

# BACKPACKING THE TALKEETNA MOUNTAINS

Hatcher Pass - Talkeetna Mountains  
4-Day Backpacking Adventure



# ALASKA ALPINE ADVENTURES

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EXTRAORDINARY ADVENTURE VACATIONS IN  
ALASKA'S NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE REFUGES

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# BACKPACKING THE TALKEETNA MOUNTAINS\*

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4-Day Backpacking Adventure



## WHAT TO EXPECT

- The Experience
- Day-by-Day Itinerary
- What's Included
- Traveling with Alaska Alpine Adventures

## PREPARING FOR YOUR ADVENTURE

- Gear List
- Travel Information
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Reservation & Cancellation Policy

\*This trip is rated a **LEVEL 2** backpacking trip\*

Physical conditioning and consistent exercise prior to these trips is essential. You will be backpacking and hiking off-trail over steep, hilly, and uneven terrain, often covering more than 6 miles in a day. You may encounter short stretches of thick vegetation and may also experience Alaska's diverse selection of insect species. You will be camping in a very remote wilderness, sleeping in tents, relieving yourself in places with a stunning view, and sometimes enjoying all of the above in the rain. You will be expected to load and unload your own gear, carry a portion of the group gear, and manage your own physical comfort and well-being. Pre-trip physical conditioning should begin no later than 2 months before departure and should include walking or hiking, preferably with loaded backpack of 30-40 lbs.

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4-Day Backpacking Adventure



## THE EXPERIENCE

Perhaps Steve Howe of Backpacker Magazine described the Talkeetnas best. In his May 2003 article he said, "Once we dry out, I'll be grateful for this more intimate encounter with the surprising Talkeetnas. I'd expected rounded talus peaks, but these summits are awesomely steep, and the tundra travel is as rugged as anywhere I've seen. Separated from the Chugach by the Matanuska Valley and Glenn Highway, the Talkeetnas have their own distinct flavor, a blend of sawtoothed pinnacles, milky creeks, and rock-hard glaciers, spiced with strong overtones of remoteness and solitude. We'll hike out in the morning, but a glance at my map shows another hundred miles of higher, snowier mountains to the north. By the time Joe hands me a steaming mug, I've already resolved to return with a tent and full food bag". This 25 mile backpacking adventure will give you a savory taste of this rugged range. From the sublime beauty of Reed Lakes to the granite peaks above the remote Mint Glacier, our 4-day tour of the Talkeetnas offers the full spectrum of Alaska backpacking challenges. Some of our hiking will be done off-trail and will include glaciers, rugged mountain scenery, and remote splendor.



Talus, tundra and the remnants of last winters' snow

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## DAY - BY - DAY ITINERARY

**Day 1:** Your trip begins today in Anchorage, Alaska. Your guide will pick you up this morning at your hotel or B&B at 8am. You'll load into our passenger van and will begin the drive north to the Talkeetna Mountains. Your route will take you from Anchorage along the Chugach and Talkeetna Mountains and into Alaska's breadbasket - the Matanuska/Susitna Valleys. From rural farmlands along the highway to the foothills of the Alaska Range, this drive will introduce you to Alaska's real character. By noon we'll be hoisting packs for the beginning of our 4 days and 3 nights in Alaska's oft overlooked Talkeetna Mountains. Today's route will take us up the Reed Lakes trail and then off-trail up into the alpine tundra above the lakes. Tonight we'll camp next to a small creek beneath a high alpine pass after a total of 5+ miles and nearly 2500' of elevation gain. *Lunch & dinner included.*

**Day 2:** After a hearty breakfast and hot drink, we'll begin the day with a one-mile off-trail ascent to a narrow alpine pass - our link into the Mint Glacier valley and the Little Susitna River. We'll then begin a long descent into the valley where we'll continue up toward the valley's headwaters. Our final destination will be the Mint Glacier itself. Today's hike will take us approximately 6 miles elevation gain of approximately 2000' and loss of nearly the same. We'll be camped near the ice by late afternoon and will spend the evening enjoying the Alaska evening daylight and a gourmet meal. *All meals included.*



