

# 2026 Denali National Park and Preserve Commercial Use Authorization Guide Handbook

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[nps.gov/dena/getinvolved/commercial-use-authorizations.htm](https://nps.gov/dena/getinvolved/commercial-use-authorizations.htm)

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# Chapter 1: Guiding in Denali NP&P

## Welcome

Whether it is your first time working in Denali National Park and Preserve, you have been working here for 30 years, or you have made the Denali region your home and your livelihood depends on your work here, the National Park Service wants you to know that we value the services you provide to the park's visitors as a guide, naturalist, driver, pilot, interpreter, or public contact.

As an employee of a business operating in the park, you are a representative of the park and what it stands for. Part of working with visitors in the park is having an understanding of the work you will do and what is expected of you. It could be summed up by the following basic tenets:

- Welcome everyone and care for their basic needs and safety
- Share the relevant rules, regulations and messaging to protect the park and our visitors
- Know the park and orient visitors to their surroundings
- Provide more than facts
- Share your pride and enthusiasm for Denali National Park and Preserve

## Entrance Fees

CUA holders are responsible for ensuring all of their clients pay applicable [entrance fees](#).

**Checking entrance fees for each guest is a REQUIRED aspect of every CUA program.**

Guides are exempt from the entrance fee. Operators may pay fees in person at the visitor center, when purchasing bus tickets or checking in for campgrounds, online at [pay.gov](#), or they can direct their clients to pay their entrance fees online. Interagency passes are valid entrance tickets for Denali. The NPS can also set up Fee Management Agreements with operators so they can purchase prepaid entrance tickets at a 10% discount and provide them to clients. Check with your supervisors if you are unsure how your employer handles entrance fees and review the fees handout for more information.

## Contact the CUA Office

The CUA coordinator is available to provide a variety of supports including:

## Guide Trainings

Several opportunities for guide trainings are offered in the spring, online and in person. This training includes discussion of CUA rules and regulations, park information, basics of interpretation, and Q&A. Trainings tailored to individual companies or offered other times of the year may be available by request.

## Program Development Support

Guides and their supervisors are welcome to reach out with questions about developing programs including logistics and interpretive content. Our office can review program outlines and provide feedback as capacity allows.

## Ranger Chats

A limited number of Ranger Chats are available throughout the summer season. Schedule for a ranger to come provide a 10-15 minute talk for your participants. These chats offer a welcome message, some park information, and a spark of curiosity for the group's time in Denali. Contact the CUA Coordinator to schedule.

## Contact Information

For current conditions and general park information, call the park info line at 907-683-9532 or email [denali\\_info@nps.gov](mailto:denali_info@nps.gov). For all other questions or to request the above resource, contact the CUA Coordinator by calling 907-683-9553 or email [dena\\_cua@nps.gov](mailto:dena_cua@nps.gov).

# Chapter 2: Safety and Resource Protection

## What to do in an Emergency

Your company's emergency procedures take precedent over this information. Follow the guidelines provided by your employer.

For trips taking place in the frontcountry, a cell phone is often the most effective means of emergency communication. If you call 911 from a cell phone your call will likely be answered by a dispatch center in Fairbanks. Answer their questions and provide your location. They will transfer your call to the Alaska Region Communication Center (ARCC) which is located in Denali and services public lands for the entire state.

Making an emergency call using satellite communication devices (satellite phone, inReach, etc.) may result in being connected with ARCC or the dispatch center you contact may coordinate with ARCC and other resources. You and your participants should be familiar with the device you carry and the information necessary to effectively communicate your location and situation.

## Alaska Region Communication Center (ARCC)

The staff at ARCC have specialized knowledge of the park and resources available to assist with your emergency. If you need non-emergency response you can call ARCC at 907-683-9555. Examples of reasons you might call ARCC directly: your vehicle is disabled and obstructing traffic, you are witnessing someone committing a crime that does not

constitute an emergency (e.g. defacing property). Incidents involving serious injury, fatality, or vehicle/ property damage **must** be reported to ARCC by calling 907-683-2276.

## Wildlife Safety

Providing wildlife safety messaging to all clients is a requirement of all CUAs. A **detailed**, comprehensive discussion *and* demonstration of what visitors should do during wildlife encounters are essential for all guided hikes or walks. Detailed messaging should also be provided to any visitors who will be camping or hiking. This is especially important if a portion of their visit will be unguided.

The goal of wildlife safety messaging is to instill a sense of shared responsibility for the visitor to respect wildlife, to prevent negative encounters from happening, and for all of us to be stewards in keeping wildlife healthy and wild. All wildlife safety messaging can be summarized by the following statement: Respect wildlife by *preventing* an encounter, *responding* appropriately to their presence, and *reporting* encounters with wildlife that affect its behavior or cause concerns for human safety. See the messaging that follows.

### Essential messages about wildlife safety in Denali

- Prevention is key: be alert, make noise, hike in groups, and carry bear spray
- Keep your distance, never approach or feed wildlife, and always secure food and trash properly
- Run from a moose if necessary
- Never run from a bear; respond appropriately to its behavior
- If you encounter a bear, never leave food or gear behind
- Never allow a wolf to approach
- Report wildlife encounters

### Keep Wildlife Wild

Please keep Denali's animals wild by following these rules when encountering wildlife:

- **Never feed wildlife**  
Do not feed or allow wildlife to obtain human foods. This includes small animals, like birds and squirrels! Human food is unhealthy for wildlife and animals can become aggressive if they grow accustomed to being fed by people.
- **Keep your distance**  
Do not approach or follow wildlife. Stay at least 300 yards (275 meters) away from bears and at least 25 yards (23 meters) from all other animals, dens, and nests.
- **Don't harass wildlife**  
If your presence alters an animal's behavior in any way, you are too close. Attempting to call wildlife closer is also prohibited.

- **Wildlife viewing from the road**

If you are driving on the park road and wish to stop to view wildlife, pull over as far out of the roadway as you safely can and use pullouts when possible. Do not abandon your vehicle on the shoulder of the road. Always leave room for at least one lane of traffic to pass through.

If you are on Highway 3, do not pull over unless you find a parking lot or pull-out area. Stopping on the side of the road on Highway 3 is extremely dangerous, as most other travelers are not expecting cars to suddenly stop in the roadway. If you cannot safely exit the roadway, drive past the wildlife and look for a safe spot to park or turn around. Do not stop in the middle of the road!

## Moose Safety

Herbivores can be just as dangerous as carnivores. Moose weigh up to 1,600 lbs—three or four times the weight of a grizzly bear in Denali—and will charge anything they think is threatening.

### *Stay Away*

Moose look docile but may charge unexpectedly and try to kick or trample a perceived threat. Stay at least two bus-lengths (25 yards, 23 m) away from moose.

### *Run Away*

If a moose charges you, it is because you are in its space. Get away as fast as you can, zigzagging and putting obstacles between you and the moose.

## Bear Safety

### *Preventing Negative Encounters With Bears*

What can you do to reduce the chances of a dangerous situation? Knowledge is the key to prevention and is the most important tool to take with you in bear country. Two of the best ways to avoid conflicts are to prevent surprise encounters and to ensure your food and trash are always stored properly.

### *Preventing Surprise Encounters*

When bears feel threatened, they will either fight or flee. Most of the time they flee, but bears may also respond to a threat by charging or attacking. This most commonly occurs when people encounter female bears with cubs or bears protecting a food source (e.g., a carcass). To reduce the chances of a surprise encounter:

- Make your presence known – Hike in groups and make noise to avoid surprising bears.

- Move in the open and avoid areas with poor visibility when possible. In areas of poor visibility, make noise more frequently.
- Traveling along rivers or other noisy areas makes it difficult for bears to hear you. Be extra loud in noisy areas.
- Pay attention to signs of bear activity (tracks, scat, dug up areas, etc.).
- Watch for carcasses – Look for bird activity to alert you of a carcass that a bear may be feeding on. If you see or smell a carcass, leave the area.
- Don't wear headphones or earbuds when hiking, jogging, or biking.
- Biking and jogging increase your speed and the likelihood of surprising a bear. Read more about [cycling safety](#).
- Stay at least 300 yards away from all bears (the length of three football fields).
- Ask about recent bear activity at the visitor center or Backcountry Information Center.
- Pay attention to trailhead signs that may provide information about recent bear activity.

## What To Do If You Encounter a Bear

### *Grizzly Bears and Black Bears*

Both grizzly bears and black bears have been involved in defensive and non-defensive attacks. Recent research suggests that your response to a bear encounter should be based on the bear's behavior, not on the species of bear. Deescalate the situation: If the bear is agitated and its energy is high, you should have low energy. If the bear is acting timid and slowly approaching you or interested in your food, this curious behavior should be met with aggression. Your energy should be the opposite of the bear's energy.

### Is The Bear Aware of You?

- **If you see a bear and it seems unaware of your presence:** Keep it that way. Quietly leave the area as soon as possible.
- **If the bear is aware of you:** Identify yourself as a human. **Do not run!** Bears standing on their hind legs are not threatening you; they are merely trying to identify you. If the bear is not approaching you, increase your distance. If the bear slowly approaches you, stand your ground by lifting your hands above your head and grouping together if you are with others.



## Defensive Bear Encounters

Defensive behavior occurs when a bear's threshold of comfort has been exceeded. This typically occurs when bears are surprised, protecting cubs, or defending a food source. Defensive bears want to neutralize a threat, so they may charge or attack.

In a defensive attack, a bear will approach you in an explosive manner, running hard with their ears back and head low. They are telling you they feel uncomfortable. Your goal is to let them know you are not a threat by deescalating the situation. If a bear charges, do not run. Talk to the bear calmly. Be ready to use [bear spray](#).

If a defensive bear makes contact, fall to the ground and play dead. Try to remain quiet and do not fight back. Lay on your stomach and protect your vital areas of head and neck by clasping your hands behind your head/neck. Remain motionless until you are certain the bear has left.

## Non-Defensive Bear Encounters

Non-defensive encounters occur when a bear is curious, seeking your food, testing its dominance, or rarely, sees you as possible prey. Unlike a defensive bear, a curious bear will often approach slowly in a cautious manner and may look away when you look in their direction. They may flank you or act uninterested to try and get closer. Food-conditioned bears may be bolder and try to push people away from a picnic table or other food source.

In any non-defensive encounter, be loud and intimidating. Let the bear know you are not worth investigating. Do not drop your pack or abandon food. If the bear is within range, use bear spray to persuade it to leave.

If a non-defensive bear makes contact or attacks, be as intimidating as possible. Fight back with everything you have. Be loud and bold.

## Bear Spray

Bear spray is a non-lethal tool specifically designed to deter bears. The active ingredient in bear spray is *capsaicin*, which is the chemical compound that makes chili peppers spicy. Capsaicin will irritate a bear's nose, eyes, and lungs and can cause significant, temporary pain.

Unlike pepper spray intended to deter humans, bear spray reaches substantially further (up to 40 feet) and comes out as a cloud instead of a stream. Using bear spray eliminates the need to have precise aim and it effectively defuses situations without permanently harming or killing bears.

Bear spray is a last line of defense. It does not replace the need for following best practices to prevent encounters with bears discussed above.

