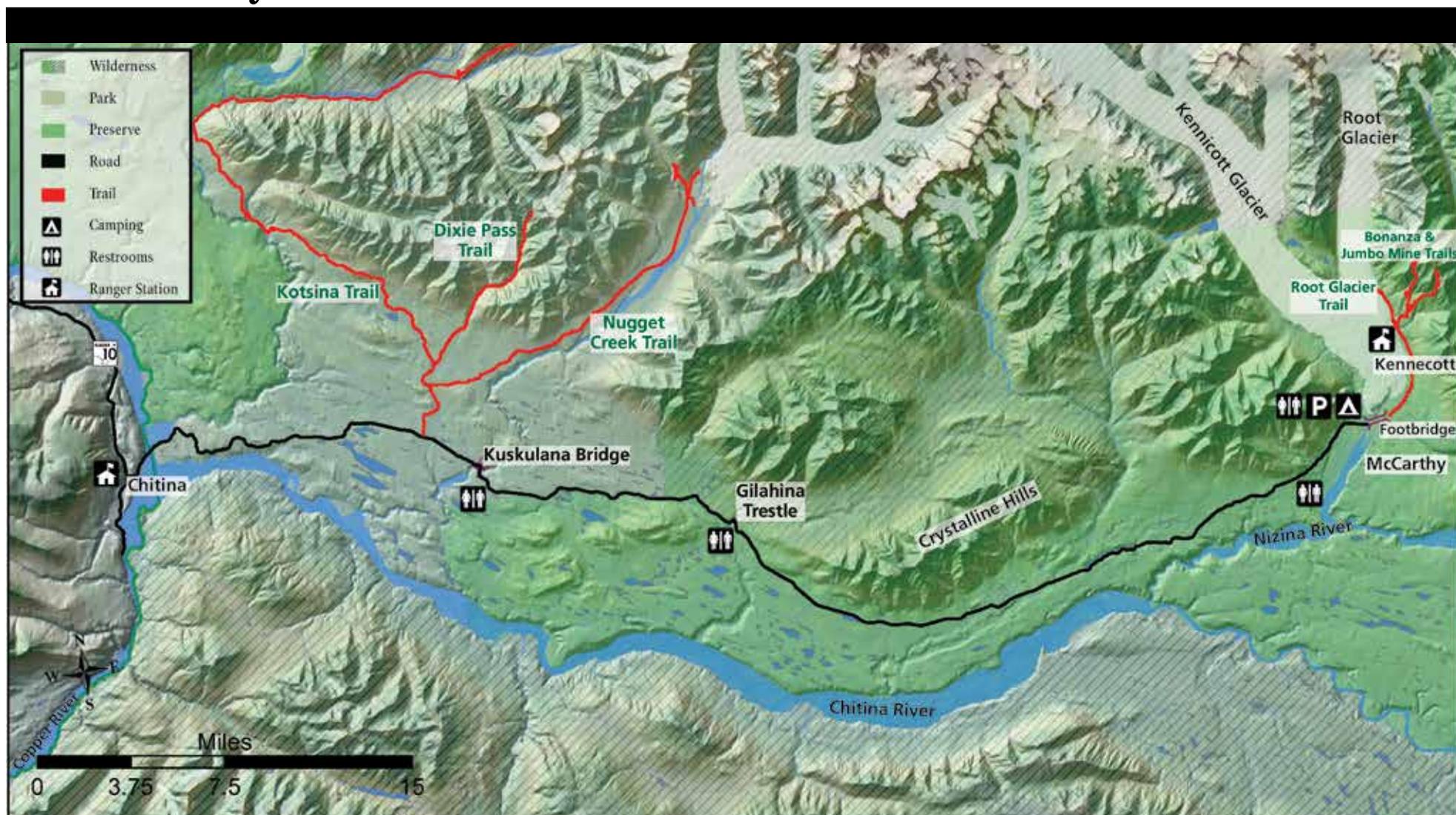


McCarthy Road Guide



THE 60-MILE MCCARTHY ROAD WINDS DEEP INTO THE HEART OF WRANGELL-ST. ELIAS. ONCE THE gateway to tremendous fortunes, it is now your gateway to spectacular scenery, vast wilderness, and adventure. For those willing to leave the pavement behind, this road provides access to many natural and historic wonders of our largest park.

Today's road originated in 1909 as a railway constructed to support the Kennecott Copper Mines. When large scale mining ended in 1938, most of the rails were salvaged for scrap iron. In 1971 a new bridge was constructed over the Copper River and the rail bed was covered with gravel, creating today's surface of the McCarthy Road.

