



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

Alaska Backpacking – Bremner Mine to Iceberg Lake – Seven Pass Route

If you're looking for a longer trek, through an incredible variety of stunning Alaskan terrain, this trip is for you. Starting at the site of the historic Bremner gold mine, in the Chugach Mountains, this route ascends high passes, crosses lush tundra, and winds across massive glaciers on its way to breathtaking Iceberg Lake. The diversity and expansiveness of the terrain provides a worthy challenge and will keep even seasoned backpackers intrigued. Some backpacking experience is recommended and strong physical condition is a must.



Trip Highlights:

- Spectacular backpacking in the Chugach Mountains.
- Explore the historic Bremner mining district.
- Hike among the icebergs of Iceberg Lake.
- Explore high ridges, alpine lakes, and wildflower-filled valleys

Bremner Mine to Iceberg Lake – Seven Pass Route – 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 camp near the old bunkhouse and set off to spend the afternoon exploring the ruins of the mine.

DAY 2 – You awake today with excited anticipation for your trip to begin. After a tasty breakfast, you and your guide break camp and make your way south along Golconda Creek to the Standard Creek drainage. As you ascend lush green

alpine steps, the patches of willow and bright flowers give way to the small, tenacious plants of the high alpine. The jagged ridge tops come closer and closer until you reach the mirrored surface of a blue-green alpine lake nestled just below the first pass you'll cross. You and your guide make camp on a grass-covered knoll overlooking the lake and spend the rest of the afternoon exploring and trying out your "boot skiing" techniques on the patches of snow usually found here year round.

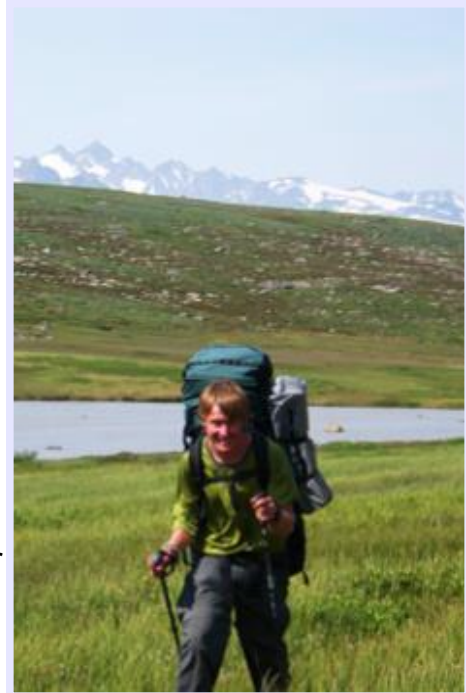


DAY 3 – The day dawns bright and fresh and, over a hot cup of tea, you and your guide admire the high peaks reflected in the lakes surface. Your route takes you up away from the lake and into the first pass. Don't forget to look back at your route from the day before as the views are incredible. The route to the pass is rocky and you weave around and across patches of snow. As you crest the pass,

the massive scope of your surroundings envelopes you. The expansive Monahan Creek drainage stretches out below you and snow-covered peaks fill the skyline in every direction. You and your guide pause for a well-deserved rest and inspect the surrounding mountainsides for wildlife. You descend steep scree slopes to the grassy slopes below and, follow Monahan Creek to the edge of a rock filled valley. A lush meadow next to a sparkling stream makes for an idyllic camp and a soft place to relax and admire the views of the mountains guarding the next pass.

DAY 4 – As you set out from camp this morning you are pleasantly surprised. The valley that looked like a difficult boulder field from camp offers relatively easy walking. Soon you are standing at the base of the next pass admiring the truck sized granite boulders that litter the landscape. Marmots peek at you from their rocky hideouts and a gentle breeze stirs the air. Gazing back down the valley, the pass that seemed so large, as you crossed it yesterday, is a nondescript notch in the mountains as they march on into the distance. This truly is a grand wilderness. Ascending the final couple hundred feet into the pass you stop for a break next to a pristine mountain tarn. The tumbled granite of this pass is reminiscent of the high country in the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California...except for the massive glaciers tumbling off of the mountains. You descend from the pass into another large valley system and camp on soft hummocks of grass with views of the North Fork Lobe of the Bremner Glacier far below in the valley.

DAY 5 – Your guide rousts you from your warm cocoon early this morning. The next camp is a long day’s hike away and an early start will give you the time you need to get there. You wind your way along the side of the valley, following game trails when possible to stay out of the thick brush below. Rounding the nose of the ridge the panorama of the Bremner Glacier and the high, glacier-covered peaks rising out of the northern edge of the Bagley Icefield fills your view. You descend through patches of thick alder and soon hear the sound of running water as the edge of the glacier comes into view. Scrambling out across loose moraine you step onto the ice and into another world. Water runs everywhere. The brightest blue glows from the cracks and holes in the glacier’s surface and huge boulders balance precariously on tiny pedestals of ice. What appeared as dark lines on the glaciers surface from above have now grown into 70 foot-high medial moraines and you’re glad your guide spent some time studying your route through them while you were still up on the mountain. You make your way across the glacier and pick your way up steep slopes to the next pass and your camp for the night. A clear alpine lake beckons and, braving the icy water, you enjoy a refreshing swim before dinner. Warming up in the gentle sun, you feel alive from head to toe.



DAY 6 – Once again, you wind your way up through the patchy snow and rock of the next pass. As you near the top, jagged spires and hanging glaciers sprout from the skyline, hurrying you towards the top to drink in the next view. A wide valley opens up below you, bordered by jagged, glacier-covered peaks that march away to the south. After 5 days of rough terrain, the grassy valley floor looks inviting and you make your way down to it. Be sure to make noise as you descend. The sides of this valley are rich with plants and berries and home to many animals including grizzly bears. It’s common courtesy to let them know you’re walking through their neighborhood! The grass gives way to sandy moraine and soon you find yourself scrambling onto a gently sloping glacier. You angle across it, hopping over small fissures and admiring the deep blue of the pools. After 6 days spent in the deep wilderness, the rhythms of backcountry life have become comfortable. You and your guide now walk side by side and you’ve learned to judge different terrain just by looking at it. The simple wholesome food you have been eating tastes wonderful and your sleeping bag feels like the most luxurious 5-star bed. As you set up camp for the night, you can’t help but feel a twinge of sadness that this is your last night. You decide to come back next summer!

DAY 7 – You’ve made good progress over the past days and, since the plane isn’t picking you up until the late afternoon, you have time for a relaxing morning and some exploration. A short hike brings you to the sandy airstrip of Iceberg Lake and you and your guide drop your heavy packs and set out to explore a sight like nothing you’ve ever seen before. Iceberg Lake is formed when the river that flows down the valley is dammed up by the large glacier that blocks the end of the valley. As the water rises, large icebergs “calve” off of the glacier and float in the lake. However, each year the glacier moves and the lake’s “cork” is pulled in an event called a jokulhlaup. The water rushes out leaving the icebergs stranded on the sandy lake bottom. Hiking among these blue giants is an other-worldly experience and a fitting end to an incredible trip. As your pick up time draws near, you make your way back to the airstrip and spend your final moments in this paradise in quiet reflection. The bush plane touches down and you gather your gear for the flight back to McCarthy. A hot meal and a well-deserved soak in our wood-fired sauna await to ease your re-entry into civilization.



What’s Included?

As with all of our Alaska backpacking adventures, the Bremner to Iceberg 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 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.