



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

Alaska Backpacking: Glacier and Tundra Exploration

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.

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
- Experiencing Alaska wilderness backpacking in the Wrangell St. Elias National Park



ALASKA GLACIER AND TUNDRA EXPLORATION: 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 to the remote Gates Glacier. After scrambling over its lateral moraine you decide to set up camp in a lush, tundra-covered outwash plain created by a small stream spilling from the alpine slopes above. This camp is only 2

miles (3.2km) from the base of the Gates Icefall, an immense jumble of ice blocks that sweeps vertically up over 6,000-foot (1,828 m). To the south is the 6,696-foot (2,040m) summit of Donoho Peak and directly above is the brilliant green, grass-covered col that is our route to gain access to the Root Glacier on its far side.

DAY 3 – The sublime light of morning and anticipation of hot drinks rousts you from your warm sleeping bag today. 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 this day to simply shoulder a day pack and explore the remote region of the Gates Glacier. Or, you may hike the 2 miles (3.2km) to the Icefall and scramble out onto the glacier to explore “Grand Canyon” like ravines carved in the glacial surface by water. If the warm sun and a good book are calling you, simply spending the day identifying the myriads of wild flowers; Siberian aster, columbine, shooting star, and forget-me-nots is time well-spent.

DAY 4 – Today’s objective is gaining the ridge above camp and descending to the Root Glacier on its opposite side. After breaking camp, you and your guide hike up through alpine tundra formed in pleasant steppes, alternating steep slopes and short level plateaus. Ascending the ridge, you find yourself surrounded by a dramatic, high mountain amphitheater. The glacier covered summits of Mt. Blackburn, Rime, the twin Ahtna peaks and Parka Peak tower before you. Make sure to take plenty of pictures because the folks back home will never believe where you were. Making your way down from the ridge, you and your guide enjoy breathtaking views of the historic Erie Mine Bunkhouse and the convoluted surface of the Root Glacier below. Hiking

along the moraine you discuss human impact on this fragile landscape and make sure that “leave no trace” methods are well ingrained as you make camp and enjoy your final dinner near a beautiful waterfall in the “fosse” of the Root Glacier.

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. Linger 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.



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.

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

What’s Included?

As with all of our Alaska backpacking adventures, the Glacier and Tundra Exploration trip 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 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.