Welcome to Turnagain Arm Trails in Chugach State Park

Turnagain Arm History

First People

The earliest evidence of humans along Turnagain Arm was found at Beluga Point, which was used as a hunting lookout by Native Alaskans. They traversed the arm in canoes and kayaks to trade with one another and access fishing and hunting sites.

Northwest Passage

Captain Cook sailed into the Cook Inlet in 1778 in search of the Northwest Passage, but had to “turn again.” He named the water body “River Turnagain.”

Gold!

In 1896, a year before the famous Klondike Gold Rush, a stampede brought over 3,000 prospectors to this area. They mined creeks flowing into Turnagain Arm and started the first gold rush towns in Southcentral Alaska.

Alaska Railroad

From 1915 to 1918, crews blasted the Turnagain Arm section of the Alaska Railroad. They blasted more than 30 miles of rock and built long bridges along the section. Some work along the arm cost a whopping $200,000 per mile!

Potter Section House

This state historic site features a restored house and outbuildings that were part of a railroad section camp. Today the house serves as the Chugach State Park headquarters.

For More Information

Chugach State Park Headquarters
Potter Section House
18620 Seward Hwy
Anchorage, AK 99516
(907) 345-5014
www.alaskastateparks.org
csp@alaska.gov

“Chugach State Park” on Facebook

Wildlife

Turnagain Arm's variety of landscapes and environments are home to diverse Alaskan wildlife including Dall's sheep, bears, bald eagles, and marmots. You can spot beluga whales cresting above the surf or see moose calving areas near McHugh Creek. Make noise when rounding corners so you don't surprise wildlife on the trail. Bring a camera with plenty of zoom and don't get too close!

Trails

Turnagain Arm is home to some of the most popular and scenic trails in Chugach State Park including the Bird Ridge Trail, Indian to Girdwood bike path, and secluded Falls Creek Trail. Explore the map inside and find your next adventure. For more information visit www.alaskatrails.org.

Fishing

Bird Creek is a popular location for anglers looking to catch silver, pink, and chum salmon in season.

Welcome to Alaska State Parks

View, walk, row, sail, bike, snowshoe, ski, camp, and fish in Alaska State Parks. The southern end of Chugach State Park is defined by the Turnagain Arm. This picturesque slice of Alaska features towering Penguin Peak, views of the Kenai Mountains across the water, and a rare, wave-like tidal bore that sweeps across the arm twice a day.

Area Highlights

Camping

Located at milepost 101 of the Seward Highway, Bird Creek Campground offers: fishing, hiking, camping, and wildlife viewing. Campers can enjoy spectacular sunsets, whale watching, and convenient access to bike paths. Campsites are equipped with fire rings, picnic tables, and nearby water and latrines.

The southern and Chugach State Park is decorated for the Happy New Year. This picture was taken by Benjamin Wager.
Rabbit lakes.

to South Suicide Peak overlooking McHugh and scramblers, Falls Creek Trailhead also offers access to the head of a wide alpine valley. For experienced through the woods and ends near a small lake at this steep climb traces tumbling Falls Creek. Ground fires are prohibited—bring a campstove.

Falls Creek Trail

Access: Falls Creek Trailhead (MP 105.6)
Travel Means: Foot
Distance: 2.7 miles one way
Elevation Gain: 2,900 feet

This steep climb traces tumbling Falls Creek through the woods and ends near a small lake at the head of a wide alpine valley. For experienced scramblers, Falls Creek Trailhead also offers access to South Suicide Peak overlooking McHugh and Rabbit lakes.

McHugh & Rabbit Lakes Trail

Access: McHugh Creek Trailhead (MP 112)
Travel Means: Foot
Distance: 6.4 miles one way to Rabbit Lake
Elevation Gain: 2,900 feet

This trail travels through cottonwood and aspen trees and alpine tundra. The area around Rabbit Lake offers secluded backcountry camping and is a perfect base camp for a weekend adventure. Ground fires are prohibited—bring a campstove.

Indian Valley Trail

Access: Indian Creek Trailhead (MP 103)
Travel Means: Foot, ski
Distance: 6.3 miles one way to Indian Creek Pass
Elevation Gain: 2,100 feet

This trail wanders through a beautiful old-growth forest and crosses Indian Creek several times on a gradual climb to a panoramic alpine landscape. In winter, this route comprises part of the “Alaska- to Indian” ski traverse. The southern end of the Powerline Trail is also accessible from this trailhead.

Bird Ridge Trail

Access: Bird Ridge Trailhead (MP 102 and Bird Creek access MP 101.5)
Travel Means: Foot
Distance: 2.5 miles one way
Elevation Gain: 3,400 feet

This popular hike ascends past the timberline to Bird Ridge Point and offers exceptional views of Turnagain Arm and the Kenai Mountains. Make sure to bring proper footwear and plenty of water for this strenuous uphill hike.

Bird Creek Trails

Access: Bird Valley Trailhead (MP 100.5)
Travel Means: Foot, bike, ski, horseback, ATV, snowmachine
Distance: 13.2 miles total in lower valley; ATV and bike access ends 4 miles up the valley
Elevation Gain: 400 feet

This network of trails allows you to explore the lower valley surrounding Bird and Penguin creeks by foot, bike, horseback, or ATV. Trails to Bird Pass and Penguin Peak can be accessed from the Bird Valley Trailhead, and Bird Creek Falls can be seen at the west end of the trail system. Trails for skiing and snowmachining make this area a year-round attraction.

Powerline Trail

Access: Indian Creek Trailhead (MP 103)
Travel Means: Foot, ski
Distance: 6.3 miles one way to Indian Creek Pass
Elevation Gain: 2,100 feet

This trail wanders through a beautiful old-growth forest and crosses Indian Creek several times on a gradual climb to a panoramic alpine landscape. In winter, this route comprises part of the “Alaska- to Indian” ski traverse. The southern end of the Powerline Trail is also accessible from this trailhead.

Know Before You Go

 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 frequent visitors can save money by purchasing an annual parking pass online at www.alaskastateparks.org.

Learn 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.

Chugach State Park

Turnagain Arm’s mudflats may invite exploring, but their surface can suddenly become like quicksand, trapping people and animals in the rapidly rising tide. Stay off of the mudflats.