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Alaska Backpacking – Bremner Mine Basecamp and Trekking

The Bremner Mine is a 40-minute bush plane flight south of McCarthy, and is nestled in an alpine pass between the Chitina and Bremner Rivers. Designated the Bremner Historic District, this abandoned gold mine provides a unique glimpse into what it must have been like to be part of the great "gold rush" to Alaska a century ago. Completely surrounded by craggy peaks, hanging valleys, and verdant green tundra, the "camp" is a wonderful jumping off point for day hikes. The old bunkhouse provides a convenient place for a kitchen, protected from the weather...and what a great place to sit and scope the surrounding slopes for grizzly and Dall sheep. Day hikes head out in any direction; south down Golconda Creek to scamper to ridges for panoramic views of the Bagley Icefield, or north towards Monahan Creek and the shores of a sky-blue alpine lake with views of the high Wrangells. No camping experience is needed. People of all abilities are invited to visit this remote wilderness.



Trip Highlights:

- Base camping and trekking while exploring an historic gold mine
- Breathtaking views of the Wrangell Mountains and Bagley Icefield
- Day hiking on lush green tundra in the Chugach Mountains
- Exploring high ridges, alpine lakes, and wildflower-filled valleys

Bremner Mine Basecamp and Trekking – 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 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 overgrown 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 set up base camp near the old bunkhouse, using it as a kitchen and gathering place out of the weather. With tents pitched nearby, you set off to spend the afternoon exploring the ruins of the mine.

DAY 2 – A base camp at the Bremner Mine affords convenient access to a wide variety of day hikes. A low shelf that hides a beautiful blue water lake breaks the high ridge to the west. To reach it you and your guide follow an old pipeline that once carried water down the steep slope to a small water powered turbine that supplied electricity to the Mine. Once at the lake you can skirt its shore and continue the hike to a higher ridge beyond with access to incredible views of pyramid shaped Hanagita Peak, a few miles distant. Looking north you are treated to a spectacular view of 16,390-foot (4,995 m) Mt. Blackburn, the highest peak in the Wrangell Mountains. To the south are the completely glacier covered peaks rising out of the Bagley Icefield. As the light softens you and your guide return to base camp for dinner and perhaps a “history” lesson for those interested!



DAY 3 – The day dawns bright and fresh and, over a hot cup of tea, you and your guide decide to retrace your route to the airstrip, passing it and continuing towards a boulder strewn basin that hides one of the hard rock mines high on its shoulder. Picking your way through the rocky terrain you reach a small azure colored lake, which lies at the foot of a steep climb to the ridge above. Using all fours, you scramble to the ridge, and are, once again, rewarded with magnificent views. On a clear day you may even glimpse 18,008-foot (5,488 m) Mt. St. Elias in the distance. The valley below is often home to grizzlies, and you and your guide decide to spend the rest of the afternoon scanning the region with binoculars for bear and Dall sheep. As evening nears you return to base camp and a well-deserved meal.



DAY 4 – Just above base camp are the ruins of an old gold separating mill and you decide that this is the perfect morning to spend exploring the oldest relics in the valley. If there’s time you may even decide to hike over the pass and down towards Monahan Creek to the shores of another pristine wilderness lake. The hike is sprinkled with wild flowers and the terrain is reminiscent of the Swiss Alps.

You and your guide gather your gear in the afternoon, and walk to the airstrip to rendezvous with your bush plane flight back to McCarthy that evening. A well-deserved soak in our wood-fired sauna awaits to ease your re-entry into civilization.

What's Included?

As with all of our Alaska backpacking adventures, the Bremner Mine Base Camp and Trekking trip 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.

