



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

Chugach Mountain Circuit

If a rugged Alaska backpacking trip, full of impressive mountain scenery, glacier travel, and only moderate elevation gain sounds like your kind of adventure, this is the trip for you! Starting out and ending up at the Iceberg Lake airstrip, this loop circles around a prominent collection of mountains, and ends back at the start point. With the same start and end points and a “layover day,” tired legs or interesting side-hikes can easily be accommodated, as the itinerary is easily modifiable.



Combining glacier travel with the rugged beauty of the Chugach Mountains, this trip offers incredible glacier scenery even from the airstrip. As you traverse the glacier, the mountain views get even more stunning and impressive with every stride. Camping on the glacier provides an unforgettable experience, staring up at the Gothic peaks of the Chugach. The latter half of the trip involves more glacier travel, as well as tundra greenery and a rocky glacial moraine landscape. Side hike opportunities to explore glaciers, neighboring peaks, or high alpine lakes cap off this amazing trip! For a taste of true Alaska backcountry backpacking, the Chugach Mountain Circuit can't be beat!

Highlights:

- Dramatic glacier and mountain views
- Rugged, remote Alaska trek with minimal elevation gain
- Flexible route with glacier travel and lots of side-hike options
- Experienced and professional guides

Chugach Mountain Circuit – 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 trip begins in the rustic Motherlode Powerhouse in McCarthy, where you'll meet your guide and do a "duffel shuffle," as you both look through your packs to make sure you've got all the gear you need (and nothing you don't). Then you'll pack your personal selection of trail snacks for the trip, and head up to the airstrip for your backcountry flight. In a tiny bush plane, the mountains seem to tower around you, as you float over the flowing rivers and glaciers. Keep your camera ready, as the views from the plane are incredible!



As you land, unload, and wave goodbye to your pilot for the next 6 days, take a few moments to soak in the remote quiet of the landscape after the plane buzzes away. Surrounded by wildlife, rugged mountains, and dynamic glaciers, it's easy to feel small among a landscape so massive. Enjoy it, as this is just the beginning of your Alaska backpacking adventure. After making sure your packs are fitting properly and everyone



is well fed and hydrated, you head south, towards views of the Bagley Icefield. Aiming to gain the expansive glacier to the south, you can explore the ice features along the glacier's edge, before camping your first night on the ice.

DAY 2 – As the morning dawns, you emerge from your tent to crisp, clear mountain views in every direction. Known for their tall, gothic peaks, the Chugach Mountains stand tall among a flowing landscape of ice. You may have even heard the sound of

rocks or ice falling from the nearby hanging glaciers during the night. After a hearty breakfast, you pack up camp, strap on your crampons, and trek eastward. You'll pass through some sections of the glacier that are free and clear of features, allowing for fast progress over the easy terrain. Other areas of the glacier will be more featured, slowing travel, as they provide limitless photo opportunities. As you set up camp and eat a hearty meal that night, you recap your day's adventures on the dynamic frozen terrain.

DAY 3 – As your third day progresses, you'll be leaving behind the glacier that has been your pathway so far. Feeding into a large lake, you and your guide will find the best route off the glacier, skirting the lake, and practicing your travel and navigation over moraine. As you continue onward, a wide green glacier valley opens up to the west, offering beautiful views of the alpine tundra where you'll be setting up camp for the night.

Keep your eyes peeled for bears while you hike, as they can sometimes be seen foraging for food across the valley.



DAY 4 – Enjoy the quiet beauty of the light filtering through the Chugach Mountains as you awake and unzip your tent. At this point, you are well accustomed to the rhythm of backcountry travel, and look forward to enjoying that hot cup of coffee to start your day.

Packing up camp and heading out, you enjoy the lush greenery while you hike through the valley, reaching your cozy campsite at the glacier's edge in the early afternoon. As this is a shorter day, you and your guide may decide to take a side-hike, scrambling up to a mountain top to gain spectacular views of the impressive Mt. Stellar.



DAY 5 – At this camp, you and your guide may decide to take a "layover day," sleeping in a little bit and enjoying a day hike without the heavy backpacking packs. With many options from this camp, you could go explore the flowing glacier to the east, looking for beautiful features such as moulins or canyons, or decide to climb a nearby ridge to overlook a high alpine lake (a great place for lunch!). Bring your camera (and an Alaska wildflower book), because the wildflowers in this valley are beautiful when in bloom!

DAY 6 – On your final day, it's time to head back to meet the plane. As you cross a flowing glacier and round the corner towards the airstrip, the views might look familiar from the beginning of your trip. As you scramble across the rocky valley floor, your gaze will be diverted upwards towards hanging glaciers in every direction. Reaching the airstrip, you can drop your backpack for the final time, and revel in the surrounding beauty, while recounting your amazing week in the Chugach Mountains. After another beautiful bush plane ride, it's time to enjoy a warm shower and a hot meal back in McCarthy.

What's Included?

As with all of our Alaska wilderness adventures, the Chugach Mountain Circuit trip includes professional, experienced 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 and ice axes. 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 website: <http://www.steliasguides.com>.



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.