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Two Day Alaskan Backpack Glacier Overnight Trip – Itinerary

The following is a sample itinerary for this trip. Due to individual abilities and goals, as well as the demanding environment of Alaska, our backpack trips are customized for you. The guide will assess weather, logistics and group dynamics to maximize each day's experience. There are endless possibilities, but we strive to make every trip your best ever.

DAY 1- Your Alaskan backpack adventure starts at our headquarters in the historic Motherlode Powerhouse of McCarthy. You know you're in good hands as our professional mountain guides review the itinerary with you, go over the menu, and make sure you are properly outfitted for the trip. After the short drive to Kennecott, we start out walking through the historic copper town of Kennecott, headed for the Root Glacier Trail. We'll cross several small creeks along the trail, and see abundant wildflowers like brilliant blue lupine, fuchsia fireweed, and pink wild roses.



As the glacier comes into view it will take your breath away. We'll stop to enjoy the view and your guide will talk about how glaciers form and how they carve out the amazing landscape you're seeing. The first two miles of our route parallels the immense Kennicott and Root Glaciers. As the trail breaks out from the forest, you are greeted with a view of the Wrangell's highest peak...Mt.

Blackburn 16,390 feet (4,995 m). Finally, the trail descends to the edge of the Root Glacier – and where the trail ends, the adventure begins!



We'll put on our crampons (which we supply for you), and your guide will instruct you in basic crampon techniques. Cramponing is simply hiking on ice with the aid of spikes attached to the bottom of your boots. With instruction and practice, crampons open up an entire new-world.

Once you feel comfortable hiking on the glacier ice in your crampons, we'll return to our packs and enjoy a hearty lunch while enjoying the sights and sounds of the glacier's edge. Afterwards, we don our packs and begin exploring. The glacier surface is like hiking on another planet.

As the surface ice melts, water runs everywhere, joining into small streams. In level areas, the water collects and shimmers in sapphire-blue pools. Another 50 degrees warmer and you might think about a quick swim! In other spots, the water picks up speed, and carves deep canyon-like ravines in the ice, forming beautiful and enticing water slides. Eventually these dive into the depths of the glacier, forming vertical shafts in the ice. Many of these holes are huge black caverns, dumping hundreds of feet straight down into the heart of the glacier. A roaring water fall cascading into the darkness – beautiful, wonderful, eerie formations.



As the day progresses, you'll feel like "Spiderman", scampering around on the ice with your crampons, discovering delicate ice formations and beautiful sculpted canyons.

As we near the far side of the glacier, the awesome Donoho amphitheater comes into view. A waterfall rushes off the flanks of the mountain, pooling alongside the glacier in the spring, but eventually draining beneath the glacier and leaving an enormous amphitheater ringed with giant towers of ice. Spectacular!

We get off the glacial ice and onto the lateral moraine, an area of scoured gravel and dirt left over from when the glacier was much larger, carving out the valley that we now walk in. We'll set up camp, reflect on a fantastic day, and enjoy a hot meal as the alpenglow illuminates the glacier in warm orange hues.



DAY 2 – After a tasty breakfast, you and your guide head out for another day of adventuring in Alaska's wild country. Which direction is totally up to you. Perhaps the ice has captured your intrigue, and you'd like to spend the day exploring more of the glacier. Or maybe you'd like to take a hike along a small and barely perceptible trail through the brush to the alpine lakes of the Donoho Basin. From the shore there is a clear view of Mt. Blackburn's magnificent south face and the glaciers and icefalls that cascade from its sides. Rising over 10,000 vertical feet, this magnificent mass is an incredible photo opportunity. Another possibility is to scale the steep slopes of

Bonanza Ridge for amazing views of the mile-high Stairway Icefall, and to explore the old mining ruins of Kennecott's "camp in the sky". Or perhaps you'd just like to relax amongst the wildflowers and tundra-covered benches of Donoho, enjoying the quiet grandeur of Alaska.

Those looking for a wild adventure that want to do it all, learning how to ice climb is an exhilarating way to spend your second day. For this you and your guide will need to carry a rope and ice tools, so it's a bit more work for the extra-added adventure, but the thrill is worth it. If you choose this option, then we'll spend the day on ice faces of varying steepness on the glacier, learning and reviewing rope work, using the front points of our crampons and two ice axes to scale the steep walls of ice.



No matter which adventure you choose for your final day, we'll return via a different route to discover new formations on the glacier – peering down gaping chasms and hopping azure blue streams. By late afternoon or early evening, we find ourselves hiking the trail that leads into Kennecott, where our ride awaits to take you back to town for a hot meal and relaxing shower.

What's Included?

As with all of our Alaskan backpack trip, our Glacier Overnight Trip includes professional, experienced backpacking guides with extensive local knowledge and medical training. We provide the food for the backcountry portions of your trip, including hot and delicious meals morning and evening and plenty of trail 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 [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.