



National Park Service Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve

Plan Your Visit



NPS photo - Penny Knuckles

Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve is a vast and essentially untouched wilderness park. This is a place for solitude, discovery and exploration. The park has no set routes in place and visitors may wander at will across 8.4 million acres of superlative natural beauty.

There are no roads, trails or established campsites in this wilderness, and only limited means of commu-

The terrain is challenging; there are no established trails and the dense vegetation, tussocks, boggy ground and frequent stream and river crossings significantly slow progress across the landscape. Experienced hikers consider six to twelve miles a good day's travel in Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve, depending on conditions.

If visitors are not proficient in wilder-

Visitors to the park should be **PROFICIENT** in outdoor survival skills, and be prepared to care for their own life and their partner(s) if an emergency arises.

For those visitors who don't have the time or the back-country skills to mount an expedition into the park, there are other options.

Local air taxis provide flight-seeing trips, day trips or overnight camp-outs at remote locations. Air taxis will also take visitors into neighboring Kobuk Valley National Park to see the sand dunes, or into the Noatak Preserve. Visitors can get their NPS passport stamps for those locations at the Bettles Visitor Center for Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve.

Spend a day fishing at an alpine lake, watching the caribou in the northern valleys, or picnicing by a wild river while listening to the wind in the boreal forest.



NPS photo - Penny Knuckles

Whatever trip option you choose, be prepared for the experience of a lifetime.

Directions

Gates of the Arctic is a wilderness park, with no roads or trails into the park lands, so visitors must fly or hike into the park. Access to the park begins in Fairbanks, Alaska. There are several small airlines in Fairbanks that provide daily flights to the gateway communities of Bettles and Anaktuvuk Pass, and flag stops to Coldfoot.

Most visitors access the park by air taxi, in small aircraft equipped with floats or tundra tires. Another option for accessing the park is to hike in from the Dalton Highway or from the village of Anaktuvuk Pass. There are no trails into the park and preserve from any location, and river crossings may be necessary from both Anaktuvuk Pass and the Dalton Highway.



NPS photo

From Bettles:

It is necessary to take one of the daily flights from Fairbanks to Bettles, as there is no road to this small "bush" village. There are several air taxis, outfitters and lodges in Bettles, and a tiny store and post office. The park Visitor Center is located here. Visitors can fly into the park from Bettles.

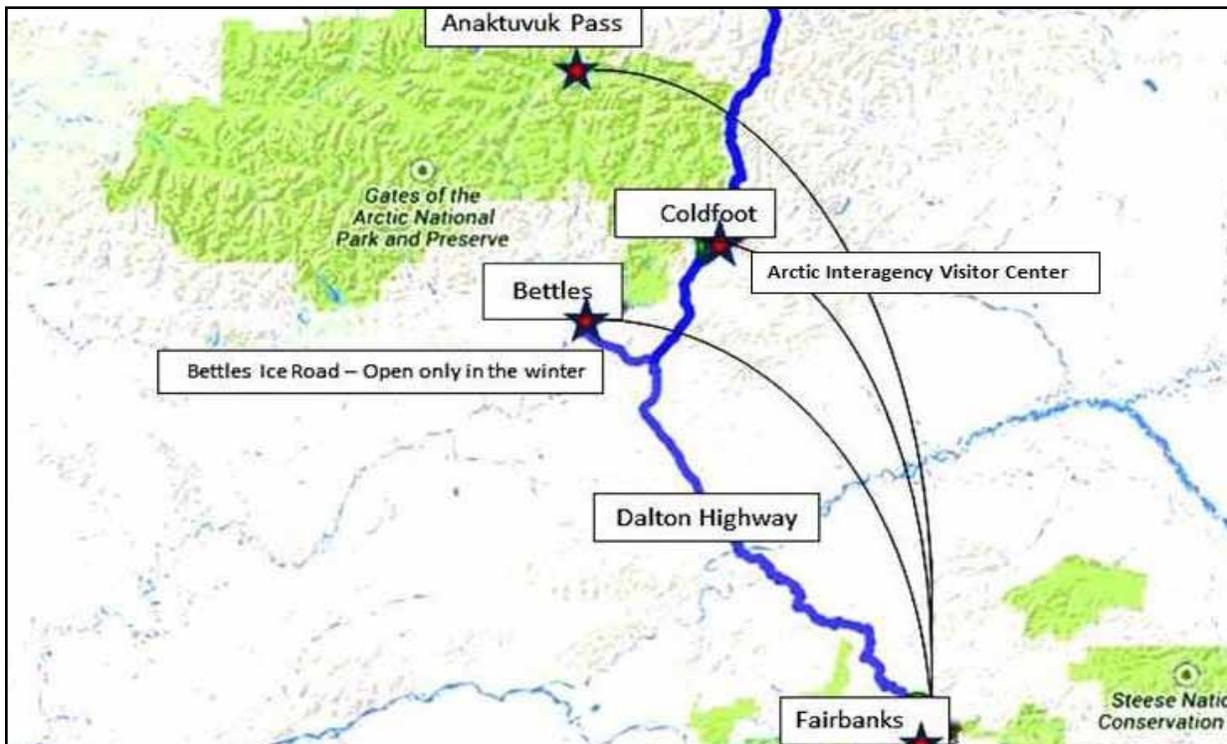
The Dalton Highway:

This highway parallels the eastern boundary of the park and it is possible to hike into the park from this road. The Dalton Highway runs through some spectacular scenery, but it is not without its own challenges. It's a mostly unpaved, two lane industrial road, with no amenities or services between Fairbanks and Coldfoot.

