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### **Alaska Backpacking – Hanagita Peak Wilderness Trek**

Located deep in the Chugach Mountains of Alaska, 8,504 ft (2,592m) Hanagita Peak is an imposing fortress of rock and ice surrounded by rugged, trail less wilderness. If you're looking for a challenging hiking trip in Alaska, this just might be exactly what you're looking for. The trek begins at the small gold mining outpost of the Bremner Mine and continues over rocky passes and past alpine glaciers to the tundra valleys of the upper Klu River. This is an unexplored region, and once you arrive, you and your guide will seek out a suitable landing strip to rendezvous with a small bush plane for the ride back to "civilization". This itinerary includes one day to explore pyramid-shaped Hanagita Peak. Due to the difficult terrain, extensive backpacking experience is required. You should feel comfortable hiking long days with a pack weighing 45-60 lbs. and have a good sense of balance and a desire for challenge.



#### **Trip Highlights:**

- Backpacking through unexplored terrain in the Chugach Mountains.
- Testing your backpacking skills in the wilderness of Alaska.
- Close-up views of the imposing summit of Hanagita Peak.
- Exploring the seldom-visited Klu River.

## Hanagita Peak Wilderness Trek – Detailed Itinerary

The following is a sample itinerary for this trip. Due to individual abilities and goals, as well as the demanding environment of Alaska, all of our trips are customized as they unfold. The guide will constantly make decisions based on weather, logistics and group dynamics to maximize each day's experience. There can be quite a bit of variation, but we always strive to make every trip your best ever.

**DAY 1** - Your rugged, Alaska hiking trip starts at our headquarters in the historic Motherlode Powerhouse in McCarthy. Our professional mountain guides have been busily making preparations for your trip and are excited to get to know you. You are in good hands as they review your itinerary, go over the menu, and make sure that you are properly outfitted for the trip. After the final checks are complete, the excitement builds as you and your guide head for the airstrip. There you'll meet your pilot and board a bush plane for the 45-minute flight to the Bremner Mine tucked deep inside the Chugach Mountains.

Flying almost due south, you cross the Nizina River. To the east are the remnants of an old highway bridge built in the "20's" to access the copper and gold mines that lie abandoned near Dan Creek, May Creek, and Chittitu. On the south side of the Nizina, you fly over thick spruce forests, interspersed with shallow lakes. Huge beaver lodges, with their weathered gray wood dot the shores of the lakes.



Moose can be seen during parts of the season, standing in swamps and shallow lakes with water up to their bellies. Soon, the large, braided course of the chocolate-brown Chitina River comes into view. This entire valley was once under thousands of feet of ice when the Chitina Glacier crept down all the way to the confluence with the Copper River, a hundred miles west. On a clear day, Mt. Logan, the second highest peak in North America

at 19, 850 feet (6,050 m) looms far to the east. After crossing the Chitina you ascend the Chakina River flying over alpine ridges to Monahan Creek. An old trappers cabin is nestled into thick spruce forest below, and from there is a faint trail cutting through the dense willows along the stream. A little further on another small cabin is almost completely over grown by brush at the base of the pass between Monahan and Golconda Creeks.

Just past the high point of the pass, a small cluster of buildings stand surrounded by rocky peaks and silent, high waterfalls. An airstrip is carved out of a hillside interspersed with old wagon trails, abandoned mining equipment, and weathered wooden towers. Your experienced pilot touches down and as the sound of the plane's engine fades into the silence, you and your guide set off on the 30-minute hike to the cluster of buildings along one of the old wagon trails. Lupine and dwarf fireweed line the road and coveys of willow ptarmigan dance along in front of you. The Bremner Mine has a rich and colorful history beginning with the discovery of gold in 1901. However, despite the fact that the Valdez Tribune once claimed, "The Bremner Is It!" the mineral was never abundant. Arriving at the mine site, you and your guide ascend a low shelf that breaks a high ridge to the west. You follow an old pipeline that once carried water down the steep slope to a small water-powered turbine that supplied electricity to the Bremner Camp. A beautiful, blue-water lake appears and you and your guide hike along its shores looking for the perfect place to set up your first camp.

