



Kennicott and Gates glaciers sweep down from the Wrangells' Mt. Blackburn and Regal Mountain.

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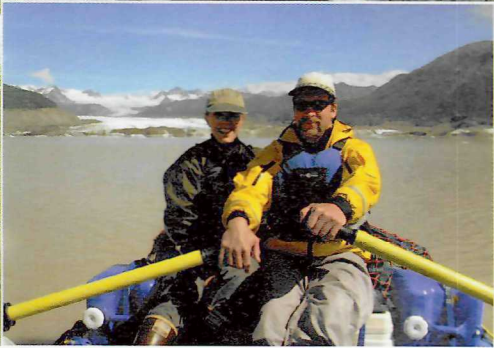
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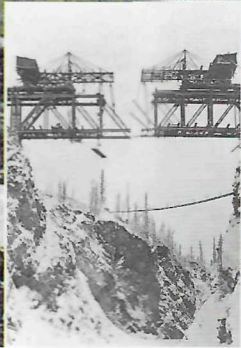
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Mt. Sanford and several other peaks in the Wrangells can be seen from nearby highways. Drum, Blackburn, and Sanford

are dormant volcanoes, but Mt. Wrangell is still active.

If one species symbolizes the park's wildlife, it is the Dall sheep that inhabit its interior highlands.

Profusely braided Chitina River flows from Chitina and Logan glaciers on the park's eastern boundary to the Copper River on its

western boundary. The mighty Copper starts on the Wrangells' north side and empties into the Gulf of Alaska.

Rafters on the terminal lake of the Nizina Glacier, shown in the background, prepare to float down the Nizina River.

Men built a railroad bridge across the Kuskulana River in 1910. Today travelers on the road to McCarthy cross this bridge.

Skiers on the Malaspina Glacier head toward the 18,008-foot Mt. St. Elias, second highest peak in the United States.

A backcountry campsite overlooks the terminal lake of the Nizina Glacier. In the background is Chisana Pass, the historic

gold rush route to the Chisana goldfields.

Preeminent Mountain Wilderness

Incredible. You must see Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and National Preserve to believe it. Number and scale loom large here, magnified by splendid isolation. The largest U.S. national park, it equals six Yellowstone, with peaks upon peaks and glaciers after glaciers. Follow any braided river or stream to its source and you will find either a receding or advancing glacier. You can view representative Alaska wildlife as well as historic mining sites. Hike its mountains, float its rivers, ski its glaciers, or fly over this landscape, and you witness living geology. You sense discovery, the feeling you might be the first to see such sights.

The peaks' sheer numbers quickly quell your urge to learn their names. Just settle back and appreciate their beauty, mass, and rugged grandeur. That roads are few means many travelers will not enter the park itself, but major peaks—Blackburn, Sanford, Drum, and Wrangell—are seen from nearby highways. Or position yourself in one spot and watch sun, clouds, and storms play hide and seek with single peaks or ridges. Watch moods change by the minute here. Four major mountain ranges meet in the park, which includes nine of the 16 highest peaks in the United States. The Wrangells huddle in the northern interior. The Chugach guard the southern coast. The St. Elias Mountains rise abruptly from the Gulf of Alaska to

thrust northward past the Chugach on toward the Wrangells. The eastern end of the Alaska Range—mapped as the Nutzotin and Mentasta mountains—forms part of the preserve's northern boundary.

The Wrangells are volcanic in origin, but only Mount Wrangell remains active—last reported erupting in 1900—with vents of steam near its summit. With adjoining Kluane National Park in Canada, all these ranges form North America's premier mountain wilderness. Covered year-round with snow, the highcountry stands cloaked with icefields and glaciers. Near the coast, North America's largest subpolar icefield, Bagley Icefield, spawns huge glaciers like the Tana, Miles, Hubbard, and Guyot.