Early season Pasque Flowers bloom on a Talkeetna Mountains ridgeline

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## DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY\*

**Day 3:** Today, we'll shoulder daypacks today and explore the dramatic upper reaches of the Mint Glacier. Weather and snow/ice conditions will determine our specific choice of objective; however we can expect to cover approximately 6 miles with at least 2000' of elevation gain and loss. Huge granite walls, neck wrenching vertical relief, and rugged terrain shaped by the retreating glaciers common to Alaska's remote mountain ranges characterize the upper reaches of this stunning valley. *All meals included.*

**Day 4:** After breaking camp, we'll begin our descent out of the upper Mint Glacier. Our route will take us out the Little Susitna River, the entirety of the Gold Mint Trail, and back to the trailhead. In all the day will include 3000' of elevation loss and 9 miles of backpacking. We'll return to the van by 5pm and will be back in Anchorage no later than 8pm. Please schedule all homebound flights for after 10pm. *Breakfast & lunch included.*

\*Whenever possible Alaska Alpine Adventures endeavors to follow our itineraries as written. However, on occasion our trips deviate from the written itinerary due to weather conditions, group preference, specific safety considerations, or unforeseeable circumstances; collectively what some have called "The Alaska Factor." Therefore we suggest that you approach any adventure in Alaska with an open mind and an understanding that Alaska will always deliver an adventure of a lifetime.



A Grizzly catches our scent across the tundra

# BACKPACKING THE TALKEETNA MOUNTAINS

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4-Day Backpacking Adventure



## WHAT'S INCLUDED:

- All group camping gear (tents, stoves, fuel, etc.) and safety equipment
- Roundtrip surface transportation from Anchorage to Chugach State Park
- Professional guide service at a 4:1 guest to guide ratio
- All meals & snacks from lunch on day one through lunch on the final day of the itinerary
- Storage for your extra travel items while in the field

## WHAT'S NOT:

- Lodging in Anchorage prior to and after your adventure
- Personal gear (sleeping bags, packs, rain gear, etc.)
- Trip insurance
- Guide Gratuities



Alaska's state flower, the Forget-Me-Not, flowering in the Talkeetna Mountains

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## TRAVELING WITH ALASKA ALPINE ADVENTURES

### GUIDES

It takes a talented individual to be able to lead an Alaska expedition, and our Alaska guides are true outdoor multi-sport professionals. We hand-select each guide based on their ability to deliver an unparalleled level of customer service, a strong wilderness skill set and background, and an insatiable passion for Alaska's wild spaces. Each lead guide is medically certified as a Wilderness First Responder and carries the necessary qualifications to competently backpack, hike, kayak, canoe, climb and ski throughout Alaska's vast wilderness. When you choose to travel with us, you can rest assured that your trip has been meticulously planned and executed by real Alaskans with authentic Alaska know-how, skill, and ability.

### FOOD

Our food is excellent – in fact it is something that clearly differentiates us from our competition. We have spent the past fifteen years fine tuning our backcountry menu. And in 2012, we launched [Adventure Appetites](#) – an award winning food company focused on bringing our lightweight and packable wilderness cuisine to adventurers everywhere. Breakfasts include pancakes, scrambles, homemade granola and cereal, locally roasted gourmet coffee, assorted tea and cocoa. Lunches could include an Italian club torta sandwich, asiago bagels and Alaska lox, a curried tuna pita, or perhaps crackers with genoa salami with a roasted red pepper goat cheese spread. We also feature housemade snack mixes (both savory & sweet), and an assortment of energy bars available throughout the day. Dinners could include pasta carbonara, Alaska reindeer rotini, chicken and chorizo enchiladas, penne pasta with a roasted red pepper pesto, and more. And we ALWAYS experience one of Adventure Appetites home baked desserts after dinner.

