

# Wrangell - St. Elias

WRANGELL - ST. ELIAS  
NATIONAL PARK & PRESERVE  
ALASKA

The Wrangell - St. Elias National Park and Preserve includes about 5 million hectares (12.4 million acres) in southcentral Alaska and borders the Yukon Territory and Canada's Kluane National Park on the east. This diverse area of great scenic beauty extends from the Tetlin lowlands in the north through the high mountains of the Wrangell and St. Elias chains and the broad

Chitina River valley, to the coastal beaches of the Gulf of Alaska bordering the Malaspina Glacier, and Icy and Yakutat Bays. The park and preserve contains some of North America's highest mountains, including eight peaks over 4,400 meters (14,500 feet). Mt. St. Elias, at 5,489 meters (18,008 feet), is the third highest in North America. The mountains, gla-

ciers, and snow fields dominate the landscape. There are well over 100 major glaciers here. Some, such as the Nabesna and Malaspina, are among the world's largest. Several dozen major river systems emanate within the park and preserve. Most are heavily silt-laden and flow in the ribboned patterns characteristic of glacially derived rivers.

## WHAT TO DO AND SEE

Opportunities for wilderness backpacking, lake fishing, car camping, river running, cross-country skiing, and mountain climbing abound. Principal hiking routes include the scenic Chitistone Canyon (the historic goat trail), which is

quite demanding; the Beaver Creek drainage; the Hanagita River valley; Nikolai Pass; the Jacksina Creek drainage; and the Kuskulana and Kotsina drainages. Only the latter is accessible by ground transportation. Mounts Drum, Sanford,

Blackburn, and St. Elias are all popular with climbers. The Bremner, Chitina, and Copper Rivers offer excellent rafting possibilities in all classes of water. Air tours should emphasize the Nabesna Glacier and Icy Bay.

## ACCESS

There is road access into the park and preserve from the community of Chitina via the Chitina-McCarthy road, a four-wheel drive route part of the year, but generally passable in summer. It extends some 105 kilometers (65 miles) up the Chitina River valley, following the historic route of

Copper River and Northwestern Railroad to the town of McCarthy. Road access into the northern section of the park/preserve is from Slana (on the Tok cutoff) along a State secondary route which extends some 72 kilometers (45 miles) to the abandoned mining community of Nabesna. All other

access is by air. Charter aircraft services are available in most Alaskan communities, including Anchorage, Fairbanks, Northway, Gulkana, Glennallen, Cordova, Valdez, McCarthy, Yakutat, and the Talsona Lake. Costs vary by type of aircraft and flight time.



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## ACCOMMODATIONS AND SERVICES

Rustic overnight accommodations (no electricity, plumbing, etc.) are available in Kennecott, McCarthy, Ptarmigan Lake Lodge, Chisana, Solo Creek, and Sportsman's Paradise Lodge. Scattered fish camps and guide cabins throughout the region can also accommodate backcountry parties. The major ones are on Tanada and Copper Lakes in the north, Ptarmigan and Rock Lakes on the northeast, and Tebay and Hanagita Lakes in the southcentral park and preserve. More standard accommodations are available in

motels and cabins in and around the community of Glennallen, on the Glenn and Richardson highways, and along the Tok cutoff. Bureau of Land Management campgrounds are found at Liberty Falls near Chitina and Sourdough and Dry Creek near Gulkana.

## WEATHER AND INSECTS

Summer brings the cool, often cloudy and rainy typical Alaska weather, which often interferes with scheduled air pickups, making trips longer than scheduled. Clear, hot days are not uncommon, particularly

in July, which has the best weather. August is cooler and wetter, but generally more mosquito free. Fall is excellent but of short duration. Winters are cold and dark, but clear weather is common. Average snow cover is about 0.6 meters (2 feet).

## CLOTHING, FOOD, & GEAR

To visit the backcountry you must be self-sufficient, carrying enough food to cover unexpected delays in getting picked up. Rain gear and wool clothing are musts. Glennallen has a good supermarket.

## PRECAUTIONS AND COURTESIES

This is a vast and sometimes hostile region. Animals are wild and should be respected because they can kill or maim careless or naive people. You should know your gear and possess backcountry skills. You should have both wilderness travel and wilderness survival

skills. Winter travel is recommended only to those experienced in cold-weather camping and survival techniques. For your safety, we suggest that you leave your itinerary with someone and contact that person upon completion of your trip.

Local residents carry on their subsistence way of life within the national park and preserve. Their camps, fishnets, and other equipment are critical to their well-being. Please observe the usual courtesies respecting their property and privacy.

For further information write:  
Superintendent  
Wrangell - St. Elias  
National Park and Preserve  
P.O. Box 29  
Glennallen, Alaska 99588.

