

Alaska Wildlands Hiker

An Inn-To-Inn Hiking and Whitewater Rafting Adventure with Ice Climbing and Sea Kayaking Options Plus a 5-day Extension to Denali National Park

Journey on foot into the wilderness of the “Great Land” to explore Alaska’s expansive mosaic of forests, glaciers, fjords, mountains, rivers, and tundra where grizzlies and moose roam the bush, eagles and seabirds fill the skies, and seals, otters and whales frolic in waters abundant with marine life. This adventure includes a day of rafting on the glacier-fed Tsaina River and an unforgettable ferry ride across magnificent Prince William Sound.

Not ready to go home? Extend your adventure with a 5-day self-guided trip to Denali National Park. Journey to Denali by train on the spectacular Denali Star, specially designed for sightseeing and wildlife viewing, then hike, bike, fish and relax at magnificent Kantishna Roadhouse lodge in the heart of Denali’s unspoiled vastness.

Day 1. Hiking around Eklutna Lake, Sheep Mountain Lodge (907-745-5121 / private baths)

Our group meets in Anchorage at 9:00 a.m. After a short shuttle, we begin our adventure hiking along turquoise-colored Eklutna Lake. Towering mountains and distant glaciers surround this tranquil lake, and the valley is home to Dall sheep, moose, eagles and a few rarely seen bears. After our hike we will drive to Sheep Mountain Lodge located at the base of Sheep Mountain. The lodge offers sweeping views of the Matanuska River Valley and Chugach Mountains, and Dall sheep can sometimes be located grazing on the rocky hillsides just behind the lodge.

- Hike around Eklutna Lake [up to 8 miles, elevation change negligible]

Day 2. Scenic Flight to McCarthy, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, Kennicott Glacier Lodge (907-258-2350/shared baths)

This morning we hike to a waterfall en route to Chitina where we board a scenic flight to McCarthy in the heart of Wrangell St. Elias National Park. At over 13 million acres, it's the largest national park in the United States and was recently recognized as a World Heritage site for its extraordinary beauty. For those interested in outdoor exploration, this untouched wilderness is waiting.

Once a vibrant mining community, Kennicott is now a ghost town with buildings selectively preserved by the Park. We stay at the beautifully restored Glacier Kennicott Lodge set spectacularly at the foot of Root Glacier.

- Hike the Liberty Creek Trail (2.5 miles, 400 feet of elevation gain)
- Scenic flight to Wrangell-St. Elias National Park (35 minutes)
- Interpretive hike around Kennicott (easy, 1-1/2 hours)

Day 3. Hiking Root Glacier, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, Kennicott Glacier Lodge

Today, with the instruction of our guide, we hike the lateral moraine that parallels Root Glacier. Dwarfed by

the surrounding mountains and the towering glacier itself, we will hike in the heart of Alaska’s wild country watching for wildlife along the way. Our destination is the dramatic Stairway Icefall, which plunges 7,000 feet from the heights of the Wrangell Mountains and is known to be the second largest icefall in the world.

Looking for more adventure? Try a day of introductory ice climbing or glacier hiking (additional cost). Learn the basics from expert guides. It’s a thrill that could be the highpoint of your trip! Or opt to experience the pristine beauty and true remoteness of the majestic backcountry with a scenic flight that will blow your mind (additional cost).

This evening back in Kennicott, relax on the porch of your lodge and soak in some of Alaska’s midnight sun, in full view of the state’s sixth highest peak, Mt. Blackburn.

- Hike Root Glacier Trail [9 miles, elevation gain/loss 200 feet]
- Ice climbing or glacier hiking option (\$100-\$105 additional cost for full day)
- Scenic flight option (additional cost, varies)

Day 4. Hiking to Bonanza Mine, Kennicott Glacier Lodge

The mountain wilderness of Wrangell St. Elias provides a stunningly dramatic setting as we hike to the precipitous Bonanza mine. Yielding incredibly rich copper deposits, the Bonanza Ridge brought a 1910s mining boom to this remote corner of Alaska. We will see remnants of the mining history as we climb above treeline and take in the prominent views of Mt. Blackburn and Mt. Regal, and with luck, 19,850’ Mt Logan. If we are feeling energetic, we can hike to the ridgeline where panoramas of the park are unparalleled.

This evening we explore the historic community of McCarthy before dinner.

- Hike to Bonanza Mine [8 miles, 3700’ elevation gain/loss]

Day 5. Transfer to Valdez, Rafting Tsaina River, Brookside Inn B&B (907-835-9130/private baths)

We’ll take a spectacular drive through Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and down the Richardson Highway

to Valdez, "Alaska's Little Switzerland". First developed during the Klondike Gold Rush, this deepwater port is set on the Prince William Sound at the head of a long, dramatic fjord and surrounded by the majestic Chugach Mountains.

After lunch at dramatic Worthington Glacier we raft the Tsaina River through narrow gorges and past several waterfalls. We spend the evening in the Brookside Inn, a charming family owned and operated Bed & Breakfast.

