

Alaska Wild Multi-Sport Adventure

INTRODUCTION

The Far North is a place of multiple moods, sometimes passive and sedate, but more often otherwise. A land first and still being explored by dint of human vigor can, in the view of many, be best experienced only by application of the same.

If not content to merely witness the wilds, but rather to feel through seamless touch, then a variety of means is required. The Land here takes myriad form, from volcanoes and high peaks still growing, to the glaciers and raging rivers carving them down, to the rugged coasts in constant transition either direction. A true taste of each demands the means most appropriate, and this very special adventure promises that diversity with alpine hiking, glacier walking, whitewater rafting and sea kayaking. While varied and active, the places and paces of this trip still allow the essential moments of savor between, fostering a connection unparalleled.

With the hallmarks of our largest National Parks, private camps interspersed with comfortable lodgings, coupled with the intimacy of modes, one can't help but come to an understanding of wild that few ever do. Designed to be enjoyed by beginner and practiced alike, this itinerary nonetheless does demand flexibility and at minimum, a moderate degree of fitness. This is the trip for those that just couldn't imagine the journey, or Life, any other way.



10 Day / 9 Night

\$3225/person

2010 Tour Dates

June 11 - June 20
July 11 - July 20
Aug 5 - Aug 14
Aug 26 - Sept 4

Code

10M1
10M2
10M3
10M4

ABBREVIATED AGENDA

Day 1 Anchorage-Denali National Park; travel north through Susitna valley along Talkeetna Mountains to the Alaska Range, private camp on Jack River just outside Denali National Park, alpine tundra hike from camp

Day 2 Denali National Park; full day natural history/wildlife tour to heart of park, late afternoon hike to Mt. Healy, Jack River river camp, evening hike

Day 3 Denali-Paxson; cross spectacular Denali Hwy, MaClaren Summit alpine tundra hike, or Gulkana Glacier hike (depending on conditions), overnight and showers, Paxson Inn

Day 4 Paxson-McCarthy; Glennallen, Liberty Falls, cross Kuskulana River Gorge (great catwalk), glacial terminal moraine hike, glacial island private camp on McCarthy Creek, with Kennicott River on opposite side

Day 5 McCarthy/Kennicott; shuttle to Kennicott for ghost town exploration, all day alpine hike to Erie Mine overlooking Root and Kennicott glaciers, evening flightseeing option, McCarthy nightlife, McCarthy creek island camp

Day 6 McCarthy-Tolsana; morning lateral moraine hike on the Kennicott Glacier; travel west to camp on the Tolsana River; evening hike to geologic oddity of mud, "volcano"

Day 7 Tolsana-Hope; Copper River Basin, humbling Matanuska Glacier ice hike (with crampons), Turnagain Arm, overnight creekside log cabins historic Hope, (great bar!), hot tub

Day 8 Hope/Seward; short drive to Seward, sea kayaking from Lowell Point, exploring west side of Resurrection Bay and Caine's Head Park; return Hope to log cabins, barbecue

Day 9 Hope; world class, Six Mile River rafting, two thrilling canyons (Class III & IV+) with dry suits, Hope log cabins (hot tub!) on Bear Creek

Day 10 Hope-Anchorage; Winner Creek rainforest hike in Girdwood; end of trip

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Trip cost includes all modes of transportation, lodging, meals, equipment and guiding. Additional information and a suggested personal equipment list sent upon deposit. Accommodations range from semi-deluxe to rustic. When camping, all group gear is provided, with two persons to a tent, and a full length sleeping pad included. Moderate physical fitness is desirable as this is a wilderness trip with hiking and outdoor activities, though it is not overly strenuous. Alcoholic beverages and gratuities to the guide not included. Group size is limited to eight persons.

Day 1 The adventure begins at 8AM, meeting in downtown Anchorage at locations previously arranged. From here we'll head northward with a quick stop in Wasilla at the headquarters for the 1000 mile Iditarod Sled Dog Race. The displays and short video here give a good insight into dog mushing in general, as well as the lifestyle and the commitment it takes to train for and run the Iditarod itself. Pushing northward towards the beacon of North America's highest peak Denali (also still referred to as Mt. McKinley), we'll enter into the great Alaska Range of mountains which serves as the divide between the vast drainages of the Yukon to the north and the Matanuska-Susitna Rivers to the south. The location of our hike this afternoon will depend upon recent weather and trail conditions, but will certainly feature some wonderful scenery and the possibility of coming across wildlife such as moose or caribou. Our alpine camp for the next two nights is along the rushing Jack River, with the "Great One", Denali, hopefully deigning to fill our tents' doors....