The Malaspina Glacier flows out of the St. Elias Range between Icy and Yakutat bays in a mass larger than the state of Rhode Island. So much glacial silt rides it that plants and trees take hold on the glacier's extremities and grow to maturity only to topple over the edge when it melts. Flowing from glaciers are multitudes of meandering rivers and braided streams. Largest is the Copper River, forming the park's western boundary. The Copper rises in the Wrangells and empties into the Gulf of Alaska in Chugach National Forest. In the early 1900s the Kennecott Mining Co.

transported copper from its mines near McCarthy by railroad along the Chitina and Copper rivers to ships at Cordova. Ore was extracted from these productive mines between 1911 and 1938 and lured many people to the area. Gold was extracted from the Nabesna area then, too. Mining still takes place on private lands in the park, and evidence of earlier mining includes ruins of the Kennecott mines, now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In mining's heyday the Alaska native villages expanded and several new towns sprang up. Copper Center, Chitina, Gulkana, and Chistochina are near the old Athabaskan settlements. The town of Yakutat is a traditional Tlingit fishing village.

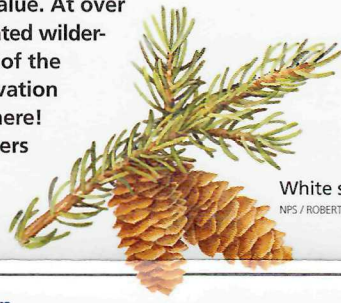
While vegetation may appear sparse, especially in the interior, the park is home to a variety of wildlife. Mountain slopes have a diversity of plants, dwarf shrubs, and grasses where Dall sheep and mountain goats patrol the craggy peaks. Interior and coastal spruce forests are home to shrubs,

like blueberry and prickly rose (left). Caribou feed on lichens and sedges on the slopes of the Wrangells. Moose browse in the sloughs and bogs of the forested lowlands, while bears roam throughout the park. Many rivers, streams, and lakes provide spawning grounds for salmon and other fish. The Copper River drainage marks major flyways for migratory birds and provides nesting sites for trumpeter swans. Coastal areas are habitat for marine mammals, including sea lions and harbor seals.

Wrangell-St. Elias, Kluane National Park in Canada, Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, and Tatshenshini-Alsek Provincial Park in British Columbia are together a World Heritage Site—at 24 million acres one of the world's largest internationally protected areas—recognized for exceptional interest and universal value. At over 9.6 million acres, the park's designated wilderness represents nearly 10 percent of the entire National Wilderness Preservation System. Nor do superlatives end here! Explore the park and discover others for yourself.



Prickly rose
NPS / ROBERT HYNES



White spruce
NPS / ROBERT HYNES

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Land Distinctions

Some areas in Wrangell-St. Elias, including McCarthy townsites and Native corporation lands, are private. Native lands may be entered by permit only. Respect the privacy of owners. Most private land lies along frequently used roads. Stick to these roads and to the trails, so you do not trespass. See maps at park headquarters or ranger stations.

In 1980 Wrangell-St. Elias was established as a national park and national preserve of 13.2 million acres. See Activities for the differences between hunting and trapping regulations for the national park and national preserve portions.

Travel Logistics

The park can be reached from Anchorage via Glenn Highway (Alaska 1). At Glennallen, Glenn Highway meets the Richardson Highway (west of the park boundary) en route to the coastal city of Valdez, which is served by the Alaska Ferry. The Tok Cutoff coming south from the Alaska Highway borders the northwestern corner.

From these highways two unpaved roads penetrate the park. The McCarthy Road extends 61 miles from Chitina to the Kennicott River, just west of McCarthy, by the old McCarthy River and North-western Railway route. This road is not regularly



Wrangell-St. Elias

maintained—ask about current conditions before you start out. The trip takes about three hours and ends up at the Kennicott River, where you take a foot bridge across the river to McCarthy and the historic Kennecott Mines National Historic Landmark.

The northern park area is reached via the Nabesna Road. From Slana on the Tok Cutoff, it extends 45 miles to Nabesna, a privately owned but inactive mining

camp. Check on road conditions at the ranger station at Slana.

Airplanes may be used within the boundary except in support of subsistence hunting in the park. Charters and flightseeing are available in most communities, including Anchorage, Fairbanks, Valdez, Cordova, Glennallen, Tok, and Yakutat. Cordova and Yakutat have daily commercial jet service.