From Coldfoot:

Drive 280 miles north from Fairbanks up the Dalton Highway, or fly in using one of the small commercial air carriers in Fairbanks. Coldfoot has an air taxi, motel, store, café, post office, and campsites. There are two lodges in the neighboring community of Wiseman. Visitors can fly into the park, or hike in from the highway.

Dalton Highway Visitor Guide: <http://www.alaskageographic.org/uploads/pdf/dalton.pdf>



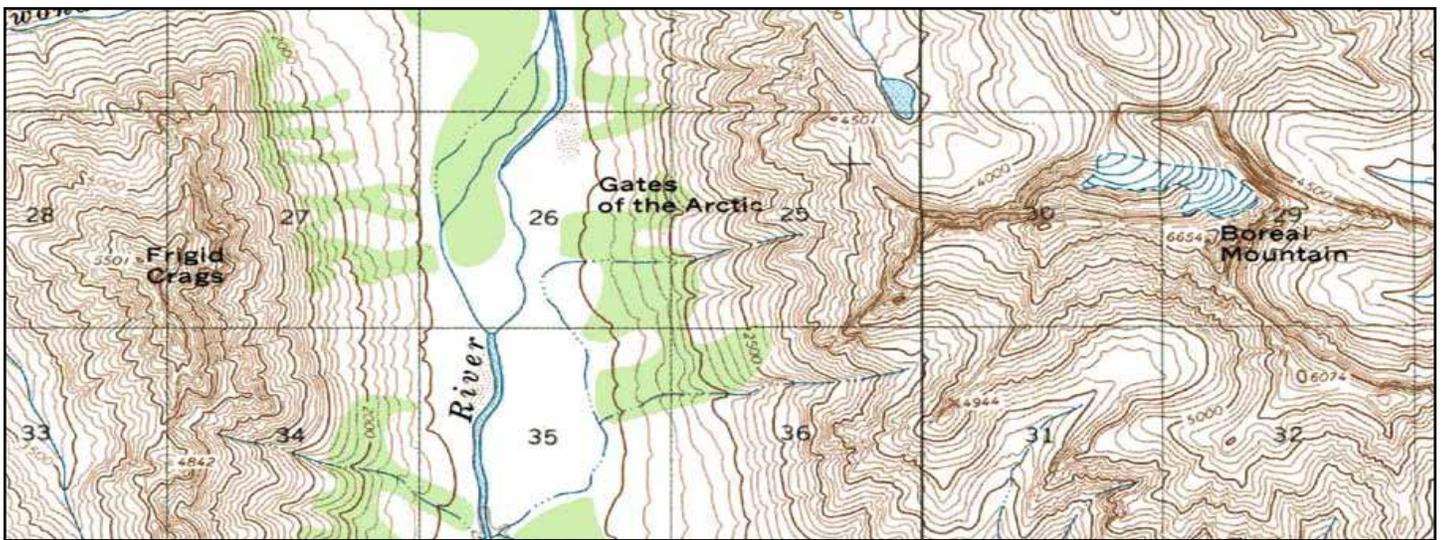
From Anaktuvuk Pass:

There is no road to Anaktuvuk Pass. Fly into this Nunamiut Village on one of the daily flights from Fairbanks, and walk into the park from the airstrip. Visitors to the park are welcome to cross the Nunamuit lands to access the park, camping as needed en-route to park land as long as they do not camp more than one night in any one location and do not interfere with ongoing subsistence activities. Anaktuvuk Pass has a Nunamiut History Museum, a small store, a NPS ranger station and a post office.

Maps

Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve encompasses 8.4 million acres of wilderness. Because there are no established trails in the Park and Preserve, good maps are extremely important.

The Trails Illustrated map of Gates of the Arctic offers an excellent large-scale overview of the Park and Preserve. This map is available through Alaska Geographic, the University of Alaska Fairbanks Map Office, and other vendors. Once you have established where you are going in the Park and Preserve, USGS topographical maps are crucial to help you plan your route. The 1:250,000 (1 inch to four miles) maps provide a good overview of specific areas while the 1:63,360 (1 inch to 1 mile) are larger scale and allow for in-depth route planning. USGS maps are available online and from some local vendors.



-Route Planning-

Deciding on specific routes is something you and your air-taxi/outfitter/guide service should determine together, based on your skill-level and their equipment ratings, as well as what you desire to accomplish on your trip. Detailed route planning is not addressed here or on our park website because Congress set this land aside as a trail-less wilderness area, specifically so that each visitor can find their own experience here. The park does not offer route planning for several other reasons: due to the fragile nature of the arctic groundcover, repeated use of a route tends to impact it very quickly and it can take a long time to recover, we cannot effectively evaluate the skill-level of our visitors, and the fluctuating conditions of the area can have a great effect on the route chosen.

