Chena River State Recreation Area

A Park for All Seasons

Chena River State Recreation Area (SRA) encompasses 397 square miles of forests, rivers, and alpine tundra. You can hike, bike, dog sled, ski, horseback ride, skijor, snowmachine, 4-wheel, or tube/ski on over 100 miles of maintained trails.

Winter Recreation
Winter's cold grip doesn't put an end to recreational opportunities—instead park users snowmachine, ski, and dog sled on the winter trails. Public-use cabins are sparsely set so that skiers can reach them in a day, and local mushers use the area to train for dog sled races.

Water Recreation
The meandering class I-II Chena River flows through the park, and is an ideal place for kayaking, canoeing, fishing, swimming, or sunbathing. River access roads (located at mileposts 31.6, 28, 20, and 27) and four bridges provide several choices for launching and ending float trips.

Wildlife
Are you looking for wildlife? Chena River SRA abounds with wildlife including moose, bears, lynx, and a multitude of birds. During winter, snowshoeing is a great way to follow animal tracks along the many accessible trails. Don't forget your camera!

Fishing, Hunting, & Trapping
Cast a fishing line into the Chena River and there’s a good chance you’ll hook an Arctic grayling. Since fishing in the Chena River is catch-and-release only, make sure to gently place the fish back into the water. You can keep fish caught in four ponds along Chena Hot Springs Road. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game stocks ponds at mileposts 30, 42.8, 45.5, and 47.8.

An abundance of small game animals bring trapping and hunting to the park during the winter months. Sport hunting within the park includes moose, bear, rabbit, grouse, ptarmigans, and fur bearing animals. Park officials advise sport hunters to familiarize themselves with ADF&G regulations.

Park History
Thomas and Robert Swan came across Chena Hot Springs in 1905. When local Fairbanks residents learned of this resource, they requested access, and the U.S. War Department built a trail to the hot springs in 1913. Today, part of the Yukon Quest, an annual 1,000-mile sled dog race, is run on the old trail. The area around the springs attracted attention from gold prospectors and loggers as well. The Chena River became a central mode of transportation, carrying people to the hot springs and timber to the rapidly growing city of Fairbanks. With the advent of World War II, large numbers of servicemen settled in the Fairbanks area and developed the wild lands.

In 1967, Alaska legislators designated 15,360 acres as the Chena River State Recreation Area. One year later, oil was discovered in Prudhoe Bay and lands were rapidly parcelled out and developed. Alaskans fought to preserve the remaining wild lands and their natural resources, and in 1971, 260,000 acres were added to the recreation area.

Chena River SRA Highlights

Geologic Formations
The Chena River, flanked by panoramic alpine ridges and towering landforms, cuts through this recreation area. The valley is anchored by Chena Dome (4,421 feet) to the north and the granite mass to the south. The granite tors’ weathered, craggy spires of intrusive granite rise above their surroundings. The two-toned Angel Rocks on the east side are the exposed tips of a large granite mass underlying the Chena River area.

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Snowmachine & Off-Road Vehicle Use Areas
Snowmachines and off-road vehicle users delight in the abundant riding opportunities in Chena River SRA.

Chena River SRA is open to snowmachines in all areas north of the Chena River, west of the east fork valley and north of the east fork valley when snow depth is adequate for protected underlying vegetation. For information regarding winter openings, call the Public Information Center in Fairbanks at (907) 451-2695 or visit www.alaskastateparks.org under the "Current News" link.

Winter Recreation:
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This year-round trail follows hillside contours and has an multi-use Travel means: Angel Creek Hillside Trail public-use cabins and hours of scenic recreation.

The Angel Creek Hillside Trail provides access to two Travel means: winter motorized Angel Creek Trail wildflowers, alpine areas, and berries.

This trail is suitable for deep-snowshoeing and snowmachining and parallels Chena Hot Springs Road.

The Chena Dome Trail is a strenuous hike that circles the Distance foot, horseback ride, snowshoe, ski and up to the Plain of Monuments, an area dominated by spruce and birch forests, and along a ridge above tree line winter scenery.

This trail provides opportunities to enjoy the beautiful country views of Chena Dome, the granite tors, and Colorado Creek are available from the Stiles Creek Trail.

Follow this trail on snowmachines, dogsleds, or on cross-country skis to reach the Colorado Creek Cabin.

Follow the Mist Creek Trail to the Nugget Creek Cabin. Distance: 6 miles one way.

Stiles Creek Trail: milepost 49.1 and 50.5

Access: milepost 48.9 (shares with Angel Rocks Trail)

Compeau Trail: milepost 31.4

Access: milepost 30.5

Travel means: multi-use

Distance: 18 miles one way

This year-round trail follows hillocks and contours and has an average grade of 4%. Spectacular views of the Angel Creek Valley can be seen along this trail.

The Granite Tors Trail travels through boggy lowlands to reach the Colorado Creek Cabin. This trail is excellent for dog sledding and snowmachining and parallels Chena Hot Springs Road.

The South Fork Trail crosses the frozen Chena River twice to reach the Nugget Creek Cabin.

The Granite Tors Campground is a special-use area located near the Granite Tors Trail. Groups using ten or more animals must obtain a special-use permit. Tethering animals within 100 feet of fresh water and loose herding are prohibited.

Chena Hot Springs Trail: milepost 36.5 across from the shooting range

Access: milepost 31.4

Travel means: foot

Distance: 15-mile loop

This short day hike heads up a moderately steep ascent to Overlook Rock. It passes granite tors and interesting plant communities.

The South Fork Trail: milepost 29.9

Access: milepost 28.6

Travel means: winter multi-use

Distance: 8.3 miles one way

This trail provides year-round access to the Colorado Creek Cabins and views of the Chena River Valley, Alaska Range, and White Mountains.

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• Bicycles are allowed on trails that are open to off-road vehicles. They are prohibited on the Angel Rocks and Granite Tors trails, but may be used on the Chena Dome Trail.

• Horses, mules, burros, and Burros are allowed except on the Granite Tors Trail. Groups using ten or more animals must obtain a special-use permit. Bicyclists using trails near or across creek areas and for overnight use of developed campsites. Camping within the park is limited to 15 consecutive days.

• Snowmachines: may be used when snow depth is sufficient, except in the southeastern portion of the park.

• A fee or an annual pass is required at degraded parking areas and for overnight use of developed campsites. Camping within the park is limited to 15 consecutive days.

• Pets must be on leashes at all developed facilities such as campgrounds and picnic areas and may not create excessive noise. Leashes are not required in undeveloped areas, but pets should be kept under control at all times. Be aware of trapping activities within the park boundaries.

• Fires must be confined to fire pits, gravel bars, or gravel pits. Use a portable stove for cooking in the backcountry.

• Dead wood lying on the ground may be gathered for a campfire when campsites are allowed.

• Discharge of firearms is prohibited except for lawful hunting or trapping. Target shooting is only allowed at the developed shooting range at milepost 47 of Chena Hot Springs Road.

• Motor vehicles are generally restricted to roads and parking lots. Off-road vehicles are permitted on designated trails.