- Kennicott to Valdez [5+ hour shuttle]
- Raft the Tsaina River [Class III-IV]

Day 6. Hiking to Shoup Bay, Brookside Inn B&B

Considered by many to be one of the best places for exploring the fjords and glaciers that feed Prince William Sound, Valdez is the gateway to this great natural preserve.

For those that prefer to experience the area from the water, we strongly recommend a full day of sea kayaking. The beautiful and well-protected area of Prince William Sound near Valdez provides an unbeatable setting to learn the basics of paddling and explore the area's shoreline and spectacular tidewater glaciers. You'll experience Alaska's largest rookery of black-legged kittiwakes with thousands of nesting sea birds..

Alternatively, you can enjoy a forest and shore hike along Prince William Sound to a beautiful waterfall while staying alert for eagles and otters.

- Sea Kayaking: [approximately \$125 additional cost; approximately 7-hour trip, 6-mile paddle]
- Hike along Prince William Sound [up to 8 miles, rolling terrain with 200 feet of elevation gain]

Day 7. Ferry Ride to Whittier and Hiking Winner Creek or Byron Glacier

We embark on an unforgettable Alaskan experience, a ferry ride across Prince William Sound, where whales, otters and seals frolic among floating icebergs. Upon arrival in Girdwood, time pending we hike the Winner Creek Gorge trail through the northernmost temperate rain forest in North America. Old growth Sitka spruce and hemlocks, lush ferns, and huge devil's club line our route. Our hike ends with an exhilarating hand-tram across narrow Winner Creek gorge. Alternatively we hike Byron Glacier, another great option.

After our hike we continue on to Anchorage where our adventure ends at approximately 6:00 p.m.

- Ferry from Valdez to Whittier [5-1/2 hours]
- Moderately Easy Hike: [6 miles, 600 feet total elevation gain]
- Shorter alternative hike: Byron Glacier hike [2.5 miles, negligible elevation change]

Denali Extension

Extend your Alaska adventure with a 5-day/4-night self-guided trip to the heart of Denali National Park.

Day 1. Scenic train from Anchorage to Denali National Park, Denali River Cabins (800-942-7420/private bath)

Experience the famous train journey from Anchorage to Denali National Park on Alaska Railroad's Denali Star with cars specially designed with large picture windows perfect for sightseeing. While traveling north from Anchorage through small towns and wild mountains, watch for wildlife and great views of Mt. McKinley (Denali). The train departs Anchorage at 8:15 a.m. and arrives at Denali 3:45 p.m. Transfer to Denali River Cabins for the evening.

- Scenic train to Denali

Day 2. Drive through Denali National Park to Kantishna, Kantishna Roadhouse (800-942-7420/private bath)

This morning enjoy activities such as hiking, rafting, shopping, and helicopter tours. Some activities are at additional cost--inquire at the Denali River Cabins front desk for prices and schedules.

Relax until 12:30pm and then take the spectacular 90-mile drive through the Alaskan wilderness to Kantishna in the heart of the park. With outstanding scenery and wildlife viewing along the way, you may spot bears, moose, caribou, and even wolves. Arrive in Kantishna at approximately 8:00 p.m.

- Sightseeing drive to Kantishna Roadhouse

Days 3-4. Kantishna Roadhouse

The Kantishna Roadhouse is an upscale, full-service lodge with a rustic Alaskan flavor. The original roadhouse was built in the early 1900s serving as a private residence, community center, post office, and informal lodge. The beautiful log main lodge was built in 1993 with an expanded dining area, new library, hand-crafted bar and spacious lobby.

During your stay you have great opportunities to see Denali's world famous wildlife--moose, black and grizzly bears, caribou, Dall sheep, wolves--and experience the beauty of its sweeping mountains, wild forests, and the awesome presence of Denali itself, North America's highest mountain at over 20,000 feet.

Evening programs and the activities below are included in the tour. Horseback riding is available but not included in the tour price with daily trail rides at \$125/ person.

- Naturalist led hikes through the surrounding wilderness (2-6 hours)
- Mountain biking on trails in the nearby mountains. Bikes and helmets are provided and fanny packs and water bottles are available
- Learn to pan for gold like a Klondike "sourdough"
- Fish in the area's pristine lakes and streams. Fly and spinning rods are available and tackle can be bought at the front desk. An Alaska fishing license is required for Moose Creek and is available at the lodge.

Day 5. Return to Anchorage

On the last day we drive back through Denali to catch the return train to Anchorage. The shuttle leaves at 6:45 a.m. to catch the 12:00 p.m. train. Arrive in Anchorage at approximately 8:00pm.

- Scenic train to Anchorage

Tour Details – Alaska Wildlands Hiker

Trip Type: Inn

Trip Length: 7 days / 6 nights

Trip Rating: Moderately Easy to Moderate

Activities: hike (5-1/2 days), raft (1/2 day), scenic flight (1/2 day), ferry ride (1/2 day), sea kayaking (optional full day, additional cost), ice climbing or glacier hike (optional full day, additional cost)

Gateway City: Anchorage, AK

Gateway City Transfer: The Coast International Inn provides a courtesy van to and from the airport. Otherwise there is an airport shuttle [approx. \$10 one way] to go downtown. Call Borealis Shuttle at 907-276-3600 or Alaska TourQuest at (907) 344-6667.

