

# Kennecott to the “Knoll”

Wrangell-St.Elias National Park and Preserve

National Park Service  
US Department of the Interior



**Access:** Begins as Root Glacier Trail, Kennecott Mill Town

**Distance:** Approximately 16-18 miles round trip

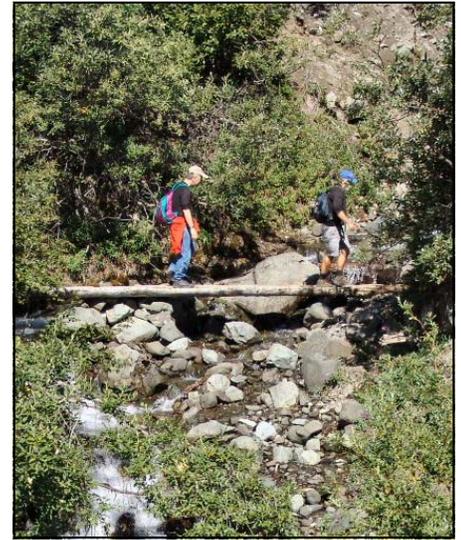
**Time:** 2-4 days

**Maps:** USGS Maps-McCarthy C-5, C-6, B-6 1:63,360;

**Difficulty:** Moderate. First five miles are on trail. Remainder is very rugged: rocky, glacial ice, some steep hiking to an open tundra area (the knoll).

**Highlights:** Spectacular Views, Glaciers, Icefall, Geology

**Note:** Proper food storage is required. Bear Resistant Food Containers are available from park visitor centers. To hike to the knoll in one day makes for an extremely long day.



Crossing Jumbo Creek

## Route:

From the Kennecott Visitor Center, walk through the Kennecott Mill Town north towards the Root Glacier. About a half mile beyond the visitor center, the road will split. Take the left hand trail. The trail will soon cross over Bonanza Creek and then wind its way through the lateral moraines of the Kennecott and Root Glaciers. After about a mile the trail curves sharply to the right and uphill, follow the trail to cross Jumbo Creek on the footbridge. After approximately another 1/4 mile, the trail reaches the Root Glacier access trail, continue **past** the access trail. (Primitive campsites, along with an outhouse and food lockers, are available in this area.)

In another 1/4 mile the trail will cross the dry outwash plain of Amazon Creek. Depending on recent rainfall or spring melt, Amazon Creek may be flowing above ground. The trail continues in and out of brush and along the top of the moraine for another 2 miles. Towards the end of the trail, the Erie Mine Bunkhouse building will be visible ahead and high above on the hillside to the right of the trail. The safest routes down the lateral moraine will be in this zone, well before the cables to the Erie Mine Tram Line. (The bunkhouse is not visible from the tram cables) Not far past the tram, the trail is cut off by a very steep rock cliff. It is very difficult and dangerous to try and climb down here to the glacier in order to continue hiking. If you reach the Erie Mine Tram Cables, it is best to back track a 1/2 mile or more and find a safer route down the steep walls.



View of Root Glacier, Donoho Peak, and Mt. Blackburn

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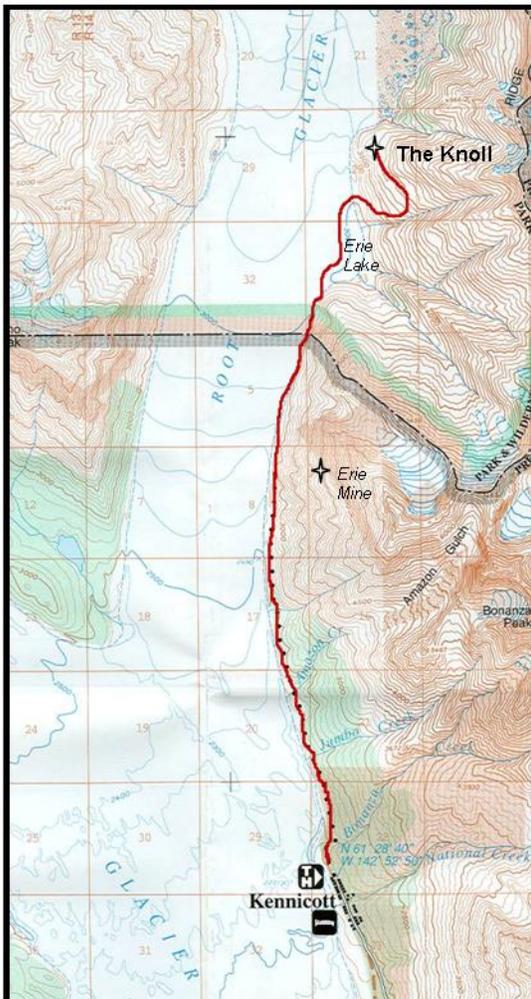
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Once down along the glacier, below the steep ridge, follow the trough that has been formed between the glacier ice and the lateral moraine. It is rocky and uncomfortable hiking. Eventually the trough will open up onto the ice of Root Glacier. The ice is relatively flat and “dry” since the winter snow melts off by the end of May and crevasses are exposed. It is possible to hike without crampons in warm and sunny weather in boots with good traction. However, in cloudy or cold weather, the glacier becomes hard and very slippery making crampons essential.



Stairway Icefall



The glacier has formed a joulaloup (glacial dammed lake) to your right (east). Hike around “Erie Lake” on the ice several hundred yards to the left of the lake. It generally drains by late-June and has numerous large icebergs beached in the basin.

While crossing the glacier, head towards the “Knoll” on the east side of the glacier. Use this as a landmark for crossing the glacier. Route find through the rock covered portion of the glacier to reach the lateral moraine a couple of hundred yards to the right of the waterfall. Climb up the hillside in the meadow to the right of the waterfall, the final destination being the creek above the waterfall. It gets extremely brushy near the top of the waterfall. From the top of the waterfall, hike up the stream watching for the trail on the left hand side of the water. The trail leads to an area suitable for camping on top of the “knoll,” elevation 3,800’. This is a beautiful spot which offers one of the best views of the Stairway Icefall.

Your route back is to retrace your steps. This is an excellent area to spend an extra day or two for exploring. Be aware that if you try to hike the entire distance to the knoll in one day, it makes for an extremely long day.