## How to Use Bear Spray

**All CUA guides should review the video demonstrating proper use of bear spray on the Denali website.**

- Carry your bear spray where you can reach it quickly, such as in a waist holster or chest holster. Do not carry it inside your pack or in other hard to reach areas.
- If a bear is charging quickly, spray when the bear is 50–60 feet away to create a wall between you and the bear. Bears can run up to 40 feet per second, so creating a cloud in front of you provides time for the spray to affect the bear before it reaches you.
- If you feel threatened by a bear that is moving toward you more slowly, spray once the bear is within the manufacturer's stated range for your bear spray (usually 30–40 feet).
- When traveling through thick vegetation or other areas of poor visibility, remove your bear spray from the holster and carry it in your hand.
- Spraying into a strong wind will limit the distance the spray travels and will likely result in the user feeling the effects of the spray. However, the spray emerges from the can at over 70 mph and will probably still be effective.
- Bear spray is a deterrent, not a repellent. **Do not apply** bear spray to your body or gear.

## Leave No Trace

**All Denali CUA holders are required to provide Leave No Trace education to their clients. It is recommended that all CUA guides take the [Leave No Trace 101](#) course.**

Denali was set aside over 100 years ago to protect wildlife, preserve history and provide for public enjoyment. Today you will find most of it is managed as [federally protected Wilderness](#), a place preserved, “in contrast with those areas where man and his works dominate the landscape.” As you travel through this unique landscape, be inspired and free, but remember the actions of few can impact the experience of many. Respect the plants and animals that call Denali home, and take responsibility for their continued protection by following the seven principles of Leave No Trace below.

### 1. Plan Ahead and Prepare

Denali’s hazards include remote terrain, large wildlife, and unpredictable weather, making it essential to be properly prepared for both day trips and multi-day excursions. In addition to safety, being prepared can prevent you from impacting an area unintentionally.

- Do your research beforehand on [what to expect in Denali](#)

- Ensure someone knows the plan for your trip and your return date. There is no cell phone service in most of the park.
- Bring what you need to keep yourself safe if there is a change in the weather or an emergency. Check out the safety advice lower on this page and recommended [gear lists for day hikers](#) and [gear lists for overnight users](#).
- Know park rules and regulations for your activity. Federal lands allow for multiple activities and experiences, but not all are allowed in all areas. Respect the rights of other users.

Backcountry users should review additional information, found on the Denali website, to be prepared for Denali's unique challenges.

## 2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces

Denali has very few trails and no developed campsites off the park road, which makes low-impact travel different here than for most National Parks. Once you leave a formal trail, Denali strives to disperse people throughout the park to avoid everyone walking and camping in the same place.

- If you are on a formal trail, stay on the trail to concentrate your impact.
- If you leave a formal trail, attempt to travel, rest, and camp on the most durable surfaces available. Durable surfaces are areas free of vegetation such as rock, sand, gravel, or snow. Gravel bars and dry washes are great, durable trail corridors.
- When on vegetation, spread out to disperse your impact. Walk side by side rather than single file. If terrain or wildlife necessitates you bunch up, spread out again as soon as you can.
- If you are camping outside of a campground, do not stay more than two nights in the same spot to minimize your impact to that location. Camp on a durable surface and move your tent at least 1/2 mile to disperse your impacts. Avoid areas that show pre-existing disturbance from camping so they can recover.

## 3. Dispose of Waste Properly

Improper disposal of trash and human waste can have negative impacts on both the experience and the health of visitors and wildlife.

- Pack out everything you take into the backcountry. This includes all food waste, garbage, and even biodegradable material such as banana peels and egg shells.
- Solid human waste should be buried 6 inches deep and at least 200 feet from water, trails and camp. Ideally it is buried in deep organic soil. Pack out your toilet paper and sanitary products.
- Urinate away from drinking water sources and off formal trails.

- In certain areas of the park, Clean Mountain Cans (CMCs) are required for carrying out human waste. Learn more about Clean Mountain Cans.

#### 4. Leave What You Find

Leave the items you find in the park undisturbed. Denali's long and interesting history can have you stumbling across anything from dinosaur bones, to 10,000 year old artifacts, to historic mining equipment. Let the park's natural and historic objects remain undisturbed for future enjoyment and study.

- Leave the backcountry as you found it; do not take home rocks, artifacts, antlers, animal remains or flowers as souvenirs. Feel free to eat edible plants and berries for personal consumption.
- Good campsites and rest spots are found, not made. Do not damage vegetation or rearrange rocks and logs while taking breaks. If items are moved, place them back before leaving.
- Avoid making or worsening informal trails. Do not cut vegetation or leave navigational aids such as rock cairns or arrows.

#### 5. Minimize Campfire Impacts

Denali has specific areas and seasons where fires are permitted. In summer, fires are prohibited in the Wilderness and in some established campgrounds. Know the [rules for your campground](#) before you start a fire. Even when fires are permitted, avoid campfires when possible since they can create fire scars, increase wildfire risk, and tend to be repositories for trash that won't fully burn. Wood can also be a limited resource in parts of Denali. If you do choose to have a fire, adhere to the following principles:

- Keep fires small and always in control. Use sticks from the ground that can be broken by hand.
- Burn all wood and coals to ash, put out campfires completely, and then scatter cool ashes.
- Any rocks used for fire pits must be dispersed after the fire is extinguished.
- All trash must be removed from the fire site after use.

#### 6. Respect Wildlife

Denali is home to many diverse [wildlife species](#). While wildlife viewing tends to focus on large charismatic mammals, remember these species rely upon even the smallest of animals to survive in this harsh habitat. Respect all wildlife by adhering to the following principle while you are a visitor in their home.

- Never feed or approach wildlife. The viewing distance for all wildlife except bears is 25 yards. For bears, the viewing distance is 300 yards.
- If an animal is changing its behavior, you are too close. Back away.
- [Bear Resistant Food Containers](#) (BRFCs) are required for most overnight backcountry trips in Denali.
- Travel through any wildlife closure is prohibited. Current closures can be found at <https://www.nps.gov/dena/planyourvisit/closures.htm>

## 7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors

People venture into Denali for reasons as varied as there are visitors. Be courteous towards all others you meet so everyone can have a quality experience.

- Keep your group size small.
- Give space to other groups to allow for opportunities of solitude and peace.
- Keep the trail clear when you are taking a break so that other users can pass through.
- Let nature's sounds prevail. Avoid loud voices and noises except when alerting wildlife to your presence in areas with reduced visibility.
- When camping, set up your tent out of sight of the park road, other users, and established trails and developed areas.

## Use Social Media Responsibly

Social media has the power to significantly impact Denali, for better or worse. It can be used to inspire outdoor enthusiasts to follow Leave No Trace principles and appreciate the park, or it can reinforce negative behavior and draw crowds to places that were once tranquil.

Consider the following points:

### **Be thoughtful about location tags, and please do not post GPS tracks.**

Denali is mostly without trails, which supports wilderness values like self-reliance, solitude, and discovery. However, when specific locations or GPS tracks are shared broadly, the footsteps of followers may lead to trail formation, overused campsites, and multitudes of people congregating at points of interest. Please keep your tags general if you choose to include them.

### **Encourage the positive, avoid posting the negative.**

Your platform may motivate others to pursue similar activities, so lead by example. Are you at least 300 yards from the bear in your photo? Consider whether the actions depicted in your posts are responsible, legal, and demonstrate good stewardship.

# Chapter 3: Interpretation

## Defining Interpretation

To put it simply, interpretation is helping people connect with the meaning a place, object, or story has so that they gain a deeper understanding and develop appreciation. This sense of connection leads to caring. Interpreting is giving people more than just facts.

The NPS often refers to the place, object, or story being interpreted as a *resource*. This broad term that could refer the entire park or to a single insect—depending on the context. So, interpretation cultivates an intellectual and emotional connection that inspires people to care for the resource.

## Why Interpretation Matters

Interpretation does more than just provides people with information by:

- Building care and stewardship
- Making complex things relatable
- Creating meaningful experiences
- Helping visitors see themselves in the story

Think of the last time you had a memorable experience that made you want to spend more time in a place, learn more about a thing, or share the event with someone else. Why did you feel a strong connection to that resource? What cultivated that inspiration? Fostering this opportunity for visitors is why all CUA holder provide interpretation.

## Interpretative Concepts and Techniques

This is a short summary of a few concepts and techniques that are commonly used in conjunction. A wide array of techniques can be found in the resources described in the “Learn More” section below.

## Tangibles, Intangibles, and Universal Concepts

Tangibles are finite things, people, or events.

Examples:

- Boreal forest
- Glaciers
- Building the park road
- The dog kennels
- Walter Harper

Intangibles are the meanings or values assigned to the tangible things.

Examples:

- Preservation
- Freedom
- Change
- Solitude
- Perseverance

Many intangibles are fundamental to the human condition and commonly understood by everyone regardless of their culture or background. These are called universal concepts.

Examples:

- Wonder
- Survival
- Death
- Hope

Connections involve moments of intellectual and emotional revelation, perception, insight, or discovery. Opportunities for visitors to meaningfully connect to a site occur when an interpreter successfully links a site's tangible resources to the intangible meanings those resources tend to represent. Connecting a site's tangible resources to their intangible meanings and universal concepts makes the resources more personally relevant and valuable to visitors.

## Thematic Interpretation

Tangibles, intangibles, and universal concepts are the building blocks to thematic interpretive program. Themes are the thesis statement of the program. They guide the focus of the program so visitors can understand the bigger meaning behind what they see and experience. Examples of themes:

- **Interdependence:** Every element in the ecosystem relies on others, revealing the hidden connections that shape life.
- **Discovery:** Exploring reveals new insights and perspectives, inviting curiosity and reflection.
- **Change Over Time:** Natural processes transform the environment, highlighting cycles of growth and renewal.

Truly meaningful interpretation relates what is being interpreted to the hearts and minds of the audience and answers the question "Why should I care?". Your theme should be the short answers this question.

## Selecting Techniques

Interpretive techniques should be engaging, suite the audience, and facilitate the message of the program.

## Presentation Skills

Clear communication is essential to every program. When your audience can hear you, understand your words, and follow your directions, your program has the opportunity to be engaging and meaningful. Here are a few things to focus on to ensure your program lands.

## Introductions and Conclusions

As guides we're often very focused on logistics. What gear does our group need, where are we going, what time do we need to back. Logistics dominate our introductions and conclusions with groups. However, it's just as important to have a **thematic** introduction and conclusion as it is to cover logistics. Your introduction sets the stage, framing the experience so visitors engage both intellectually and emotionally. Your conclusion reinforces the main message, helping visitors make sense of what they've seen and experienced. Think of it like guiding someone through a great book: you're helping them recognize why it mattered and what they'll take away—almost like helping them “write the review” of their visit before they leave.