Day 2 In the morning we'll drive a short distance to the entrance of Denali National Park. A stop at the Visitor's Center will better acquaint us with Denali, and it is here that we will board a Park Service bus to travel into the Park, as the vast interior is closed to private vehicles. The round trip is a full day, and opportunities are some of the best anywhere for wildlife viewing. And then there's the scenery . . . chances are very good to see bears, caribou, moose, and possibly even wolves. Photographic possibilities are excellent, as the bus will stop at any desired location at the group's request. In the late afternoon when we exit the Park, our legs will most likely demand a stretch and a variety of trails await. Should the weather be cooperating another option is flightseeing from a nearby airstrip (costs approx. \$250-285/person). It's a truly indescribable experience to witness the stark and formidable higher elevations from this perspective --and if "The Mountain" is "out", then there's just no question. It's then back to our camp for dinner and an evening tundra exploration.

Day 3 After breakfast we'll pack up and turn east to cross the spectacular Denali Highway. It is a 135 mile gravel road across wide valleys, alpine tundra and haunting scenery that is open only in the summer months and the only road through this remote area. Crossing glacial river and lake country, wildlife viewing opportunities abound in this large stretch of wilderness inhabited year-round only by the occasional trapper and wilderness hermit. We'll stop along the way at a couple of the unique establishments to mingle with some of the locals. After crossing the beautiful Maclaren River we will gradually climb up to Maclaren Summit (elev. 4082 ft), the second highest point on Alaska's road system. Here we will leave the van for a great ramble above treeline, walking north towards the impressive Maclaren Glacier and mountains of the Alaska Range. This alpine tundra hike is spectacular, allowing for expansive views in all directions. Numerous kettle lakes dot the landscape and the possibility of seeing migrating caribou is good. After reaching Paxson, we will turn north on the Richardson Highway and depart the road to reach the base of the imposing Gulkana Glacier for a quick hike across a swinging bridge and onto the glacier's terminal moraine. A few miles south we'll find our lodging in the comfortable rooms of the Paxson Inn & Lodge.

Day 4 The Richardson Highway, following the old Valdez-Eagle trail, leads us southward through Glennallen to the Visitor Center of our nation's largest National Park, Wrangell-St. Elias. An undeveloped jewel, the Park coupled with the adjoining Kluane National Park of Canada, is the largest piece of protected wilderness on the planet. We'll pick up a one-lane abandoned railroad grade at the confluence of the Copper and Chitina Rivers, that leads us 60 miles into the center of the Park and the near ghost towns of McCarthy and Kennicott. The road ends at the Kennicott River, with public access to McCarthy limited to a footbridge. We though, will utilize a private vehicle bridge to access our own private facility on the island between the Kennicott River and McCarthy Creek. It's truly a fantastic spot with views in all directions, from the towering icefalls up high, to the glacial creek tumbling just out front. Legs and palates will no doubt demand a short walk to the tiny ghost town of McCarthy (possibly wetting whistles at their unique tavern/watering hole) followed by an "untrailed" hike over the glacial moraine below where the Kennicott and Root glaciers join. It's an eery landscape seemingly of another planet, and darned beautiful. Working our way back along one fork of the Kennicott river to the confluence with McCarthy Creek, leads us back to camp for dinner and surely an evening fire on the river gravel bar right in front of our tents.

Day 5 A post breakfast van trip up the remainder of the road four miles to the abandoned company town of Kennicott overlooking its glacier namesake, allows an almost unbelievable exploration of an entire town sitting much the way it was when the mines closed in 1938. The Park Service has been busy for the last several years, renovating, shoring and adding interpretive displays to the historic buildings, and the incredible 14-story mill building itself. Kennicott is truly a ghost town without equal, with its remoteness dictating that many things were not worth transporting out, coupled with a

adventure ALASKA

Expanded Itinerary - cont. 10-Day Multi-Sport Adventure

fortunate lack of vandalism. We'll continue onward by foot along the lateral moraine of the Root Glacier towards the old Erie Mine site. After exploring the ruins a bit, we'll return, possibly by the manual method along the old Wagon Road, back to McCarthy for possibly an appetizer and drink in the bar. The contrast between the two towns is now very apparent, with Kennicott the regimented company town, and McCarthy, the nearby free wheeling outlet for all of those lonely miners . . . Another hearty camp dinner and evening creekside fire with views all about is definitely in order.