Air taxi operators should also be consulted before finalizing a route, since they have specific places that they can pick up and drop off visitors and their gear.

It is recommended that visitors have at least one alternate route planned. In the event of bad weather, high or low water, or smoke from wildfires, visitors have a better chance having an enjoyable and successful trip if there is some flexibility built into their itinerary.

Operating Hours and Seasons



NPS photo - Zak Richter

Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve is open year round to visitors, but some of our visitor centers are only open seasonally. It is best to call each visitor center or office prior to arrival to confirm current operational hours.

Bettles Ranger Station and Visitor Center

PO Box 26030
Bettles Field, AK 99726
(907) 692-5494

Open year round:

From mid-June to the end of September: open 7 days a week, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
October through May: open Monday-Friday, 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. Closed on holidays.

Fairbanks Administrative Center

4175 Geist Road
Fairbanks, AK 99709
(907) 457-5752

Open year-round Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Closed on holidays.

Arctic Interagency Visitor Center

Coldfoot, Alaska, on the Dalton Highway
(907) 678-5209

Open Memorial Day to Labor Day, 7 days a week, 10:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m.

Anaktuvuk Pass Ranger Station

Anaktuvuk Pass, AK
(907) 661-3520

The ranger station is closed during the winters; call for summer ranger station hours.

PERMITS AND REGISTRATION

No permit is required to enter the park; however visitors are requested to contact the Bettles Visitor Center, the Coldfoot Interagency Visitor Center or the Anaktuvuk Pass Ranger Station and attend a back country orientation. During an orientation you can get valuable information about current weather, fire and wildlife alerts, back country safety, bear safety and *Leave No Trace* camping techniques. The Fairbanks Alaska Public Lands Information Center also provides back country orientations. All of these facilities have Bear Resistant Food Containers to loan out to back country visitors.

Commercial transporters are required to ensure that all of their clients get the opportunity to receive a backcountry orientation from park rangers prior to entering the park and preserve. Please take a moment to complete our voluntary registration form prior to your trip into the backcountry.

If you are traveling in a group (i.e. nonprofit, educational, commercial, guided, etc.) please contact the park several months before your travel dates for permit requirements and group size limits.



Bettles Visitor Center/Ranger Station

FACILITIES

Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve is a wilderness park - there are no facilities, roads, campsites or trails in the park area.

Limited lodging is available in the neighboring communities of Bettles, Anaktuvuk Pass and Coldfoot. There are small stores in Bettles and Anaktuvuk Pass, however they carry very limited supplies. We suggest you call ahead if you plan on purchasing any of your supplies in these locations.

Accommodations

In addition to providing lodging, the following businesses offer a variety of other services like charter, outfitting and guiding services. This listing is provided for the information of potential park visitors and does not constitute an endorsement of any of the businesses or services.

Arctic Getaway (907) 678-4456 mailto:info@arcticgetaway.com	Wiseman	Lodging, Food, Recreation Open Year Round
Bettles Lodge, Inc. (907) 692-5111 1-800-770-5111 mailto:BTTLodge@Alaska.net	Bettles	Lodging, Food, Gas, Charters Gifts, Recreation Open Year Round.
Boreal Lodging (907) 678-4566 boreallodge@juno.com	Wiseman	Lodging, Kitchen, Gift Shop Open Year Round
Brooks Range Aviation (907) 692-5444 airservice@brooksrangle.com	Bettles	Lodging, Grocery Store, Charters
Coldfoot Services (907) 678-5201 mailto:adventure@northernalaska.com	Coldfoot	Lodging, Food, Gas, Water, Laundry, RV Parking, Camping Facilities, Dump & Fill Site Open Year Round
Iniakuk Lake Lodge (907) 479-6354 (907) 692-5105 mailto:gofarnorth@compuserve.com	Iniakuk Lake Alatna River	Brooks Range Luxury Accommodation, Food, Recreation Open Seasonally. Accessible only by Float Plane.
Nunamuit Corporation (907) 661-3026	Anaktuvuk Pass	Motel Lodging, Camp Kitchen Open Year Round.
Peace of Selby (907) 672-3206 http://www.alaskawilderness.net/	Selby Lake Narvak Lake	Lodging, Recreation Open Year Round



As increasing numbers of people seek the beauty and exhilaration of outdoor recreation, our collective mark on the environment and natural processes increases. We encourage you to practice minimum-impact techniques, such as:

- Plan ahead and be properly prepared
- Travel and camp on durable surfaces
- Dispose of waste properly
- Leave what you find
- Minimize campfire impacts
- Respect wildlife
- Be considerate of other visitors
- Respect private land and subsistence users

To accomplish this properly, you'll need to bring some specific equipment (e.g. camp stove & fuel, small trowel, etc.) For additional Leave No Trace information checkout: <http://www.LNT.org>

The park has a 30 minute video on youtube with helpful information on camping in the back country of Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve. We highly recommend that you take some time to watch it before your trip. It's filled with good advice on Leave No Trace camping ethics along with some great tips on river crossings, bear safety, hiking and boating safety. It's also got some beautiful footage of the park to whet your appetite for the adventure to come.

