Welcome to Chugach State Park

For More Information:
Chugach State Park Headquarters
Potter Section House
Anchorage, AK 99516
(907) 345-5014
www.alaskastateparks.org

csp@alaska.gov

- "Chugach State Park" on Facebook
  • Alaska State Trails page
www.alaskastateparks.org
  • 50 Miles in Chugach State Park
  • State Park Guides

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Wildlife

Wildlife of all shapes and sizes can be found throughout the park, from high-alpine marmots, to回落.

Moose

Moose generally ignore humans. Still, every year moose cause more injuries in Alaska than bears. These situations can be avoided by showing moose a little courtesy. If a moose approaches you, BACK OFF IMMEDIATELY. If you see a moose's ears laid back and hack hairs raised (much like a dog or a cat), it’s warning you to stay away. An agitated moose can suddenly become like quicksand. People and animals trapped in the mud often drown.

Avalanches

Avalanches can occur anywhere, but gullies, steep snow-covered slopes, and areas below steep ridges are particularly susceptible. The majority of avalanches happen after heavy, sustained snowfalls, although they can happen at any time of year. Get informed of the warning signs, techniques, and gear needed to protect yourself from avalanche danger. Take an avalanche class.

Need to Know

Ready to conquer the Chugach? Not so fast—there are a few things you need to know first.

Outdoor Skills

This brochure does not tell you everything you need to know about venturing into the Chugach. Get informed, take a class, or bring an experienced friend. Tell a friend where you’re going, who you’re going with, and when you’ll return. This is VERY important if something unexpected happens.

Mudflats

Mudflats in the intertidal areas along Turnagain Arm are dangerous. While the mudflats may invite exploring, their seemingly solid surface can suddenly become like quicksand. People and animals trapped in the mud must drown in the rapidly rising tides, despite rescue efforts. Please stay off of the mudflats.

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Hypothermia

A stiff breeze can be as deadly as anything in the Chugach if you are unprepared. Hypothermia, or cooling of the body’s temperature, can happen any time of year. Hypothermia directly affects the brain and causes poor judgment. Victims are often unable to help themselves, so know the symptoms: intense shivering, fatigue, stumbling, slurred speech, and irrationality.

To prevent hypothermia: dress in layers (avoid cotton) with wind and water resistant outerwear; wear a hat and gloves; and snacks often; drink plenty of water; and stay dry by wearing layers if you begin to sweat. Learn how to treat hypothermia. This knowledge could save your life or the life of a friend.

River Crossing

Many trails in the Chugach have un-navigable crossings that have to be forded. When crossing, keep your waist and chest straps unbridled, and NEVER go barefooted. Be prepared and learn the techniques for fording before you get to the backcountry.

Perilous Plants

There’s no poison ivy in Alaska, but we do have cow parsnip. This large perennial contains a chemical that can cause skin hypersensitivity to sunlight, causing a painful, blistered burn. Wear long pants and sleeves when hiking through cow parsnip—especially on sunny days.

Little Facts

The Chugach’s sparkling mountain streams might look clear, but they could be contaminated by mammal and insect excreta. CLARIFY OR BOIL WATER before drinking. In nearly any water source—even late summer snowmelts—there may be Giardia. Also known as “bean fever” this parasite can be carried by any mammal and found in nearly any water source—even late fall snow banks. Thankfully, Giardia is easy to avoid. You can purify drinking water using a pump filter, chemical treatments, or by boiling for two minutes.

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Chugach State Park

Beyond the footfalls at the city’s edge lies Chugach State Park—a half-million acres of accessible hiking, biking, skiing, hunting, wildlife viewing, mountain climbing, packrafting, kayaking, ATVing, climbing, and much more.

Here you can pick berries along a high alpine meadow under the midnight sun, or watch a 6-foot-tall bore tide rush past at 15 mph from Bird Point.

The park’s varied terrain is the perfect backdrop for your next adventure—just choose a starting point, grab your essentials, and let the fun begin.

If you are camping, know the safe ways to cook food, store your food, and attractants responsibly.

• Carry bear spray, have it readily available, and know how to use it.
• Don’t feed bears. Hand food, fish, and other attractants responsibly.
• If you’re camping, know the safe ways to cook and store your food.
• Pay attention to posted signs about bear activity.
• Never run from a bear!
• Learn more about bear behavior at www.alaskabears.alaska.gov.

Nature’s Guide to Chugach State Park

Steve Neel

In 1970 Governor Keith Miller signed the bill creating Chugach State Park. Thanks to the efforts of concerned and organized citizens, the wild Chugach got a voice, and brought the world its first. With the tentative sale of logging rights to the Bird Point, the wild Chugach was being blocked by homestead sales. Grassing concern of these threats came to a head with the tentative sale of logging rights to the Bird and Indian valleys. In 1969 citizens sprang into action and formed the Chugach State Park Ad Hoc Committee. The group spoke with one voice to preserve the rugged, natural skyline of Anchorage, and gained broad support from the community. The committee lobbied for the available 490,866 acres in hopes of securing a large chunk of land for the proposed park. They got every inch.

