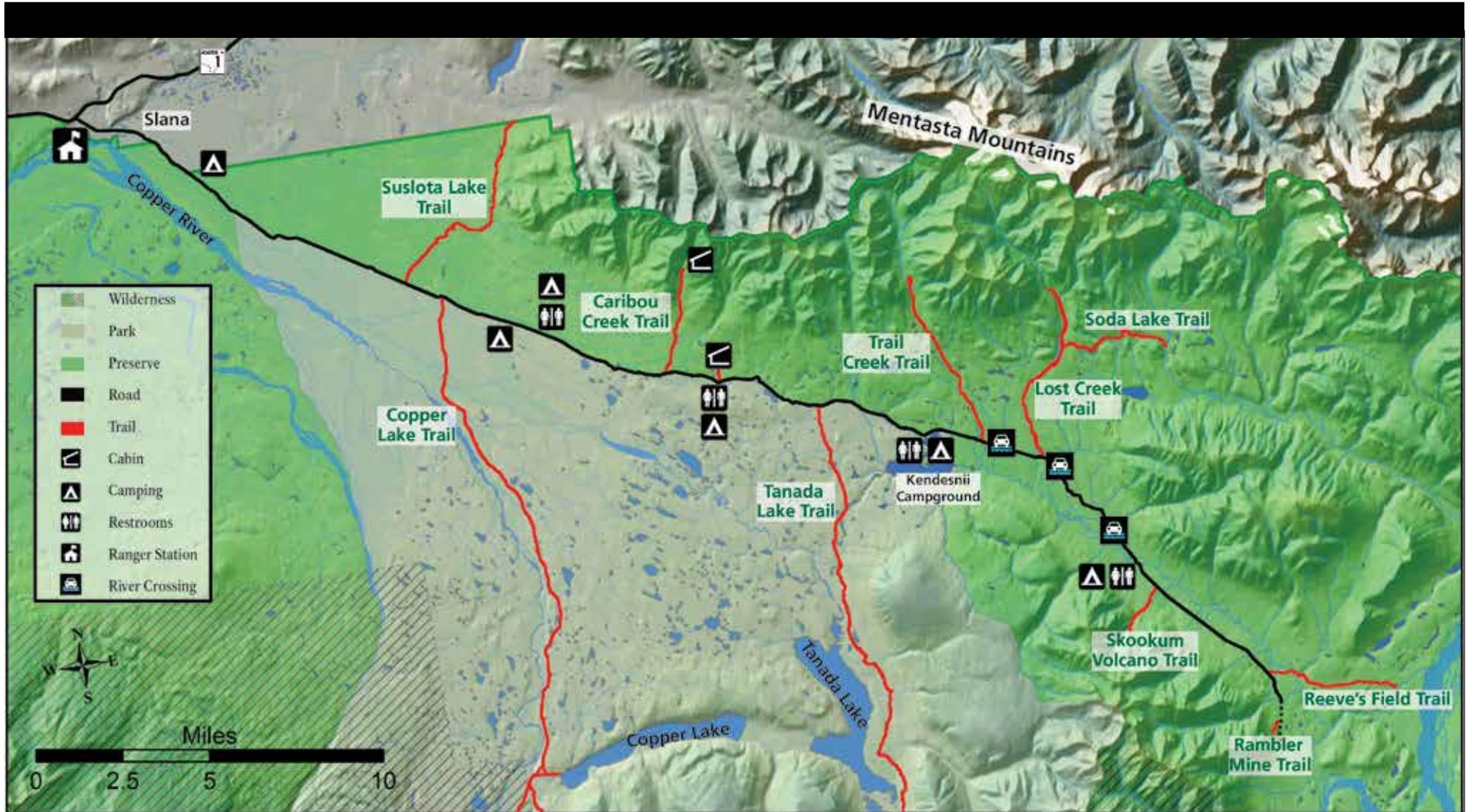
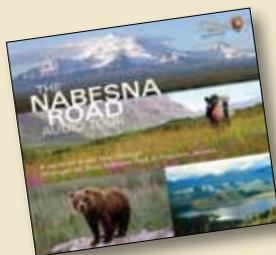


# Nabesna Road Guide



THE NABESNA ROAD OFFERS AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLORE INTERIOR ALASKA AND THE NORTHERN reaches of the park. The road begins at mile 60 of the Glenn Highway (Tok Cutoff), and soon becomes gravel as it winds 42 miles into the park. The drive is an adventure with views of the Wrangell, Mentasta, and Nutzotin Mountains. Along the way you'll find campsites, scenic vistas, hiking routes, and opportunities for wildlife viewing. But you won't find many people here. So if you like taking a road less traveled, the Nabesna Road may be right for you.