The Leave No Trace and Backcountry Safety / Bear Safety Video is here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YP9vFTA0t0A>



Hiking

Experienced hikers in the Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve consider six to twelve miles a good day's travel. There are no established trails, and the dense vegetation, tussocks, boggy ground and frequent stream and river crossings significantly slow your progress. You will find easiest walking above the tree line or in the streambeds, if the water level is low. There are so many rivers in this area that you are likely to have to cross one or more during your trip. The water levels fluctuate continuously due to weather conditions, but the highest levels are generally in the spring during the run-off.

Topographic maps are essential in planning your course of travel. Carry your maps and a good compass and/or GPS unit with you in the field.

When hiking, minimize damage to vegetation by limiting your group size to seven people traveling in one direction. Where no game trails exist walk in a fan formation, rather than a single file straight line, to avoid creating social trails. Adjustable ski poles used as walking sticks are very useful.



Climbing

The most popular climbing areas in the park and preserve are in the Arrigetch Peaks, Mount Doonerak and Mount Igikpak areas. Long-term impacts tend to be greater in these locations. Access to these areas is primarily by float-equipped aircraft and most peaks are considered technical climbs.

A good source of climbing information for this area is the American Alpine Club journals. We currently have no regulations specific to rock climbing, with the exception of installation of fixed anchors, but we do require that climbers follow all park regulations that apply to backpackers and canoeists. This includes cleaning your climbing route and avoiding use of bolts or fixed anchors, as the area is designated wilderness.

Camping



NPS Photo by Penny Knuckles

There are no designated camping sites in the park and preserve, but using large gravel bars is preferred wherever possible. These generally have fewer mosquitoes present and can provide less obstructed views of approaching wildlife. When camping, minimize damage to vegetation by limiting your group size to seven people and by camping in one spot no longer than three days.

Campfires are allowed except during restricted times of high fire danger. Keep in mind that wildfires are easily started in the peat that makes up a large percentage of the ground in this part of the world. We ask that you build your campfire on a gravel bar

Fishing

Because of the low productivity of arctic waters, we ask you to keep only what you can immediately consume. The fish populations in arctic waters have very low growth rates and productivity, and therefore are highly susceptible to over fishing. The most widespread species in the park is the arctic grayling, which is found in many rivers and those lakes with an outlet stream. Lake trout, northern pike, arctic char, sheefish, whitefish and chum salmon are also found in northern waters.

State fishing regulations apply in the park. For a complete list of fishing regulations contact the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, <http://www.state.ak.us/adfg/>. Fish-

Rivers and Lakes

For ease of air transportation, most river travel is done with rafts, inflatable canoes, pack rafts or other collapsible boats. Most charter operators will not haul rigid canoes. If you are going to rent watercraft from a local vendor, be sure to make arrangements with them before you arrive, as supplies and equipment are often limited.

Waters average Class I and II, with a few Class III-IV rapids, but river conditions constantly change. Challenges associated with river in the arctic travel include very cold water temperature, dramatically fluctuating water levels, logjams, strainers and sweepers, and some rapids. Generally, the highest water is in May and June. High water has its drawbacks - it can make it difficult to find suitable campsites.

Many northern rivers have afeis, sometimes called overflow ice. As rivers begin freezing in the fall, they flow up and over the new ice, creating layer upon layer of ice. By winter's end, these layers may be more than 15 feet thick. Often covering extensive areas of northern rivers, afeis can block river channels or calve into the river like icebergs, so constant awareness of the river conditions in front of you is important. Afeis persists in some rivers until late summer.

Rivers change every spring during break-up, sometimes dramatically. And water levels also change constantly; a summer storm fifty miles upriver can cause a major rise in river levels where you are. Rivers in areas with permafrost react quickly to rain, as the water does not soak into the ground but is channeled directly to the rivers. Northern rivers can be low one day and be in flood stage two days later. Remember that this is a remote wilderness in an extreme environment and conditions can change rapidly.

Gates of the Arctic National Park has six designated Wild Rivers: the John River, Noatak River, Kobuk River, Alatna River, Tinyaguk River and the North Fork of the Koyukuk River.

These rivers are all commonly floated in addition to the Killik, Itkillik, and occasionally the Nigu. Each river has a variety of access points and take-out points. Contact an air taxi operator to find out where they are able to drop you off and pick you up on each river. Wildlife viewing opportunities exist on all of the rivers.



Photo courtesy of Paxson Woelber

Weather

Your ability to deal with the rapidly changing weather in and around Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve could well determine the level of satisfaction you derive from your trip into the Arctic.

Be prepared for rapid, severe changes in the weather. One sudden rain-storm, in or near your travel region, can cause streams and rivers to rise suddenly. Since most travel in the park and preserve involves river and stream crossings, it is important to consider potential changes in water levels. Choose your clothing, gear and food with great care.

