounds. Exit Glacier has nine walk-in summer-use camping sites. There are three summer-use coastal, backcountry,

public-use cabins in the fjords—at Holgate Arm, Aialik Bay, and North Arm—reached by boat, kayak, or float plane. In winter a public-use cabin at Exit Glacier is available. Cabin stays are limited to three days, except at North Arm. Permits are required. The park takes summer reservations from January 1 through April 30. After that availability may be limited.

Backcountry Travel
This is rugged wilderness that requires good physical condition, proper equipment, and reasonable precautions. In planning a backcountry trip with no guide, get current, specific information from the park staff before setting out.

If you want to challenge the Harding Icefield, you must be prepared to face sudden storms, blinding sunlight, high winds, and extreme changes in temperature. At Exit Glacier in winter you may also face deep snow and cold temperatures. Know hypothermia symptoms and their treatment.

Bears
Bears are dangerous, and you must maintain a wide distance from both 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, like toothpaste, must be hung or stored in bear-proof containers. Feeding

wildlife is prohibited. It is unsafe and sets up behavior patterns that may endanger future travelers and put animals at risk.

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 can calve without warning, posing extreme danger from the falling ice and cresting waves. Never approach within one-quarter mile of a tidewater glacier. Although the most experienced paddlers can travel to the fjords from Seward, most kayakers will choose to arrange drop-offs and pick-ups with charter boats.

Emergencies
Traveling here requires self-reliance and planning. Emergency service may be distant and difficult to contact. A ranger can help contact medical help. In an emergency: in the Seward area call 911; on the coast call the Coast Guard, Marine Channel 16. Rangers patrol Nuka and Aialik bays in summer. Contact them on Marine Channel 16.

Regulations
All lands and waters in Kenai Fjords National Park are closed to hunting and trapping. Alaska state fishing licenses are required.

At Exit Glacier dogs are allowed only in the parking lot. They are not per-

mitted on any of the area’s trails. In the rest of the park, dogs must be on a leash no longer than six feet. No overnight parking is allowed in the Exit Glacier parking lot. Campers in the tents-only campground must camp in one of the nine 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 in the bear-proof food storage locker provided. Elsewhere in the park, cook, eat, and store food at least 200 feet from your sleeping area. Hang food at least 15 feet high and between two trees when possible.

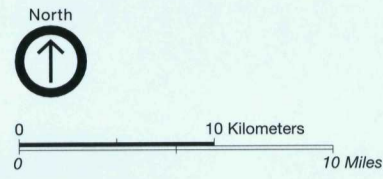
Administration
Kenai Fjords National Park is part of the National Park System, one of more than 370 parks that are important examples of our nation’s natural and cultural heritage.

