Denali

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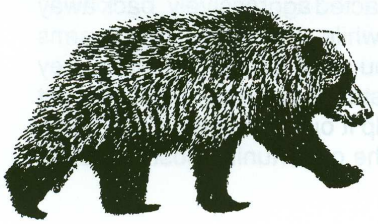


Bear Encounters

Traveling in Bear Country

When you venture into bear country, you must be willing to accept these wild creatures on their own terms. You have chosen to risk the possibility of encountering wild grizzly bears and black bears. Although there are no guarantees of safety, by being perceptive and non-threatening, you can minimize the chances of being involved in a dangerous confrontation with a bear. For your own protection and to keep Denali's bear population healthy and wild, please carefully read and abide by the following guidelines.

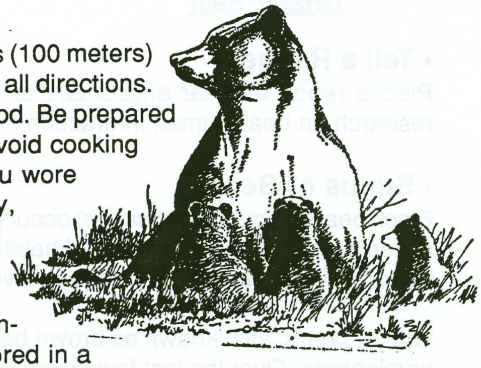
• Stay Alert - Avoid bears

Bears can be anywhere, even near populated areas or around buildings. Look for footprints and large droppings. Stay alert and watch for movement across the landscape. Try to hike in open areas, either along wide river channels, or in the alpine tundra. This open habitat affords you the opportunity to spot a bear before it sees you. Be aware of wind direction because bears rely heavily on their sense of smell. Stay upwind of thickets so the bear has a chance to smell and hear you. Never approach carcasses; a defensive bear is likely to be in the area. Be especially alert for bears in berry patches. If possible, detour around areas with high concentrations of berries. When you observe a bear, look for others; females often have cubs with them. Female grizzlies aggressively defend their cubs; therefore, never get between a female and her cubs. Be prepared to alter your route if you sight a bear. Never approach a bear or attempt to pressure it to move out of your way. Always give bears the right of way.

• Make Noise

When visibility is limited, such as in forested or brushy areas, bears may be difficult to see. A bear may also be less likely to sense a human presence. Make a variety of noises (loud talking and bell ringing work well) to alert bears of your presence. When given the opportunity, a bear will often move out of the way. Whistling is not recommended because a bear may perceive the sound as a prey animal. Sound does not travel well on windy days or near running water. Compensate for these conditions by altering your route and increasing the amount of noise you make.

• Camping and Food Handling



In the back-country, cook and store food at least 100 yards (100 meters) downwind from your tent, in an area with good visibility in all directions. Keep an eye out for approaching bears while preparing food. Be prepared to put all food away quickly when a bear is observed. Avoid cooking greasy or odorous foods. Do not sleep in the clothes you wore while cooking. When spending the night in the back-country, always store your food and garbage in a bear resistant food container.

In the roadside campgrounds, <u>all</u> food, beverages, containers, pet food, coolers, and cooking utensils must be stored in a closed, hard-sided vehicle, or in campground food-storage lockers when not in use. Trash must be stored in the same manner as food or deposited in a bear-resistant garbage can. Scrape unwanted food from pots and plates into a bear-resistant garbage can. **Never** leave food, containers, or garbage unattended. Bears are often destroyed when they become persistent in seeking out human food.