

SAY HELLO TO YOUR ALASKA GETAWAY



THE MULTI-DAY ADVENTURE GUIDE

*to McCarthy, Alaska
and Wrangell St. Elias National Park & Preserve*



Hi friend,

Alaska is just one of those places where—once you're here, once you've experienced it—it sticks with you forever.

And why wouldn't it? Nothing quite compares to moments like hearing the sounds a glacier makes with your hand pressed against the cold ice... or seeing a bear lumber across the horizon from the safety of your raft.

For a lot of people, this may be their only trip to Alaska so they can finally check it off their bucket list, and we take that seriously: we want to help make this a trip of a lifetime.

So! Are you ready to explore the final frontier?

Nik Merlino
Owner/Founder

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WELCOME... TO THE LAST FRONTIER

to McCarthy, Alaska and
Wrangell St. Elias National Park & Preserve

A LOOK AT WHERE WE ARE: SOUTH-CENTRAL ALASKA

McCarthy, Alaska – Located in Wrangell St. Elias National Park & Preserve

Rugged mountains, hanging glaciers, and abundant wildlife are all on display in what is the largest national park (and possibly the best-kept secret) in the United States: Wrangell St. Elias National Park & Preserve.

At 13.2 million acres, the park is the same size as Yellowstone National Park, Yosemite National Park, and Switzerland combined—and is home to Mt. St. Elias, the second highest peak in the United States at 18,008 feet.

It's hard to believe it's just an 8-hour drive from Anchorage, isn't it? But it is, and that makes immersing yourself in this wild, untouched land easier than ever.

QUICK FACTS

- > Wrangell St. Elias National Park & Preserve is a designated **World Heritage Site** with Glacier Bay National Park & Preserve, Kluane National Park Reserve, and Tatshenshini-Alsek National Park.
- > Together, they make this the **world's largest** international protected wilderness.
- > Mt. St. Elias, at 18,008 feet, is the **second highest peak** in the United States.
- > Mt. Wrangell, at 14,163 feet, is **one of the largest active volcanoes** in North America.
- > The Nabesna Glacier, at approximately 80 miles, is the longest **non-polar valley glacier**.
- > The Hubbard Glacier is one of **the largest and most active tidewater glaciers** in North America.
- > The spectacularly scenic, 8-hour drive from Anchorage rivals the best drives in the world. **Immersing yourself in this wild, untouched land is both the journey and the destination!**



GETTING TO MCCARTHY, ALASKA

SHUTTLES

From Anchorage, Alaska:

[Wrangell-St. Elias Tours](#) offers van shuttles daily during the summer months from Anchorage.

[Reeve Air](#) & [Copper Valley Air](#) team up to offer a twice weekly flight (Mondays and Thursdays) from Anchorage to McCarthy on the mail plane.

From the Copper Basin, Alaska:

The [Kennicott Shuttle](#) offers a daily shuttle from Glennallen to McCarthy with stops in Copper Center, Kenny Lake, and Chitina along the way.

[Wrangell Mountain Air](#) has a daily flight schedule between Chitina & McCarthy.

RENTAL CARS

Many rental car companies have restrictions on traveling the McCarthy Road. For an updated list of companies that allow travel, contact us.

CAR STORAGE

We offer free car storage to all multi-day guided trips. If you are interested in storing your car while on your trip with us, let us know.



Watch this information-rich video to see how breathtakingly beautiful the drive is from Anchorage to McCarthy!

DRIVING DISTANCES

Anchorage to McCarthy: 314 miles / 7.5 hours

Fairbanks to McCarthy: 374 miles / 9.5 hours

Valdez to McCarthy: 176 miles / 5.5 hours

Glennallen to McCarthy: 125 miles / 4 hours

Chitina to McCarthy: 60 miles / 2.5 hours

Denali N.P. to McCarthy: 395 miles / 11 hours

ABOUT ADVENTURES



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WEATHER & SEASONS

What's the weather like?

