

## Script for *Hiking the Chilkoot Trail* video

(music)

Permits are needed from June-Sept to hike the Chilkoot Trail.

Erica:

Welcome to Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, home to the famous Chilkoot Trail. My name is Erica Francis and I'll be introducing you to some of the common risks of hiking the trail.

In 1897, hopeful gold seekers from all over the world poured into Skagway and Dyea to begin a 600-mile trek to the goldfields. Today you can retrace the footsteps of the stampeders and natives by hiking the first 33 miles of the Chilkoot Trail.

Hiking the Chilkoot can be highly rewarding; however, unlike many hikes, taking on the Chilkoot means crossing an international border, and hiking 33 miles of isolated, physically challenging and potentially hazardous terrain. Due to the risks of a trek like this, proper preparation is imperative. There is no substitute for planning ahead, having the right skills, and using good judgment. Being smart can make the difference in having a wonderful trip, ending up in the hospital, or worse.

Liz:

Most hikers begin the trail here in Dyea and take 3-5 days to travel to Lake Bennett to meet their scheduled train or float plane. The trail length is 33 miles and you gain 3500 feet of elevation; 2500 of which are gained between the 3.3 miles from sheep camp to the summit.

Erica:

The portion of the hike from the Scales over Chilkoot Pass is a route not a trail. Although marked, frequent fog and rain make it easy to miss a marker and end up traveling in the wrong direction.

The Chilkoot is not a novice trail and should only be attempted by persons who are physically fit and experienced in hiking and backpacking. Individuals who have previously injured their ankles, knees or back, or who have chronic pain, frequently experience flare-ups while hiking the Chilkoot. To avoid unnecessary problems test your strength and endurance on shorter, less demanding overnight trips prior to hiking the Chilkoot.

Liz:

Many people underestimate the challenges that you might face on the Chilkoot Trail. It's their first time backpacking or maybe they just haven't done the research to realize how challenging it can be. People often times don't have the appropriate equipment; they wear jeans and t-shirts and think it's going to be ok. But here, it rains almost every day, so polypropylene or some other type of wicking material is a must. Often times folks also show up without having set up a tent before, or seeing if their stove works this year. It's important that you have a run through before you show up on the trail to make sure all your equipment is in good working order and that you know how to use it.

We have many avalanche zones on the trail that you will travel through, especially from Sheep Camp to Happy Camp. Those zones are active throughout the summer. Especially in the early season while hiking on the Chilkoot Trail, you need to have full avalanche gear, which would be: a beacon, shovel, and probe. You also need to have basic avalanche awareness.

The Chilkoot Trail is used not only used by people, but also by wildlife. One of our most common visitors would be bears. We have both black bears and brown bears here on the Chilkoot Trail. It's very important that you travel 'Bear Aware' when traveling on the Chilkoot Trail.

Erica:

Every year many hikers end up turning around or getting hurt on the trail due to lack of preparation, accidents, and inclement weather. These unexpected events can happen to anyone, even the most experienced. As you decide whether you're ready to hike the Chilkoot, make sure you're prepared to handle any emergency that arises. Although National Park Service and Parks Canada staff patrol the trail during the summer months, help from rangers and wardens might be many hours or even days away. Rescue and helicopter evacuations could end up costing you upwards of \$75000.

In addition to protecting yourself and others here at Klondike Gold Rush, it is also your responsibility to help us protect the park.

Liz:

The Chilkoot Trail is essentially a living museum. You'll be traveling the same way that the stampeders traveled over the pass. Many of the items they took with them have actually been left behind on the trail. You'll find things like: tram wheels and pianos and boats and shoes that are even still intact today. As you're traveling by these artifacts, please refrain from touching them.

Erica:

Visit the parks website to get more information on planning your trip and current conditions or stop by the trail center in Skagway or the Chilkoot Trail National Historic Site in Whitehorse, Yukon to speak with a ranger or warden.

And on behalf of everyone here at Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park, we hope you have an enjoyable trip on the Chilkoot Trail.