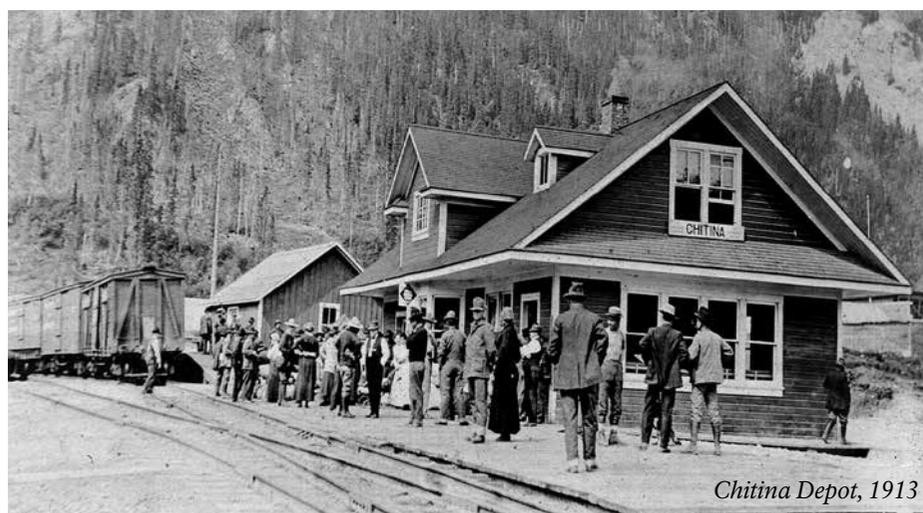
Narrow and winding, the road still reflects its railway origins. In places, remnants of railroad ties may surface along with the occasional spike, creating unexpected hazards. Although traffic and weather often result in ruts and washboarded surfaces, under normal summer conditions most passenger vehicles can make the trip. Please allow faster vehicles to pass by using turnouts. Due to the narrow road and limited visibility, we do not recommend that large RVs drive on the McCarthy Road.

The road ends at the Kennicott River, a half-mile short of McCarthy and five miles short of historic Kennecott. Parking is available from private vendors. Cross the footbridge over the river, then continue on foot, by bicycle, or shuttle.

McCarthy Road Basics

- Begins at mile 33 Edgerton Highway, in Chitina, AK.
- 60 miles, allow 2 hours EACH WAY.
- **Unpaved and maintained by the Alaska state DOT. Rough road conditions and potholes are common.**
- This is a remote area with **NO** services. **NO FUEL** is available in Chitina. The last place to get fuel is Kenny Lake, AK.
- Drive slowly, carefully, and courteously.
- We recommend that you carry a full-sized spare and an adequate jack.
- **Private land** adjoins many parts of the road and in the McCarthy/Kennecott area. Please respect private property.
- Cell phone coverage is very limited.

The McCarthy Road begins in Chitina, AK. Look for the mile-marker posts and follow along with this guide



Chitina Depot, 1913

The Town of Chitina

Pronounced, "Chit-Na," this railroad town sprang to life in 1910. Chitina was once bustling as the major stopover and service point for the trains that carried ore from Kennecott to ships in Cordova. The railroad is gone, but today Chitina is busy during the summer fishing season and serves as a gateway to the park. Restrooms and informational panels can be found at the downtown wayside. There are restaurants, shopping, and lodging options in Chitina. There are no gas stations here.

Chitina Ranger Station

 During the summer months, stop by the historic Chitina Ranger Station. This log cabin, which was constructed in 1910 by the Ed S. Orr Stage Company to house its local superintendent, serves as an enduring reminder of Alaska's colorful transportation history. One of Chitina's oldest surviving buildings, it was recently rehabilitated by the National Park Service and now serves as a visitor contact station.

State Wayside - The Beginning of the McCarthy Road

This is the start of the McCarthy Road. It is a paved pull-out with vault toilets and exhibit panels.

Mileposts

1.4 The Copper River

As you drive across the Copper River Bridge, you can see the confluence of the Copper and Chitina Rivers. Several small pull-outs provide views of the rivers. Do not stop in the middle of the bridge for photos. After the bridge, the road becomes gravel. The large snow covered mountain visible to the north is volcanic Mount Drum (12,010'), part of the Wrangell Mountains.

1.6 Copper River Campground - south side of the road



This is a non-Park Service primitive campground. It is located just after crossing the bridge. This area has 12 sites, picnic tables, fire pits, and vault toilets.

1.6 Copper River Easement & Fishwheels - north side of the road

An easement is an area of land where visitors are granted the right to cross private property. The National Park Service has an easement here where you can access and view the Copper River. Please follow the easement markers and respect the private property that you are crossing. Visitors can use a small site along the Copper River where they may park a vehicle, load and unload rafts, and temporarily camp for up to 24 hours. This is an excellent place to view the river and to witness Alaskans catching red, silver, and king salmon with dipnets and fishwheels.

5.0 Chitina River Scenic Vista



Stop here and enjoy the view. The Copper River and its tributaries (including the Chitina River) drain an area of approximately 24,000 square miles. Much of this drainage basin lies within the park and almost 25% of it is covered by glaciers. Because of this glacial influence, high water in the park's large rivers typically occurs not during the snowmelt of spring, but summer hot spells that cause rapid ice melting. Low water usually occurs in late winter when everything is frozen.