Alaska weather can be hard to predict, as it can change suddenly and dramatically. Generally, June tends to be the nicest month but also the buggiest. July is also warm and very busy, while August tends to be cooler and more likely to see some rain, but also the least buggy. The prepared traveler should plan for temperatures ranging from 40°F to 80°F. One of the best investments you can make is a comfortable, durable set of rain jacket and pants.

When is there a midnight sun?

McCarthy's longest day of the year is the Summer Solstice, sometime between June 20th–22nd. The sun is up from 3AM until just before midnight and it does not get dark all night! By August we start getting dark nights again and stars begin to come back out; this is when we start seeing the occasional Aurora Borealis as well.

Is the park open year round?

The park is technically open year round, however, the seasonal window during which people visit is between May 15th and September 15th. Outside of that window,

services can be VERY limited. We offer trips from the last weekend in May until the first weekend in September... otherwise, a custom booking is the perfect option.

GETTING THERE

What are the McCarthy Road and the Nabesna Road like?

The Nabesna Road is roughly a 50-mile stretch of dirt road with multiple creek crossings and a very quiet end-of-road. Meanwhile, the McCarthy Road has been vastly improved since 2006, with many of its stretches now straightened and widened, and creek crossings have been routed into culverts. That being said, it is still a 60-mile dirt road and you should expect to travel between 25 and 30 miles-an-hour with some occasional rough stretches.

Can I drive my rental car on park roads?

The McCarthy and Nabesna Roads are maintained by the State of Alaska as state right-of-ways. However, since they are dirt roads, many rental companies restrict travel on them; you will also encounter this if attempting to drive the Dalton or Denali

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

highways—also dirt roads—too. It is worth it to check with local car rental companies like [Midnight Sun Car Rental](#) in Anchorage about options for driving on dirt roads in Alaska.

THINGS TO DO

What adventures are available for day trips?

We offer a large variety of exciting day adventures. From paddling on a glacier lake and jumping off of icebergs, to rafting Class III whitewater and trekking on the white ice of the Root Glacier! Looking for adventure on your own? Rent a bike from us and explore the valley by pedal power!

What adventures are available for multi-day trips?

We offer world-class rafting trips all over Wrangell St. Elias National Park, with our most popular advertised trips originating out of McCarthy. We offer scenic rafting trips into some of North America's deepest wilderness. Intensity levels range from large

volume Class II scenic trips to some of the best undiscovered Class IV+ whitewater!

What is there to do in the town of McCarthy?

McCarthy was the vice town that sprang up next to the company town of Kennicott; it was where the miners came to blow off steam. Just like then, you can certainly blow off some steam in our local eateries, like the Roadside Potato, the Golden Saloon, and the McCarthy Lodge Bistro. And no trip to McCarthy is complete without visiting our [local McCarthy-Kennicott Historical Museum](#), which features local artifacts and the best photo collection we have seen in the valley. They are also working on implementing a historical tour of McCarthy for coming seasons. In the meantime, you can grab one of their self-guided walking tour maps of McCarthy and explore on your own!

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

OUT IN THE WILDNESS

What kind of meals should I expect on a multi-day trip?

You won't find freeze-dried food on any of our multi-day trips. Instead, expect a culinary experience! Grilled salmon, fresh baked brownies, eggs Benedict, reindeer sausages, grilled pizza, and so much more awaits the hungry paddler at camp.

We have forged relationships with local and statewide farmers to be able to supply our trips with a wide variety of locally produced meats and vegetables. In this way, your trip does not just support one Alaskan business, but many Alaskan businesses.

What do I need to know about bears (and any other wildlife)?

While traveling in Alaska, you will be in the heart of bear country. All wildlife, bears included, enjoy their personal space just like humans. Bears are usually not a threat, but you do need to remain alert, give them your respect, and appreciate the opportunity to see these amazing creatures in their natural habitat.

Wrangell St. Elias National Park is home to an abundance of Alaskan wildlife. If you are lucky enough to have the opportunity

to observe these animals in their natural environment, please treat that encounter responsibly. There are a few basics to follow regarding encounters with wildlife while on a river trip:

Animals need their space, too: Using binoculars and spotting scopes are always the best option when viewing wildlife. Be respectful of their habit.