## Engaging Visitors

Engaging techniques invite visitors to think, feel, and participate, making the experience more memorable and meaningful. Programs that rely only on the guide talking—or focus only on the guide's knowledge—risk leaving visitors passive or disconnected. By involving the audience, you create space for them to discover their own connections to the resource. Techniques for engaging visitors include:

- Thought provoking/ open ended questions
- Hands-on activities
- Sensory experiences
- Participant sharing
- Storytelling
- Comparison/ analogy/ metaphor
- Problem solving challenges
- Demonstrations (involve the audience)

## Managing Groups

Managing your group is essential to creating a safe and effective program. Clear guidance, establishing expectations, and monitoring group behavior help keep everyone focused and



engaged. Good group management also supports interpretation—when visitors are attentive and organized, they can better notice details, participate in activities, and connect with the themes you’re presenting.

- **Set expectations early:** Explain rules, timing, and safety at the start so the group knows what to do. Explain the participants role in the program so they know it will not be a passive experience.
- **Gather attention before speaking:** Wait until the group is quiet and focused to ensure messages are heard.
- **Use natural breaks and pauses:** Check in frequently to keep everyone together and engaged. Give people time and quiet to process and generate questions.
- **Position yourself strategically:** Stay visible and accessible so everyone can see and hear you. If you’re hiking, make sure everyone has caught up before you start.
- **Encourage participation:** Actively involve visitors in discussions, questions, or activities while keeping the group organized.

### Adapting to your Audience

Every program is unique because every audience is unique. Good interpreters modify their techniques to suite their audience and resource. If a group seems disengaged, it doesn’t mean your content isn’t valuable—it means you may need to approach it from a different angle or access point to make it relatable and meaningful for them. Adapt to your audience by adjusting language, examples, and activities to match interest, experience, and engagement. Watch for cues from the group and offer multiple ways for visitors to connect with the content, keeping the program meaningful and accessible for everyone.

### Learn More

There are many training opportunities available to develop interpretive skills. Some CUA permits types require guides to complete an interpretive training course equivalent to the Eppley’s Foundations of Interpretation. There are also many resources on the “For People Who Work with the Public” section of Denali’s website. This includes a recommended reading list and additional websites. Another great way to learn more is to watch skilled interpreters. Work with your supervisors to set up opportunities to observe other guides. The CUA office can also offer additional training and schedule guides to observe example programs.

## Chapter 4: Park Information

As a CUA holder you are required to provide accurate information and quality customer service. Having a breadth of knowledge about the park is necessary to fulfill this

requirement. It's essential to know the basics about visiting the park. Understanding visitor center hours, entrance fees, park access, the bus system, and seasonal operations ensures you represent the park accurately and professionally, even if your guests don't need these details themselves. Regardless of the type of activity you guide, having some naturalist content in your back pocket is important. Naturalists know a little bit about a lot of things. They have factual information and present a curiosity about the natural world. Be prepared with information about park history, cultural history, flora and fauna, ecosystems dynamics, geology, weather and other topics relevant to the park and your audience.

## Park Mission

We protect intact, the globally significant Denali ecosystems, including their cultural, aesthetic, and wilderness values, and ensure opportunities for inspiration, education, research, recreation and subsistence for this and future generations.

## Park Basics and Logistics

Denali is six million acres of wild land, bisected by one ribbon of road. Travelers along it see the relatively low-elevation taiga forest give way to high alpine tundra and snowy mountains, culminating in North America's tallest peak, 20,310' Mount McKinley. Wild animals large and small roam un-fenced lands, living as they have for ages. Solitude, tranquility and wilderness await.

In 1917, Congress created this park for one main reason: to protect Dall sheep. Over time, Congress expanded the park boundaries and added other reasons for its existence, including protection of North America's tallest mountain (Mount McKinley) and to provide a place for wilderness recreation. Today, most people arrive in Denali hoping to see the mountain, view wildlife (such as bears, moose, caribou, sheep, and wolves), and experience the vast wilderness.

## Campgrounds

The park has six designated campgrounds. Stays are limited to 14 nights total. Group sites are available by reservation for nine to 20 people. Camping is prohibited in parking areas and on roadsides. Campfires are permitted only in certain campgrounds. Additional information on camping and details of each campground can be found [online](#). Commercial operators may only camp in Savage River Campground and require a CUA.

## Denali Visitor Center

Built in 2005, the Denali Visitor Center and its surrounding "campus" are worth a stop, either at the beginning or end of your trip. Surrounding facilities include a restaurant, giftshop, bag check, bus stop and railroad depot. The center itself is the main National Park Service welcome and information center. During the summer, you can explore exhibits,

watch the park film, pay the park entrance fee, and talk with a ranger. In fall, winter, and spring, the Murie Science and Learning Center (MSLC) acts as the park's Winter Visitor Center. Guiding in the visitor center is prohibited.

## Walter Harper Talkeetna Ranger Station

Located in the town of Talkeetna, about 100 miles south of the entrance to Denali National Park and Preserve, this ranger station serves as the center of mountaineering operations. Climbers wishing to attempt Mount McKinley or other peaks in the Alaska Range stop here first, for an orientation to the mountain and to acquire their climbing permit. This ranger station also offers some visitor services, particularly in summer. It is open year-round.

## The Sled Dog Kennels

From May 15 to mid-September, 2025, the kennels are open to visitors from 9:30 am to 4:30 pm daily. Visitors have the opportunity to walk through the dog yard, meet the park's canine rangers, talk with rangers about the work sled dogs do to protect park wilderness, and learn about mushing through exhibits.

The dogs primarily live at home in the kennels during the summer, but you may also see dogs out on walks and runs along the park road.

[Sled dog demonstrations](#) are offered during the summer season. These popular programs are a great way to learn more about mushing and the role of sled dogs in Denali. To attend a dog demo, you'll use a dedicated shuttle from the visitor center to travel to and from the kennels. In winter (mid-September through mid-May), the kennels are open on Saturdays and Sundays only, from 1 pm to 4 pm. **Guided Winter Activities is the only CUA who may park at headquarters to visit the Kennels.**

## Types of Bus Trips: Tour vs. Transit

There are two main types of buses in Denali—narrated trips (*tour* buses) and non-narrated trips (*transit* buses). In addition, a few free buses travel routes around the park entrance, connecting visitor centers and points of interest in the same area where visitors may drive their own vehicles. CUA guides may ride buses with their clients but may not provide any support, narration, or guiding services. Guides must behave only as visitors on buses.

### *Non-narrated transit buses*

Cheaper than tour buses, and more flexible in that you may disembark and re-board anywhere along the restricted portion of the road, these are called **transit** buses. Transit bus drivers aim to help you experience the park on your own terms. These buses stop for wildlife viewing, restroom stops and beautiful scenery, just like tour buses.

[Read more about non-narrated transit bus options](#)

### *Narrated tour buses*

Your driver is your narrator on the tour buses, and they will provide a detailed and captivating program to accompany your journey along the Denali Park Road. Tour buses make the same restroom stops as the non-narrated buses, and of course will pause for views of wildlife and scenery. All tours offer either a snack or full lunch.

[Read more about narrated tour bus options](#)

### *Free buses*

Three types of free buses operate on the publicly-drivable portion of the Denali Park Road. These enable visitors without vehicles, or those who wish to leave their vehicle behind, to travel between various facilities, trails, campgrounds and day-use areas. All of these are free, and none require reservations.

[Learn more about free buses](#)

## Weather

The following is a generalization of Denali's weather. For detailed info like historic temperatures at certain seasons, precipitation, etc., please see [our detailed weather & climate data](#). Weather in Denali is extremely variable. Changes in weather often occur without warning. Many of our rangers tell visitors to expect sun, wind, rain, and clouds, and expect them all on the same day. Snow can fall any month of the year, particularly in the mountains.

### Summer

When talking about weather, "summer" generally means late May through early September. Average summer temperatures range from 33 to 75 degrees Fahrenheit. While rare, it has been known to snow in any summer month, so be prepared for cold weather. Wearing layers of clothing makes it easy to regulate your body temperature.

Also, you'll find that a good waterproof, hooded raincoat is invaluable. June through August are the rainiest months in Denali, although yearly variances sometimes lead to bone dry summers—Denali always keeps you guessing.

### Winter

Winters can be extremely cold with temperatures ranging from -40 degrees Fahrenheit and colder, to high 20s on warm days. This kind of extreme cold typically begins by late October or early November, and runs through March.

As mentioned above, snow is possible any month of the year - although snow that falls before mid-September tends to melt quickly. Winter snow levels are not usually sufficient for skiing or other recreation until mid-October or later. Specialized cold weather gear is necessary for [mountaineering](#) and [winter visits](#).

## The Other Two Weeks of the Year

Both spring and fall seasons are quite short. Spring weather, which might occur in late April and early May, sees highs into the 40s or 50s F, and lows near or below freezing. In extreme years, however, winter temperatures (below freezing) linger until nearly the start of summer. Fall weather, generally occurring in September, is similar—highs well above freezing, and lows at or below freezing.

## Flora

This subarctic wilderness is home to more than 1,500 species of vascular plants, mosses and lichens. They form the foundation of the park's ecosystems and define the habitat characteristics for all of the more famous and recognizable denizens of Denali National Park such as moose, wolves, eagles, caribou and grizzly bears. Without the rich and diverse vegetation communities that blanket the park landscape, this area would be entirely barren of animal life. Therefore, preserving the precious botanical resources of the park is central to conserving and maintaining the entire intact subarctic ecosystem here. Check out the [Ecological Atlas of Denali's Flora](#) to search for information on a specific species. Learn more about [plant groups](#) and [vegetation science](#) for in-depth knowledge of Denali flora.

## Fauna

Denali's abundant and diverse wildlife are just as famous as its tallest mountain, Mount McKinley, which towers above the landscape at 20,310' tall. In fact, Denali was the first national park created to protect wildlife. Now, this park is home to 39 species of mammals, 169 species of birds, and 1 lonely species of amphibian. Visit the [wildlife](#) section of the website to learn about the animals that make Denali their home.

## How To Estimate Populations

Aerial surveys are the primary means to estimate the size of large mammal populations. Imagine you're the trained observer counting wildlife while the pilot flies the small fixed-wing plane over standard survey routes. You might track signals from radio-collared animals to locate non-collared ones in the same group. Knowing the number of animals per square mile from your survey, and how much of the park's suitable habitat you covered, you can estimate the population size for the entire park.

Population sizes often are estimated separately on the north and south sides of the Alaska Range's inhospitable spine of rock and ice. The timing of surveys makes a big difference in population estimates. Wildlife biologists working in the park provide these estimates of population sizes for Denali's large mammals.

### *Grizzly Bears*

On the north side of the Alaska Range, there are approximately 300–350 grizzly bears. This number is based on densities determined using radio collaring of bears south and west of Wonder Lake (about 70 bears per 1,000 mi<sup>2</sup> or 27 bears per 1,000 km<sup>2</sup>), then extrapolating to all grizzly bear habitat. On the south side of the Alaska Range, brown bear density is about 72 bears per 1,000 mi<sup>2</sup> (28 bears per 1,000 km<sup>2</sup>). The density of grizzlies is likely to be higher south of the Alaska Range because the habitat includes more salmon streams. These estimates are the results of survey work done in the mid 1990's and are the most current available.

### *Black Bears*

Black bears have been observed throughout the park, particularly in forested areas. No formal surveys have been conducted north of the Alaska Range. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) estimates that there are about 2700 black bears in Game Management Unit 16, or about 334 bears per 1,000 mi<sup>2</sup> (131 bears per 1,000 km<sup>2</sup>). Based on the proportion of GMU 16B that is in Denali, there are about 200 black bears in the park on the south side. These estimates are the results of survey work done in the early 2000's and are the most current available.

