



---

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

---

## **Alaska Backpacking – Alpine Scrambling Expedition**

Our Alpine Scrambling Expedition combines Alaska hiking and mountaineering for backpackers who wish to incorporate some easy Alaskan summits into their adventure. The climbing is non-technical, but still offers the opportunity to learn and practice basic climbing skills and techniques. Located in the high country of the Chugach Mountains, numerous summits offer a wide range of terrain types. Bush planes allow you and your guide to gain access to the area, and then backpack into higher country using glaciers and moraines as "trails". Rugged peaks in the six to seven thousand foot range (1,828 – 2,133m), some of them still unclimbed, rim the nameless valleys that you'll explore. On clear days the possibility of awe inspiring views will awaken the climbing spirit in you as you scamper from peak to peak looking for new vistas of the mountains and tundra beyond. Previous backpacking experience and good physical conditioning are a must for this adventure.



### **Trip Highlights:**

- Possible first ascents on remote Alaskan peaks.
- Alaskan backpacking trip in the magnificent Chugach Mountain wilderness.
- Exploring unnamed valleys and peaks with your experienced mountain guide.
- Learning new techniques and skills to add to your backcountry repertoire.

### **Alpine Scrambling Expedition – 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 hiking and mountaineering trip of a lifetime 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 30 minute bush plane flight south of McCarthy where you'll land on a small airstrip along the Tana River. Flying almost due south, you cross the Nizina River. To the east are the remnants of an old highway bridge built in the "20's" to access the copper and gold mines that lie abandoned near Dan Creek, May Creek, and Chittitu. On the south side of the Nizina, you fly over thick spruce forests, interspersed with shallow lakes. Huge beaver lodges, with their weathered gray wood dot the shores of the lakes. Moose can be seen during parts of the season, standing in swamps and shallow lakes with water up to their bellies.

Soon, the large, braided course of the chocolate-brown Chitina River comes into view. This entire valley was once under thousands of feet of ice when the Chitina Glacier crept down all the way to the confluence with the Copper River, a hundred miles west. On a clear day, Mt. Logan, the second highest peak in North America at 19, 850 feet (6,050 m) looms far to the east. After crossing the Chitina you turn slightly and ascend the Tana River. Below your plane is the infamous Tana River Canyon, and the Gates of the Aurora. Class IV white water rapids punctuate this glacial river as it is funneled into the narrow confines of the Tana Canyon. At its entrance are 500 foot sand dunes, deposited by the constant wind blowing down canyon from the Bagley Icefield to the south. Your pilot circles a small sandy airstrip that is nestled along the western side of the Tana River. A large white cross marks the strip, made by a lone hunter 50 years ago, as he waited, marooned, for a small plane to come and rescue him. Once on the ground, you and your guide make camp along a small seep, and marvel at the size of the grizzly bear tracks that criss- cross the strip.

**DAY 2** - This first morning there is no hurry and after breakfast, you and your guide break camp, leisurely, to begin climbing a large scree slope that tumbles down from the peak directly west of the airstrip. You'll get a healthy taste of Alaskan backpacking as you fight your way through heavy alders and willow to gain the foot of the open rocky slope. Bush whacking in Alaska is an experience in itself and you'll quickly appreciate the groomed trails of the "Lower 48" as you dodge and duck through this twisted maze. However, once onto the scree slope, you're rewarded with relatively smooth sailing. Although the route is



steep, you gladly pull steadily away from the brush. Tonight you make camp above the brush line, in a small pass that allows for beautiful views north to the Wrangell Mountains. You and your guide enjoy a tasty dinner and, after the strenuous hiking, sleep comes easily.

**DAY 3** – After a tasty, hot breakfast you and your guide hike through this unnamed mountain pass and then down a snow slope to Willow Creek. After crossing this crystal clear stream, you head towards an unnamed glacier. This river of ice is your highway to another nameless pass. Beyond is your gateway into a beautiful alpine valley surrounded by rugged 6 and 7 thousand foot (1,828 – 2,133 m) high peaks. Tonight you make camp at the edge of a small lake which lies at the upper end of the valley beneath the pass.

**DAY 4** – Today dawns and anticipation for the adventure to come rousts you from your warm cocoon. You break camp and follow the small stream flowing from the lake near the campsite. The stream leads you down the valley through alpine meadows and short brush. Keep your eyes peeled; mountain goats roam the precipitous slopes of the surrounding peaks, as well as grizzlies, moose and the colorful rock ptarmigan. You and your guide hike at your own pace and choose a campsite when you're ready to throw off your packs and perhaps scamper up a small peak.



**DAY 5-8** – You continue to explore and hike through this remote valley as well as its neighboring valleys and stream drainages. There are numerous unclimbed peaks in this region, and deciding which ones to climb will make for exciting breakfast conversation. On clear days, the views from the high peaks are breathtaking. The Bagley Icefield, with its awe inspiring snow and ice draped peaks, lies directly south. You may glimpse Mt. Miller (11,150' / 3,398m), Mt. Stellar (10,617' / 3,236m), Mt. Tom White (11,210' / 3,416m), Mt. Hawkins (10,295' / 3,137m) and the jagged peaks of Thompson Ridge. If you're lucky, you may even see Mt. Logan (19,850' / 6,050m), and America's second highest peak, Mt. St. Elias (18,008' / 5,488m) which lie some 80 miles to the southeast. You'll have views of the Wrangell Mountains to the North, Mt. Blackburn (16,390' / 4,995m) and numerous unnamed and unclimbed peaks.

The climbs will be strenuous, but not technical. You and your guide will discuss various aspects of mountaineering such as route finding, hazard evaluation, terrain types and their objective dangers. You may climb on snow, and discuss safe techniques and anchor building in case you need to use a rope in a short stretch. The goals of the climbs will be the views, the differing terrain, and simply the beauty of the particular mountain you're exploring. At the end of the trip you make your way back to the airstrip alongside the Tana River, climbing as you go, exploring peaks and valleys. On the afternoon of the 8th day, you'll rendezvous with the bush plane for the flight back to McCarthy. A hot meal and a soak in our rustic wood-fired sauna will ease your re-entry into "civilization"

## What's Included?



As with all of our Alaska backpacking adventures, the Alpine Scrambling Expedition 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.