



St. Elias Alpine Guides, LLC
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Alaska Backpacking: Glacier and Tundra Backpacking Trip

Come experience the wild beauty of Alaska, backpacking with us on the Glacier and Tundra Exploration trip. At 13.2 million acres, Alaska's Wrangell St. Elias National Park is the largest national park in the United States. It is home to massive glaciers, lofty mountain peaks, and lush, tundra-carpeted valleys. This trip gives you a great sampling of the variety of terrain found in the Park as you travel through one of its most breathtaking glacial valleys.



The Glacier and Tundra Exploration trip is a perfect backpacking trip for people interested in pushing their own personal limits, learning new skills, and spending some quality time in the splendid Alaskan wilderness.

Ask us about the option to cap off this amazing trip by spending the final day ice climbing on the Root Glacier!

Trip Highlights:

- Guided, Alaska backpacking tours through some of the most spectacular scenery in North America
- Exploring blue, glacial pools and green, tundra covered mountainsides
- Learning new skills from experienced mountain guides
- Optional ice climbing on the last day
- Experiencing Alaska wilderness backpacking in the Wrangell St. Elias National Park

ALASKA GLACIER AND TUNDRA BACKPACKING: 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 20-minute flight north to the "fosse" (the level area between the base of adjacent mountains and the lateral moraine of a glacier) alongside the vast Kennicott Glacier. During the flight be sure to have your camera at the ready. The landscape below is rich with history and stunning natural beauty as you fly over the serene blue pools and rugged moraines of the mighty Kennicott and Root Glaciers.

Upon landing, you and your guide may choose to start trekking across the Kennicott Glacier to Goat-hair Ridge or set up camp and day hike to nearby Hidden Creek Lake. Either way, you will



be treated to the rugged majesty of the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, hiking on lush tundra steppes dotted with wildflowers, all the while Mt. Blackburn towers overhead at 16,390 feet (4,995 m).

DAY 2 – Waking up in this grand Alaskan wilderness may have you pinching yourself to make sure the view outside your tent flap is not a dream. After a hearty breakfast you and your guide don crampons and, after discussing some pointers on their use, continue across the ice of the Kennicott

Glacier towards Donoho Basin. Today's objective is to cross the glacier and set up camp on the other side, in Donoho Basin, a "peninsula" of land surrounded by glacial ice. As you cross bands

of moraine (rock) and beautiful white ice, you and your guide will navigate the beautiful features of the Kennicott Glacier, including blue pools, rivers, and moulins (deep shafts drilled down into the ice by flowing water). As you focus on the intricate glacial features under your feet, don't forget to look up and check out your beautiful surroundings! With Mt. Blackburn to the north, the Gates Glacier to the east, and the Kennicott Glacier flowing southward below you, the photo opportunities are endless!

DAY 3 (optional) – For those of you who are taking 4 days to complete this trek, you'll be moving on towards your next camp (see Day 4). Folks doing the 5-day option will have a layover day at this cozy camp in the Donoho Valley, allowing time to explore the area without the burden of backpacking packs. As the sunlight creeps down distant peaks, flooding the valleys below, you and your guide sip fragrant tea and discuss the day's activities. Maybe you'll choose to simply shoulder a day pack and explore the remote region of the Gates Glacier, hiking onto the glacier and exploring "Grand Canyon" like ravines carved in the glacial surface by water. If the warm sun and a good book are calling you, spending the day identifying the myriads of wild flowers; Siberian aster, columbine, shooting star, and forget-me-nots is time well-spent. If you'd like a birds-eye view of your glacier surroundings, you may choose to climb up the slopes of Donoho Peak and explore the ruins of the majestic Regal Mine. For an extremely strong group with the right conditions, you may choose to abuse yourself for additional heights and exposure and pick your way up higher, toward the Donoho Peak summit. However you and your guide choose to spend the day, you're sure to have beautiful sights and lots of photos to capture.



DAY 4 – Today, you'll be traversing Donoho Basin, to set up camp overlooking the Root Glacier on the other side. Donoho Basin contains dense, lush greenery, and beautiful alpine lakes. If it's warm, you may even decide to take a dip to cool off! As you navigate the primitive game trails through the basin, you'll have ample opportunities to view the local wildflowers. Keep your eyes peeled for bears – they think this basin is beautiful too! When you reach camp, you and your guide will set up your tents overlooking the featured Root Glacier.

After camp is set up, you may even decide to go down and explore the edge of the glacier and stunning Donoho falls before enjoying your final dinner in the backcountry.

DAY 5 – The morning light casts its glow over a new landscape today; the 5,000 foot tall (1,524m) Stairway Icefall seems close enough to touch in the crisp morning air. Before you, the Root Glacier fills the valley and if you look closely, the red and white buildings of Kennecott are visible against the green mountainside in the distance. Lingering over tea, you reflect on your accomplishments and experiences during the past few days. It's been a good trip, you may even

be a bit reluctant to be getting back to “civilization”..... but a hot shower sure will feel good! After a hearty breakfast you set off down the lateral moraine and out onto the glacial ice. Once more, you don crampons and, crunching down the smooth center of the glacier, you and your guide make your way to an old wagon road that is well traveled as a path for day hikers. You follow this “easy” route back the 2 miles (3.2km) to the historic mill town of Kennecott.

DAY 5 (optional) – Ice Climbing – Instead of just hiking across the Root Glacier, making your way to an old wagon road leading back to the town of Kennecott, why not try your hand at ice climbing on the way? A guide laden with ice climbing gear will meet you out at the glacier on your last day, where you can cap off your amazing trip with the thrill of ice climbing the steep faces and deep shafts of the glacier! A wonderful way to culminate your amazing journey through the Kennecott Valley, make sure you have plenty of room on your camera for photos. After spending the day “learning the ropes,” it will be time to hike the final stretch into town.

Upon arrival back to “civilization” it’s time for a celebratory meal, a soak in the Saint Elias Alpine Guides rustic, wood-fired sauna, and some well-deserved rest. You look forward to sharing this adventure with friends and family.

What’s Included?

- Guiding and instruction from skilled professionals. Our personable guides have extensive experience and local knowledge, as well as medical and rescue training.
- Bush plane flights to or from the backcountry.
- Delicious breakfasts, lunches, and dinners while in the backcountry, including hot and delicious meals morning and evening, and plenty of trail snacks and lunch food for mid-day nourishment.
- Group equipment: stoves, pots, tents, fuel, etc.
- Technical gear: crampons, ice axes (if needed for route)



All you need to bring is your personal gear. 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.