### *Wolves*

In spring 2022, there were approximately 105 wolves in the 14 packs regularly being monitored by park biologists and 15 packs monitored by the fall. Den activity and pup productivity were monitored through radio tracking flights as well as data received remotely from Iridium radio collars all season. It appeared the 14 out of 15 packs monitored by fall denned and 13 packs had pups that survived to the fall.

### *Caribou*

The fall 2022 parkwide preliminary estimate for the Denali Caribou Herd was about 1,510 caribou, a decrease from the 2021 estimate of 2,060. Ten percent of calves born in 2013 survived to September. This population estimate reflects a recent decline of the Denali Herd since 2018.

### *Moose*

Moose surveys were last conducted within the park on the south side of the Alaska Range where subsistence users harvest moose (Cantwell area) in December 2018. Near Cantwell, 509 moose were observed in a 419 mi<sup>2</sup> (1,085-km<sup>2</sup>) area. Moose numbers in this area appear to be stable or increasing slightly. The last survey on the north side of the Alaska Range was in 2017 and estimated 1,743 moose. This estimate is similar to the 2015 survey estimate but a slight increase over estimates done in the early 2000's. Aerial moose surveys in the park are on hold for the time being (2023) while survey methodology is re-evaluated.

### *Dall Sheep*

Estimates of the sheep population north of the Alaska Range in Denali National Park have ranged from about 1,100 – 2,000 from 2011 to 2020. New aerial survey techniques are being tested and updated population estimates are forthcoming (as of 2023).

### *Other Challenges*

Even estimates of population size are difficult to obtain. The challenges of estimating numbers of large mammals in the park include:

- Births and deaths cause fluctuations in numbers.
- Numbers may change as animals travel in and out of the park--what's a park boundary to an animal?
- Estimates made in one part of the park are extrapolated to other parts, assuming habitats are similar. There are limits to the accuracy of these assumptions.
- Some population estimates are based on multi-year counts (each year in a different location), so estimates are ready only when counts are completed.
- Sampling may be suspended when there is a lack of snow cover (to serve as a backdrop for seeing animals) or when aircraft are grounded by weather.

### *Conservation of Large Mammals in Denali*

Population estimates are an important part of the information needed to conserve populations of large mammals in Denali. Surveys are conducted frequently enough to estimate population sizes and identify population trends. But wildlife researchers also collect data on animal movements, productivity (number of young), health, survivorship, food preferences, and mate selection. Along with population trends, this information helps resource managers understand and manage these species in the park. The goal is to maintain the natural population dynamics of wildlife.

## **Geology**

Alaska is the most geologically active part of the country and Denali National Park and Preserve reveals much of this activity. Immense tectonic forces wrinkle and crumple terranes to form the Alaska range that looks like a spiny backbone to the park. Mount McKinley towers over the landscape at 20,310 feet tall. Its dominant presence reminds all that come to the park of the immense power of the Earth. Glaciers etch out the land and fill up 16% of the park, appearing like white snakes slithering out of the mountains. Fossils of the park's prehistoric past show a story of a warmer past where dinosaurs roamed what is now this park. These are just a few of the amazing geological phenomena that occur in the park.

Interested in more information? Check out the [Science and Scholarship Resources](#) to find more recommended resources about geology and other research topics from the park.

## Pretty Rocks Landslide

The Pretty Rocks landslide intersects the Denali Park Road near its midpoint at Mile 45.4 and displaces 100 yards (90 m) of the full width of the road. In recent years this landslide has evolved from a minor maintenance concern to one that has caused substantial road restrictions.

The Pretty Rocks landslide has been active since at least the 1960s, and probably since well before the Denali Park Road was built through this area in 1930. Before 2014, the landslide only caused small cracks in the road surface and required moderate maintenance every 2–3 years. However, in 2014, road maintenance crews began to notice a change. By 2016, the movement had increased further, a slump had developed in the road, and a monitoring program was begun. The rate of road movement within the landslide evolved from inches per year prior to 2014, to inches per month in 2017, inches per week in 2018, inches per day in 2019, and up to 0.65 inches per hour in 2021. By late August, 2021, maintaining a drivable surface was no longer possible, and the road was closed at Pretty Rocks. The [Polychrome Area Plan](#) was developed to restore reliable road access across the landslide, and bridge construction began in 2023.

Pretty Rocks is just one of several known landslides in the Polychrome area and one of the more than 140 mapped unstable slopes along the entire Park Road. The National Park Service is working with the Federal Highway Administration to manage the park road proactively and holistically in order to restore and maintain access along the entire length of the road.

[Read more about the Pretty Rocks Landslide.](#)

## Glaciers

In the high, frozen regions of the Alaska Range, snow and ice are the main forms of precipitation. In the past, most of the snow and ice remained behind; very little melting occurred. Snow and ice accumulated and got deeper and deeper, year after year, until the mass of ice that formed was so thick it compressed under its own weight. Gravity caused this ice to flow through stream valleys as glaciers. Glaciers are rivers of ice. The glaciers we see today in the park are increasingly small remnants of their former selves, but all around us we can see evidence of how they dominated the landscape. During past ice ages, most recently about 10,000 years ago, glaciers covered the Alaska Range and much of Alaska in ice. All of south-central Alaska has been buried in ice numerous times, and the shape of the land in this area comes from the carving forces of glaciers and the debris they leave behind.



Glaciers are often fed by more snow and ice precipitating and accumulating at higher elevations. If ice builds up at its source, a glacier may flow at rates ranging from several feet per year to several feet per day. As a glacier flows downhill, it grinds away at its beds with tremendous force. It picks up rocks from its bed, grinding some to a fine powder called silt and by plucking up larger chunks. When the glacial ice melts, the silt is carried along in the meltwater to be deposited downstream as outwash. Streams flowing from melting glaciers are often milky-colored. The silt in the water is called glacial flour, and the silty water is described as glacial milk. The larger chunks get left behind as erratics or in unsorted deposits forming ridges or hills called moraines. Erratics are rocks that are foreign to the surrounding terrain. They differ from the types of rock found where they are deposited. The rocks embedded in glacial ice grind away at bedrock, forming the jagged ridges and deep U-shaped valleys found in the range. Large blocks of ice can be stranded in the moraines left behind by retreating glaciers. When they finally melt, a water-filled depression known as a kettle lake develops. The carving action of ice forms many of the elongated lakes in the upper Susitna Valley to the south of Denali, and examination of a map reveals that they are all oriented in the direction that the ice was moving.

## More Geology Topics

Learn more about [glaciers and glacier monitoring](#). Go online for more information about [earthquakes](#), Denali's [geologic timeline](#), and [earth science stories](#). You can also download a PDF of the [Denali Geology Road Guide](#).

## Climbing Mt. McKinley

Denali National Park's [mountaineering blog](#) contains periodic feature stories on life in the Alaska Range, as well as almost-daily Field Reports containing mountain statistics for Mount McKinley and Mount Foraker, weather observations, and route conditions on Mount McKinley and other climbing areas of the Alaska Range. Ready to test your mountaineering and wilderness skills on North America's highest peak? [Learn more about planning](#) a safe and successful journey in the Alaska Range. The [Historical Timeline of Mt. McKinley expeditions](#) is a good place to start learning about historic climbs.

## Sled Dogs

The [history of sled dogs in Denali National Park](#) reaches back over 100 years, to 1922. While 100 years is a long time, in Alaska, sled dogs have been a part of the landscape for many more hundreds of years. Prior to the introduction of mechanized transport, almost every family had a few sled dogs that served as transportation for trapping, trading, and traveling to neighboring villages. [Native Alaskans hold generations of knowledge and stories](#) that have contributed to the National Park Service's use of safely and effectively managing sled dogs in Denali's Wilderness.

Our first Superintendent, Harry Karstens, purchased the park's first seven sled dogs for patrolling the newly established park boundaries. The park has maintained working dog teams ever since. Their job has evolved over time and while they are no longer patrolling for poachers, they are still performing essential and inspiring work in protecting and preserving the unique character of Denali.

The dogs, and the kennels where they live, represent important pieces of the American story. These are the only sled dogs in the United States that help protect a national park and the wildlife, scenery, and wilderness therein, and it has been this way since the birth of the park.

## Park History

The relationship between people and the land that is now Denali National Park and Preserve reaches back to time immemorial. Alaska Native peoples have lived with, traveled through, and cared for this place long before it was designated a park. The National Park Service's involvement, and the arrival of non-Native settlers in this region, is comparatively recent. More than a century ago, two men spent the winter in a cabin not far from the Toklat River. Their experience and interaction with the wild landscape changed them. In turn, they came to have a profound influence on preserving the landscape for generations to come.

Charles Sheldon, an early conservationist and gentleman hunter from Vermont, along with Harry Karstens, a legendary outdoorsman and dog musher, struck upon an idea over the long winter to make of the place the world's first national park established to conserve wildlife. By 1917, after almost a decade of hard work, Sheldon and others persuaded Congress to create Mount McKinley National Park. Four years later, in 1921, Karstens was hired on as its first superintendent. Extensive reading is available to learn more about the modern history of the park. This includes a free book [Snapshots from the Past](#), many books and websites about the [first ascent of Mount McKinley](#), [kennels history](#), and the park's administrative history captured in [Crown Jewel of the North Volume 1](#) and [Volume 2](#). The NPS [website](#) has many pages on various aspects of history as well.

## An Extremely Brief Timeline of Denali National Park

1896 William Dickey, gold prospector, gives the mountain a new name, "Mt. McKinley."

1903 Judge James Wickersham makes first recorded attempt to climb the mountain.

1905 Gold stampedeers populate the Kantishna Mining District.

1906 Charles Sheldon visits region to study sheep; returns for winter of 1907-08.

1910 Sourdough Expedition reaches the North Peak.

1913 Karstens-Stuck expedition climbs true (south) summit.

1917 Mt. McKinley National Park created by Congress.

1921 Harry Karstens hired as the first superintendent; stationed in Nenana.

1922 Headquarters established on Riley Creek. First extension of the park- from approx. 16 miles west of McKinley Station to approx. 4 miles west. 12 miles of road completed.

1923 Alaska Railroad completed between Seward and Fairbanks. Visitor accommodations at Savage River Tourist Camp established.

1923-38 The park road constructed from Savage River to Wonder Lake

1932 Second boundary extension- from the 149th parallel to Nenana River and to include Wonder Lake.

1939-41 Adolph Murie conducts an extensive study of the park's wolves. Mt. McKinley Park Hotel opens for tourist accommodations-1939.

1942 The Alaska Highway is completed.

1957 The Denali Highway is completed from Paxson to McKinley Park entrance.

1959 Alaska becomes the 49th state. Eielson Visitor Center opens.

1972 Parks Highway from Anchorage to Fairbanks is completed. The Park Service restricts road access and institutes the shuttle bus system. Park hotel burns down and is replaced by a "temporary" structure lasting until 2001.

1980 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act passed by Congress enlarging park to 6 million acres & changing the name to Denali National Park & Preserve.