Before beginning your trip, stop at the Slana Ranger Station to **check on current road conditions**. Generally, the road is passable by two-wheel drive vehicles. At times, high clearance and four-wheel drive are recommended beyond Mile 29, where you encounter the first of three creek crossings. Following a heavy rain, these intermittent stream crossings can become impassable due to high water and deep channels. Please be aware that private property adjoins many parts of the road. Ask a ranger for information on area services.



Pick up a free copy of the Nabesna Road Audio Tour! This is a narrated tour that plays in your vehicle's CD player. Available at any park visitor center.

## Nabesna Road Basics

- Begins at mile 60 of the Glenn Highway (Tok Cutoff), in Slana, AK.
- 42 miles, allow 1.5 hours EACH WAY.
- **Unpaved and maintained by the Alaska state DOT. Washouts are common.**
- This is a remote area with limited services. **NO FUEL** is available in Slana. Fill up either in Chistochina (28 miles south) or Mentasta (18 miles north).
- 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. Please respect private property.
- Cell phone coverage is very limited.

**⚠️** This road was built to access the Nabesna Gold Mine, which operated from 1925 - 1945. Limited, small scale mineral extraction has occurred since then. The Nabesna Mine and its structures are privately owned and situated on private property. Please respect this private property. Park visitors should avoid the Nabesna Mine area altogether. The mine tailings extend onto adjacent park lands and these tailings contain high levels of metals and are acidic. Surface waters in the area contain contaminants of potential concern (COPCs) including arsenic, cadmium, chromium, mercury, nickel, and lead. Environmental exposure may be hazardous.

**🚙** Off Road Vehicles (ORVs) are permitted in Wrangell-St. Elias. Recreational ORV users must obtain a permit. The following trails are open to recreational ORVs: Trail Creek Trail, Lost Creek Trail, and Soda Lake Trail. All trails are open to subsistence ORVs (limited to local, rural residents).

The Nabesna Road begins at mile 60 of the Tok Cutoff. Look for the mile-marker posts and follow along with this guide.

## Mileposts

### 0.2 Slana Ranger Station

**🏠** Stop here for information about the park and road conditions, local area, exhibits, and ranger-led activities as well as an Alaska Geographic bookstore.

### 1.0 Original Slana Roadhouse (private property)

The building is visible on the south side of the road. This roadhouse was built in the 1930s, but there has been a structure here since 1912. It served travelers on the trail to Chisana, the site of Alaska's final gold rush. It is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The roadhouse is privately owned and is not open to the public.

### 1.7 Slana River Access

Rafters often begin trips down the Copper River here. The confluence of the Copper River and the Slana River is less than a mile downstream. The Slana River begins in the Mentasta Mountains, seen to the north.

### 2.7 Change in Land Status - Entering Federal Land

On the south side of the road, the boundary of the "National Preserve" begins.

#### 4.0 Junction with "4-Mile" Road

This road leads into the Slana Settlement, created in 1983 when the BLM opened over 10,000 acres to homesteading. It was one of the last opportunities for homesteading on federal land. Eight hundred claims were filed, but most were soon abandoned. Alaskan winters took their toll. Many tried to live in hastily-built cabins and tents, with temperatures down to -60°F. Jobs were scarce and the climate was not suited to farming. Today, about 50 people live in the settlement on private property.

#### 5.6 Change in Land Status - Preserve to Park

The north side of the road is "National Preserve" whereas the south side is "National Park." Sport hunting is allowed in the preserve but not in the park. Subsistence hunting by local, rural residents is allowed in both the park and preserve.

#### 6.1 Rufus Creek Wayside

 This is a primitive camping spot and rest area. There are no vault toilets here.

#### 11.2 Suslota Lake Trail

This trail is primarily an ORV trail and is generally not suitable for hiking.

#### 12.2 Copper Lake Trail

 Only the first 2.5 miles of this 12-mile trail are generally suitable for hiking, then the trail crosses Tanada Creek and trail conditions deteriorate.

#### 15-18 Views of the Wrangell Mountains



Over the next few miles, enjoy the splendid views of the Wrangell volcanoes. Mt. Sanford (16,237') is the tallest mountain that can be seen from the Nabesna Road. To the left of Sanford is the rounded, icy dome of Mt. Wrangell (14,163'). It is the park's only active volcano and occasionally steam can be seen rising from the summit. Wrangell's broad sloping profile is an excellent example of a shield volcano. The jagged summits of Tanada Peak to the left of Mt. Wrangell and Capital Mountain to the right of Mt. Sanford are actually eroded remnants of once massive shield volcanoes.

#### 16.6 Kettle Lake Wayside

 This is a primitive camping spot and rest area. There are no vault toilets here.

#### 17.8 Dead Dog Hill Rest Area

 This is a great site to take a break for wildlife viewing or bird watching. There are views of wetlands, a small lake, and boreal forest. Moose are seen here and caribou migrate through this area in the spring and fall. There is a vault toilet at this primitive camping site and rest area.