### CAMPING

Alaska Alpine Adventures has camped in some of Alaska's most remote and wild places; from the remote beaches of the Alaska Peninsula, the rugged glaciers of the Neacola Mountains, to the open tundra expanses of the Brooks Range, With literally thousands of nights camped in the Alaska wilderness in all seasons, we have refined camp craft to a science. Expedition quality tents, included trekking poles, group-size tarp shelters, and only the best cooking equipment accompany each and every one of our wilderness trips. Not only does including the finest equipment make camp life more comfortable, it also adds a level of safety to trips that could otherwise be relentlessly unforgiving to the unprepared. In other words, we take our camping very seriously! Don't be surprised if you find yourself waiting out a storm under the group tarp, out of the weather, enjoying hot drinks, sumptuous meals and excellent company, while your guide fastidiously tensions all of the tent guy lines!

### SMALL GROUPS

Small groups are the best way to witness the Last Frontier! This wilderness trip is limited to 8 guests. And with a guest to guide ratio of 4:1 you are assured of our commitment to risk management and safe operations. Furthermore, it is a best practice to keep groups exceptionally small to minimize our impact on the Alaskan backcountry by following Leave No Trace principles.

# BACKPACKING THE TALKEETNA MOUNTAINS

Hatcher Pass - Talkeetna Mountains

4-Day Backpacking Adventure



## GEAR LIST – BACKPACKING TRIPS

### ON THE HIKE:

#### GEAR

- Backpack – 73L-75L (4500cu3) or larger - We recommend a professional fitting if purchasing a new backpack prior to the departure.
- Waterproof Pack Cover – Large enough to fit your pack when it's full
- 1L Water Bottle (Hydration bladders are acceptable) - Guides Choice: Wide-mouth Nalgene water bottle

#### CLOTHING

##### Footwear

- Hiking Boots - Quality medium/heavy-duty hiking boots - Guides Choice: Salomon Quest 4D GTX  
\*\*\*It is very critical that you break in your boots BEFORE you arrive, as traveling with blisters is a painful way to enjoy Alaska! \*\*\*
- 5 pair synthetic / wool mid-weight hiking socks

##### Outerwear

- Waterproof/breathable rain jacket - Guides Choice: OR Foray Jacket
- Waterproof/breathable rain pants - Guides Choice: OR Foray Pants  
\*\*\*Gore-Tex or similar quality waterproof/breathable - Good rain gear is essential on any wilderness outing, and is probably the most important piece of gear that you have on your trip\*\*\*
- Lightweight Windshirt – Guides Choice: OR Redline Jacket

##### Hiking Layers – Synthetic or wool (no cotton)

- 1 mid-weight short sleeve top - daily use base layer shirt that you'll wear all day in warmer temperatures - Guides Choice: Patagonia Capilene 1 Silkweight T-shirt
- 1 mid-weight long sleeve synthetic top – daily use base layer shirt that you'll wear all day - Guides Choice: OR Sequence L/S Crew
- 1 mid-weight synthetic bottom – to put under your hiking pant or rain pant on a cold/wet day - Guides Choice: Patagonia Capilene 2 Lightweight Bottoms
- 1 pair synthetic hiking pants – daily use hiking pant that you'll wear all day - Guides Choice: OR Ferrosi Pants
- 1 pair lightweight synthetic shorts (convertible hiking pant/shorts OK) - Guides Choice: ExOfficio Neo Amphi Convertible Pant

##### Headwear

- 1 Warm beanie hat – synthetic / wool - Guides Choice: OR Storm Beanie
- 1 Billed hat – keeps your face protected from the sun - Guides Choice: AAA Truckers Hat
- 1 Mosquito head net - Guides Choice: OR Deluxe Spring Ring Headnet