Stay in designated areas or on trails: This ensures that you will not disturb the beautiful, wild places that wildlife call home.

Never feed the animals: Only share your food with your fellow trip-goers. Animals may get hooked on handouts, which can disturb their natural hunting habits and even harm their digestive systems.

What about the bugs?

Yep. We have bugs this far north, too... just like the lower 48. The good news is, they are very manageable.

Mosquitoes enjoy their own peak season: it's the second week in June to the last week in July. They are mostly active at dawn and twilight.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Wear tight weave, long sleeve shirts and pants to keep the bugs away from your skin.

Avoid wearing dark colors, especially blue, and instead opt for neutral colors such as khaki.

Don't use scented hygiene products.

Bring repellent.

Do I need a head net? Only if it makes you happier. We don't use them and rely on our other tips to stay comfortable.

You may have heard that “The Mosquito is Alaska’s Unofficial State Bird”...

Well, the mosquito situation is not nearly as bad as myth would have it and is certainly manageable while on a trip.



WILDERNESS IS NOT
A LUXURY BUT A
NECESSITY OF THE
HUMAN SPIRIT.

—Edward Abbey

CHOOSE YOUR STYLE OF ADVENTURE...



COPPER RIVER RAFTING – 6 & 7 DAY EXPEDITIONS (AGES 10+)

As far as scenic Alaska river trips go, Copper River Rafting is truly second to none. Copper River rafting is the quintessential scenic Alaska rafting experience with soaring mountains, cascading waterfalls, and glaciers that calve directly into the mighty river. During this trip you will truly experience Alaskan wilderness on its grandest scale.

TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

- Raft one of Alaska's classic scenic rivers
- View glaciers, touch glaciers, maybe even jump off of one!
- Witness waterfalls and wildlife in large numbers
- Travel the old route of the Copper River Northwestern Railroad

TANA RIVER RAFTING 4 & 6 DAY EXPEDITIONS (AGES 18+)

The Tana River, known for its large volume and even bigger rapids, is the crown jewel of remote Alaska whitewater rafting in Wrangell St. Elias National Park. On this trip you will have the opportunity to traverse Class IV whitewater and rolling sand dunes. You may also spot grizzly bears, Dall sheep, and perhaps one of the Wrangell's herds of bison. This trip is perfect for the adventurous spirit!

TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

- Take a bush plane flight with some of Alaska's premier pilots
- Drift down Alaska's best undiscovered glacial whitewater with Grand Canyon-size waves and drops
- Take in magnificent views of multiple, towering 16,000+ ft mountains
- Experience multiple hiking and exploration opportunities





UPPER CHITINA RIVER 6 & 8 DAY EXPEDITIONS (AGES 14+)

This trip begins with a short bush plane flight from the airstrip in McCarthy, Alaska and then we launch onto one of the great wild river adventures that Wrangell St. Elias National Park & Preserve has to offer. This is a remote, wild, and untamed stretch of river, and we often will not see a single soul for the entirety of our journey. For those with an adventurous spirit, who are looking for fun whitewater and breathtaking views, the Upper Chitina is sure to please.

TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

- Take a bush plane flight with some of Alaska's premier pilots
- Take in soaring views of the Chugach, St. Elias, and the Wrangell Mountains
- Raft a remote Alaskan river that few have rafted

THE RIVERS TO RICHES LOWER CHITINA RIVER RAFTING 3 & 4 DAY EXPEDITIONS (AGES 8+)

The Chitina River, considered the River to Riches for many early Alaska prospectors, is a massive river drainage originating from a glacier of the same name off the flanks of mighty Mount Logan in Canada. Along the way on this expedition we will see historical remnants of prospectors and explorers as they made their way into the Alaska wilderness. We offer both three and four day trips on our River to Riches float, allowing for more hiking and exploration of the side drainages with the extra day.

TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

- Raft four Alaska rivers on one trip
- Trace the same route that prospectors used over 100 years ago on their way to copper & gold riches
- Get farther off the beaten path with hiking and exploration opportunities
- The perfect exploration for families and groups





UPPER NIZINA RIVER RAFTING 4 & 6 DAY EXPEDITIONS (AGES 12+)

This trip begins with a bush plane flight to Nizina Lake at the terminus of the mighty Nizina Glacier. We spend our first day hiking and exploring the beauty surrounding the lake and glacier before beginning our trip downstream.

Unrivalled beauty surrounds us as the river tumbles towards Chitina. Class II and III whitewater make this a “must do” Alaska river adventure. Choose a four to five day trip with a bush plane fly out at the confluence with the Chitina River, a short plane flight back to McCarthy, or add an extra day and continue on downstream on the Chitina River to the historic town of Chitina, Alaska. For sheer beauty and grandeur, the Upper Nizina is a stretch of remote river that is hard to beat.

TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

- Take a scenic bush plane flight
- Enjoy unbelievable scenery – like rafting in a painting
- Float around massive icebergs in Nizina Lake
- Float past mile high cliffs and through the Chitistone Gorge

OVERNIGHT ALASKA RAFTING SCENIC RAFT AND FLY (AGES 8+)

Our Overnight Alaska Rafting and Camping trip is tailored for the outdoor enthusiast that wants the backcountry experience but only has a limited amount of time on their vacation.

With a float of almost 20 miles and a bush plane flight back to McCarthy, this is a trip that can wet the most adventurous of whistles. As far as Alaska wilderness adventures go, this unique excursion is a bucket-list item for any adventure enthusiast!

TRIP HIGHLIGHTS

- Camp in the scenic limestone Nizina Canyon
- Be lulled to sleep by the sound of the river flowing past your tent
- Experience the heart of Wrangell St. Elias National Park
- Take a scenic bush plane flight

CUSTOM MULTI-DAY TRIPS

Our Custom Alaska River Adventures are designed for travelers looking for something a bit more unique than a standard raft trip.

Custom trips are created for folks that want to add a few extra days of hiking, have the desire to trek a little deeper into the wilderness, or are looking for an all-inclusive trip that takes care of transportation to and from Anchorage, lodging, and more.

All of our standard Multi-Day Raft trips can be upgraded to a custom all-inclusive trip as well.

THE ROLE OF ADVENTURE GUIDES ON MULTI-DAY TRIPS

Friendly, knowledgeable, and safety oriented, our guides are the best in Alaska! (We're not biased...)

Your safety is our highest priority. All of our guides complete extensive and regular training in whitewater emergency rescue and wilderness first response.

They are also versed in Alaskan wildlife, plants, and history—with a natural flair for storytelling that will enrich your trip immensely.

Oh, and did we mention that they also know how to cook up a mean riverside flapjack?

CERTIFICATIONS

- Wilderness First Responder
- Advanced First Aid
- Whitewater Emergency Rescue
- Naturalists



BE A RESPONSIBLE VISITOR TO THE ALASKAN WILDERNESS...





EXPLORING & CAMPING

Leave it as you found it: If you get the feeling that you are the first person to ever set foot on the tundra... it is because those who came before respected the wilderness.

Respect culture: Respect the privacy and customs of people living along our routes. Before taking pictures of people or their property, please ask for their consent. Respect private property and cultural differences.

Treasures: Please resist taking natural objects like feathers, bones, arrowheads, and antlers. If these things seem plentiful, it may be because they have been left in place by other conscientious travelers.

Tent sites: When choosing a tent site, look for places that will not require moving rocks or uprooting bushes. When we leave a camp we try and put everything back just how we found it. Being sure to pick up any garbage, no matter how small.

Campfires: We carry a self-contained fire pan on every one of our trips; this allows us to have fires in almost any location, pack it up in the morning, and leave with hardly a trace of a fire left behind.

NOTE: Rocks are fair game! Our reasoning is that rock appeal is very subjective and, let's be honest, they are indeed plentiful!

WILDERNESS BATHING & BATHROOMS

Soap and washing: We provide biodegradable soap and hand sanitizer, and ask that you always wash your hands after going to the bathroom and prior to handling food.

