

# Yukon River Canoe Adventure

## INTRODUCTION

This adventure circuit offers an in-depth experience with the fabled lands of Alaska and the Yukon, for those that long for a taste of the true North and the wilderness that defines it. From traveling its remote roadways and seldom-visited hideaways, to paddling the mighty Yukon River through abandoned gold rush ghost towns, you'll leave after nine days with an appreciation of the North beyond that of many "year-rounders". By canoe and kayak, we can leave the crowds behind and truly experience the wilds, with this easy means accessible even to those with absolutely no experience. Camping is complemented with overnight stays in uniquely northern accommodations, allowing for a wilderness experience though balanced with a certain level of "civilization". Steeped in the gold rush history that in many ways defines the North, a highlight is the time spent in the old frontier river town of Eagle, as well as the more infamous, Dawson City. The goal of this itinerary is to depart the traveled corridors and explore the seldom-visited Alaska, impossible to really experience without leaving the road system. Seeking out the special places, people and history that make the north unique, this intimate journey through wilderness grandeur allows one to feel just how appropriate is this native name Alaska, which means, The Great Land.



**9 Day / 8 Night**

**\$2355 p/person**

<b>2010 Tour Dates</b>	<b>Code</b>
May 29 - June 6	9Y1
June 8 - June 16	9Y2
July 8 - July 16	9Y3
Aug 4 - Aug 12	9Y4
Aug 15 - Aug 23	9Y5

## ABBREVIATED AGENDA

**Day 1** Anchorage-Gulkana camp: Depart Anchorage towards Denali National Park; Mat-Su Valley, Alaska Range; cross spectacular Denali Highway; camp at base of Gulkana Glacier

**Day 2** Gulkana-Eagle: Travel to Eagle on the Yukon; stops at Delta Junction; Tok and Chicken; visit abandoned gold dredge; overnight in the historic cabins in Eagle where famous Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen spent the winter

**Day 3** Eagle-Dawson City: Morning tour of Eagle and Fort Egbert; cross spectacular "Top of The World Highway" to Dawson City with a stop in Boundary; ferry across the Yukon River; dinner on the town; overnight in a B & B

**Day 4** Dawson City: Explore town; museum visits; late afternoon canoe/kayak departure on the mighty Yukon River; float past steamboat graveyard; three hour paddle/float to river camp

**Day 5** Yukon River: AM river departure; explore abandoned homestead; working subsistence homestead visit; overnight at abandoned Gold Rush town of Forty Mile

**Day 6** Yukon River: River travel through "Dozen Islands", past subsistence fish camp; arrival at island camp near Canadian-US border; short hikes recommended

**Day 7** Yukon River-Eagle: Morning river departure, arrive Eagle, Alaska (showers!); optional hike to top of Eagle Bluff; dinner; overnight in Amundsen cabins in Eagle

**Day 8** Eagle-Tolsana: Travel to the Copper River Basin via Mentasta Pass; camp on Tolsana River; evening hike to geologic oddity of a mud, "volcano"

**Day 9** Tolsana-Anchorage: Optional morning hike; Late AM departure; lunch overlooking the Matanuska Glacier; travel along the Mat River to reach Anchorage in the early evening

## 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 wilderness trip with hiking and outdoor activities, though it is not overly strenuous. Passports are now required for re-entry into the US. 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 your B&B or previously arranged location. From here we'll head east through the agricultural region of the Matanuska-Susitna valley toward Palmer to pick up the Parks Highway. Turning north to follow along the west side of the Talkeetna Mountains, we'll climb steadily toward the mighty Alaska Range of mountains. Hopefully, Denali itself, the highest mountain in North America will deem to show its towering summit. In the early afternoon we'll arrive in Cantwell to turn back east and start our traverse of the beautiful Denali "Highway", a 140 mile gravel road across wide valleys, alpine tundra and breathtaking 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 seasonal establishments to mingle with some of the locals, and travel through the heart of the Tangle Lakes Archeological District, traditional hunting grounds since the time of those that crossed the Bering Land Bridge to people the Americas. After reaching Paxson, we will turn north and travel a few miles to reach our camp at the base of the imposing Gulkana Glacier. For those inclined, there is an excellent hike up to the glacier, across a swinging bridge, and onto the face for great views of Summit Lake and the mountains in the distance.

**Day 2** From Gulkana we will get an early start to continue north through the Alaska Range following the Delta River to Delta Junction, and then take the Alaska Highway to Tok. Here, we'll pick up the twisting gravel road to historic Eagle, home of the early Army outpost of Fort Egbert, the army's northernmost presence until World War II. Eagle has long served as the last supply post for the vast upper Yukon valley, providing the earliest miners and current wilderness dwellers with their link to mail delivery, telephones and the rest of the world. Its frontier nature hasn't changed much, as it is still cut off from the rest of the road system during the eight winter months of the year. We'll bunk for the evening in historic cabins overlooking the Yukon. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, one of the cabins is where the famous Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen "wintered", after arriving in December of 1905 from mushing by dog team from his ship locked in the ice 1000 miles to the north. It was by telegraph from Eagle that he was able to notify the world of his success in finding the long sought Northwest Passage, after three years with no communication.