1985 Court order-imposed injunction on mining in Kantishna until Environmental Impact Statement is completed. EIS's completed in 1990 but mining not resumed.

2002 Park Hotel sold and shipped out of the park. Front country construction begins.

2004 Murie Science and Learning Center opens in August.

2005 New Denali Visitor Center opens.

2008 New Eielson Visitor Center opens.

2021 Pretty Rocks land slide causes multi-year road closure at mile 43 in August.

2023 Beginning construction of the Pretty Rocks bridge.

## Cultural History and Native People

The Denali region is home to the Ahtna, Dena'ina, Koyukon, Upper Kuskokwim, and Tanana peoples, and has been for thousands of years before the establishment of [Denali National Park and Preserve](#).

Today, as in the past, many Alaskans live off the land, relying on fish, wildlife and other wild resources. For thousands of years, Alaska Natives have used these resources for food, shelter, clothing, transportation, handicrafts and trade. These subsistence resources continue to be critical to sustaining both the physical and spiritual culture of Alaska's

Native people.

Learn more about Alaska Natives and Denali through these resources:

- [Watch a fishwheel being built](#) as elders from Nikolai share an Athabascan tradition with the younger generation.
- [Listen to elders](#) with stories of living in remote communities and traveling by sled dogs.
- Listen to an Athabascan legend about [the origins of Denali](#) as told by late Chief Mitch Demientieff of Nenana.
- Learn more about individuals through time including [Abbie Joseph](#)'s interior Alaska subsistence lifestyle and [Howard Luke](#)'s importance as a Cultural Ambassador. Many more articles are [online](#).

## Learning Opportunities

A nearly infinite amount of information is available on the Denali NP&P website. You can find everything from closure notices to scientific papers. There is a plethora of books written about Denali including several handy guides. These can be found at the Alaska Geographic Park Store, book sellers, and online. Other opportunities include, but are not limited to:

- Science Symposium: Hosted by the NPS each May in person and online.
- Speaker Series Events: Hosted by various local organizations throughout the summer including Alaska Geographic and Denali Education Center.
- CUA Guide Training: Offered 2-3 times each spring in person and online.

Reach out the Denali CUA Coordinator at [dena\\_cua@nps.gov](mailto:dena_cua@nps.gov) for the dates and location of upcoming trainings.

## Chapter 5: CUA Rules

CUA holders and their employees must be knowledgeable of and adhere to all stipulations and rules in Denali National Park and Preserve. These include federal laws and regulations, park specific regulations found in the Superintendent's Compendium, CUA stipulations applicable to all at the National, Regional, and Park levels. It also includes the stipulations specific to the permit type. Violations can result in penalties, fines, and permit revocation. This chapter contains all rules specifically applicable to CUAs. Regulations applicable to all visitors, including CUAs, can be found online.

# Stipulations Applicable to All Denali CUA Holders

## Denali National Park

### 1. Areas Open to Conduct Commercial Services

- [1980 Park and Preserve Additions](#)
- Kantishna Airstrip
- Savage Campground Group Sites
- Designated Frontcountry and Wonder Lake Trails
- Park Road to Mountain Vista Rest Area for Guided Winter Activities - September 24 through when the park road closes for winter and mid-February through May 10 only

### 2. Areas Closed to Commercial Services (except as noted in Stipulation #16 below)

- Former Mt. McKinley National Park
- Windy Creek drainage, northwest of Cantwell in the former Mt. McKinley National Park
- Glaciers in the 1980 Park and Preserve Additions are closed to air taxi landings, including lakes on glaciers

### 3. Incident Reporting

All incidents involving serious injury, fatality, or vehicle property damage must be reported immediately by calling the Alaska Regional Communication Center at (907) 683-2276.

### 4. First Aid and CPR

At a minimum, each guide must be currently certified in basic first aid and CPR. Each group must carry and be familiar with a basic first aid kit, with a valid expiration date, appropriately sized for the group. Documentation must be presented upon request from NPS personnel.

### 5. Wildlife Safety Messaging

Employees shall be trained in proper wildlife safety protocol for preventing incidents and acting in case of a wildlife encounter. Visitors must be made aware of this protocol prior to beginning activities. Bear spray must be carried for any activity where bears may be present. See the [park website](#) for more information on wildlife safety protocol.

### 6. Bear and Wolf Encounters

- Any bear interactions (wherein a bear's behavior is changed in anyway due to the presence of a human/s) that occur involving clients or guides must be reported using a Bear Human Incident Management System (BHIMS) form.
- Any wolf interactions (wherein a wolf's behavior is changed in anyway due to the presence of a human/s) that occur involving clients or guides must be reported using a Wolf Encounter Form (WEF).
- NPS wildlife staff must be immediately notified anytime a bear makes contact with a human, damages property, continually approaches an area occupied by humans,

touches a tent, or shows signs of aggression or excitement toward a human. Contact NPS wildlife staff at [e-mail us](#) or by calling Wildlife Technicians at (907)683-9574.

## **7. Leave No Trace**

All employees who accompany clients in Denali National Park & Preserve must be knowledgeable of Leave No Trace principles. Operations must be conducted with regard to minimizing the impact on park resources and other visitors. [Leave No Trace 101](#) course is recommended for all guides and required for some permit types. Denali-specific Leave No Trace information can be found on the park [website](#). The CUA holder must remove all trash and garbage generated by their activities within the park, including food waste.

## **8. Closures**

Public closures may be established in the interest of maintaining public health, protecting environmental and scenic values, and protecting natural and cultural resources. This may include but is not limited to wildlife activity such as dens/nest sites, kill sites, or potentially hazardous animals.

## **9. Interpretation**

The [Eppley Foundations of Interpretation](#) course is recommended for all guides and required for some permit types. CUA holders must provide effective interpretation which meets the following standards:

- Uses effective techniques to provide opportunities for visitors to make meaningful and relevant intellectual and emotional connections to park resources.
- Is appropriate for the audience.
- Provides a clear focus for their connection with the resources(s) by demonstrating the cohesive development of a relevant idea or ideas, rather than relying primarily on a recital of chronological narrative or a series of related facts. Conveys accurate information about Denali National Park and Preserve and its mission. Access to park information about Wildlife Safety, Leave No Trace, Natural and Cultural History, as well as tips, tools, and training for creating effective visitor experiences can be found [online](#).

## **10. Employee Performance**

All employees must maintain the highest professional standards of conduct, treating each guest/client with respect. Employees must provide quality customer service, show leadership, maintain group management, guide decision making, communicate hazards to visitors, provide relevant safety messaging, and make conservative risk management judgements and decisions during activities. Employees must also respect the freedoms and rights of other groups and individuals they encounter on federal lands.

## **11. Entrance Fees**

CUA holders are required to ensure their clients have paid the park's weekly entrance pass or own a valid Interagency or Denali Pass. Annual and Lifetime passes cover the passholder and up to three other adults, in the passholder's party. Examples of valid pass types are

found on the park's [fee webpage](#). A weekly park pass may be paid in conjunction with the purchase of a bus ticket, or in person at the Denali Visitor Center (summer), Murie Science and Learning Center (winter) or Talkeetna Ranger Station (year-round). Passes may also be purchased [online](#). Pre-printed/pre-paid entrance fee tickets may also be available through a Third-Party Sales Agreement. To learn more about this Agreement, or for any other questions regarding park entrance fees and passes, contact the Fee Program Manager at 907-683-6347.

## 12. Guiding

CUA holders and employees (guides) are not allowed to accompany clients in areas closed to CUA activities and if found doing so, will be assumed to be conducting guiding activities and considered to be in non-compliance of the terms of the CUA. Guides may accompany their clients on the park transportation system but must conduct themselves as a park visitor and not as a guide. Any actions such as providing expertise and/or support to clients will be deemed a violation of this stipulation.

## 13. Reporting Requirements

CUA holders must meet the following annual reporting requirements to maintain a valid authorization. Reporting requirements include:

Document	Due
Guide List	May 1 or before operation begins
Activity Reports	January 31
Annual Financial Report (form 10-660)	February 28
Annual Fee	Two weeks after the annual report is accepted by the NPS
Insurance Certificate	With application and as insurance renews

## 14. Annual Fees

Required fees are calculated based on the following schedule. Annual fees are based on a percentage of gross receipts for: Land-Based Guiding, Air Transportation, and Auto Transportation.

Gross Receipts	Annual Fee
Between \$0.00 and \$250,000	3% of gross receipts
Between \$250,001 and \$500,000	4% of gross receipts in addition to the prior amount
Above \$500,001	5% of gross receipts in addition to the prior two amounts

**Mountaineering:** A flat 6% Annual Fee will be applied to gross receipts on all income earned as a result of providing mountaineering services within Denali National Park and Preserve.

## **15. Commercial Road Access within Denali National Park and Preserve**

- Commercial passenger-carrying motor vehicles are allowed within the boundaries of Denali National Park and Preserve on the George Parks Highway and on the Denali Park Road as far west as the Denali Visitor Center complex (Mile Post 1.4) and Alaska Railroad Depot. No permit is required for this access. A commercial operator may therefore bring passengers into the park and stop within the developed area of the road corridor up to the Denali Visitor Center complex. This allows commercial operators to access the following: Denali Bus Depot, Backcountry Information Center, Riley Creek Mercantile store, showers and laundry, McKinley Park airstrip, U.S. Post Office, Day Use Picnic Area, Railroad Depot, and the Denali Visitor Center complex.
- No commercial vehicle may proceed west beyond the Denali Visitor Center complex except under either of the following scenarios: they have a Group Camping CUA and their travel is related to a current campground reservation or they have a Guided Winter Activities CUA and they are traveling during the time period of September 24th through when the park road closes for winter and mid-February through May 10 when the road officially opens to Mountain Vista Turnout. The winter closure date and February start date for road access will vary and is weather and driving-condition dependent.



## Alaska Region

**Applicability:** Current calendar year National, Region, and Park-Specific Conditions, as published at <https://www.nps.gov/locations/alaska/stipulations.htm>, are applicable regardless of the permit issue date.

As used herein and in any CUA, the term “employee” includes all of the CUA holder’s officers, employees and other representatives, including but not limited to interns or volunteers.

1. Engaging in a commercial visitor service or activity not authorized on a CUA permit (Form 10-115), signed by both the NPS deciding official and an authorized agent of the CUA, is prohibited.
2. Within the boundaries of the park unit(s) authorized on this permit, only the holder and their employees registered under this permit are authorized to provide the services specified on the permit. The holder may not subcontract or otherwise allow outside entities and/or non-registered employees to provide any services within the park unit, under the auspices of this permit.
3. The commercial visitor services authorized by an (out-of-park) CUA must originate and terminate outside of the boundaries of the park area (“outside of the boundaries of the park” to include an in-holding within the park). The CUA does not authorize the holder to advertise, solicit business, collect fees or sell any goods or services within the boundaries of the park area.
4. Unless authorized by park Superintendent, all personal property used in the operation of CUA activities must be removed from the park area after each trip. Leaving personal property within the park area between trips is prohibited.
5. Holder is responsible for ensuring that each employee complies with the terms and conditions of the CUA. The CUA holder shall ensure that each of its employees receives training in and reviews a copy of its CUA including all conditions and stipulations. The NPS reserves the right to request written certification that all employees have received training in and reviewed a copy of the CUA including all conditions, stipulations, and the park compendium.
6. Holder must provide a current employee list to the National Park Service annually prior to startup for seasonal operations, or at the beginning of the calendar year for year-round operations. The holder must inform the NPS of any additions to the employee list prior to the employee working in the park.
7. Holder and their employees must carry a current, signed, and approved CUA permit (Form 10-115) for the park unit in which they are operating. A reproduction or electronic copy on a mobile device is acceptable. The holder and their employees must present the permit to any park employee on demand.