Day 6 Today feels a bit more leisurely, with the morning open to explore such options as fantastic flightseeing (cost approx. \$150-200/person), or, you just might not want to miss a delightful hike up the western lateral moraine of the Kennicott Glacier. The unceasing nature of the glacier's evolution is evident in the continual clatter of rocks yielding to gravity and falling into the ever changing pools of meltwater. The distant views aren't too bad either . . . In the afternoon we'll reluctantly be on our way, winding out of the park and back to pavement to reach Glennallen, now turning west on the Glenn Highway. Camp for the night is not far, on the banks of the Tolsana River, in the Tolsana Wilderness Campground (showers!). After dinner a hike is in order to a nearby geologic oddity --a mud "volcano". Not quite as spectacular as a lava spouting dome, nonetheless this strange phenomenon consists of mostly methane gasses bubbling up from the coal deposits of the Lower Cretaceous and Upper Jurassic formations that underly the Copper River Basin. As the bubbles travel up through the earth to the surface, they pick up and carry fine particles of silt which over time have formed the hill from which the springs emerge. The cold salty water flows all winter and is an important source of liquid to the local creatures large and small, during the long months when all about is frozen.

Day 7 Today the road leads southwest, leaving the basin of the Copper River and climbing to the divide of Eureka summit, with the Talkeetna Mountains to the north and the Chugach to the south. It's a beautiful mountain drive through to the huge valley of the Matanuska and Susitna rivers, home to most of Alaska's agricultural industry. We'll stop at the Matanuska Glacier for a 3-hour glacier hiking experience - complete with crampons! Beautiful views abound as we round Turnagain Arm along the Chugach Mountains and onto the Kenai Peninsula. Turning off the main road and following along the south side of the Arm leads to the little end of the road community of Hope. The second oldest gold rush town in Alaska, Hope is still predominately built of log, from the tiny church to the old Social Hall, still hosting weddings, dances and community functions. It's a very special place and it is here that we'll lodge for the next three nights in cozy log cabins overlooking Bear Creek. We'll dine at the local establishment with possibly a campfire and hot tub to cap the day?

Day 8 Blueberry pancakes for breakfast should give a good start, before heading south through the Kenai Mountains to Seward for extraordinary sea kayaking in beautiful Resurrection Bay. Pushing off from Lowell Point, we'll follow the fjord shoreline, punctuated by waterfalls fed by the massive Harding Icefield above. Maybe a two ton sea lion might wander near to investigate our comparatively small craft. And of course there are lots of sea otters, eagles, and depending on the moment, orcas and humpback whales. It's a staggeringly different world than that we've wandered previously, and one that dominates much of maritime Alaska with its endless coastline. Afterwards, it's back to Hope, and if you still feel spry, you might be inclined to sample a bit of the "wildlife" at the local watering hole down by "another" ocean at the Seaview Bar.

Day 9 Today's adventure takes us 20 minutes down the road to raft Six Mile Creek. After donning drysuits and getting a bit of instruction, you'll have the pleasure of a quick "swim test". This is where we float downriver a bit in the comfort of your drysuit, to ensure that everyone is convinced of their effectiveness, and ready for the Class IV rapids that await. Six Mile is truly a world class white water river, as is the conclusion of most everyone that has experienced it, no matter their level of past whitewater play. The canyon is as intimate as can be, with some drops not much wider than the raft itself. It's a gem of Alaska that few have the privilege to experience, and one that will serve as comparison to rivers anywhere. It's a day to remember and you'll have earned dinner by the time we return, with a leisurely barbecue planned on the deck overlooking our cabins. And there's always that hot tub . . .

Day 10 Leaving the Kenai Mountains and skirting the Chugach while winding back around Turnagain Arm brings us to Girdwood, home to the Alyeska Ski Resort situated here due to a much higher level of precipitation than even the adjacent valleys. It is a microclimate that gives rise to a temperate rainforest with flora quite different from Hope, just a couple dozen miles away. Lush ferns and undergrowth along with large spruce trees are dominate on the trail up Winner Creek to its beautiful little gorge and hand tram. It might be a late lunch but worth it at the The Bake Shop upon return. And then it's on back to Anchorage in the late afternoon, each of us probably just a bit different than when we left, and most likely figuring out just when we can return and find out what's over one of those ridges spied earlier . . .