Current weather forecasts for Bettles Field and Anaktuvuk Pass can be obtained from a variety of on-line sources. However, be prepared for weather fluctuations throughout most of the year, both from day to day and within any given 24-hour time frame. This information is a broad generalization of climactic conditions in the Brooks Range. Be aware that you can experience extremes of temperature even in the summer months.



Photo courtesy of Paxson Woelber

Summer:

Mid-June to September is usually the best time for backpacking and hiking. July through August is generally the best time to take float trips. The central Brooks Range has and relatively short, cool summers. The entire region receives continuous sunlight during the summer for at least 30 days, and there are long days of daylight for months on either end. Thunderstorm activity is common during June and July. July through September is the wettest time of year and prevailing winds are out of the north. Freezing temperatures may occur at any time of the year, but particularly from mid-August on. Be prepared for wet ground and possible cold weather in June. July may be the only month that snow does not fall. Insect protection is a must during the summer months.

Autumn:

Fall is usually very brief, and filled with vibrant colors. Freezing temperatures start occurring in mid-August and rivers generally freeze by mid-September to early-October. Local air taxi operators pull their float planes out of service on September 23.

Winter:

November through March is the best time for viewing the Aurora Borealis. The central Brooks Range has long, severe winters. Snow falls during 8 or 9 months of the year, averaging 60-80 inches. Average minimum and maximum winter temperatures are -67F and 33F. Snow has been recorded in every month of the year and the annual average is 45 inches. Winter travel presents additional difficulties, such as ice crossings, potential avalanche conditions and extreme temperatures (-50F or colder). As always, be sure you're prepared with the properly rated equipment and skills necessary to deal with these extreme conditions.

Spring:

February through April is a good time for winter travel with skis, snowshoes or dogs. Thawing generally begins in late April. The month of May is considered 'break-up', when the ice on the rivers is getting soft and mushy and starting to break apart. It is very difficult to do any backcountry travel that involves river crossings during break-up. The exact time of break-up is dependent on weather and the amount of ice and snow accumulated over the winter. Depending on weather and elevation, snow cover is mostly gone by June, although it can persist in some areas.

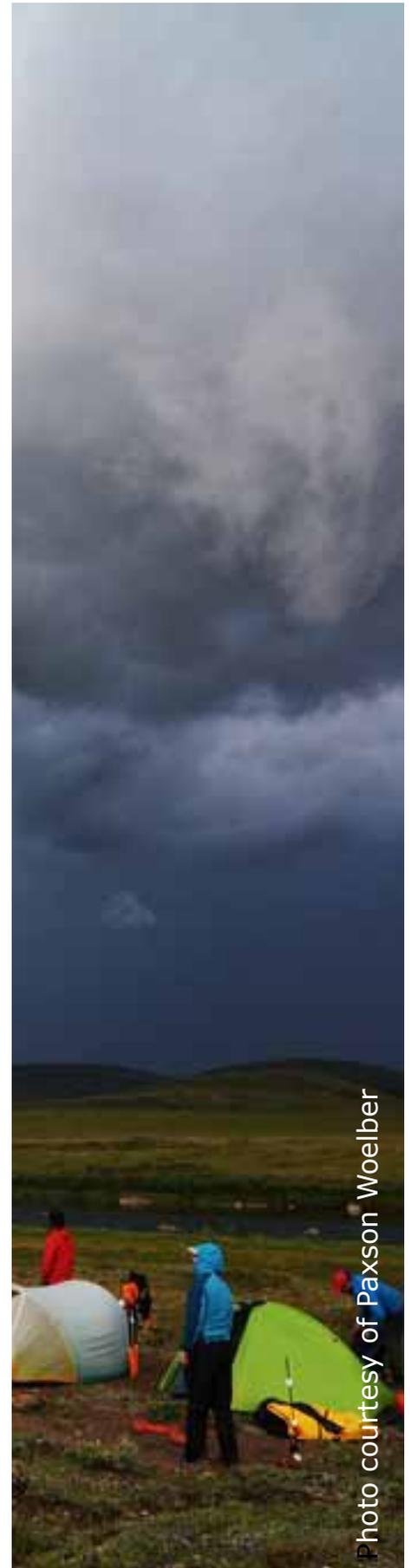


Photo courtesy of Paxson Woelber

BEARS & FOOD STORAGE

Most people who see a bear in the wild consider it the highlight of their trip. However, habituated bears (bears that have become accustomed to human food and petroleum-based products, such as fuel and bug repellent in aerosol cans) can present a hazard to people traveling in the backcountry.

A Fed Bear May Become a Dead Bear

All Alaska National Parks and Preserves require that food and garbage be stored by an approved means. Allowing a bear to obtain human food or garbage, even once, will cause it to seek out more human food. Eventually, if the bear becomes a threat to human safety, it may be killed. For this reason, it is against the law to feed bears in Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve, either on purpose or by carelessly leaving food or garbage where bears can get to it.

Because in most areas of Gates of the Arctic Park and Preserve there are no trees appropriate for hanging food, Bear Resistant Food Containers (BRFCs) are the most common way to meet the requirement for overnight visitors in the park. Coolers, ice chests, plastic packing boxes (totes, ActionPackers, etc.) dry bags, blue dry barrels, tents and kayaks are not approved food storage containers.

