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Alaska Backpacking – Iceberg Lake Basecamp and Trekking

True to its name, Iceberg Lake is filled with icebergs. These icebergs, however, aren't the floating kind. In fact, most of the lake has no water in it at all and the icebergs are sitting on the ground! Located 45 minutes south of McCarthy, by air, and nestled in the Chugach Mountains, Iceberg Lake is typical of many Alaskan lakes that are formed when a glacier dams up a river. Typically, at some point in the season, the ice-dam fails and the water that is backed up releases in an event called a jokulhlaup. The icebergs that were once floating on the surface of the lake are left sitting on the dry lakebed! Combine this with sweeping views of the Bagley Icefield and a setting surrounded by rugged peaks and hanging glaciers and you can see why Iceberg Lake is a fantastic destination for a base camping trip. No previous experience is necessary and we welcome everyone to experience this unspoiled paradise!



Trip Highlights:

- Exploring the eerie blue icebergs left sitting on a dry lakebed.
- Day hiking to beautiful alpine lakes and on moving glaciers.
- Spectacular views of the Bagley Icefield
- Base camping near spectacular rugged peaks and hanging glaciers.

Iceberg Lake Base Camp and Trekking – 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 loading your packs you and your guide head for the airstrip for the 45 minute flight by bush plane deep into the Chugach Mountains.



As you take off from McCarthy, you are immediately treated to expansive views of the Wrangell Mountains to the north (including 16,390ft (4,995 m) Mt. Blackburn if the day is clear), the St. Elias Range to the east and the Chugach stretching across the southern horizon. You head south across the broad Chitina Valley and into foothills of the Chugach, winding your way through narrow valleys toward the Bagley Icefield. Dall sheep are often spotted high on the mountainsides and on a clear day the

second highest peak in North America, 19,551 ft (5,959m) Mt. Logan is visible far to the east. Rounding a corner at the edge of this huge expanse of ice, the hidden valley of Iceberg Lake comes into view, surrounded by hanging glaciers and carpeted with beautiful alpine meadows. Your experienced pilot sets you down gently on the sandy lake bed and helps you unload your gear.

As the sound of the plane's engine retreats, you and your guide shoulder your packs and set out to locate a base camp. You are greeted by the sound of rushing water and the feel of absolute wilderness as you set up camp.

You spend the rest of the day exploring the area around camp, taking in the views and marveling at the beauty of your surroundings. During the next four days you will have a chance to explore in every direction from your camp.

DAY 2: This morning, after a hearty breakfast, you and your guide pack your day-packs for a full-day hike up the valley to the north. Within a couple hours of camp you reach a small glacier that fans out across the valley. Many small streams flow out from under the ice, eventually joining together into one large creek. To avoid wet feet, you clamber onto the ice and cross the valley on the glacier,



checking out the streams and other features on the surface. The ice is not steep here, and you can cross in your hiking boots with no need for crampons.



Reaching the other side, you scramble through a short boulder field – rock that the glacier has piled here as it pushed its way down the valley. You and your guide find yourselves in a lush alpine meadow, surrounded by flowers and sparkling streams. Depending on the goals of the group, you may decide to continue hiking up to a crystal blue alpine lake perched between the rocky peaks. From here you can enjoy views of ice, rock and mountains in all directions.

You return through the meadows by a different path and cross back over the glacier to return to a hearty dinner at your cozy campsite.

DAY 3: This morning, over a hot cup of tea, you and your guide discuss your day hike options. You decide that you'd like to contour around the lake, and head up the side of the glacier for sweeping views of the Tana Glacier and edge of the Bagley Icefield. As you hike, your path crosses a line of bear tracks in the sand and you're reminded that you aren't the only ones to inhabit this remote valley. You make certain that your camera is easily accessible should the need arise. Returning to camp in the evening, your guide prepares another delicious dinner– this time in honor of your last night in this amazing place.

DAY 4: After breakfast you and your guide break camp and carry your packs to the airstrip in preparation for your flight back to McCarthy. The bush plane will not come until the afternoon however, so you have time for one last exploration. Perhaps the water will be low enough to cross the river that feeds the lake and hike up through the alpine meadows on the other side searching for blueberries (if they're in season). You may also want to walk along the river, taking photos of animal tracks and the colorful



flowers along the banks. Your guide will make certain to get you back to the airstrip in plenty of time for the spectacular flight back to McCarthy.

Upon arrival in McCarthy, you are invited to join us at our base, the Motherlode Powerhouse, for a wood-fired sauna to ease your re-entry into “civilization”.

What’s Included?

As with all of our Alaska backpacking adventures, the Iceberg Lake Base Camp and Trekking 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 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.