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Kenai Fjords

Kenai Fjords National Park
Alaska

National Park Service
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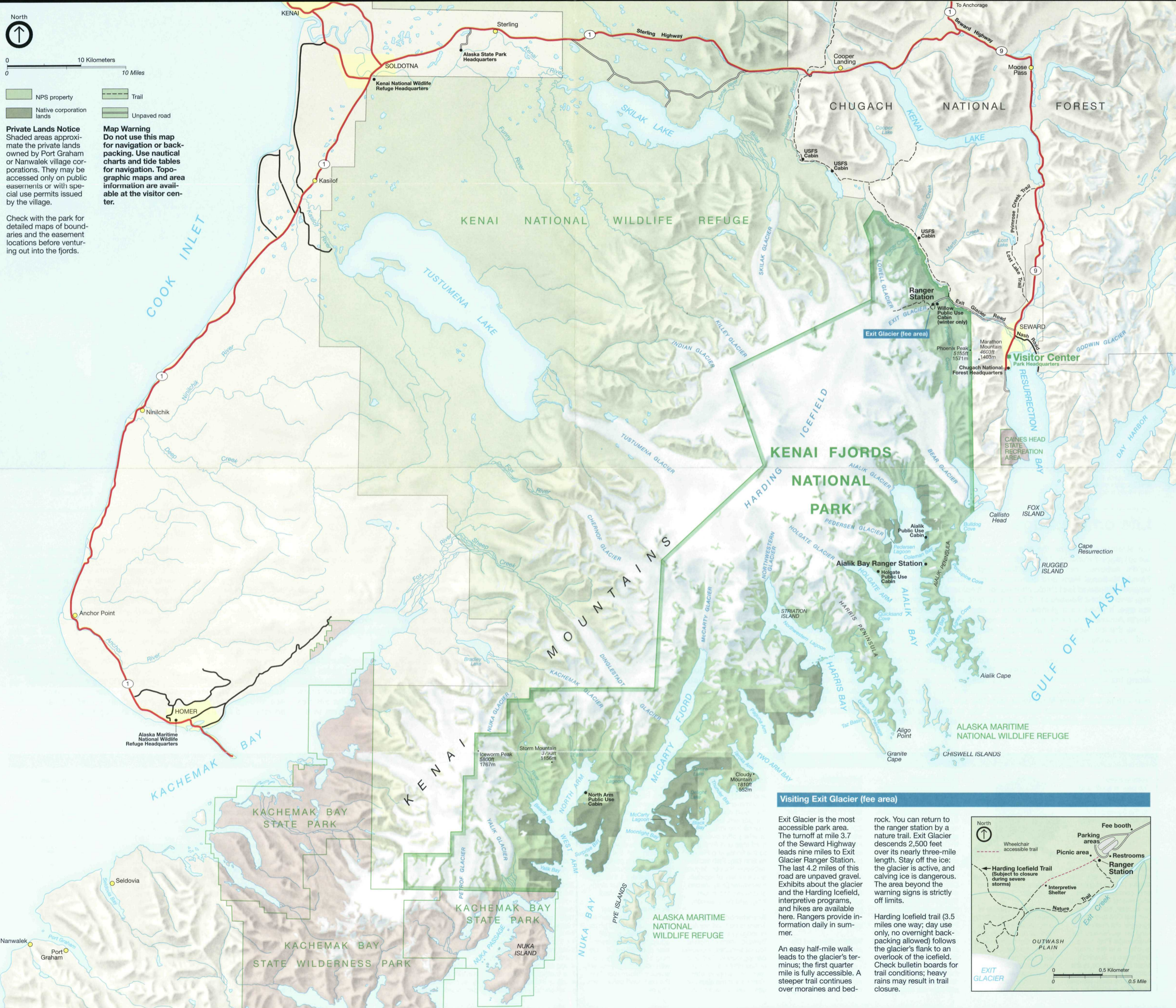


- NPS property
- Native corporation lands
- Trail
- Unpaved road

Private Lands Notice
Shaded areas approximate the private lands owned by Port Graham or Nanwalek village corporations. They may be accessed only on public easements or with special use permits issued by the village.

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

Check with the park for detailed maps of boundaries and the easement locations before venturing out into the fjords.



Visiting Exit Glacier (fee area)

Exit Glacier is the most accessible park area. The turnout at mile 3.7 of the Seward Highway leads nine miles to Exit Glacier Ranger Station. The last 4.2 miles of this road are unpaved gravel. Exhibits about the glacier and the Harding Icefield, interpretive programs, and hikes are available here. Rangers provide information daily in summer.

An easy half-mile walk leads to the glacier's terminus; the first quarter mile is fully accessible. A steeper trail continues over moraines and bed-

rock. You can return to the ranger station by a nature trail. Exit Glacier descends 2,500 feet over its nearly three-mile length. Stay off the ice: the glacier is active, and calving ice is dangerous. The area beyond the warning signs is strictly off limits.

Harding Icefield trail (3.5 miles one way; day use only, no overnight backpacking allowed) follows the glacier's flank to an overlook of the icefield. Check bulletin boards for trail conditions; heavy rains may result in trail closure.