8. When operating in the backcountry, the holder must comply with the guidelines of the US Public Health Service for Food, Potable Water, Human Waste, Vector-Borne and Zoonotic Diseases, and Illness Reporting:  
[http://www.nps.gov/public\\_health/info/rms/rm83f.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/public_health/info/rms/rm83f.pdf)
9. When conducting any multi-day guided backcountry or wilderness activity (such as but not limited to mountaineering, glacier travel, backpacking, or river travel) holder or their employees must carry some type of two-way electronic communication equipment, including a backup source of power, capable of communicating with NPS or other emergency responders. Acceptable communication equipment includes satellite phones, satellite messengers (i.e. Garmin inReach, Spot, or similar), VHF radios, or cell phones (only where service is known to be available). In addition, holder or their employees must carry a non-electronic method to supplement the electronic communication equipment such as mirrors or flares for signaling location. Each group participant/client must be instructed on the proper use of these devices.
10. Accidents involving personal injury, substantial aircraft or vessel damage, or threatening incidents involving wildlife where active hazing by spray, flare or firearm are used must be reported orally or in writing to the Superintendent of the respective park unit, as soon as possible. [36 CFR 2.33, 3.4, 4.4.] For the purposes of this paragraph, “substantial damage” means damage or failure, which adversely affects the structural strength, performance, or flight/operating characteristics of the aircraft/vessel.
11. Parks may contain private lands, it is the holder's responsibility to obtain prior approval from landowners for access to or across private lands within the park unit.
12. The holder shall inform clients of park regulations and safety concerns before beginning a trip (see park regulations at <https://www.nps.gov/locations/alaska/park-regulations.htm>).
13. Unmanned Aircraft are not allowed for use in units of the National Park System. Unmanned Aircraft is defined as a device that is used or intended to be used for flight in the air without the possibility of direct human intervention from within or on the device, and the associated operational elements and components that are required for the pilot or system operator in command to operate or control the device (such as cameras, sensors, communication links). This includes all types of devices that meet this definition (e.g., model airplanes, quadcopters, and drones) that are used for any purpose, including for recreation or commerce.
14. **Suspension, Restriction, Revocation, and Denial Policy:**  
Further to National CUA Condition #2, NPS Interior Region 11 Policy (<https://www.nps.gov/locations/alaska/revo.htm>) states that a CUA may be suspended, restricted, or revoked when the holder/owner or employee commits a violation as defined by the policy (below).

- Failure to comply with state or federal law, regulation or administrative action when conducting activities authorized by the CUA, including but not limited to federal and/or state health or safety codes.;
- Failure to comply with state or federal law, regulation or administrative action where a link exists between the offense and the business activity authorized or to be authorized, regardless of whether the violation occurred in a unit of the National Park System;
- Violation of 18 U.S.C. 1001, providing false information to any agency or department of the United States;
- Failure to comply with the provisions and conditions of the CUA, including national, regional, and park-specific conditions (refer to: <https://www.nps.gov/locations/alaska/stipulations.htm>);
- Failure to adequately and timely address material and documented operational concerns expressed by the National Park Service that may negatively impact visitor experience, park resources and/or staff and visitor safety.

#### **15. Reporting Requirements:**

##### **Annual Report (Form 10-660) - Required for All CUA Holders in All Park Units**

Further to National Condition #15, CUA holders in all Park Units, must annually submit a completed Annual Report (Form 10-660) on or before January 31st for the prior CUA season. The current Annual Report is available to download from <https://www.nps.gov/locations/alaska/activity-reporting.htm>. Submission is required even if the CUA holder did not operate in a park unit.

*Denali and Glacier Bay CUA holders, and all CUA holders issued a permit through the online CUA Application and Reporting System (<https://cua.nps.gov/>) must use that system to enter information traditionally requested on the Annual Report (Form 10-660). Reports must be submitted on or before January 31st of the following year. Submission is required even if the CUA holder did not operate in the park unit.*

##### **Activity Reporting - Required for All CUA Holders in All Park Units**

Certain activities require more detailed reporting. Refer to park-specific stipulations for additional detailed conditions related to your permitted activities.

The holder is required to use the online Visitor Use Reporting system (VURn) at <https://irma.nps.gov/VURn/>, to report all commercial activity for all park units in Interior Region 11 – Alaska. If the CUA holder did not operate in a park unit, the holder must use VURn to report no use/did not operate and meet the Activity Reporting requirement.

Unless otherwise noted in park-specific permit stipulations, each trip to a park unit must be reported separately. A trip is defined as a commercial visit to or entry in a park unit. It is considered one trip each time a permitted business enters and leaves a park unit.

Activity Reporting in VURn, for All Park Units except Denali NP&P must be completed on or before November 15th annually. Denali Operators must enter prior year activity in VURn on

or before January 31st of the following reporting year.

Further to Interior Region 11 Condition #14, the Suspension, Restriction, Revocation, and Denial Policy, failure to submit required activity and annual reporting or fee payments in a timely manner may impact the holder's ability to obtain a CUA in future years. New CUA applications will not be processed until all prior year reports and payments are complete.

## National Stipulations

1. **False Information:** The holder is prohibited from knowingly giving false information. To do so will be considered a breach of conditions and be grounds for revocation: [RE: 36 CFR 2.32(a) (3)].
2. **Legal Compliance:** The holder shall exercise this privilege subject to the supervision of the area Superintendent. The holder shall comply with all applicable laws and regulations of the area and terms and conditions of the authorization. The holder must acquire all permits or licenses of State or local government, as applicable, necessary to provide the services described above, and must operate in compliance with all applicable Federal, State, and local laws and regulations, including, without limitation, all applicable park area policies, procedures and regulations. All vehicles/vessels/aircraft are required to be registered and the operators are required to have the proper licenses to operate them commercially, as required by law or regulation.
3. **Employee Conduct:** The holder must ensure that its employees are hospitable and exercise courtesy and consideration in their relations with the public. The holder must establish appropriate screening, hiring, training, safety, employment, termination and other policies and procedures. The holder must review the conduct of any of its employees whose action or activities are considered by the holder or the Director to be inconsistent with the proper administration of the Area and enjoyment and protection of visitors and must take such actions as are necessary to correct the situation. The holder must maintain, to the greatest extent possible, a drug free work environment.
4. **Rates:** The holder shall provide commercial services under this authorization to visitors at reasonable rates satisfactory to the area Superintendent.
5. **Operating Conditions:** The holder shall provide the authorized commercial services to visitors under operating conditions satisfactory to the area Superintendent.
6. **Liabilities and Claims:** This authorization is issued upon the express condition that the United States, its agents and employees shall be free from all liabilities and claims for damages and/or suits for or by reason of any injury, injuries, or death to any person or persons or property of any kind whatsoever, whether to the person or property of the holder, its agents or employees, or third parties, from any cause or causes whatsoever while in or upon said premises or any part thereof during the term of this authorization or occasioned by any occupancy or use of said premises or any activity carried on by the holder in connection herewith, and the holder hereby covenants and agrees to indemnify, defend, save and hold harmless the United States, its agents, and employees from all liabilities, charges, expenses and costs on account of or by reason of any such injuries, deaths, liabilities, claims, suits or losses however occurring or damages growing out of the same.

7. **Insurance:** Holder agrees to carry general liability insurance against claims occasioned by the action or omissions of the holder, its agents and employees in carrying out activities and operations under this authorization. The policy shall name the United States of America as additional insured. Holder agrees to have on file with the park copies of the above insurance with the proper endorsements.
8. **Exculpatory Agreements:** Any exculpatory agreement used by the CUA holder or entity providing services authorized by the CUA must comply with applicable state and federal law and NPS policy. The exculpatory agreement must not waive liability or preclude claims against or require indemnifying the CUA holder or entity providing services authorized by the CUA for gross negligence, recklessness, or willful misconduct. The exculpatory agreement must waive liability against the United States by including the following language: “The undersigned further waives liability of the United States and acknowledges and agrees that the United States and its officers and employees are fully released from any liability for injuries, damages, or losses that the undersigned sustains as a result of or in connection with the undersigned’s participation in this activity.” The Service will not as a matter of standard practice, collect, review or approve the exculpatory agreement. The CUA holder may consider consulting with their own counsel in the development of its exculpatory agreement to ensure they comply with NPS policy and Applicable Law. However, the Service reserves the right to review the exculpatory agreement and any modifications or replacements of the agreement at any time during the term of the CUA and require any revisions to ensure all the requirements of NPS policy are met. The NPS also reserves the right to require changes to the exculpatory agreement or, to the extent permitted by law, revoke the allowance to use the exculpatory agreement, if the Service determines the agreement is not compliant. Any determination by the Service that an exculpatory agreement is policy-compliant does not convey the NPS’s view that the agreement is valid, enforceable, or otherwise endorsed by the NPS for any purpose.
9. **CUA Fees:** At a minimum, the holder shall reimburse the park for all costs incurred by the park as a result of accepting and processing the application and managing and monitoring the authorized activity. Administrative costs for the application process must be paid when the application is submitted. Monitoring fees and any additional costs incurred by the park to support the commercial activity will be paid annually or on a more frequent basis as determined by mutual agreement between the Holder and the area Superintendent.
10. **Benefit:** No member of, or delegate to, Congress, or Resident Commissioner shall be admitted to any share or part of this authorization or to any benefit that may arise from this authorization. This restriction shall not be construed to extend to this Contract if made with a corporation or company for its general benefit.

11. **Transfer:** This authorization may not be transferred or assigned without the written consent of the area Superintendent.
12. **Suspension and Revocation:** This authorization may be suspended or revoked upon breach of any of the conditions herein or at the discretion of the area Superintendent.
13. **Preference or Exclusivity:** The holder is not entitled to any preference to renewal of this authorization except to the extent otherwise expressly provided by law. This authorization is not exclusive and is not a concession contract.
14. **Construction:** The holder shall not construct any structures, fixtures or improvements in the park area. The holder shall not engage in any groundbreaking activities without the express, written approval of the area Superintendent.
15. **Reporting:** The holder must submit annually the CUA Annual Report (NPS Form 10-660) by January 31 for the prior CUA season and also must submit upon request the CUA Monthly Report (NPS Form 10-660A). The holder is to provide the area Superintendent upon request any other specific information related to the holder's operations that the area Superintendent may request, including but not limited to, visitor use statistics, and resource impact assessments.
16. **Accounting:** The holder is to maintain an accounting system under which its accounts can be readily identified within its system of accounts classification. This accounting system must be capable of providing the information required by this authorization. The holder grants the United States of America access to its books and records at any time for the purpose of determining compliance with the terms and conditions of this authorization.
17. **Paid Sick Leave:** The holder must comply with all provisions of Executive Order 13706 of September 30, 2016, (Establishing Paid Sick Leave for Federal Contractors) and its implementing regulations, including the applicable contract clause, codified at 29 C.F.R. part 13, all of which are incorporated by reference into this authorization as if fully set forth in this authorization.
18. **Intellectual Property of the National Park Service:** Except with the written authorization of the Director of the National Park Service, the Holder shall not assert any legal claim that the Holder or any related entity holds a trademark, tradename, servicemark or other ownership interest in the words "National Park Service", the initials "NPS", or official name of any unit or part thereof, including but not limited to any facility, logo, distinctive natural, archaeological, cultural, or historic site, within the National Park System, or any colorable likeness thereof, or the likeness of a National Park Service official uniform, badge, logo, or insignia.
19. **Nondiscrimination:** The holder must comply with Applicable Laws relating to nondiscrimination in providing visitor services to the public and with all equal employment opportunity provisions of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, as amended.

