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Glacier Hiking in Alaska – Full Day Root Glacier Hike

Your adventure begins at our office in the historic mill town of Kennecott, Alaska. Here you will meet your professional mountain guide who will fit you for crampons (steel spikes worn on your shoes to make hiking on the glacier ice a breeze) and make sure that you have all the essentials for a day of fun and discovery.

From our office, you and your guide set off down the main street of Kennecott, passing the red and white buildings that stand as a reminder of the highly successful copper mining operation that boomed here in the early 1900's. The main street gradually turns into the two-mile glacier trail that was originally built in the '20's as a wagon road to supply the Erie Mine, six miles up the Root Glacier. In May and June, brilliant blue lupine bloom alongside the path. As summer matures, dwarf fireweed and wild rose splash pink and vermilion alongside the path. A mile from town you'll pass a tumbled down shed, the original "dynamite shack," remnants of the early copper mining days. All good miners put the dynamite shack a healthy distance out of town!



The trail gradually descends toward the edge of the Root Glacier and as your guide pauses to explain the local geology, flora, and fauna, you'll enjoy spectacular views of the rock-covered Kennicott Glacier and 6,696' Donoho Peak. Continuing on down the lateral moraine, the air becomes slightly cooler and the vegetation changes as you near the edge of the ice and the freshly exposed moraine found there. 2 miles one-way, the trail to the glacier is moderate with some steep sections, so be sure to bring good hiking boots, and a pack to carry your gear. You

and your guide pause at the edge of the ice to don crampons and learn some cramponing techniques and glacier safety.



Day hiking on the Root Glacier has been likened to a walk in the tide pools near the ocean and you can literally spend hours discovering the fascinating details on its surface. Water runs all over the ice surface, joining into bubbling streams and waterfalls. In steeper terrain, the water picks up speed, and carves deep canyon-like ravines in the ice, forming beautiful and enticing water slides. At level spots, the water collects and reflects a

breathtaking blue. Another 50 degrees warmer and you might think about a quick swim! As the ice gives way to the melting water, holes, known as moulins, form. Although many of these holes are huge black caverns, with a roaring waterfall dumping straight down hundreds of feet into the very heart of the glacier, some are no bigger around than your arm and make a sound like a gurgling coffee pot.

After “lunch with a view”, the possibilities are endless. You and your guide may decide to head up-glacier towards the massive Stairway Icefall and the possibilities of finding undiscovered moulins and azure blue pools. You may set your sights across the medial moraine for Donoho Falls and the thundering cave it creates as it tunnels its way under the Root Glacier. Either way, this truly Alaskan day hike is sure to leave you spellbound and eager to share your discoveries with other travelers over dinner.

As the day draws to a close and the light softens, you and your guide make your way back to Kennecott. Rushing water and your own footsteps are the only sounds as you hike and your mind wanders back over the highlights of the day. The adventure is far from over, though. It’s this time of the evening, when the trail is quiet, that we’ve had some of our most spectacular wildlife sightings. Keep your camera ready!

