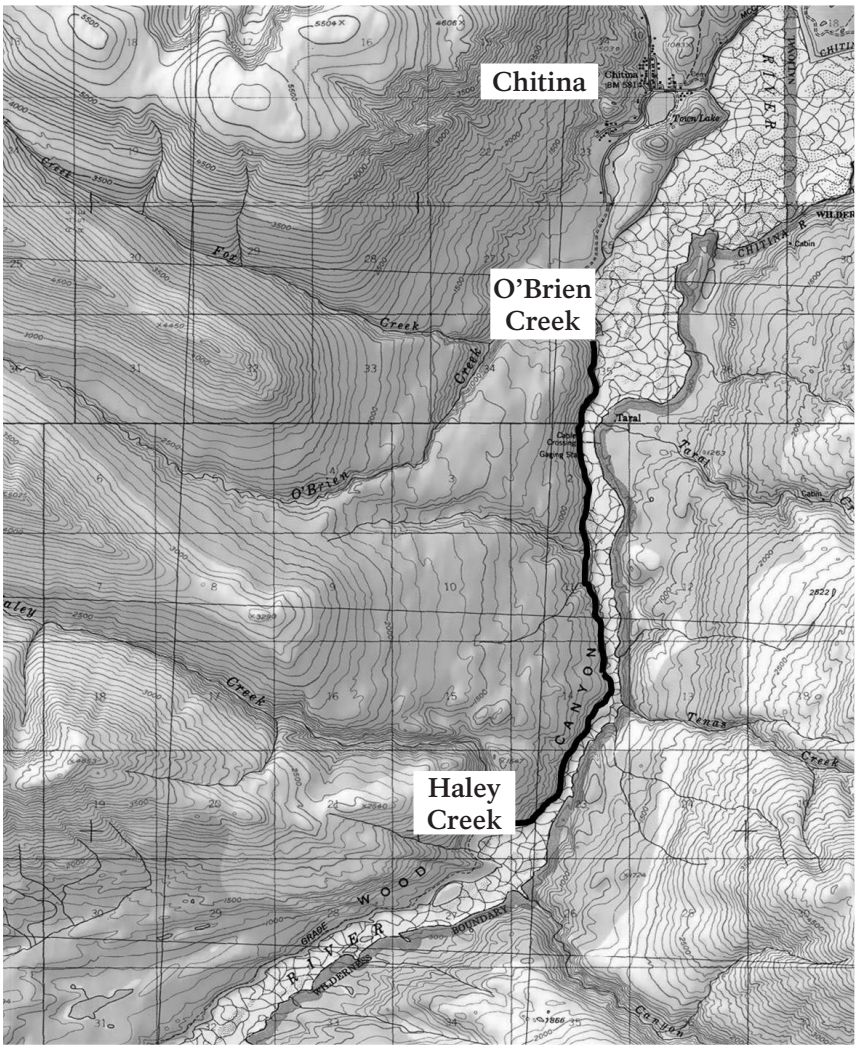
O'Brien to Haley Creek

Chitina, AK

This is a privately maintained trail. It is not managed by the National Park Service.



Access: The trailhead begins at O'Brien Creek. To reach O'Brien Creek follow the Edgerton Highway to the town of Chitina. Drive through Chitina and look for the O'Brian Creek road sign. Take a right and go about 2½ miles until you reach O'Brien Creek where parking is available. The Haley Creek Trail begins from this parking area.

Distance: Approximately 10 miles round trip from O'Brien Creek to Haley Creek

Time: About 3-5 hours round trip

Difficulty: Easy to moderate, with easy stream crossings

Highlights: Great views of the Copper River, historical sites and structures, campsites, and interesting geologic formations. This is also a nice route for mountain biking.

Route: This trail follows the old right of way of the historic Copper River and Northwestern Railway which operated from 1911 to 1938 to serve the Kennecott copper mines. The trail begins at the O'Brien Creek Bridge and continues for about five miles until it reaches Haley Creek. The trail follows the banks of the Copper River, providing views of the river and Wood Canyon. The majority of the trail is flat with a few hills and easy stream crossings. Old railroad trestles are visible in some places. The trail passes through a historic railroad tunnel. Mile markers are sporadically placed along the trail. Haley Creek is located just past mile marker 7.14. There are several locations that are suitable for camping. There is a nice gravel beach near the confluence of Haley Creek and the Copper River. The railbed goes10 more miles to Uranatina River, which is impassable.

