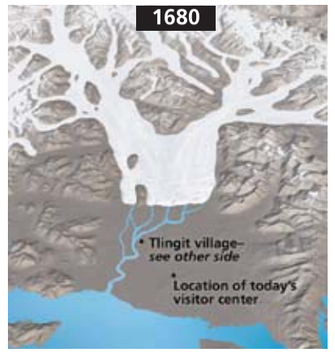
Compact Atlas of Glacier Bay

Glaciers Advance, Glaciers Retreat

Until 10,000 years ago, continental-scale ice sheets came and went many times for seven million years. During this Great Ice Age these ice sheets would reach as far south as the upper Midwest of the United States.

Glacier Bay today is the product of the Little Ice Age, a geologically recent glacial advance in northern regions. The Little Ice Age reached its maximum extent about 1750.

Some glaciers are retreating here, others are advancing—unlike in some mountains in the contiguous United States where glaciers may soon be a thing of the past.



At Glacier Bay you can witness geologic processes and change usually barely noticed in the span of a human life. Compare this diagram with the 1680 Huna Tlingit scene on the other side. There was no Glacier Bay then, only a broad valley with a glacier moving down it.

The Little Ice Age came and went quickly in geologic terms. By 1750 the glacier reached its maximum, jutting into Icy Strait, but 45 years later, when Capt. George Vancouver sailed here, the glacier had melted back five miles into Glacier Bay, which it had gouged out.

When conservationist John Muir came here in 1879 the glacier had retreated 40 more miles up the bay since Vancouver's visit. A renowned author, Muir captured the public's imagination about Alaska, attracting tourists to Glacier Bay. Like most people today, they came by ship.

Today you must travel 65 miles up the bay to view tidewater glaciers—a far cry from the glacier's 1750 maximum shown at left. Northern regions respond to changes in climate at faster rates than southern regions do. How will Glacier Bay change in your lifetime?

Visiting the Park

West of Juneau in Southeast Alaska, the park and preserve are reached by boat or plane only. Park headquarters is 65 miles from Juneau at Bartlett Cove. It is 55 more miles from there to the tidewater glaciers. To learn about safety, access, trip planning, lodging, backcountry use, services, activities, river permits, or companies that offer services in the park, contact the park. The free park newspaper *The Fairweather* also offers this information.

Vessel permits are required before entering Glacier Bay from June 1 to August 31. Contact the park at 907-697-2627 or VHF radio—KWM 20 BARTLETT COVE. Reservations are recommended. Some areas are closed or restricted because of bears, nesting birds, humpback whales, or other wildlife activity. Guard against hypothermia even in summer: rain gear, hat, gloves or mittens, and waterproof footgear are essential.

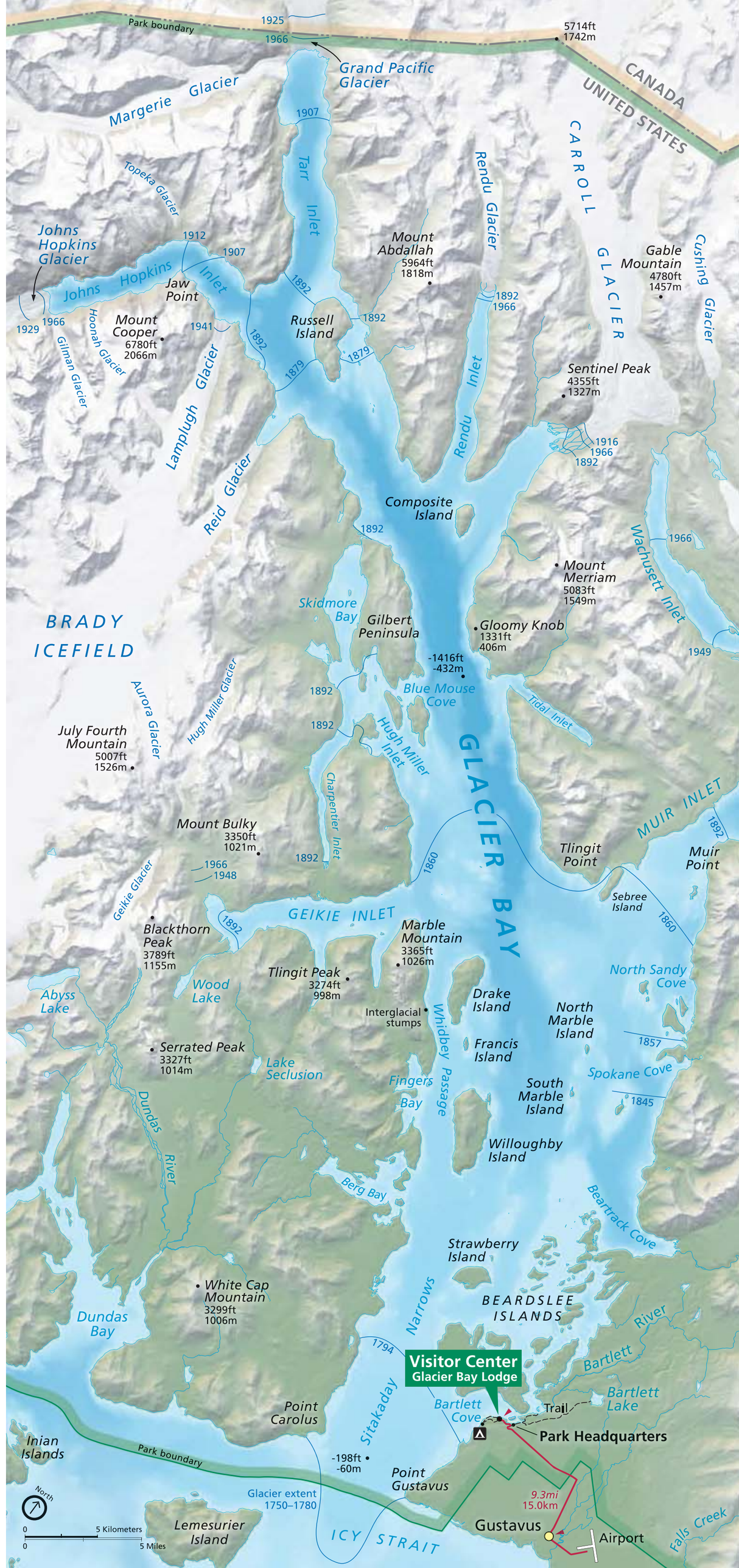
Brown/grizzly and black bears and moose roam the park. Ask a ranger about traveling and camping safely in bear country.

More Information
Glacier Bay
National Park and Preserve
P.O. Box 140
Gustavus AK 99826-0140
907-697-2230
www.nps.gov/glba
email glba_administration@nps.gov

Alaska Geographic sells books, maps, charts, and videos by mail. Contact the park for a list. Your purchases help support programs offered by the park.

Visit www.visitglacierbay.com for information on Glacier Bay Lodge.

The park and preserve are part of the National Park System, which includes over 390 parks. To learn more about national parks visit www.nps.gov.

nGPO:20xx—xxx-xxx/xxxx
Printed on recycled paper

Comprised of 3.3 million acres of mountains, glaciers, forests, and waterways, Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve are a highlight of the Inside Passage and part of a 25-million-acre World Heritage Site—one of the world's largest protected natural areas.