**DAY 2** - After a hot breakfast, you and your guide skirt the lake's shore and continue hiking to a higher ridge where you're treated to incredible views of pyramid-shaped Hanagita Peak, a few miles distant. To the north, on a clear day, spectacular 16,390-foot (4,995 m) Mt. Blackburn, the highest in the Wrangells, rears up from the surrounding peaks. Looking to the south, glacier-covered peaks rising out of the Bagley Icefield are visible in the distance.



You make your way along the ridge, dropping down into a small valley, and then climbing up to another ridge. Here, you and your guide pause to look for a descent route down the steep alpine glacier below you. You may need to set a rock anchor and lower yourselves down the initial slope by rope. Once on the ice, you slowly pick your way down to an azure blue lake nestled at the base of the glacier. Continuing on, you spend the rest of the day making your way through a series of high alpine valleys, with precipitous peaks towering on every side. The Swiss Alps-like scenery encompasses verdant green meadows and wonderful hiking terrain. Tonight, you set up camp high in a tundra-covered valley on a small, clear tributary to Amy Creek.

**DAY 3** – Morning light comes softly, gradually increasing in intensity until the surrounding peaks are bathed in its golden glow. You and your guide sip hot tea

and study the map and your route for today. Descending the branches of Amy Creek, you arrive at its main valley. Here you turn north and hike along a crystal clear alpine lake paralleling a high ridge to the west that separates you from the glaciers flowing from 8,504-foot Hanagita Peak. Today you have the option to either remain on the valley floor and bush whack around the ridge's steep northern border, or instead turn uphill and climb to the ridge crest and descend the other side to the Hanagita Glacier. Tonight, you'll camp near the base of fortress-like Hanagita Peak enjoying a tasty dinner and scanning for wildlife.

**DAY 4** – Today is a rest day and what a spectacular setting for a day hike. Shouldering only day packs, you decide to explore the glaciers and valleys surrounding Hanagita Peak. You can climb a lower rocky spur and gaze at the rock of the pyramid-shaped summit, scanning for the best route to the top. Or you can walk on the glacier ice and discuss glaciology and safe glacier travel while exploring with your guide.



**DAY 5** – As you awake this morning, the rhythms and routines of backcountry life are becoming familiar. Your senses have become slightly more perceptive, and you appreciate the simple camaraderie of your small group as you make breakfast and pack up camp. Hiking trips in Alaska have been known to change people's perspective on life; slowing things down and allowing time to savor the simple things.

Hiking west, you and your guide pick your way to the high slopes above the Klu River. Staying out of the brush, you traverse the base of the subsidiary peaks west of Hanagita. Your goal, today, is to gain access to the open, upper Klu River valley. Here the hiking becomes easier, and you can hike slowly, identifying wild flowers and scanning the peaks for Dall sheep and grizzly. Your last camp will be in this upper valley perhaps nestled next to an alpine lake, on top of a small ridge, or alongside a tumbling stream.

**DAY 6** – Rising early, you and your guide break camp after a quick bite to eat. You ascend the Klu River to its source glacier where your guide has made arrangements to rendezvous with a Super Cub for the flight back to McCarthy. The exact location of the pick up will depend on the conditions and the pilot. Equipped with large "tundra tires" the plane will be able to land in the numerous boulder fields that dot the glaciated landscape. One or two at a time you fly back to McCarthy where you can enjoy a hot meal and soak in our wood-fired sauna to ease your re-entry into civilization.

## What's Included?



As with all of our Alaska backpacking adventures, the Hanagita Peak Wilderness Trek includes professional, experienced backpacking guides with extensive local knowledge and medical training. We provide all food for the backcountry portions of your trip, including hot and delicious meals morning and evening and plenty of snacks and lunch food for mid-day nourishment. St. Elias Alpine Guides also provides shared group gear, including stoves, pots, and tents, as well as any technical gear, such as crampons. All you need to bring is your personal gear, (clothing, rain gear, boots, sleeping bag and pad) You can find a detailed list of the backpacking gear that we recommend you bring on our [backpacking equipment list](#).

If you would like us to arrange your transportation to McCarthy/Kennecott and/or lodging while in the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, we offer this as a free service to our multi-day clients. Please email or give us a call to discuss the details.