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**Chugach State Park**

There are plenty of ways to get into the wild throughout Chugach State Park—here are a few highlights.

**Eklutna Lake**

Flanked by the Inверing Eklutna Mountains, Eklutna Lake is a serene lake surrounded by trails. You can hike, bike, boat, snowmachine, ski, sightsee, and ATV. Numerous developed and backcountry camping options make this an ideal location to set up basecamp and explore the park. **Directions:** Take the Glenn Highway to the Eklutna exit at milepost 26.5.

**Thunder Bird Falls**

The 200-foot tall Thunder Bird Falls can be viewed at the end of a pleasant one-mile hike. The trail passes through birch and cottonwood groves bordering Eklutna Canyons. In the winter, the falls often freeze, producing a natural ice sculpture. **Directions:** Take the Glenn Highway to the Thunder Bird Falls exit at milepost 25.2.

**Eagle River Nature Center**

Flanked among 7,000-foot peaks, the Eagle River Nature Center offers a variety of programs and activities for the general public, as well as a cabin and two yurts for rent. Ten miles of trail are maintained throughout the year for public use and guided nature walks are given seasonally. For more information visit www.natureconservancy.org or call (907) 645-0203. **Directions:** Take the Glenn Highway to the Eagle River Nature Center at milepost 11.6. Turn right on Eagle River Road.

**South Fork Eagle River Trailhead**

If you're in the mood for an imaginative day hike, the South Fork Eagle River Trail is just the place. This 5.5-mile (one-way) hike traverses a beautiful alpine valley, crosses aoulder field, and ends on a high ridge overlooking Eagle and Symphony lakes—a pair of pristine mountain pools each with their own distinct color. **Directions:** Take the Glenn Highway to the Eagle River Loop exit at milepost 11.6. Turn right on Eagle River Road.

**Glenn Alps Trailhead**

The Glenn Alps Trailhead has something for everyone: access to the Hillside Trail System; views of Turnagain Arm and the Anchorage Bowl; mountain biking on the Powerline Pass Trail; and Alaska's most popular summit, Flattop Mountain. **Directions:** Off the Seward Highway, take O'Malley Road toward the mountains. Turn right on Hillside Drive. Turn left on Upper Huffman Road and follow signs.

**Potter Section House State Historic Site**

The Potter Section House is Chugach State Park's main headquarters and is a great place to get information and your annual park pass. The restored Alaska Railroad section house and historic site offer custom, interpretive displays and vintage railroad hardware. **Directions:** Take the Glenn Highway to milepost 115.2.

**Turnagain Arm Trail**

The Turnagain Arm Trail parallels the coastline from Potter to Windy Corner. The 94-mile (one-way) trail walks through spruce forests, birch and alder groves, and flower-filled meadows. Thanks to its south-facing slope, the trail is clear of snow in early spring and a favorite first hike of the year. Scenic overlooks provide views of the Chugach Mountains to the north and the Kama Mountains across Turnagain Arm. **Directions:** Take the Seward Highway to turnoffs at milepost 155.1, 119.9, 108.1, or 106.7.

**Bird Point**

Take in the sights at Bird Point, a popular wayside along Turnagain Arm. A large viewing area with interpretive displays and telescope gives a panoramic view of Turnagain Arm, Bear's Deli sheep, mountain goats, and beluga whales are commonly seen. This is also a great place to observe the bore tide, a rare, wave-like tidal wave that does not occur anywhere else in the United States. The wayside provides access to the Glacial to Inland hike path—a scenic 1.5-mile (one-way) paved path that parallels the Seward Highway. **Directions:** Take the Seward Highway to milepost 95.

**Cross Pass**

The Cross Pass Trail from Girdwood to Eagle River follows the Island and National Historic Trail route and is considered to be one of the best hikes in Chugach State Park. This challenging, 25-mile trail crosses a variety of terrains and offers diverse sights along the way, including glaciers, waterfalls, wilderness, wildlife, meadows, and mountain views. **Directions:** Take the Seward Highway and turn left onto the Anchorage Highway. Turn left onto Cross Creek Road. **Eagle River Nature Center**—Take the Glenn Highway to the Eagle River Loop exit at milepost 11.6. Turn right on Eagle River Road.

**Elfin Lakes**

Flanked by the Inверing Eklutna Mountains, Elfin Lakes is a 5.5-mile (one-way) hike traverses a beautiful alpine valley, crosses aoulder field, and ends on a high ridge overlooking Eagle and Symphony lakes—a pair of pristine mountain pools each with their own distinct color. **Directions:** Take the Glenn Highway to milepost 115.1, 111.9, 108.1, or 106.7.

**Fees**

Fees are charged for the use of some developed facilities in Chugach State Park. Fees can be paid at the time of use or can be purchased in advance. Annual parking passes are also available. **Online:** Visit the Alaska Park Pass website at https://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/Passes.cfm.