

Lake Clark

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National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Lake Clark National Park & Preserve
www.nps.gov/lac



Hiking The Portage Creek Trail



How to Get There

The Portage Creek Trail originates at the Joe Thompson Public Use Cabin (not visible from the lake), approximately 13 miles north-northwest of Port Alsworth. Visitors can access the beach in front of the cabin via boat or float plane and water taxis may be available from Port Alsworth. While there are no mooring buoys or boat docks at this location, watercraft can land on the beach. To the west of the cabin, and around the point (see reverse for map) is private property. Please avoid disturbing our neighbors.

Trail History

The resource rich Portage Creek area offers habitat to salmon, bears, eagles and other species as well as a lush forest habitat beyond. The Dena'ina people utilized the respected resources located here seasonally, as the historic Kijik village is located a few miles southwest of Portage Creek. These resources also led to the first Euro-American settlements in the late 1800s and the area is still inhabited by both cultures today. In the mid-20th century, the Portage Creek area harbored a placer gold mine that operated about a mile upstream from Lake Clark. The location of the placer mine established the first iteration of the Portage Creek Trail. As time went on, the trail extended past the mining site and up Lach Mountain or Nusdatl'na Dghil'u ('Ghosts Mountain'). Today, the trail leads to alpine tundra and offers views of Lake Clark and the surrounding mountains.

Know Before You Go

The cabin can be used under reservation only. Please respect the privacy of those who are staying in the cabin. To make a reservation visit www.recreation.gov and search "Joe Thompson Cabin."

Bears frequent this area. Do not leave food unattended. Take precautions and stay alert, be visible and make noise. Follow Leave No Trace principles and store your food properly as well as pack out all trash.

There is no reliable cell service or other amenities in this area. Plan your pick up and drop off accordingly, and be prepared for any potential weather delays.



View from the tundra area of the Portage Creek Trail.



Trail Specifications

Distance: 3.25 miles
Elevation gain: 1850 ft
Width: Single track, ~12 inches
Surface: dirt and leaf litter

Trail Description

The Portage Creek Trail begins near the shore of Lake Clark and continues over three miles through a thick spruce and birch forest, past alders and up to alpine tundra. The first mile is generally flat until you reach Portage Creek. Foliage on the trail can change drastically from season to season so be aware of where the trail is to avoid creating social trails or trespassing on private property. After crossing the creek, the trail starts to ascend in a series of switchbacks. Stay to the left after crossing the creek to stay on the public trail. Please do not shortcut the switchbacks as this will erode the trail. The maintained trail ends in the tundra.