10.1 Strelina Lake

A pull-out on the north side of the road provides access to a 1/3-mile trail to Strelina Lake. The Alaska Department of Fish & Game stocks this lake with rainbow trout, although you can find other fish here as well.

10.6 Silver Lake

A short trail on the south side of the road provides access to Silver Lake for fishing. The Alaska Department of Fish & Game stocks this lake with rainbow trout, and you may find other fish as well.

12.3 Sculpin Lake

A pull-out on the south side of the road provides access to a 1/4-mile trail to Sculpin Lake. The Alaska Department of Fish & Game stocks this lake with rainbow trout, although you can find other fish here as well.

14.5 Kotsina Trail - Backcountry Trailheads



The Kotsina Trail departs from the north side of the McCarthy Rd and provides access to backcountry hiking routes. Take this trail 2.5 miles to the Nugget Creek trailhead or 3.8 miles to the Dixie Pass trailhead. The first part of this trail is a road, but it is not maintained and may not be passable for low clearance vehicles. It may be a better option to park your car at the McCarthy Road and hike to the trailheads. Ask a park ranger for more information and route descriptions.

15.9 Change in Land Status - Entering Federal Land

The road is now entering land managed by Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve.

17.2 Kuskulana River Bridge

A spectacular achievement, the Kuskulana Bridge was constructed during the winter of 1910. Imagine riding high in a heavily loaded ore train across the two icy rails. Perched 238 feet above the raging Kuskulana River, this single-lane railroad bridge is for many the most hair-raising part of the entire drive. The muddy Kuskulana River reflects its origins from melting glaciers that drain Mt. Blackburn.

This is a one-lane bridge. Watch for oncoming traffic. Please do not stop in the middle of the bridge for pictures. We encourage you to park at either end of the bridge and get out of your vehicle to enjoy the views.

17.3 Kuskulana Bridge Wayside

This rest area has vault toilets and is a gravel pull-out.

29.0 Gilahina Trestle Wayside

This wooden structure was originally 890 feet long and 90 feet high, required one-half million board feet of timber, and was completed in eight days in the winter of 1911. Due to the rugged landscape, over 15% of the entire railway was built on trestles such as this. This rest area offers vault toilets and a gravel pull-out. There is a short 1/2 mile hiking trail that departs from this rest area. Please do not climb on the trestle.

34.8 Crystalline Hills

These hills on the north side of the road are an excellent place to see Dall Sheep. Take a moment to pull over and look up into the hills. Watch for bright white spots on the hillsides - these may look like patches of snow, but they could actually be sheep!

44.0 Change in Land Status - Entering Non-Federal Land

The road is entering privately-managed land.

45.5 Long Lake

Each year, an average of 18,000 sockeye salmon struggle up the silty Copper and Chitina Rivers to spawn in this lake. This is a unique run. Salmon begin entering the lake as late as September and spawning continues until April.

55.2 State Wayside

This wayside is a gravel pull-out and has vault toilets and exhibit panels.

58.0 Change in Land Status - Entering Federal Land

The road is now entering land managed by Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve.

58.6 McCarthy Road Information Station



This National Park Service information station contains posted information that is updated during the summer. Day-use parking is available as well as vault toilets, updated bulletin boards, and a short hiking trail. No overnight camping or parking is available. This station is generally not staffed.

59.4 Kennicott River & Parking - The End of the Road!

You've made it to the end of the road, but in many ways, your adventure is just beginning. All visitors must leave their vehicles at the end of the road and walk, bike, or take a shuttle into McCarthy and Kennecott.

McCarthy - 1/2 mile from the footbridge

Homesteaded in 1906, McCarthy quickly grew into a lively community with a story all its own. McCarthy served as the supply and recreation stop for the entire Kennecott mining district. Town history is well portrayed by the local museum and guide services. Today, McCarthy retains much of its original flavor. Accommodations, dining, guide services, flightseeing, and air taxis are some of the services available here.

Kennecott Mines National Historic Landmark - 5 miles from the footbridge

Like a time capsule, the impressive structures and artifacts left behind when the mines were depleted represent an ambitious time of exploration, discovery, and technological innovation. Currently, the National Park Service is stabilizing and rehabilitating many of the old buildings.

Kennecott Visitor Center



The Kennecott Visitor Center is located within the historic landmark. Park rangers and local guide services conduct programs and town tours daily during the summer. This is where most hiking trails depart - trails lead to the Root Glacier and up the mountains to spectacular views and historic mining structures.

Jumbo Creek Camping Area - 1.4 miles from Kennecott



This primitive camping area has no amenities. It is reached via foot travel only. Water is available from nearby streams and there are bear boxes for storing food.