**20. Notification of Employee Rights:** The holder must comply with all provisions of Executive Order 13496 of January 30, 2009, (Notification of Employee Rights Under Federal Labor Laws) and its implementing regulations, including the applicable contract clause, codified at 29 CFR part 471, appendix A to subpart A, all of which are incorporated by reference into this authorization as if fully set forth in this authorization.



## Park Specific Stipulations by Permit Type (2026)

### Guided Day Hiking- Frontcountry

#### Permitted Activities

Guided Day Hiking may include the following activities: naturalist walks, incidental photography, and bird watching.

#### Designated Areas for Use

CUA holders are authorized to conduct **one hike per day** on the following trails and routes:

- Triple Lakes Trail starting from the Denali Visitor Center (DVC) (Triple Lakes South)
- Triple Lakes Trail starting from the Tsenesdghaas Na' Trailhead (Triple Lakes North)
- McKinley Station Trail starting from the DVC
- McKinley Station Trail starting from the Riley Creek Day Use Area and Overflow Parking
- Roadside Trail to Rock Creek Trail loop
- Rock Creek to Roadside Trail loop
- Oxbow Trail
- Nenana River Trail

The following connector trails and routes used to access the primary trails listed above are not subject to the one hike per day limits.

- The portions of the Horseshoe Lake Trail from the DVC and the DVC parking area are permitted as connections to the McKinley Station and Roadside Trails.
- Use of the Meadow View and Jonesville Connector Trails and the Spruce Forest and Morino Loops are permitted when using the McKinley Station, Triple Lakes, Roadside, and Rock Creek Trails.
- Use of the Roadside Bike Trail is permitted.

#### Group Size

Group size is defined as all guides, other employees, clients, and guests of the CUA holder.

- Maximum group size 12 – Triple Lakes, Oxbow, and Nenana River Trails
- Maximum group size 20 – McKinley Station, Rock Creek, Roadside, Meadow View
- Maximum group size 20 – The permitted portions of the Horseshoe Lake and the Spruce Forest, Morino Loop, and the Jonesville Connector Trails.

#### Guide Certification

- Current basic first-aid and CPR certifications are required for Denali CUA holders.
- Guides must complete a course on the basics of interpretation equivalent to the [Apply Foundations of Interpretation Course](#).

#### Unauthorized Activities

- Parking at the Horseshoe Lake Trailhead is prohibited.

## Park Specific Stipulations: Guided Winter Activities

### Permitted Activities

The Guided Winter Activities CUA permits road-based transportation and specific incidental activities from September 24- May 10. Incidental activities include short-duration hiking or snowshoeing on designated trails and visits to the Dog Sled Kennels and Mountain Vista Area.

Authorized Activity	Details
Driving the park road to Mountain Vista (Mile 12.5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Road typically opens mid-February.</li><li>• All vehicles permitted.</li><li>• Driving beyond mile 12.5 is prohibited, even if the road is open to the public.</li><li>• Hiking/ snowshoeing the Mountain Vista trail is permitted</li><li>• No group size limit.</li></ul>
Guided hiking/ snowshoeing on designated trails	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Group size limit is 12 inclusive of guide.</li><li>• Up to 4 groups per day.</li><li>• Groups must be staggered by 15 minutes.</li><li>• Designated trails: McKinley Station, Roadside Bike, Roadside Trail, Rock Creek Trail, Triple Lakes Trail.</li></ul>
Visit the Dog Sled Kennels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Driving past Mile 1.5 is only allowed when the Kennels are open (Sat-Sun, 1-4 p.m.).</li><li>• Vehicles with a seating capacity of more than 15 passengers (including the driver) are only permitted past Mile 1.5 when the road is open to Mountain Vista.</li><li>• No group size limit.</li><li>• During the winter and early spring, the park dogs are often away from the kennels on extended backcountry operations.</li><li>• All visitors must receive a 10-minute Kennels Safety briefing from a ranger before interacting with the dogs.</li><li>• If the gate is closed at the kennels, access to the area is prohibited.</li></ul>

### Authorized Areas

Specified front country trails (see map), driving the park road as far as Mountain Vista, and visiting the Kennels.

### Group Size

Total group size is 12, inclusive of CUA holder and employees (guides) except at Mountain Vista and the Kennels.

### Guide Certification

- Current basic first-aid and CPR certifications are required for Denali CUA holders.

- Leave No Trace 101 is recommended.
- No additional certifications are required for this activity.

#### Safety and Resource Protection

- The CUA holder or guide must remain with their clients for the duration of the trip.
- The CUA holder must provide all clients with an orientation prior to the trip which emphasizes safe practices in extreme winter conditions.
- There is no guarantee of the condition of the trails as weather can change unexpectedly. Groups may have to break their own trails.
- Road closures may occur due to weather or road conditions. Call (907) 683-9532 for updates.
- Passengers may exit at plowed roadside pullouts, but no guided activities are allowed
- Vehicles must have two-way emergency communication (e.g., satellite phone or messaging device). Cell service is unreliable past mile 3.
- Minimize idling. Consider engine-off air heaters for interior heat. Extended idling is allowed at Denali Visitor Center; no plug-ins are available at Mountain Vista.

#### Unauthorized Activities

- Overnight use is prohibited.
- Parking at the Horseshoe Lake trailhead is prohibited.
- The Horseshoe Lake trail is prohibited.

## Guided Mountaineering/Climbing

### Permitted Activities

Guided mountaineering, climbing, and ski mountaineering are authorized under this permit.

### Authorized Areas

#### 1980 Park and Preserve Additions

### Group Size

Total group size is 12, inclusive of CUA holder and employees (guides) except in backcountry units (BCUs) 65-69, 80, and 82-85 which have a maximum group size is 6, including guides.

- The CUA holder must only have 1 group per Backcountry Unit at the same time. With advance written permission, two groups may be in BCU 78 at the same time. See details under Additional Regulations and Considerations.

### Guide Certification

- Extensive certifications are required, see Guided Mountaineering Supplemental Application.

### Safety and Resource Protection

#### *Leave No Trace Principles*

- Guides and clients must hike on established trails or snow whenever possible.
- Guides and clients must remove all of their trash from the Park. Guides are encouraged to remove any additional litter they encounter.
- All solid human waste must be managed in accordance with the most current Denali National Park and Preserve human waste policy.
  - Within one-half mile of glacial landing sites used by aircraft, solid human waste must be collected in a Clean Mountain Can (CMC) or personal receptacle and removed from the Park.
  - On technical climbing routes, solid human waste must be tossed or shoveled away from the route.

#### *Staffing*

- Maximum 3 clients per guide.
- For mountaineering courses, maximum 5 clients per guide.
- Each group will have a Lead Guide who will oversee the climb check-in to check-out.
- Clients shall never be left without a guide.

#### *Communication Devices*

- Each guide must carry a Family Radio Service (FRS) radio and/or satellite device, with sufficient extra batteries.
- Guides must be proficient in the use of the communication device and be able to

make emergency calls.

- At a minimum, FRS radios must be able to transmit and receive on FRS channel 1 (462.5625).

#### *Solo Travel*

- Guides and clients must travel as an organized group.
- Solo travel is prohibited for guides and clients.

#### *Helmet Use*

- Helmets are required in areas with overhead hazards.

#### *Roped travel requirement*

- When traveling on glaciers or in other hazardous terrain, guides and clients must travel roped up to a partner.
- Guides and clients may un-rope at camps or rest areas on glaciers once the guide has designated a safe area.

#### *Un-roped travel exceptions*

##### Mountaineering courses and ski mountaineering expeditions

- Guides and clients may travel downhill un-roped in glaciated terrain where a fall is unlikely to result in serious injury or death. When travelling un-roped the Lead Guide must perform the following:
  - Prior to un-roped travel, the Lead Guide must conduct a visual and physical inspection of the terrain.
  - Hazardous conditions must be assessed (crevasse hazard, snow condition, avalanche hazard, seracs, rock fall, and weather/visibility).
  - Assess snowpack instability. A hazard avoidance strategy must be implemented to avoid exposure to larger than D1 avalanches and should be based on avalanche problems and terrain use.
- Guides must manage the terrain to avoid crevasses and/or use a rope for belay when crevasse falls are likely.
- Guides must hold a safety briefing before un-roped travel to discuss hazards and boundaries.
- Guides must consider other skiers/climbers and avoid creating hazardous conditions for others.

### Additional Regulations and Considerations

#### *Client Screening and Training*

- The CUA holder must ensure clients are prepared to safely participate in scheduled activities.
- The CUA holder must provide education and/or training, before and/or during the trip as appropriate to ensure client safety and education of relevant topics.

#### *Registration Procedures*

- [Guided Backcountry Registration forms](#) must be submitted electronically at least 48 hours before the trip.
- CUA trip leaders must check-in, in person, at the Talkeetna Ranger Station within 24 hours of scheduled fly-in date with a copy of their CUA permit.

- During check-in, CMCs with biodegradable bags are available for checkout.
- CUA trip leaders must check out, in person, at the Talkeetna Ranger Station within 24 hours of the expedition's return to Talkeetna.
- The CUA holder cannot check-in more than 1 group per day.

#### *Caching*

- Caches must be buried at least 1 meter deep.
- Caches must be marked with a cache tag that includes CUA holder name, expedition permit number, Lead Guide's name, air taxi provider and retrieval date. At least 1-two-meter wand must be used.
- All caches must be removed from the Park during the same operating season in which they were placed.
- Unmarked and improperly buried caches may be removed by the NPS.

#### *BCU 78 Group Exception*

Unit 78 has a high concentration of technical climbing routes that are geographically separated by distance, terrain and fixed-wing access points. CUA operators may operate two groups in this area during the same time period with advanced approval.

- Requests must be made through the concession office (dena\_cua@nps.gov) with proposed dates, number of guides and clients in each group, and proposed climbing routes and landing strips.
- NPS approval must be received prior to operating two groups in BCU 78.
- The operator must maintain guide to client ratios.
- The operator must adhere to a combined total group size of 12, inclusive of guides, combined between the two groups.

#### *Unauthorized Activities*

- Activities within the Old Park boundary, including the Upper Kahiltna area (BCU 46), are prohibited.