Accessibility/Fitness

This is in great part a wilderness trip and while no particular skills are needed for any portion, a prerequisite for personal enjoyment as well as the ability of the group as a whole to proceed without hindrance, is a moderate level of physical conditioning. This does not mean brute strength or endurance but simply the ability to hike for up to four hours over uneven ground (with breaks) in possibly inclement weather. A suggested minimum level of conditioning would be several hours of steady walking a day in the weeks before the trip. We will also be sleeping in tents for five nights, two nights in a row at two locations.

Clothing/Equipment

While all group equipment is provided, this is an outdoor trip and personal gear should be chosen carefully (see separate packing list). The weather we might encounter could range from temperatures in the low thirties to the mid eighties, with rain of course always a possibility. This variety would suggest being prepared for the coldest to ensure comfort at all times, with multiple layers of versatile clothing the best approach. **Clothing:** Four to five changes of lightweight clothing are recommended (laundry facilities available on Day 7) which can be layered on cooler evenings. For outerwear, a sweater or pullover is perfect with the best being made of polypropylene pile (fleece) accompanied by a light jacket or vest. A high quality, two piece rainsuit is necessary which can also be used as a windbreaker or outer shell and should include a hood or else a rain hat. A hat is also ideal for the sun, with some also preferring an additional light stocking cap and gloves. Footwear should be suitable for the intended hiking, fairly lightweight and comfortable - this is not a time to break in new boots! **Sleeping Bag:** Should be comfortable to thirty degrees to ensure warmth if it gets damp, with mummy styles recommended. (NOTE: Clean, appropriate sleeping bags can also be rented from Adventure Alaska for a fee of \$30 for the trip - please indicate in advance if needed). A very comfortable full-length ThermaRest sleeping pad is provided, that with another gizmo, doubles as a wonderful camp chair. A daypack enough to hold a jacket, camera, water bottle, lunch is also necessary.

Luggage

Soft-sided luggage, duffles or travel packs are best. Total amount of personal gear for the trip including sleeping bag, should not exceed fifty pounds and should be manageable. Extra luggage can usually be stored in Anchorage during the trip if necessary. While this is not a backpacking trip, you will need to be able to carry your gear a short ways (up to 50 yards), as these are wilderness camps.

Accommodations/Meals

Accommodations: Include a roadhouse/lodge and cabins, the latter without private baths, as well as five nights camping. The lodge and cabins are set up for double occupancy while camps are of course camps. Camping will be with two persons to a tent designed for three. All of the camps are our own, and do feature dining shelters, outhouses, and other amenities. **Meals:** Some of the meals will be in established facilities, sometimes with a limited menu. While in camp, due to the nature of wilderness travel, choice will often be limited to a single entree with choice of side dishes. We make no pretense toward gourmet cuisine, though all meals are hearty and cookbook-worthy! Special dietary needs cannot always be met, but vegetarianism is not a problem. Let us know if you have any special or medical dietary requirements and we'll be happy to discuss the options. Alcoholic beverages are not included.

Pre/Post-Trip Lodging/Trip Addons

Many types of lodging are available in Anchorage as are independent extensions before or after your trip with us. Facilities fill up very early during the summer season. Please advise us of your interests well in advance so that we are able to guarantee suitable accommodations. If you need suggestions for other things to do, just let us know.

Miscellaneous

Money: Though most everything is included in the overall price, purchases for souvenirs, alcoholic beverages etc, can be made with either cash, traveler's checks in US Dollars, or, accepted in most places but not all, credit cards. **Traveler's Insurance:** is strongly recommended, as the season is very short and our cancellation policy is necessarily quite strict. Ask us for recommendations. **Emergencies:** A trip list of the individual accommodation addresses and emergency phone numbers with the specific dates when you will be there is sent prior to trip departure. As some places are quite remote, the best way to be reached while on the trip, is through the Adventure Alaska office in Hope. Smoking is not permitted in the vans and nearly all lodging facilities in Alaska are non-smoking. Cell phone use is strongly discouraged in the van. Gratuities to your guide not included.

Suggested Reading

Each client's appreciation will be immeasurably heightened by gaining some background beforehand of Alaska and the areas of our travels. A wide selection of books and information is available from Alaska Geographic: 810 E 9th Ave, Anchorage, AK 99501; (866) 257-2757; www.alaskageographic.org and also from our local bookseller, Title Wave Books, in Anchorage - www.wavebooks.com; 907-278-9283