

AK Range & River

- ⇒ 6 days trip, small group up to 10 people
- ⇒ Starts on SUNDAY, finishes FRIDAY

Day 1: From Anchorage to the Matanuska Glacier

Depart Anchorage to Hatcher Pass (60 miles, approx 1 hr)
Hike on the Reed Lakes Trail (5.5 miles one way, 1,300 feet elevation gain)
Visit to the Independence Mine State Historical Park
Drive to Matanuska Glacier (70 miles, approx 1 hour 45 minutes)
Dinner, Camp near Matanuska Glacier

Beginning from Alaska's largest city a short a drive will take us into the heart of the Talkeetna mountains for an unforgettable first day hiking among alpine lakes and ridgelines first travelled by gold rush prospectors. Descending from the Talkeetnas, a late afternoon drive to the headwaters of the Matanuska river will bring us to our first night's camp, at the face of one of Alaska's longest piedmont glaciers. The midnight sun provides plenty of light and the perfect timing to explore this wonder born of ice age at the base of the breath taking Chugach mountain range, a beautiful welcome in the wild Alaskan summer.

Day 2: On the Denali Highway

Morning hike to Matanuska Glacier face (1mile one way, 1 hour total)
Drive Matanuska Glacier to MacLaren River Lodge, Denali Highway (197 miles, approx 3.5 hours) lunch enroute
Transfer at MacLaren River Lodge to boat transport to Wilderness Camp
Afternoon hike from wilderness camp (approx 3 hours hiking time to ridge above camp)
Dinner, camp at MacLaren Wilderness Camp

On day 2 we will break camp and enjoy a scenic departure from the Chugach range, travelling across a vast landscape of glacial lakes and black spruce expanse. At the junction of the Richardson highway, Alaska's first highway which initially served as a telegraph route and then a wagon road into the interior, we will make our way north and into the Alaska range via the less traveled Denali Highway.

For the next two nights we will camp in a beautiful setting in the heart of the Alaskan range.

Day 3: Mc Claren Wilderness Camp

Full day hiking options from wilderness camp, (approx 4 miles to glacier toe)
Dinner, camp in wilderness camp

The long northern summer days will give us plenty of time to explore this wilderness landscape of clear flowing glacial river braids where caribou herds still migrate. A full day hiking from our base camp to the glacier's face or the surrounding ridgeline will give you a lasting impression of this unique setting.

Day 4: Mc Claren Glacier to Denali National Park

Transfer gear to boat for transport back to MacLaren River Lodge, return to road via canoe (approx 2 hour scenic float)

Drive to Denali NP, via Denali Highway (78 miles Denali Highway, approx 2.5 hours, plus 30 miles Cantwell to DNP via Parks Highway, 30 minutes.)

Lunch and short hikes en-route

Afternoon Denali National Park

Dinner, Camp in Healy, AK at Denali Outdoor Center

After breakfast on day 4 we will leave our wilderness camp and return to the road via canoe, a fun float to say goodbye to a place you will not want to leave quickly. Back at the van the rest of the Alaska range awaits, all the way to Denali National Park, our next destination. First created after the construction of the Alaska Canada highway for post-war motorists driving to Denali Park from the lower 48, the Denali Highway is a scenic route too often ignored by the average tourist either in a hurry or intimidated by the scarcity of services along the way. Though it is a slow road it is still the most direct route and we'll arrive at Denali National Park in the afternoon, with time to visit the park for a short hike or whitewater raft a class III river before setting camp for the next two evenings.

Day 5: Explore Denali National Park

Eielson Visitor Center DNP tour (mile 60 DNP park road, approx 8 hours round trip)

Dinner in restaurant

Camp at DOC

Denali National Park is the crown jewel of Alaska's wilderness locales, a must see for any visitor. On the Alaska Range and River we will devote day 5 to a trip into the heart of Denali National Park, with a wide array of opportunities—wildlife viewing, hiking or even biking the park road, to name a few—to discover this awe inspiring natural setting.

Day 6: Back to Anchorage via Talkeetna

Optional morning return to Park or whitewater rafting Nenana River, Class III

Drive to Talkeetna (164 miles, 3 hours)

Flightsee Denali afternoon, visit Talkeetna

Drive Talkeetna to Anchorage (100 miles, 2 hours)

On the morning of day 6 we will have the opportunity to white water raft the river that forms a portion of Denali National Park's eastern boundary and cuts an exciting path through some of Alaska's oldest rock formation. Then we will drive south from the range and reconnect with the Talkeetna mountains, this time near their northern terminus for an afternoon of hiking with exceptional viewing opportunities from the alpine wonderland.

After a night camping in the state park we will make a short drive to the town of Talkeetna. Meaning "three Rivers" in native Athabascan, Talkeetna sits at the confluence of the Talkeetna, Chulitna and Susitna rivers and began its existence as a town just over 100 years ago when it became an important part of the Alaska railroad. The core of the tiny main street dates to the early 1900's with a number of buildings listed as national historic landmarks. With the discovery of the West Buttress route to the summit of Denali by Bradford Washburn in the post war era, Talkeetna, with its ideally situated airport and willing bush pilots, became the place to go for mountaineers seeking adventure in the Alaska range, a distinction that continues to this day. Climbers still flock to Talkeetna, ensuring those who want to make a scenic flight around the tallest mountain in North America a number of flights to choose from,

including the exclusive option of a glacier landing, all at nearly half the rates charged outside Denali Park.

Situated just a few hours north of Anchorage, a mid afternoon departure from Talkeetna will conclude the Alaska Range & River tour after a short drive through the Mat-Su valley.