



St. Elias Alpine Guides, LLC
Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, Alaska
(888) 933-5427 ♦ (907) 345-9048
www.steliasguides.com

Alaska Backpacking – Journey to Oz

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

Journey to Oz – 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 to



the McCarthy airstrip, to catch your super cub flight out to the Lakina airstrip. The smallest of the fleet of planes, the super cub flight will take your breath away, as you sit directly behind the pilot and have unobstructed views out both sides of the aircraft. Make sure you keep your camera ready during the flight to take beautiful pictures of the glaciers, mountains, and valleys you'll be flying over.

Once you and your guide have arrived at the airstrip near the Lakina River (it often takes multiple flights to shuttle everyone there), it's time to head off on your adventure! The first day involves some significant uphill, so take advantage of your fresh legs. You and your guide will hike up toward the glacier, and then up to a series of pristine alpine lakes where you will reach your camp. This area is often referred to as "Oz" for the lush green of the hillsides in contrast to the surrounding rocky and snowy mountains. As you zip into your tent tonight, take a few minutes to revel in the remote beauty of your surroundings before falling asleep.

DAY 2 – With rested legs from a night of sleep, you'll break camp in the morning and head up toward a high alpine lake. A perfect lunch spot, this pass offers breathtaking mountainous views in every direction. After lunch, it's time to hike down towards the start of Hidden Creek, and set up camp on the soft tundra. Make sure to find a camp site with a good view!

DAY 3 – Today is a rest day, so there is no need to break camp in the morning. Enjoy a leisurely breakfast before loading up your packs with only lunches and layers, before setting off to explore the area around camp. You may choose to climb up the prominent peak above camp for 360 degree views of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park! Keep your eyes peeled for fossils along your way up to the top of the peak, and make sure you don't leave your camera in camp!





DAY 4 - You and your guide rise, and after taking some last photos, begin the next stage of your journey. Following Hidden Creek, you'll head down the tundra towards iceberg-filled Hidden Creek Lake. 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 tomorrow's adventures.

DAY 5 - The morning dawns clear and you watch the first light trickle down from the high peaks surrounding the valley. Packing up camp again, you'll continue to follow Hidden Creek towards the Kennecott Glacier. Upon reaching Hidden Creek Lake, you can search for a flat campsite to set up camp, and then head off to explore the icebergs of Hidden Creek Lake.

DAY 6 – Today is a shorter travel day, as you are simply skirting the edge of Hidden Creek Lake to make your way up to an area we call “the fosse.” A small flat area between the glacial moraine and the mountains, this is an excellent place to set up camp, protected from the glacial winds. At the fosse, packs can be dropped or lightened, and you can head out to the north, catching some spectacular mountain and glacier views before returning to camp for the night.





DAY 7 – 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. Today, your goal is to cross the Kennicott Glacier

to reach a camp site in Donoho Basin. About 5 miles wide, the terrain is varied, and this crossing may take most of the day. Crampons will be needed as you navigate the glacial ice and moraine. Along the way, keep your eyes peeled for serene blue pools, roaring moulins, and twisting glacial streams, as well as bears foraging on the surrounding hillsides. Your goal is to make it to the northern end of Donoho Basin, a lush valley surrounded by glaciers, where you can set up a cozy camp with incredible views.

DAY 8 - Unfortunately, this is the day that your backpacking trip comes to an end. However, you still have several miles and unlimited views before hiking back to town. You and your guide will break camp, and either set off through the lush greenery of Donoho Basin, or don your crampons and take the glacial route. Whichever way you go, the scenery is spectacular, and you will end up on the rolling features of the Root Glacier. This is the final glacier crossing of your trip, as you make your way towards the trail leading back into town. As you hike, don’t forget to turn around to view the splendor of the mile-high Stairway Icefall 7 miles towards the north. Leaving the glacier, you’ll follow the “easy” trail into Kennecott, with dreams of a celebratory meal and soak in the St. Elias Alpine Guides rustic, wood-fired sauna.



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.