## Group Camping

### Permitted Activities

- Camping at Savage River Campground (reservations required) limited to 14 nights annually with no more than seven consecutive nights.
- Driving to the Savage River Campground to transport campers and supplies.
- Hiking the Savage Alpine Trail.

### Authorized Areas

- CUA holders are restricted to group sites A, B, and 34.
- The Savage Campground picnic shelter is open to all campers. CUA holders may use it but must share the space, which is not first-come, first-served.
- Savage Alpine Trail (day hiking).

### Group Size

#### *Camping*

- Group size limit is 20 people per site, inclusive of CUA holder and employees (guides).
- Vehicle limit is two (2) per site

#### *Hiking*

- The group size limit is 12, inclusive of CUA holders and employees (guides).

### Guide Certification

- Current basic first-aid and CPR are required for Denali CUA holders. Leave No Trace 101 is recommended. No additional certifications are required for this activity.

### Additional Regulations and Considerations

- Campground reservations must be made over the telephone by calling the reservation center at 800-622- 7275.

### Unauthorized Activities

- Driving beyond Savage River Campground is prohibited. A free shuttle is available to transport hikers between trailheads and campgrounds in the area.
- Driving beyond the Denali Visitor Center (Mile 1.4) for any reason other than transporting people and supplies to and from the campground is prohibited.
- Parking at Park Headquarters is prohibited.
- Parking at the picnic shelter is prohibited.

## Air Taxi

### Permitted Activities

- Visitor transport: drop off or pick up people from a day trip or overnight stay, passengers do not remain with the airplane while on the ground.
- Incidental hunt transport: the carriage of big game hunters, their equipment, or big game animals harvested by the hunters as an incidental<sup>1</sup> portion of their business.

### Authorized Areas

Air Taxi landings are permitted throughout the park additions and preserve **except on glaciers and lakes on glaciers.**

### Group Size

Group size is not limited, but Air Taxi providers should be aware that groups in the Park or Preserve areas are limited to 12 people.

### Certifications

- All airplanes must be currently licensed, maintained, and operated in conformance with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) requirements.
- All pilots must have Title 14, Part 135 certification.

### Safety and Resource Protection

- The CUA holder must carry a spill kit onboard each aircraft that includes absorbent pads, a shovel and doubled plastic bags to remove and transport contaminated material.
- When transporting hazardous materials such as stove fuel or bear spray, the CUA holder must use an USDOT approved container and packaging, and follow the hazmat guidelines for safe handling, transportation, and storage.
- The CUA holder must remove all trash and garbage generated by their activities within the park.
- The CUA holder must notify the Alaska Regional Communication Center at (907) 683-2276 of any hazardous material discharge as soon as possible without impeding cleanup.
- Loading or unloading passengers or cargo from aircraft must be done only when engine(s) are completely shut down. "Hot loading" or "hot unloading" of passengers or cargo is prohibited.

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<sup>1</sup> The word "incidental" means transportation provided to a big game hunter by an Air Taxi operator who does not: Charge more than the usual tariff or charter rate for the carriage of big game hunters, their equipment, and/or the big game animals harvested by the hunters; or advertise transportation services or big game hunting services to the public. The word "advertise" means soliciting big game hunters to be customers of an Air Taxi operator for the purpose of providing transportation service to, from, or in the field through the use of print or electronic media, including advertising at trade shows or the use of hunt broker services or other promotional services.



### Additional Regulations and Considerations

- Flight operations are authorized only for fixed wing aircraft.

#### Kantishna Airstrip Specific Stipulations:

The annual landing limit on the Kantishna Airstrip is six (6) for those landings conducted to transport park visitors traveling to or from Kantishna for recreational purposes.

- Air Taxi drop offs in support of overnight backcountry trips must ensure clients have obtained the necessary backcountry permit(s) and Bear Resistant Food Containers (BRFCs).
- Clients in the Denali area (Healy to Cantwell) must obtain backcountry permits and BRFCs in person at the Backcountry Information Center.
- Clients flying into/out of Kantishna, not in the Denali Area (ie. Fairbanks, Talkeetna, Anchorage) may remotely obtain a backcountry permit by calling (907) 683-9590.
- Landings for the purposes of pickup or delivery of Kantishna landowners, their immediate family members, employees, contractors or guests are unlimited.

### Unauthorized Activities

- Helicopter use is prohibited.
- Landing on glaciers and lakes on glaciers is prohibited.

## Overnight Hiking/ Camping- Backcountry

### Permitted Activities

Guided backpacking and base camping are authorized by this permit.

- Guided backpacking is defined as hiking and camping in a different location each night.
- Base camping is defined as setting up a camp in one location, day hiking from the location, and returning to the camp for overnight stay(s).

### Authorized Areas

#### 1980 Park and Preserve Additions

### Group Size

Total group size is 12, inclusive of CUA holder and employees (guides).

- The CUA holder may have one hiking group in Backcountry Unit 74 and two in Unit 77 at a time.
- Those offering both Day and Overnight Hiking must coordinate group movement to comply with the above requirement.
- Groups may overlap briefly while awaiting air taxi transport.

### Guide Certification

- Current basic first-aid, CPR, and Leave No Trace 101 certifications are required for Denali CUA holders.
- At least one guide on each trip must have a current Wilderness First Aid or Wilderness First Responder certification.

### Safety and Resource Protection

- An electric bear fence in proper working order must be placed around a basecamp. The fence must be tested twice daily.
- All tents, tarps, and campsites in the Backside Lake area must be located at least 100 yards from and out of sight from the lake.
- Participants are required to use Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee approved Bear Resistant Food Containers (BRFC).
- Tents must be removed from the backcountry when not in use overnight.

#### *Leave No Trace:*

- Hiking activity near Backside Lake (in the recent moraine areas with gravely soil and pioneer vegetation) shall take place on routes designated with existing unobtrusive small rock cairns. These routes must be minimized and not expanded.
- Hiking activity away from Backside Lake (the older alpine meadow vegetation) shall be dispersed to the greatest degree possible to prevent the formation of newly created social trails and minimize resource damage at camping areas.

- If the NPS detects visitor-created social trails or resource damage at camping areas away from the lake, the NPS will seek to apply measures to limit the impacts to the area.
- Camping and hiking must be done on durable surfaces whenever possible.
- If a non-durable surface is used for camping it must not be used more than twice per season.

#### Additional Regulations and Considerations

For 2026, Backside Lake Base camping will be restricted to the following days:

- TBD

#### Unauthorized Activities

- Tents must not be left unattended between trips.

## Guided Day Hiking- Backcountry

### Permitted Activities

Guided day hiking in the backcountry is authorized by this permit.

### Authorized Areas

#### 1980 Park and Preserve Additions

### Group Size

- Total group size is 12, inclusive of CUA holder and employees (guides).
- The CUA holder may have one hiking group in Backcountry Unit 74 and two in Unit 77 at a time.
- Those offering both Day and Overnight Hiking must coordinate group movement to comply with the above requirement.
- Groups may overlap briefly while awaiting air taxi transport.

### Guide Certification

- Current basic first-aid, CPR, and Leave No Trace 101 certifications are required for Denali CUA holders.
- At least one guide on each trip must have a current Wilderness First Aid or Wilderness First Responder certification.

### Safety and Resource Protection

Bear resistant containers approved by the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee, are required for short-term, emergency food and equipment storage.

#### *Leave No Trace:*

- Hiking activity near Backside Lake (in the recent moraine areas with gravely soil and pioneer vegetation) shall take place on routes designated with existing unobtrusive small rock cairns. These routes must be minimized and not expanded.
- Hiking activity away from Backside Lake (the older alpine meadow vegetation) shall be dispersed to the greatest degree possible to prevent the formation of newly created social trails and minimize resource damage at camping areas.
- If the NPS detects visitor-created social trails or resource damage at camping areas away from the lake, the NPS will seek to apply measures to limit the impacts to the area.
- Hiking must be done on durable surfaces whenever possible.

### Additional Regulations and Considerations

Tarps may only be used for shelter during inclement weather under the following conditions:

- Placed on a durable surface with minimal vegetation and no cryptobiotic soils.
- Located at least 100 yards from the lakeshore and unobtrusive to visitors.
- Used only when employees are present.

### Unauthorized Activities

Overnight use, including storing emergency food or gear, is prohibited.

## Guided Day Hiking- Kantishna and Wonder Lake

### Permitted Activities

- Guided Day Hiking and the following incidental activities: naturalist walks, incidental photography, and bird watching.
- Use of the Mile 87.5 Parking Area as a location for the drop off and pick up of unguided visitors.

### Designated Areas for Use

Authorized trails and backcountry units in the Kantishna and Wonder Lake area (see map).

### Group Size

- A total of two (2) vehicles may be parked at Mile 87.5 Parking Area, including vehicles associated with guided hikes on Blueberry Hill.
- Maximum group size 12, inclusive of guide/ employee, for all guided hiking.

### Guide Certification

- Current basic first-aid and CPR certifications are required for Denali CUA holders.
- Guides must complete a course on the basics of interpretation equivalent to the [Epply Foundations of Interpretation Course](#).

### Safety and Resource Protection

Kantishna is a historic mining district with hazards like adits and abandoned explosives. CUA holders must inform staff of these dangers and report any found to NPS. Groups may not enter abandoned buildings, adits, or mine openings.

### Additional Regulations and Considerations

#### *Kantishna Area*

- Covers Mile 88 to Kantishna Airstrip, including Backcountry Units 41, 42, 43.
- Some access routes cross private land (see Interior Region 11 Alaska Conditions, #11).

#### *Quigly Cabin*

- CUA holders receive a key to Quigley Cabin for guided activities. Guides must accompany guests. Avoid 12–3 PM (June 8–end of bus service) due to NPS use. Coordinate with other operators. Guides must complete NPS cultural resource training.

#### *Wonder Lake Area*

- Only one commercial group per trail at a time (except the evening program).
- Coordination with other operators encouraged.
- Guides must accompany guests.

#### *McKinley Bar Trail*

- Max six hikes per week.
- Two vehicles per CUA holder at the trailhead.
- Groups may turn around at the campground bus stop but cannot park at or drive through the campground.

#### Blueberry Hill

- Hiking limited to the designated knoll to the southeast of the inlet on the north end of Wonder Lake.
- Follow the NPS-designated route.
- Two vehicles per CUA holder at Mile 87.5 parking.

#### Reflection Pond

- Stay on the trail; no access beyond the pond.
- One vehicle per CUA holder at Reflection Pond parking area.

#### Wonder Lake Campground Evening Program

- CUA holders may attend with guests.
- Parking determined each spring.

#### Unauthorized Activities

- Vehicle transportation to and from Kantishna on the Denali Park Road is not authorized as part of this CUA. CUA holders must have an existing road permit to access an inholding.
- Drop off and pick up for unguided visitors east of the Old Park boundary at Mile 88 is prohibited, except as outlined above.
- Parking and staging a vehicle at the Kantishna Airstrip is prohibited.
- Parking or passenger drop-off at the north end of Wonder Lake is prohibited, except for physically disabled individuals. If they cannot walk from the gravel pit, use the east pull-out to off-load, then move the vehicle to Mile 87.5 Parking.