



Glacier Bay National Park & Preserve © NPS

## FACT SHEET

### National Parks in Alaska

Alagnak Wild River • Aleutian World War II National Historic Area • Aniakchak National Monument & Preserve • Bering Land Bridge National Preserve • Cape Krusenstern National Monument • Denali National Park & Preserve • Gates Of The Arctic National Park & Preserve • Glacier Bay National Park & Preserve • Inupiat Heritage Center • Katmai National Park & Preserve • Kenai Fjords National Park • Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park • Kobuk Valley National Park • Lake Clark National Park & Preserve • Noatak National Preserve • Sitka National Historical Park • Western Arctic National Parklands • Wrangell - St Elias National Park & Preserve • Yukon - Charley Rivers National Preserve

Alaska's national parks are still being discovered. The nation's northern most parks are filled with natural wonders and inspiring wildlife watching, waiting to be explored. From snow-covered peaks to slow-moving glaciers, the innate beauty and power of nature welcomes visitors from around the world.

**Alagnak Wild River** - Located in the beautiful Aleutian Range. The river provides unparalleled opportunities to experience the wilderness of the Alaska Peninsula.

**Aleutian World War II National Historic Area** - Encompasses the historic footprint of the U.S. Army base Fort Schwatka. Located on Amaknak Island in the Aleutian Island Chain of Alaska, the fort was one of four coastal defense posts built to protect Dutch Harbor (the back door to the United States) during World War II, the fort is also highest coastal battery ever constructed in the United States.

**Aniakchak National Monument & Preserve** - The Aniakchak Caldera is the result of a series of eruptions, the latest in 1931. Nearly six miles in diameter and covering some ten square miles, it is one of the finest examples of dry caldera in the world. Surprise Lake, located within the caldera, is the source of the Aniakchak River, which cascades through a 1,500-foot gash in the caldera wall.

**Bering Land Bridge National Preserve** - Located on the Seward Peninsula in northwest Alaska. The Preserve is a remnant of the land bridge that connected Asia with North America more than 13,000 years ago. During the glacial epoch this was part of a migration route for people, animals, and plants whenever ocean levels fell enough to expose the land bridge. Archeologists agree that it was across this Bering Land Bridge



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that humans first passed from Asia to populate the Americas.

**Cape Krusenstern National Monument** – A treeless coastal plain dotted with sizable lagoons and backed by gently rolling limestone hills. Cape Krusenstern's bluffs and its series of 114 beach ridges record the changing shorelines of the Chukchi Sea over thousands of years. This unusual series of beach ridges present, in sequence, detailed evidence of an estimated 9,000 years of prehistoric human use of this coastline.

**Denali National Park & Preserve** - Features North America's highest mountain, 20,320-foot tall Mount McKinley. The Alaska Range also includes countless other spectacular mountains and many large glaciers. Denali's more than 6 million acres also encompass a complete sub-arctic eco-system with large mammals such as grizzly bears, wolves, and moose.

**Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve** - By establishing Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve in Alaska's Brooks Range, Congress has reserved a vast and essentially untouched area of superlative natural beauty and exceptional scientific value - a maze of glaciated valleys and gaunt, rugged mountains covered with boreal forest and arctic tundra vegetation, cut by wild rivers, and inhabited by far-ranging populations of caribou, Dall sheep, wolves, and bears. Gates of the Arctic encompasses several congressionally recognized elements, including the national park, national preserve, wilderness, six Wild Rivers and two National Natural Landmarks.

**Glacier Bay National Park & Preserve** - Provides opportunities for adventure, a living laboratory for observing the ebb and flow of glaciers, and a chance to study life as it returns in the wake of retreating ice. The park has snow-capped mountain ranges rising to over 15,000 feet, coastal beaches with protected coves, deep fjords, tidewater glaciers, coastal and estuarine waters, and freshwater lakes.

**Inupiat Heritage Center** - The Inupiat Heritage Center in Barrow, Alaska was designated an affiliated area of New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park in New Bedford, Massachusetts to ensure that the contributions of Alaska Natives to the history of whaling is recognized.

**Katmai National Park & Preserve** - Famous for volcanoes, brown bears, fish, and rugged wilderness and the site of the Brooks River National Historic Landmark with North America's highest concentration of prehistoric human dwellings. Katmai National Monument was created to preserve the famed Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes, a spectacular 40

square mile, 100 to 700 foot deep, protoclastic ash flow deposited by Novarupta Volcano.

**Kenai Fjords National Park** - Encompasses 607,805 acres of unspoiled wilderness on the southeast coast of Alaska's Kenai Peninsula. The park is capped by the Harding Icefield, a relic from past ice-ages and the largest icefield entirely within U.S. borders.

**Klondike Gold Rush National Historical Park** - This park celebrates the Klondike Gold Rush of 1897-98 through 15 restored buildings within the Skagway Historic District. The park also administers the Chilkoot Trail and a small portion of the White Pass Trail. Included in the park is a portion of the Dyea Townsite at the foot of the Chilkoot Trail.

**Kobuk Valley National Park** - Encircled by the Baird and Waring mountain ranges. The park provides protection for several important geographic features, including the central portion of the Kobuk River, the 25-square-mile Great Kobuk Sand Dunes, and the Little Kobuk and Hunt River dunes. River bluffs, composed of sand stand as high as 150 feet, hold permafrost ice wedges and the fossils of Ice Age mammals.