##### Gloves

- 1 pair fleece or wool gloves - Guides Choice: OR Versaliner Gloves



# BACKPACKING THE TALKEETNA MOUNTAINS

Hatcher Pass - Talkeetna Mountains

4-Day Backpacking Adventure



## GEAR LIST – BACKPACKING TRIPS

### AROUND CAMP:

#### GEAR

- Sleeping Bag - Synthetic or down sleeping bag rated to a minimum of 30 degrees F - Guides Choice: Cascade Designs Antares 15F Down Bag
- 2 Waterproof Compression Stuffsacks - Guides Choice: Sea to Summit eVent Compression Dry Sacks  
\*\*\*1 Large enough to fit your sleeping bag, 1 Large enough to fit your extra layers\*\*\*
- Sleeping Pad - Closed-cell foam pad or inflatable air mattress - Guides Choice: Thermarest ProLite Mattress
- Camp Chair - Crazy-Creek style, soft, folding camp chair or Therm-a-Rest conversion chair kit to fit mattress - Guides Choice: Crazy Creek Hex 2.0 Original Chair
- Headlamp - For trips departing after August 1.
- Insulated Mug - Guides Choice: Wide-mouth Nalgene water bottle  
\*\*\*Save weight and the bulk – use your wide mouth water bottle for both hot and cold drinks. We recommend wide mouth, as it's easier to pour hot water into for hot drinks\*\*\*

#### CLOTHING

##### Camp Layers

- 1 Heavyweight synthetic top - Guides Choice: OR Radiant Hybrid Pullover
- 1 Heavyweight synthetic or fleece bottoms - Guides Choice: OR Radiant Hybrid Tights
- 1 Synthetic or down lightweight puffy jacket - Guides Choice: OR Transcendent Hoody

##### Footwear

- Camp Shoes - Light weight Crocs or sport sandals (for around camp and crossing streams and rivers) - Guides choice: Crocs Original Classic Clogs
- Sacred Socks – Heavy, warm pair of socks to put on at night. The name says it all – they're sacred – they live with your sleeping bag until you need them.

# BACKPACKING THE TALKEETNA MOUNTAINS

Hatcher Pass - Talkeetna Mountains

4-Day Backpacking Adventure



## GEAR LIST – BACKPACKING TRIPS

### PERSONAL EFFECTS:

- Sunglasses with case
- Toiletries
- Personal medications
- Sun screen/lip protection
- Pack Towel
- Book/reading materials
- Camera/film
- Journal and pen
- Binoculars
- Insect repellent

### ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED ITEMS:

- Lightweight synthetic glove liners
- Bandana
- 2 accessory carabiners
- 2 pair synthetic liner socks
- Gore-Tex or Lightweight Neoprene Socks - Guides Choice: NRS Wetsocks  
\*\*\*Great for keeping your feet dry in camp and to protect your weary feet from marauding insects\*\*\*
- Waterproof gaiters - Guides Choice: OR Verglas Gaiters

### AVAILABLE RENTAL ITEMS:

Alaska Alpine Adventures rents quality down and synthetic sleeping bags, inflatable air mattresses, Crazy Creek chairs, and waterproof/breathable chest waders (for our rafting/canoeing trips). Please click **THIS LINK** to our website for prices.

Click the link below to check out Alaska Alpine Adventure's helpful and informative packing and gear videos:

## BACKPACKING EQUIPMENT VIDEO PACKING A BACKPACK

# BACKPACKING THE TALKEETNA MOUNTAINS

Hatcher Pass - Talkeetna Mountains

4-Day Backpacking Adventure



## TRAVEL INFORMATION

### GETTING TO ALASKA

This trip begins and ends in Anchorage, Alaska. Getting to Anchorage is a snap. Alaska Airlines, your travel agent, online travel sources, or the carrier of your choice are options to easily arrange roundtrip airfare from international cities or the lower 48.

### ACCOMMODATIONS

This is a real wilderness camping trip and you will be sleeping in backpacking-style tents for the three nights within Chugach State Park. You will need to bring a sleeping bag, rated to 30 degrees F. or warmer, and a sleeping pad (see included equipment list for details). There will be no hot running water, showers, beds, or cabins. This is "real" Alaska and you will be completely immersed in it for the 3 nights.



