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## **Alaska Backpacking – Skolai Pass Basecamp and Trekking**

When we picture the perfect setting for a base camp, the alpine tundra of Skolai Pass is right at the top of the list. To the south, this remote valley is flanked by the exotic Hole-in-the-Wall Glacier with its seven icy tongues. To the north, the mighty Frederika Glacier lumbers down towards Skolai Valley.

A day hike to Chitistone Pass provides views deep into the Yukon Territory and of the western edge of the St. Elias Range capped by 16,421 ft (5,005 m) Mt. Bona. Dwarf Fireweed and alpine Forget-Me-Nots dot the tundra in the summer and the piercing red of bear berry and dwarf willow blaze in the autumn. We invite people of all abilities to visit this spectacular backcountry kingdom and no previous experience is necessary. Enjoy!



### **Trip Highlights:**

- Base camping and trekking in a stunning, remote alpine valley.
- Day hike to the expansive views from Chitistone Pass
- Great trip for people of all abilities
- Explore the unspoiled Alaskan wilderness

## **Skolai Pass 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 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 short flight northeast to a primitive landing strip in Skolai Valley. 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 past the rock glaciers of Sourdough Peak, sections of an old bridge that spanned the Nizina River in the 1930's, waterfalls pouring off of the Mile-high cliffs, and, off to the east, the University Range and 16,421 ft (5,005 m) Mt. Bona.



Flying north along the Nizina River, the Nizina Glacier is straight ahead. This massive flow of ice creates a natural pass between the Chitina River Valley and the northern lowlands of the Tanana River. It was used during the gold rush of 1915 as a route to Chisana a hundred miles north of McCarthy. Turning east again, the alpine tundra of Skolai Valley comes into view as you fly up Skolai Creek and round Hole-in-the-Wall Glacier. Your plane sets you

down in the lush valley and as the noise of its engines recedes you find yourself pleasantly immersed in the unparalleled wilderness of the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park.

Shouldering your packs, you and your guide set out to locate an ideal basecamp from which to begin your adventure. The options are truly limitless.

**DAY 2** – Peering out of your tent flap you may need to rub your eyes to make sure that the splendid valley surrounding you is real. Good news! It is, and today you're going to start exploring it. After a tasty breakfast, you and your guide decide to pack daypacks and explore west along Skolai Creek. Views of the 7-braided Hole-in-the-Wall Glacier fill the skyline to the south. The alpine tundra, dotted with wildflowers is soft under your feet and you revel in the sweet mountain air. Life is good as you explore along the creek and take in the magnificent views. Returning to camp in the evening, you and your guide relax with a cup of tea and watch the soft light play on the mountain tops.



**DAY 3** – Today you've decided to hike east and climb the 1,500 ft (457

m) up to Chitistone Pass. From the pass the views are astounding. Directly below you and to the northeast flows the ice of the mighty Russell Glacier. Beyond the glacier you can see the mountains and glaciers deep into the Yukon Territory. Falling away to the south is the vast Chitistone Canyon, the only path between the Wrangell Mountains and the great ice field ranges of the St. Elias Mountains. Chitistone Canyon is home to the famous "Goat Trail" and for those looking for more outstanding adventures we encourage you to come back and hike it with us. Keep your eyes peeled as you return to camp. Skolai Valley is home to wildlife including bears and caribou.

**DAY 4** – After a hot breakfast, you and your guide decide to break camp and ready your belongings for the flight back to McCarthy. However, the plane doesn't arrive until the afternoon and there's plenty of time to explore up the tumbled channel of Frederika Creek towards the Frederika Glacier. As you walk, you and your guide decide that leaving this mountain kingdom will definitely be bittersweet. On one hand, there is so much more to explore and do that you could spend weeks here taking it all in. On the other, a meal in McCarthy and a soak in our rustic wood-fired sauna sure do sound good!

### What's Included?



As with all of our Alaska backpacking adventures, the Skolai Pass 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 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.