#### 18.9 Parking for the Caribou Creek Trail

#### 19.2 Caribou Creek Trail & Access to Caribou Creek Cabin

 Park at the gravel pit at mile 18.9. The trail is approximately 3 miles long and offers views of the Wrangell Mountains and the lakes and rivers below. The trail ends at a cabin, but you could hike further into the hills. Reservations are required for use of the Caribou Creek cabin. Contact the Copper Center Visitor Center to sign up for this public use cabin.

#### 21.8 Rock Lake Wayside & Access to Viking Lodge Cabin

 This is a primitive camping spot and rest area. There is a vault toilet here. The trail is approximately 1/4 mile long to the cabin and departs from the north side of the road. Reservations are required for use of Viking Lodge cabin. Contact the Copper Center Visitor Center to sign up for this public use cabin.

#### 24.5 Tanada Lake Trail

This trail is primarily an ORV trail and is generally not suitable for hiking.

#### 24.7 Watershed Divide (3,320 ft)

You have reached the highest point on the Nabesna Road, and crossed a major watershed divide. All waters flowing west from the divide are carried by the Copper River to the Gulf of Alaska. All waters flowing east enter the Nabesna River, the Tanana, the Yukon, and ultimately the Bering Sea.

#### 27.8 Kendesnii Campground

 Ten campsites, picnic tables, fire rings, and two vault toilets provide a nice spot for camping. Campground is first-come, first-served and is free. There are picnic sites near the shoreline of the lakes and short hiking trails. Enjoy canoeing, viewing waterfowl, and fishing for grayling.

#### 28.1 Change in Land Status - National Preserve

Both sides of the road are now "National Preserve."

**BEFORE YOU CONTINUE:** Road conditions can deteriorate beyond this point. Trail Creek (Mile 29.8), Lost Creek (Mile 31.2), and Boyden Creek (Mile 34.3) may be flowing across the road. Generally, these creek beds are dry, but during spring run off or following prolonged rain, high-clearance and/or four-wheel drive may be necessary. Carefully evaluate all crossings before driving across.



#### 29.8 Trail Creek Trail

 Trailhead is located where Trail Creek crosses the road. Parking is along the road - do not park within the creek drainage. The trail is approximately 6 miles long and allows quick access to the backcountry. The trail ends within the creek drainage, but you can continue hiking another 4 miles to reach the pass.

#### 31.2 Lost Creek Trail

 Trailhead is located just after Lost Creek crosses the road. Parking is located at the trailhead. The trail is approximately 7 miles long, but you can continue hiking another 3 miles to the pass. Trail gives you scenery, alpine tundra, flowers, and the chance to see Dall Sheep.

#### 35.3 Jack Creek Rest Area

 Several nice campsites with picnic tables and fishing along Jack Creek. There is a vault toilet at this rest area.

Look for Dall sheep in this area. These bright white, wild sheep inhabit high altitude ridges, meadows, and extremely rugged terrain. Sheep use these areas for feeding, resting, and to escape predators. Although they usually stay at higher elevations, in this area they are known to descend to springs and mineral licks. Careful observers can usually spot small flocks on the mountainsides over the next few miles.

#### 36.2 Skookum Volcano Trail

 The Skookum Volcano Trail/route is 2.5 miles one-way to a beautiful high pass. This trail leads through an extinct, deeply eroded volcanic system with fascinating geology. The elevation at the trailhead is 3,000' and rises to an elevation of 4,800' at the pass. Hikers can explore other routes or expand this hike into a multiple-day trip.

#### 40.2 Reeve's Field Trail

 This 4.2 mile trail leads to views of the Nabesna River. The Reeve's Field airstrip is no longer here, but this area holds important historical significance. During 1941, trucks hauled equipment from Valdez to a rustic strip along the river. Pilot Bob Reeve cut everything into pieces, loaded it into his Boeing Trimotor, flew them to Northway, about 40 miles north, and then had them re-welded. This effort was organized to build the Northway Airport, a critical stopover in ferrying lend-lease aircraft to the Soviet Union during WWII. By November, he had transported all the materials for a full-scale airport. It was good timing. One month later, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor gave Northway new relevance, and it became a critical element in the defense of Alaska.

#### 42.0 The End of the Road!

The maintained portion of the Nabesna Road ends at the Devil's Mountain Lodge, which is private property. Please respect this property and their privacy. Stay alert, and be careful not to park on the airstrip.

#### 42.25 Parking

Approximately a 1/4 mile beyond the lodge, there is a gravel parking area that is located on public land. If you'd like to explore further by foot travel or bike, this is the best place to park your vehicle, as the road is not maintained beyond this point.

#### 42.5 Rambler Mine Trail

 Approximately 1/4-mile past the parking area, a trail leads south towards the remains of the abandoned Rambler Mine, an area that was active after WWII. The one-mile trail is steep, but the effort rewards you with superlative views of the Nabesna River and Nutzotin Mountains.