



St. Elias Alpine Guides, LLC
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Alaska Backpacking – Kennecott to the Lakina River (via Hidden Creek)

Traversing some of the most stunning terrain in the Wrangell St. Elias National Park, the Kennecott to the Lakina River Trek gives backpackers a healthy helping of wild Alaska. The route crosses lumbering glaciers, high passes, and pristine alpine tundra as you and your guide make your way from the historic copper mining town of Kennecott to a remote landing strip on the Lakina River. The bush plane flight back to McCarthy, is nothing short of awe inspiring as you are treated to a birds-eye view of the mighty Wrangell Mountains. This trek is recommended for backpackers with some prior experience.



Trip Highlights:

- Alaska backpacking in the remote Wrangell St. Elias National Park
- Test your skills as you cross glaciers, high passes, and wild rivers.
- Learn new techniques from our experienced Alaska mountain guides.
- Enjoy the pristine solitude of one of the few remaining unspoiled wilderness areas in the world.

Kennecott to the Lakina River – 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 Alaska backpacking adventure begins at our headquarters in the historic Motherlode Powerhouse in McCarthy, Alaska. Your guide has been busily preparing for your trek, and after a quick final check you depart by van for the historic copper mining town of Kennecott, four miles up the road. Your route today takes you past the red and white buildings of Kennecott and onto the Root



Glacier Trail. This trail was originally a wagon road, built to supply the nearby Erie Mine. As you hike, you are treated to spectacular views of 16,390 ft. (4,995 m) Mt. Blackburn and the massive ice of the Kennicott and Root Glaciers. After about 2 miles (3.2 km) you depart from the trail and step out onto the white ice of the Root Glacier. Using crampons you cross glacier

and moraine as you make your way to the smooth ice of the Kennicott Glacier. Along the way keep your eyes peeled for serene blue pools, roaring moulins, and twisting glacial streams. Your goal today is to make camp somewhere near the confluence of the Gates and Kennecott Glaciers. You may decide to camp right on the glacial ice, drifting off to sleep with the sound of rushing water in your ears and a view of Mt. Blackburn at your tent flap.

DAY 2 – As you enjoy a tasty breakfast and prepare for today's journey, you find yourself surrounded by the grandeur of this remote mountain kingdom. 6,696 ft (2,040 m) Donoho Peak rises to the east and directly north the sharp spine of Goathair Ridge divides the Gates and LaChapelle Glaciers. Your goal today is Hidden Creek Lake, a large cleft in the seemingly impenetrable mountains forming the western border of the Kennicott Glacier. Your route takes you across the white glacial ice and challenging moraine of the glacier to a small flat area between the lateral moraine

and the mountains known as the fosse. A small landing strip lies here and it is possible to shorten this trip by flying in to this point and beginning the trek from here. From the fosse, your route takes you south along the glacier to a faint game trail leading to Hidden Creek Lake. From this trail, you are treated to expansive views of your route from the previous day and the



iceberg filled lake. Tonight you and your guide make camp along the banks of Hidden Creek and enjoy a well-deserved rest.

DAY 3 – The objective today is to push on, up Hidden Creek valley, to within striking distance of the pass into the Lakina drainage. The scale of the valley is spectacular. Wispy waterfalls cascade 2,000 feet (609 m) down to the river



below and the valley itself cleaves a 7-mile (11.2 km) rift through the rugged Wrangell Mountains. As you hike, keep your eyes open for Dall sheep and mountain goats tiptoeing on the sheer valley walls. Tonight, you and your guide make camp near Hidden Creek and treat yourself to a tasty meal in preparation for the pass crossing tomorrow.

DAY 4 & DAY 5 - The morning dawns clear and you watch the first light trickle down from the high peaks surrounding the valley. You and your guide break camp and begin your ascent to the pass leading to the Lakina drainage. As you climb, the tundra gives way to the sparse vegetation of the alpine and patches of snow become more frequent. Cresting the pass, the views are magnificent. Beautiful alpine lakes dot the valley below and Mt. Blackburn and Castle Peak are visible to the north. You'll camp here for two nights, giving you and your guide the opportunity for a dayhike, an attempt on a nearby peak, or simply relaxing with a good book.

DAY 6 – You and your guide rise, and after taking some last photos, begin the final stage of your journey. Descending down past a series of pristine, alpine lakes, you make your way to the toe of the Lakina Glacier and the start of the Lakina River. The silt-laden, steel gray waters are your companion as you turn downstream and head for the airstrip. As evening draws near, you find yourself camped near an old trapper's cabin, reminiscing on your spectacular adventure. The rhythms of living in the wilderness have become familiar now and you know you'll be back to explore this pristine mountain kingdom soon.



DAY 7 – Civilization awaits and you and your guide prepare for the bush plane flight back to McCarthy. After several false alarms, the drone of the aircraft's engine grows stronger and soon it's landing in a cloud of dust. Your pilot jumps out and asks how your trip went, but he already knows the answer. The grins on your faces give it away. Once you're loaded, you fly back to McCarthy. From the birds-eye perspective of the plane, you search out your route below and marvel at the patterns of the landscape. Tonight, treat yourself to a warm meal and a 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 Kennecott to the Lakina River 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.