Bathroom: With a little effort and planning, we can prevent fecal contamination and prevent others from seeing signs that we have traveled through. We use a specially designed River Toilet, lovingly referred to as the “Groover”, in a location designated by the guide, which ensures that the water stays clean.

When/ if no latrine is available:

Dig a hole 6” deep with the trowel we provide, make your deposit, and cover it up again. Burn the toilet paper, completely, on site. Female menstrual supplies should be placed in a Ziplock and deposited in the “group garbage”.



FOR ADVENTURES... *On the River*

McCarthy River Tours is proud to be the first raft company in Wrangell St. Elias National Park to outfit our guests with drysuits for free.

Drysuits are required and INCLUDED in all trip packages. This ensures your safety should you end up in the water—and helps protect you against wind and bugs!

Packing for an extended stay in Alaska's backcountry can be daunting...

You need to pack for temperatures ranging anywhere from 40 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit (5-25+ Celsius) and between rainy, windy, buggy and/or beautifully sunny weather.

We've put together a packing list to help you in not overpacking—which is important, as the heavier you pack, the more hassle you'll have in lugging your gear to and from the boats everyday.



WHAT TO PACK...

PACKING LIST

Personal Items

Rain Pants & Jacket

Since it can rain at anytime in Alaska, it is important to buy good quality, comfortable rain gear as you may spend many hours at a time in them.

Hiking/Camp Shoes

Socks

3-4 pairs heavy wool or polypropylene.

Long underwear

At least two of each; tops and bottoms.

Warm Jacket

For days that the temperature stays in the 40's and 50's. Thick fleece, down, or synthetic are fine.

Warm Hat

Good wool or poly blend, we recommend two.

Camp Pants/Shorts

2 pairs. Quick drying; many people prefer zip-off convertible brands that function as both shorts and pants.

PACKING CHECKLIST



Gloves

Fleece or wool, good quality, 2 pairs.



Camp Shirts

2-4. Can be t-shirts or button ups. Preferably not cotton.



Brimmed Hat

Baseball cap, visor or fishing cap will work to keep the midnight sun off of your face.



Flash Light or Head Lamp

Bring extra batteries and bulb (if applicable).



Sunglasses

We recommend bringing a backup pair as well. And a sunglasses retainer strap so they don't fall off!



Personal Toiletries

Travel size, try to bring just what you will need for the expedition.

PACKING CHECKLIST

Sleeping Items

We rent Sleep Kits that include a 0 degree sleeping bag, comfortable sleeping pad and camp pillow for \$5/night. Or bring your own!



Sleeping Bag

We recommend 0 to 15 degree bags, 20 to 25 degree work as well but we recommend including a liner.



Sleeping Pad

Therma-Rests are both compactible and the warmest.



Tent

Good quality 3 season camping tent with solid rain protection.

We provide three-person tents for all of our Alaska Raft Adventure Multi-Day Trips, and we never assign more than two people to a tent so you can have a little more room to spread out at night.

PACKING CHECKLIST

Optional Items



Rubber Boots

Good quality, knee height, make sure that they are comfortable and can accommodate warm socks. Xtra-Tuff and Muck boots are good options.



Reading Materials, Journal, Pen



Field Guides

Bird/Plant/Natural History books.



Binoculars



Camera

Highly recommended! Bring extra batteries and pack in a waterproof case such as a Pelican Case.



Small Camp Towel

TRAVEL IS THE
ONLY THING WE
BUY THAT MAKES US
RICHER.

—Unknown



GO AHEAD...
LEAVE THE REST
OF THE WORLD
BEHIND

MCCARTHY, ALASKA VISITOR INFORMATION

LIMITED CONNECTIVITY

Alaska says... unplug when you're here!

We don't have the greatest cellphone reception, or the strongest internet signals.

So go ahead and disconnect from the outside world. Enjoy the wilderness and the connection you make with the people around you!