Meeting Time & Place: 9:00 a.m. in Anchorage in the lobby of the Aspen Hotel, 108 East 8th Avenue (907-868-1605). We recommend that you have breakfast before our meeting and come ready to hike. We recommend that you wear comfortable hiking boots with ankle support and wool socks coupled with a thin liner sock.

Trip Conclusion: 6:00 p.m. in Anchorage at the Aspen Hotel

Trip Fees Include: All accommodations, all meals (starting with lunch day 1 through lunch day 7), T-shirt, water bottle, park fees, support vehicle, and professional guides, scenic flight, ferry ride, and whitewater rafting trip.

Trip Fees Exclude: Airfare, personal insurance, miscellaneous hotel expenses (phone, fax, laundry, etc.), additional optional tours, services not specified in the tour itinerary, and guide gratuities (as deemed appropriate).

Tour Details – Denali Extension

Type of Trip: Self-guided, inn-based tour. Transportation, lodging, meals, and activities are provided as described in the above itinerary.

Trip Length: 5 days/4 nights

Departure Dates: To be determined (in coordination with *Alaska Multi Sport & Hiker* departures)

Departure Time: Train leaves Anchorage at 8:15 a.m., arrives Denali station at 3:45 p.m.

Return Time: Shuttle from Kantishna leaves 6:45 a.m., arrives at Denali station in time for the 12:00 p.m. train to Anchorage with arrival in Anchorage at 8:15 p.m.

Trip Fees Include: Round trip railroad fare Anchorage to Denali, round-trip transport Denali Park Station to Kantishna, lodging Day 1 to Day 4 (double occupancy), meals dinner Day 1 to breakfast Day 5, tour transfers except to and from Anchorage Depot, activities as described in above itinerary and park entrance fee.

Trip Fees Exclude: Personal insurance, miscellaneous hotel expenses (phone, fax, laundry, etc.), transfers to and from Anchorage Depot, meals on train, tips, activities not included in package, personal expenses and alcoholic beverages.

Note: Limited singles supplement availability at Kantishna Roadhouse.

The Next Step...

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The Best Value in Active Travel Guarantee: *We commit to you that all of our trips are of the highest quality at the best value.* If you find a trip of equal quality that matches our itinerary and inclusions at a lower fare within 30 days of booking your trip with us, we will gladly refund the difference. A simple guarantee that assures you of the best trip at the best fare!

How do I join this trip? Call Hidden Trails and a Trip Consultant will reserve your space(s) or register online.

Your travel agent can also book your trip at no extra cost and provide other helpful assistance.

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How do I book airfare for this trip? Call your travel agent or Amanda Bernier at Travel-Ease Boulder to arrange and book your airline tickets and your pre- and post-trip arrangements. She can be reached between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. MST at (888) 524-4182 or via email at amanda@traveleaseboulder.com.

General Information, Questions & Answers

What weather conditions can I expect? June, July and August... Summer is a miraculous time in Alaska, when the sun refuses to set and people are energized with seemingly limitless energy. June is the driest of the three summer months, July the warmest and August generally is the wettest month but still relatively warm. Average high temperature during the summer is in the mid-60s, but it is not uncommon for it to reach into the mid-to-high 80s. The low temperature is around 50°F. Be prepared for anything... from sunny 80° days to windy, rainy, 50° outings on the water. The best way to prepare for such a range of weather is with layers.

How difficult is this trip? ... Really: This trip is Moderately Easy to Moderate. It is intended for the active adult who feels comfortable being active 4-6 hours a day, hiking 6-8 miles with options of up to 10 miles, and with climbs of up to 2200 feet.

Airline Information: Almost all the major airlines fly into Anchorage International Airport. However if you plan to arrange any flights within Alaska before or after your trip, the following are the two major in-state airlines.

- Alaska Airlines 800-426-0333 www.alaskaair.com
- Era Aviation 800-866-8394 907-266-8394

Pre/Post Trip Lodging: If you arrive in Anchorage the evening before a trip, or stay over after the trip, we recommend the following hotels:

- Aspen Hotel 907-868-1605 [rate: \$139-189]
- Coast International Inn 800-544-0986 / 907-243-2233 [rate: \$169-189]
- Courtyard by Marriott 800-321-2211 [rate: \$159-169]
- Millinium Hotel 800-544-0553 [rate: \$260-280]
- Best Western 907-243-3131 [rate: \$125-199]
- Holiday Inn Express 907-248-8848 [rate: \$189]

We're Always Improving! While the information presented here details this trip's planned activities, routes, accommodations, departure and conclusion times, we are consistently seeking new opportunities to enhance this itinerary and your experience. Our actual activities and sites may vary due to season, special events, or weather. As a result, we reserve the right to alter the itinerary since unforeseen circumstances that mandate change may arise. Naturally, we will keep you up-to-date on any changes that may affect your arrival or departure times.