**Day 3** After a morning historic tour of old Eagle and Ft. Egbert we'll load up the canoes and kayaks and head down the road toward Dawson City via the "Top of The World Highway". The road follows magnificent ridgelines and descends through many old mining camps from days gone by, including the tiny outposts of Chicken and Boundary, Alaska. After crossing the Canadian border, the road descends into the Yukon River Valley and to the goal of all the Stampeders of the Great Klondike Gold Rush of 1898, Dawson City. Dawson is still a frontier town with plenty of its history evident in the old structures and dirt streets. An excellent recitation of famous works at the cabin of the poet laureate of the north, Robert Service, is optional but highly recommended, with the rest of the late afternoon left open to those that would like to explore on their own or get cleaned up before dinner on the town. Lodging will be in a comfortable Bed & Breakfast near downtown, after sampling a bit of the nightlife.

**Day 4** After breakfast, there will be plenty of time open for prowling around, shopping, and visiting the museums. We'll meet for lunch and then have some more free time for a last taste of "civilization", as the guide readies the equipment for us to set out on the mighty Yukon River in the kayaks and canoes in mid-afternoon. First we'll float past a steamboat graveyard a short ways downstream, and from here continue on past the picturesque Native village of Moosehide and the site of Ft. Reliance just downstream. The fort's presence is still felt in the names of many streams and rivers in both directions, named for their estimated distance from the fort. It's about a three hour paddle/float, past rock bluffs and waterfalls to a creekside camp on the river.

**Day 5** Slipping into our boats after breakfast we will continue downriver to explore the abandoned homestead of Percy "Iron Man" DeWolfe, who ran the mail up and down the Yukon between Eagle and Dawson by boat in summer and by dog team during the harsh winter months, until he was well into his seventies and was forcibly replaced by the airplane. Percy's presence is still felt in the many items of his life hidden in the overgrowth and wild raspberries (delicious!) that have claimed the site since. An afternoon stop at the wilderness homestead of Cor Guimand will give an idea of what it's like to live in the wilderness year-round, hunting and trapping with his dog team and leading a subsistence lifestyle. The evening's camp will be at the remote abandoned gold rush town of Forty Mile with many structures still standing; including a church, store, and the log cabin headquarters of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

**Day 6** Another day on the river past many islands, drainages and cliff walls dropping directly into the river, before lunch at Old Woman's and Old Man's Rock (a native legend that will have to wait for on-site explanation). We'll float through a labyrinth section called, "Dozen Islands", an excellent area for wildlife viewing. We'll see if we can pick out any of the abandoned wood camps that supplied fuel to the hundreds of steam boats that used to ply the river until roads were built opening up the great river valleys to more economical vehicle traffic in the 1950's. Camp for the night will most likely (depending on the weather) be on an island just shy of the US border. The views are magnificent.

**Day 7** A morning departure will have us paddling back across the U.S. border and into Eagle in the early afternoon for lunch (and showers!) at the riverbank cafe. Solidly back on "terra firma", we might stretch our legs with a short but vigorous hike to the top of Eagle Bluff, long a landmark to river travelers. The history is so palpable in Eagle, you'll probably want to spend a few hours just strolling about, maybe talking with the locals about how and why they might live in such a remote outpost with road access only a few months a year. After a sumptuous dinner, we'll again spend the night in the cabins by the river, that by now have come to feel like home.

**Day 8** Early in the morning we'll continue following the road back to Tok, this time taking the Tok Cut-off southward through the lake country of Mentasta Pass. Passing through Slana and the old mining community of Chistochina we'll break out into the great Copper River basin and follow the western border of the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, our country's largest. Just short of the road that follows the old Valdez-Eagle Trail to Glennallen, we'll turn 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 9** We'll get a reasonable start in order to play a bit on our return, climbing out the Copper River Basin toward the divide, with the Talkeetna Mountains to the north and the Chugach to the south. The beautiful Glenn Highway descends to the Matanuska Glacier, with our lunch planned overlooking the glacier that gives life to the wild river of the same name, after which we'll follow the north side westward, possibly doing a hike into some alpine tundra country before having to return to "civilization". We'll arrive back in Anchorage in the early evening, somehow just a bit different than when we left, and most likely figuring out just when you can return . . .



## Client Pre-Trip Information 9-Day Yukon River Canoe Adventure

### 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 sit in a canoe or kayak for up to two hours at once, or sleep in a tent for three consecutive nights with no established toilet facilities.

### 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 temps 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 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 absolutely 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! Knee high rubber boots will be issued in Eagle for the river portion, but some folks prefer to bring aqua socks or "Teva" sandals as well. A small bath towel is also useful in camp. **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 ThermoRest 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 recommended.

### Luggage

Soft-sided luggage, duffles or travel packs are fine for travel to and from Anchorage, but your gear will need to be transferred to dry sacks (provided) for the actual trip. 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. **Packing:** Waterproof nylon dry sacks are distributed upon arrival in Anchorage that serve as your "luggage" during the trip. Though it might take a little getting used to, we have found this system to work best throughout the trip. Space is at a premium in the van, and extremely so in the boats, so *please* pack accordingly - what won't fit in the allotted dry bags won't be able to go.

### Accommodations/Meals

**Accommodations:** Include a bed & breakfast and cabins, both without private baths, as well as five nights camping. The B&B and Eagle 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. No toilet facilities are available along the River. **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, though 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.



***Client Pre-Trip Information***  
***9-Day Yukon River Canoe Adventure***

**Legal Requirements**

**Passports:** As this trip crosses the US/Canada border two times, a valid Passport is necessary. Please make sure you arrange for this early enough in advance so you have it by the time the trip starts. Minor children must have a birth certificate as well as written notarized parental permission unless both parents are present.

**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 card. **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](http://www.alaskageographic.org) and also from our local bookseller, Title Wave Books, in Anchorage - [www.wavebooks.com](http://www.wavebooks.com); 907-278-9283.