RESTAURANTS & CAFES

[The Roadside Potatohead](#)

Known locally as "The Potato". From the famous potatohead burrito to their rotating dinner entrees, they do their best to use local produce and made-from-scratch ingredients. Don't forget their locally famous curly fries!

[Golden Saloon](#)

The Golden Saloon is not only a great local staple... it has a collection of artifacts from the town that you won't want to miss. Have a drink and swap a story with new friends... and jump in on one of their open mic nights!

[McCarthy Lodge](#)

Experience the stories of the town's history, along with great food and wine. This restaurant's approach is all local, from their own greenhouse and gardens to family farms and community vendors.

[The Meatza Wagon](#)

This is a small, family-friendly spot that isn't owned by a local serving food, but by a Chef who also happens to be local! Enjoy their covered seating area overlooking the Kennicott Glacier & Mt. Blackburn!

[Glacier View Campground](#)

Enjoy a panoramic view of The Root Glacier and surrounding Wrangell Mountains from the comfort of an outdoor cafe that's famous for their "Glacier Burger".

[Shuttle Stop Cafe](#)

Espresso and baked goods with some great Alaska gifts!

WHERE THE ROAD ENDS, THE ADVENTURE BEGINS!

LODGING & CAMPING

[Kennicott River Lodge & Hostel](#)

Offers both shared hostel rooms and private cabins and rooms in the main lodge. With a full kitchen in the main lodge, a sauna, horseshoe pits, and a fire pit, it's a great place for anyone visiting the Kennicott Valley.

[Currant Ridge Cabins](#)

Fully equipped cabins with kitchen, bedroom, bath, and view. These cabins are a great choice for families, groups, and anyone looking for the comforts of home while on vacation.

[Aspen Meadows Bed & Breakfast](#)

Offers cabins and a shower house with a light breakfast in the morning. A great place for people looking for a relaxing setting here in McCarthy.

[As for on-site camping...](#)

We offer on-site, affordable, and private camping at our daily Take-Out for our guests a few miles outside of town. There are also a few public campgrounds close to the end of the road if you are interested in a more rustic experience!

[McCarthy Lodge, Ma Johnson Hotel &](#)

[Lancaster Backpacker's Hotel](#)

A great place to stay in downtown McCarthy. Beautiful restored rooms in Ma Johnson Hotel and dining in the old Lodge building.

[Blackburn Cabins](#)

Conveniently located on the wagon road between McCarthy and Kennicott, your home away from home in the Wrangell Mountains!

[Kennicott Glacier Lodge](#)

Located in the historic town of Kennicott. Offers great views of the Kennicott and Root Glaciers. Quiet and comfortable setting for a relaxing stay. Don't forget the great food and casual atmosphere, too!

LOCAL SHOPS

[The Copper Ore in Kennicott and The Copper Nugget in McCarthy](#)

Larry Hoare has been creating handmade jewelry from locally sourced rocks and minerals from the Wrangell Mountains since 1979. You'll find these treasures at both shops, along with paintings done by his equally talented wife, Rita.

[McCarthy Center Store](#)

The McCarthy Center Store is a local grocery store that features fresh produce, baked goods, prepared foods, and a wide selection of organic, gluten free items. Be sure to visit the Center for fresh baked goods, your supplies for a backcountry trip, or an ice cream cone on a hot summer day!

[Nugget Liquors](#)

For a wide selection of beer, wine, and spirits at the local liquor store—Nugget Liquors. It's located in downtown McCarthy.

[Mountain Arts Gift Shop](#)

Tucked into the same location as the Shuttle Stop Cafe, the Mountain Arts Gift Shop is the perfect place to find unique gifts from Eyak, Athabascan, Tlingit, and other native artists in this area. You'll also enjoy the diverse range of Alaskan herbal products, photography, maps, handmade knives, ulus, gems, cards... and more.

WE'RE READY TO HELP YOU PLAN YOUR NEXT ADVENTURE TO ALASKA

Give us a call and we'll help you check Alaska off your bucket list!



907-302-0688

Or visit our website for further details!

RaftTheWrangells.com

READY FOR THIS?