Food and equipment cannot be left unattended at any time unless it is properly stowed in an approved BRFC. The Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC) field tests BRFCs and provides a list of all those containers that pass their testing. These approved containers are the only BRFCs authorized for use in the park. For a list of certified and approved BRFCs go to their website: <http://www.igbconline.org/>

Unattended food caches in non-bear resistant containers are prohibited in all areas of the park and preserve.

As a courtesy to our visitors, a variety of Bear Resistant Food Containers are available for loan, free of charge, on a first come first serve basis. They can be checked out and returned to any of our ranger stations and visitor centers. They can also be returned by US mail. Call ahead to check availability. See page 5 for a complete list of facilities where you can check out BRFCs.

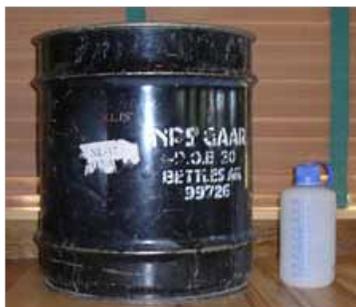
Your air-taxi operator or guide service may also be able to assist you in securing BRFCs. If you wish to purchase your own BRFCs make sure they are on the approved list of containers for use in the park.



Bear Resistant Food Containers available for loan from Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve



Length: 1.8 ft
 Height: 2.45 ft
 Width: 1.2 ft
 Weight w/lid: 13.5 lb



Circumference: 3.7 ft
 Height: 2.45 ft
 Width: 1.2 ft
 Weight w/lid & rim: 13.5 lbs



Circumference: 3.7 ft
 Height: .85 ft
 Width: 1.2 ft
 Weight w/lid & rim: 10.5 lbs



Circumference: 2.25 ft
 Height: 1.5 ft
 Width: 0.7 ft
 Weight w/lid & rim: 5 lbs



Circumference: 2.25 ft
 Height: 1 ft
 Width: 0.7 ft
 Weight w/lid & rim: 3 lbs



Circumference: 3.7 ft
 Height: 2.7 ft
 Width: 1.2 ft
 Weight w/lid & rim: 15.5 lbs

Firearms / Bear Spray

If you choose to carry a firearm and/or Capsicum pepper spray for protection from bears, be familiar with the weapon(s) and their potential.

Firearms:

Park visitors are allowed to carry guns in the park's backcountry for personal protection; however we strongly encourage visitors to carefully assess their skill level with firearms before doing so. For people who are not extremely experienced and comfortable with guns, they may be safer without one. Guns may serve as a false sense of security and could ultimately lead to taking unnecessary chances or actions in bear country.

Visitors who discharge firearms inappropriately and/or kill or injure wildlife unnecessarily will be held accountable for their actions.

You may kill a bear in defense of life and property if you did not provoke an attack or cause a problem by negligently leaving food or garbage in a manner that attracts bears, and if you have done everything else you can to protect your life and property. Additional guidelines regarding defense of life or property are listed in the Alaska Hunting Regulations produced annually by the Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game (800-478-3377) or <http://www.state.ak.us/adfg/>.

Bear Spray:

Bear spray (Capsicum spray) is also an effective deterrent in bear encounters. "Bear spray represents an effective alternative to lethal force and should be considered as an option for personal safety for those recreating and working in bear country." -from The Journal of Wildlife Management. In a 20 year study recently completed, Capsicum spray was found to be more effective in preventing injury to persons and less lethal to bears than firearms in most instances.

Capsicum spray also has its own inherent dangers. You must be fairly close to the bear to use it effectively (15-20 feet) and can affect you if you are standing downwind. Capsicum spray can accidentally discharge and disable you or someone in your party. If you discharge bear spray and get it on your gear be sure to wash it off thoroughly. When dry Capsicum has proven to be an attractant rather than a deterrent.

Plan ahead:

The final decision is yours. However, if you choose to carry a firearm and/or Capsicum spray we recommend that you spend some time becoming versed in its use before heading out into the back country. Firearms are subject to Alaska State laws. Notify your air taxi operator if you carrying bear spray or ammunition so that it may be stored safely on the aircraft.

For more information:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=hunting.bearsafety>

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.2193/2006-452/abstract>

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=livingwithbears.conflicts>

Bear Safety



Bears and campers often frequent the same areas in Alaska's national parks and it is important that campers and hikers respect their space. It is likely that bears and campers will encounter one another, but by remaining calm and following the basic advice of experienced bear behaviorists, you increase the odds of a positive outcome for both you and the bear.

We strongly recommend that you attend a back country/bear safety orientation at one of our Visitor Information Stations. Once in the backcountry you are on your own.