Mid-summer Fireweed in full bloom

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# BACKPACKING THE TALKEETNA MOUNTAINS

Hatcher Pass - Talkeetna Mountains

4-Day Backpacking Adventure



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **What about the mosquitoes?**

In case you've heard horror stories... the number of mosquitoes is greatly dependent on hatching season, annual weather conditions, specific locations, and time of year. While you are bound to encounter some mosquitoes during the course of your summer adventure, their numbers rarely present major problems. That said, please arrive prepared with insect repellent and a head net to fend off any bugs that are present.

### **Will bears be a problem?**

Alaska is bear country! There are both grizzly and black bears in most of the wilderness areas of Alaska we visit. We love seeing bears in the wild, and consider bear sightings one of the most thrilling privileges common in Alaska's backcountry. That said, traveling safely and taking precautions to minimize a negative encounter are considerations we take very seriously. In addition to conducting a thorough pre-trip bear safety orientation, your guides also take many precautions on all of our trips including: 1) all of our food is packaged to minimize odors – we vacuum seal most of our fresh ingredients and sauces, we pack our food in bear resistant food canisters, and we store our food well away from camp. 2) We make noise when we're hiking in thick brush or when we're hiking in windy conditions to minimize surprise encounters. 3) We keep an exceptionally clean camp and 4) as a last resort guides travel armed carrying a .44 magnum or a shotgun. Alaska's national parks allow firearms and our guides are thoroughly trained. Again, using a firearm is a last resort and thankfully we've never had to call one into service on a trip!

### **Will I see wildlife on my trip?**

It's important to keep in mind that while we do have abundant wildlife populations in Alaska, animals are often obscured by the vastness of the landscape, subject to imprecise migration routes and often affected by Alaska's dynamic weather patterns. While wildlife viewing on our trips has been historically reliable, and we schedule our trips to maximize the chances of seeing wildlife, there are simply too many factors to make any guarantees.

### **What will the weather be like on my trip?**

Alaska has some of the most dynamic and dramatic weather on the planet. During the summer months in Alaska, average daytime temperatures range from 60 to 80 degrees F, nighttime and morning temperatures are cooler, but rarely dip below 40 degrees F. Fall arrives early at these latitudes and you'll experience cooler temperatures and fewer hours of daylight in late August and early September. Throughout the summer season, you may experience rain, sun, wind, clouds and fog on your departure. We live by the adage "prepare for the worst, hope for the best, and you'll likely end up with some of both".



A mother moose and calf browse amongst the willows

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# BACKPACKING THE TALKEETNA MOUNTAINS

Hatcher Pass - Talkeetna Mountains

4-Day Backpacking Adventure



## RESERVATION AND CANCELLATION POLICY:

**Deposit:** This Alaska Alpine Adventures trip requires payment in full at the time of reservation. If the participant cancels a reservation earlier than 60 days prior to the starting date, the deposit will be refunded, minus a \$100.00 administration fee. If the participant cancels within 59-31 days of the starting date, 50% of the trip balance will be refunded. If cancellation is made within 30-0 days of the trip starting date, there will be no refund of any costs. Alaska Alpine Adventures recommends cancellation insurance available through Travel Guard. Please call or email us for details.

**Trip Cancellations or Delays:** Alaska Alpine Adventures reserves the right to cancel or change the itinerary of a trip. In the event that Alaska Alpine Adventures cancels your trip and you are unable to participate, your total balance will be refunded. Occasionally, weather or other factors may cause delays or make completing a trip impossible. In these circumstances, there will be no refund of fees. Furthermore, Alaska Alpine Adventures is not responsible for any additional costs (e.g. airline flight changes, additional hotel nights, etc.) associated with trip delays or itinerary changes due to weather or other factors.

**Trip Minimums:** In order to guarantee any Alaska Alpine Adventures departure, a minimum number of participants must sign up. Our wilderness trips (including our Ultimate Alaska Multisport) require a minimum of 3 guests to guarantee departure, while our Source to Sea Multisport and our trips into the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge require a minimum of 4 guests to guarantee departure. However we will operate our adventures at below the minimum required for a modest surcharge. Please contact us for details.



A beautiful day on the Reed Lakes Trail

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