Buses run between Anchorage and Valdez in summer, with stops in Glennallen. A number of companies offer river and backcountry guide services in the greater area.

Lodging, Services

Check on accommodations and make reservations in advance. Services are few, and seasons vary. Motels, restaurants, and roadhouses offer usual tourist services in major communities on highways near the park and also in the coastal communities of Yakutat, Valdez, and Cordova. Write to the park for a list of privately operated fishing camps, guide cabins, and lodges with full service that offer rustic accommodations within the park.

The Bureau of Land Management and the state of Alaska run campgrounds along the Tok Cutoff and Richardson and Edgerton highways.

Activities

This is a park for wilderness-oriented activities. Travel services and facilities are limited. You are mostly on your own and must be highly self-motivated and self-sufficient.

Some major activities besides sightseeing are backpacking, camping, hiking, fishing, hunting, mountaineering, river running, kayaking along the coast, and cross-country skiing. No matter what you do, please read Precautions.

Backpackers and day hikers generally set out from points along the Nabesna or McCarthy roads. Trails are few; most hiking is across what may look like untraversed terrain. You may tent-

camp anywhere within the park boundary except on private property. There are places for primitive camping along the McCarthy and Nabesna roads.

The park's glaciers, icefields, rivers, and steep rock walls present endless challenges for mountaineers. Mounts Sanford, Drum, Blackburn, and St. Elias attract climbing expeditions each spring.

The Copper and Chitina rivers offer excellent rafting and kayaking. The 77 miles down the Copper from Chitina to the Gulf of Alaska boast some of the park's most rugged terrain. Kayakers explore the bays, inlets, and coast in the Yakutat

and Icy bay areas. March, April, and May—after the severe cold weather but with the lowlands still snow-covered—are best for cross-country skiing.

In the national park, local rural residents may carry out traditional subsistence hunting, fishing, and trapping activities. This policy recognizes rural Alaska's longstanding reliance on wildlife, fish, and plant materials.

In the national preserve, local subsistence uses are permitted, as are sport hunting, trapping, and fishing for nonresidents. Alaska licenses are required. Please do not trespass on private property.

Weather

As in most of interior Alaska, summers here are cloudy and cool, but clear, hot days are not uncommon in July, the warmest month. August and September tend to be cool and wet, with fewer mosquitoes than July. Fall can be delightfully clear, but it is a short season. Winters are cold and dark; temperatures drop to -50°F. Winter snow cover averages two feet, but days are often clear. Spring's clear skies, lengthening days, and warming temperatures break winter's hold on the land with dramatic quickness.

The weather can change by the minute and make your trip longer—plan for delays.

Precautions, Notes, Information

Help may be days away in this vast region; be extraordinarily careful. You must have proper survival gear and skills to handle mountainous terrain.

Backcountry hikers must be self-sufficient, carry enough food to cover a delay, and be prepared for wilderness. Rain gear and wool or pile clothing are essential. Ask rangers or area residents about weather conditions and if you should try to reach certain points—they know the weather and terrain from experience.

Walking over spruce muskeg with a pack can take more time than you expect. From a distance what looks like scrub

lands tests endurance. You can be knee deep in water or flat on your back before you know it.

Hikers must be familiar with safe techniques for crossing streams and rivers. Many are impassable, even for experts. Others change quickly from trickling creeks to raging torrents. Be cautious. Only those with expertise in cold weather camping and with survival techniques should attempt winter camping.

Horses and dog teams may be used for backcountry travel. Snowmachines, with adequate snow cover, may be used for traditional activities. Backcountry permits are not required, but travel-

ers are encouraged to complete a Backcountry Itinerary, available at park offices.

More Information
Visit the main park visitor center at mile 106.8 Richardson Highway near Copper Center.

In season, contact: Nabesna Ranger Station, Slana, 907-822-7401; Chitina Ranger Station (summer only), Chitina, 907-823-2205; or Yakutat Ranger Station, Yakutat, 907-784-3295.

Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and National Preserve
P.O. Box 439
Copper Center, AK 99573 907-822-5234
www.nps.gov/wrst

Exploring Wrangell-St. Elias