Bear Signs to Watch Out for and Areas to Avoid

It is important to be "bear aware" when camping and hiking in Alaska's national parks and to avoid seasonal bear areas (sedge meadows, berry patches, etc.). Bear signs are easy to find if you know what to look for. Select a campsite with the least amount of bear sign and away from seasonal bear foraging areas. Here are some signs to be on the lookout for:

- Prepare and consume food at least 100 yards from your tent site and food storage area. Try to select cooking areas where you can see a comfortable distance to minimize the risk of a surprise encounter with a bear passing through the area.
- Be prepared to quickly stow all food back into the BRFC if a bear should suddenly approach.
- Keep your gear together— minimize the amount of space that you occupy. Always ask yourself, "Is there room for a bear to get around us?" Or "Can I quickly get all this gear under my control?"

- Bear scat or tracks that seem very recent or abundant.
- Trails that are formed because of consistent use. Bears will often follow the path of least resistance, for example, lakeshores, gravel bars and ridgelines.
- A tree or log that has bear hair or claw marks may indicate that it is a repeatedly used bear rub-tree.
- Large dug up areas could be forage sites, day beds, or belly holes.
- Avoid salmon streams. Bears like fish. A noisy stream may lessen your ability to hear a bear or for a bear to hear you.
- Narrow beaches with steep cliffs or extremely dense brush that do not allow a bear to pass safely.
- Neither you nor the bear want to be surprised by the other. Avoid areas with restricted visibility and make noise when exiting your tent. Ask yourself: Can a bear walk by and pass my campsite and cooking area unhindered?

How to Handle a Bear Encounter

As the number of visitors to bear country in Alaska increases, so does the number of human/bear encounters. The vast majority of these encounters do not result in human injury or fatality. However, a much larger proportion of these encounters do result in the bear's death. You can help prevent injury to yourself, to others, and to the bear by taking a few basic precautions.

- **Stay Alert.** Stay constantly alert in bear country. Use your ears, eyes, and even your nose to detect the presence of a bear. The sooner you are aware of the bear, the more time you and the bear will have to react appropriately.
- **Be Visible, Make Noise.** A surprise encounter with a bear is can be stressful. However, you can reduce the potential for such encounters. Avoid surprises by traveling in open areas with good visibility. Make noise as you walk, particularly in thick brush, or when rounding a blind corner—talk, clap, or sing. Be extra alert in windy conditions or near noisy streams or rivers that may mask your sounds. When possible, travel with the wind at your back.

What Should You Do if You Encounter a Bear?

First assess the situation.

Does the bear see you? If the bear does not see you, simply move away from the bear and the encounter is over.

- If you see a bear and it does not see you, back away out of sight and change your course. Move out of the area or quietly observe the bear at a safe distance without approaching or otherwise disturbing it.
- Disturbance is evident whenever a bear changes its behavior because of you. If it stops eating and looks up, sniffs the air with ears erect, trying to locate you, you are too close! Bears only have 6-8 months to acquire the calories and fat reserves needed for the entire year. Give them space.



Photo courtesy of Paxson Woelber

Non-defensive Bear Encounters

If the bear is aware of you and either looking or not looking at you, or moving steadily along a route, this can be considered non-defensive behavior.

What if you are hiking or kayaking and you encounter a non-defensive bear?

- Change your course to avoid the bear. Increase your distance from the bear and stay alert to the bear's whereabouts.
- Never approach a bear, even from your boat or kayak. Approaching bears is dangerous and can cause undue stress and disturbance to the bear increasing the risk of attack.

What if you are camping, cooking, or eating and you encounter a non-defensive bear?

- Keep all of your gear under your direct control. Make sure the bear is aware of your presence. Talk calmly to the bear and stand your ground.
- If you are in a group, stay together without blocking the bear's route. If the bear is not focused on you allow the bear to pass peacefully. If the bear approaches and is focused on you, stand together and elevate your defensive actions by shouting, yelling, and waving your arms. Do not retreat from the bear. You can also use noisemakers like air horns or bang pots and pans.
- If the bear departs the encounter ends.
- If the bear continues to approach, stand your ground and remain assertive.
- If a bear charges you stand your ground and remain assertive. Make yourself look big. Most non-defensive charges do not end in contact.
- Now is the time to use bear pepper spray if you have it!

Defensive Bear Encounters

Defensive behaviors arise when bears are defending food, or female bears are defending their offspring, or because you have surprised the bear. Defensive encounters usually occur suddenly and at close distances. Defensive behavior may include snorting, huffing, jaw popping, and charging.

If you note any of these behaviors, your safety lies in calming the bear and leaving the area. Never run from or turn your back on the bear.

- Talk calmly to the bear; move slowly away diagonally if the bear is stationary.
- Continue to monitor the bear as you move from the area.
- If the bear renews its advance stop and stand your ground again. Talk calmly to the bear.
- If the bear charges remain non-threatening and stand your ground. Most charges do not end in contact. Now is the time to use bear pepper spray if you have it.

FIGHT ANY BEAR THAT ATTEMPTS TO ENTER YOUR TENT.

Hunting

Sport Hunting:

Sport hunting and trapping are permitted only in the Preserve areas of Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve. The National Park Service and the State of Alaska cooperatively manage the wildlife resources of the Preserve. To hunt and trap in the preserve, you must have all required licenses and permits and follow all other state regulations. State of Alaska hunting regulations apply throughout the Preserve areas of Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve.