Hazards: One mile after O'Brien Creek is a Road Closed sign, warning of possible hazards to anyone who continues past this point. The Department of Transportation no longer maintains the road. Proceed at your own risk.

Notes: This trail is heavily used by ATVs. Be aware that private property borders the trail in many places. Please be respectful of these land owners' rights and property.

5 Mile Trail
Chitina, AK

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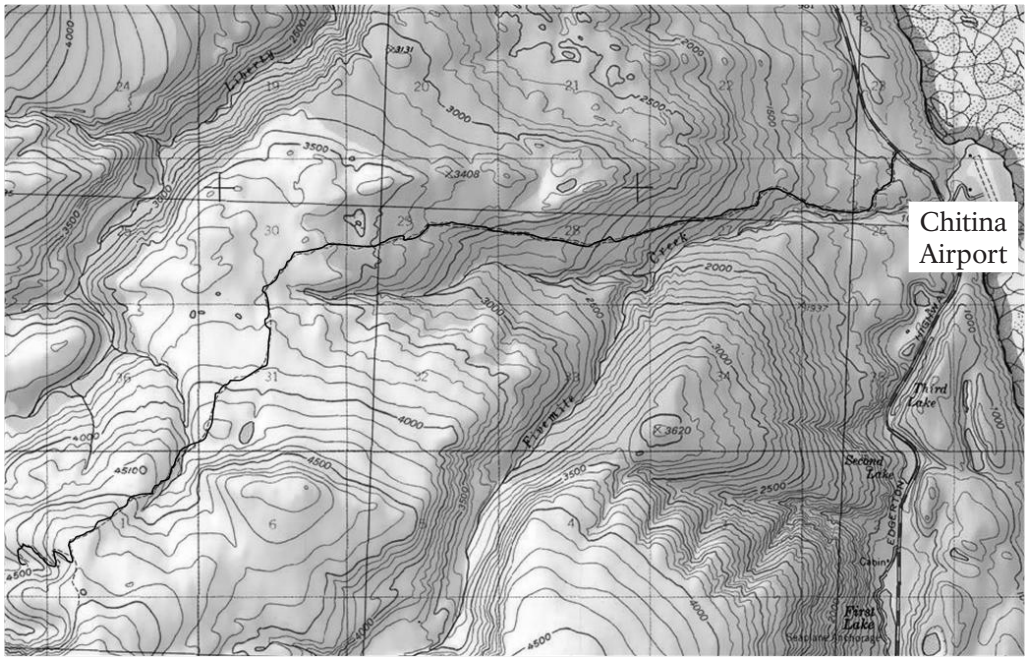

Access: Trail begins five miles from Chitina at Mile 27.8 on the Edgerton Highway, near the Chitina airport. Parking is either right off the road or up the trail a ways.

Distance: Approximately 16 miles round trip

Time: Allow 4-5 hours to reach the top and more time for exploring

Difficulty: Strenuous but straightforward. Total elevation gain of 3,500 feet.

Highlights: Easy roadside access, wide clear ATV trail, spectacular scenery, panoramic views of mountains, the Copper River, and often wildlife. A scenic waterfall, stream, and lake can be seen right off the trail about a mile above tree line. Wildflowers are abundant. Look for Fireweed, Monkshood, Larkspur, Mountain Harebell, and many more. During the late summer and early fall the berries are abundant along the trail. Blueberries are a bonus to making it above tree line. Once you are above tree line, this area is a great place to view wildlife, especially bears.

Route: The trail proceeds in a southwest direction up the mountain. This is an ATV trail that is very easy to walk. The first four miles are through trees with some nice views of the Copper River below. Once above treeline there are endless opportunities for venturing off the trail to explore mountains, lakes, and creeks.

The trail continues to an old mine site. The Tiger Mine claim was discovered in 1963 and the area was mined for gold and other related minerals from 1987 to 1994. However, the mine is not very prominent and only one of the features of this trail. It is possible to travel through the high alpine tundra and hike your own route. There are many places to camp.

Hazards: Bears are frequently sighted in this area.

Notes: If camping overnight it is necessary to have a Bear Resistant Food Container (BRFC) for food storage. These can be obtained at any visitor center in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park. There are several small lakes and creeks that are right off the trail, making water plentiful once you are above tree line. This trail is closed to ATVs and pack animals from July 26th through September 30th, due to the hunting season.