**Lake Clark National Park & Preserve** - The spectacular scenery stretches from the shores of Cook Inlet, across the Chigmit Mountains, to the tundra covered hills of the western interior. The Chigmits, where the Alaska and Aleutian Ranges meet, are an awesome, jagged array of mountains and glaciers which include two active volcanoes, Mt. Redoubt and Mt. Iliamna. Lake Clark and many other lakes and rivers within the park are critical salmon habitat to the Bristol Bay salmon fishery, one of the largest sockeye salmon fishing grounds in the world.

**Noatak National Preserve** - As one of North America's largest mountain-ringed river basins with an intact ecosystem, the Noatak River environs features some of the Arctic's finest arrays of plants and animals. The river is classified as a national wild and scenic river, and offers superlative wilderness float-trip opportunities from deep in the Brooks Range to the tidewater of the Chukchi Sea.

**Sitka National Historical Park** – Alaska's oldest federally designated park was established in 1910 to commemorate the 1804 Battle of Sitka. All that remains of this last major conflict between Europeans and Alaska Natives is the site of the Tlingit Fort and battlefield, located within this scenic 113-acre park in a temperate rain forest.



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**Western Arctic National Parklands** - Western Arctic National Parklands is a management unit that includes Noatak National Preserve, Cape Krusenstern National Monument and Kobuk Valley National Park all near Kotzebue, Alaska, and Bering Land Bridge National Preserve located on the Seward Peninsula near Nome, Alaska.

**Wrangell - St Elias National Park & Preserve** - The Chugach, Wrangell, and St. Elias mountain ranges converge here in what is often referred to as the "mountain kingdom of North America." The largest unit of the National Park System, this park includes the continent's largest assemblage of glaciers and the greatest collection of peaks above 16,000 feet. Mount St. Elias, at 18,008 feet, is the second highest peak in the United States.

**Yukon - Charley Rivers National Preserve** - Located along the Canadian border in central Alaska, the preserve protects 115 miles of the 1,800-mile Yukon River and the entire Charley River basin. Numerous rustic cabins and historic sites are reminders of the importance of the Yukon River during the 1898 gold rush. The Charley, a 100-mile long wild river, is considered by many to be the most spectacular river in Alaska.

### *Key Issues Facing National Parks in Alaska*

Taking care of America's national parks should be a national priority. With the 100th birthday of the National Park System approaching in 2016, it is more important than ever to address the ongoing problems that our parks are facing. The National Park Service is suffering from an operations funding shortfall now exceeding \$800 million annually. In addition, several billion dollars are needed to protect archaeological sites and historic buildings, and repair the extensive backlog of maintenance projects. Many park friends in Congress have spent years highlighting the fiscal crisis in America's national parks. The Administration has responded with a budget request for 2008 that would increase the National Park Service operating budget by \$258 million - a strong step in restoring our parks and improving the experiences of visitors. This budget also launches the National Park Centennial Challenge, which if properly framed and enacted could help restore the parks for their 100th birthday and for generations to come. In addition to the operational shortfall, the National Park Service has a \$1.9 billion land acquisition backlog consisting of over 11,000 tracts of land and covering more than 1.8 million acres. In many instances, failure to acquire these lands makes operating the parks more complex and costly. Unfortunately, funding for national park federal land acquisition has declined dramatically in recent years, from \$130 million five years ago, to only \$23 million in the fiscal year 2008 request.

- Since 2002, budget erosion and rising fixed costs at Sitka National Historical Park have resulted in the lapsing of four of 10 seasonal interpretive positions, one of two seasonal maintenance positions, and one of three permanent maintenance staff. The result has been fewer building tours, longer emergency response times, and reduced maintenance.
- Rising fuel and utility costs Lake Clark National Park and Preserve have significantly affected the park's ability to maintain remote operations and provide support to volunteers who frequently staff ranger stations.
- In recent years, Denali National Park and Preserve has lost six seasonal positions and support funding in its maintenance operation. Its water system has been found by the Public Health Service to be out of compliance because of inadequate emergency staffing. Proposed funding would allow the park to rebuild its safety program, restore key maintenance positions, and hire staff to fill critical law enforcement, visitor service and emergency response capacity.
- Funding is proposed to provide maintenance and visitor services, and utility and fuel costs for the new Western Arctic National Parklands visitor and cultural center which will opening Kotzebue in 2008. The facility will house a visitor center, maintenance facility, and offices.
- In the past decade, visitation at Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve has increased by 42 percent, due in part to increased vessel traffic in the park. Park interpreters spend 10-12 hour days on-board each ship visiting the park and yet the park currently lacks a supervisory park ranger position for interpretive operations.

### *Park Visitation in Alaska*

In fiscal year 2005, the national parks in Alaska welcomed 2,348,879 visitors.

### *Budget Information*

In fiscal year 2006, the operations funding for the 19 national parks in Alaska was \$37.8 million. For fiscal year 2008, the administration is proposing a 13.8 percent increase, which would bring operations funding to \$43 million.

### *Contact Information*

For more information on the national parks in Alaska, please contact NPCA Regional Director Jim Stratton at 907-277-6722 or NPCA Legislative Director Blake Selzer at 202-223-6722, ext. 250.



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