For further information on hunting in Alaska and where to get a license, visit the Alaska Department of Fish and Game website: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/>

Boundary maps and a variety of hunting and harvest pamphlets may be found on our website: <http://www.nps.gov/gaar/planyourvisit/hunting.htm>

Please keep in mind that many areas within the preserve are private land. Do not enter private land without the landowner's permission.

Subsistence Hunting:

When this vast park area was created in 1980, Congress protected the traditional subsistence rights of local rural residents through the Alaska National Interests Land Conservation Act (ANILCA). Subsistence use is defined as: Customary and traditional uses by rural Alaska residents of wild, renewable resources for direct personal or family consumption as food, shelter, fuel, clothing, tools or transportation; for the making and selling of handicraft articles out of non-edible by-products of fish and wildlife resources taken for personal or family consumption; for barter, or sharing for personal or family consumption; and for customary trade

Today, as in the past, many Alaskans live off the land, relying on fish, wildlife and other wild resources. Alaska's natural abundance forms the backbone of life and economy for many people in the state, and indigenous people in Alaska have used these subsistence resources for food, shelter, clothing, transportation, handicrafts and trade for thousands of years. Subsistence, and all it entails, is critical to sustaining the physical and spiritual culture of Alaska Native peoples and to making life on the land possible for many of Alaska's rural residents.

Ten villages in and around the park and preserve have the right to subsistence hunt, fish and trap within the park.

Please respect and do not disturb subsistence activities and sites.



Experience Your National Park

This 8.4 million-acre park was established on December 2, 1980 as a wilderness park. Congress recognized that a special value of this park is its wild and undeveloped character and the opportunity it affords for solitude, wilderness travel and adventure.

In establishing Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve in Alaska's Brooks Range, Congress has reserved a vast and essentially untouched area of superlative natural beauty and scientific value, and protected opportunities for continued traditional subsistence use by local rural residents.

We hope this brochure will be of some assistance in planning your trip to this incredible wilderness. If you have any questions feel free to contact one of our ranger stations or visitor centers and talk to a ranger about your plans. For current information and a list of all outfitters, air taxis and guides authorized to provide services within the park, check out our trip planning web pages: <http://www.nps.gov/gaar/planyourvisit/index.htm>. The website also has features about the history and culture of the park area, and you can read about the landscape, plants and animals in the park.

Robert Marshall once famously said, "I like it among these rugged mountains better than anyplace in the world."

We agree, and we think you'll find this the perfect place for your next adventure.



NPS Photo by Zak Richter



The Six Designated Wild Rivers in Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve

The National Wild and Scenic Rivers System was created by Congress in 1968 to preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations.

Noatak River: Entirely above the Arctic Circle, it traverses alpine and tundra, rolls through canyons and over plains, and ends up in a flat coastal delta where it drains into Kotzebue Sound. It provides easy to moderate floating through glacial valley with snow-capped peaks and occasional opportunities for wildlife observation.

Length: Approx. 330 miles long (65 miles within the park)

Features: Glacial alpine valley becoming rolling hills and tundra.

Kobuk River: The Kobuk is an exceptional float river with many hiking opportunities in the upper reaches. There are a few short stretches of extremely rugged rapids in the stretch just below Walker Lake (up to class III-IV). You'll find opportunities for sport hunting (in the preserve only), fishing and wildlife observation.

Length: Approx. 110 mi. long

Features: Wide valleys with sweeping vistas of nearby hills and low mountains. Many floats start at Walker Lake. There are two canyons just downriver of Walker Lake.

North Fork of the Koyukuk River: The North Fork of the Koyukuk flows from its headwaters on the south flank of the Arctic Divide through broad glacially carved valleys, passing between the iconic Boreal Mountain and Frigid Crags (dubbed the "Gates to the Arctic" by Bob Marshall.)

Length: Approx. 102 miles long

Features: Outstanding backpacking in upper reaches of drainage. A few challenging rapids, depending on water levels. The North Fork can be floated all the way to Bettles.

Alatna River: The Alatna flows from lakes high on the Arctic Divide in the Central Brooks Range. It passes through dramatic and rugged mountains and spruce-hardwood forest. Plentiful sightseeing, hiking and fishing.

Length: Approx. 83 miles long

Features: Broad river valley running through the mountains of the central Brooks Range, including the Arrigetch Peaks, wildlife, fishing, and numerous lakes.

Tinayguk River: This river starts as a trickle high up in the Endicott Mountains. The scenic qualities are tremendous, with many opportunities for hiking and backpacking. Access is difficult; most floaters hike in with pack rafts.

Length: Approx. 44 miles long

Features: Broad glacial valley bordered by the rugged peaks of mountains and boreal spruce forest.

John River: The John River starts at Anaktuvuk Pass and then flows south through alpine tundra and forested valleys. There is good hiking and backpacking along the river and the lower reaches make an excellent family float.

Length: Approx. 52 miles long

Features: Wide glacial valleys dissecting the central Brooks Range, lined with interesting bluffs in the lower reaches. Major caribou migration route.