

Hiking, Backpacking, Cycling, Camping

Getting outside in Denali National Park and Preserve is a unique experience. Whether your ideal adventure is hiking on a trail, biking the park road, backpacking to a remote location, relaxing with family while camping, or packrafting down a glacially fed river—Denali has something for everyone.

Getting Started

Learn more at go.nps.gov/DenaliHiking

There are two ways to experience Denali National Park and Preserve's wild lands—hiking on an established trail or travel off-trail. Both are great ways to get outdoors. Follow this decision tree if you are unsure about whether your ideal adventure is on-trail or off-trail. Before starting your hike, make sure to read the "Plan Ahead" section of this guide.



Check in - Check in after 11 am. Check out by 11 am.
Quiet Hours - 10 pm to 6 am
Generators - Generators may be operated from 8 am to 10 am and 4 pm to 8 pm at Riley Creek Campground, Savage River Campground, and Teklanika River Campground.
Wildlife Safety - Keeping a clean campsite is key to a safe campground experience. Follow these rules to avoid a wildlife encounter:

- Pets** - Pets may be walked on roadways, parking areas, campground loops, the Roadside Trail, or the Bike Path. Make sure to use a leash (6' or shorter) and dispose of pet waste.

- Fires must not be left unattended.
- Cutting living vegetation or standing dead wood is prohibited.
- Do not cook directly on fire grates.
- Dispose of all garbage and foil in a trash can.



Learn more at go.nps.gov/DenaliHiking



1. **Decide Where You Will Go** - There are two ways to experience Denali National Park's wild lands—hiking on an established trail or traveling off-trail. Choose a hike that is right for you and leave an itinerary with someone who will notice if you are overdue and can report it to 911.
2. **Check the Weather** - Plan for weather. Rain and snow are possible even during summer months. Bring a hat, gloves, and rain gear to make your trip more enjoyable.
3. **Pack Layers** - Weather can change quickly. It is wise to wear wool or synthetic layers, which are warm when wet.
4. **Food and Water** - Bring plenty of food and water. No food is available for purchase beyond the park entrance. If you are hiking off-trail bring a way to treat water, such as purification tablets or a water filter.
5. **Wildlife Safety** - Check for wildlife closures with a ranger or online at [go.nps.gov/DenaliClosures](https://www.nps.gov/denali/closures). Read all wildlife safety information.
6. **Know How to Report an Emergency** - In an emergency call 911. There is no cell phone service past Mile 3 on the park road. Flag down a bus driver or park ranger if cell service is unavailable.

- **Travel on Durable Surfaces** - Whenever possible, travel on durable surfaces such as trails, river bars, and rocky areas. Do not hike in a single file line if you are traveling off-trail in a group. Instead disperse your group to minimize impact to the land.
- **Sanitation** - If you are out hiking when nature calls make sure you know how to answer.
 - When disposing of fecal waste, dig a hole at least 6 in (15 cm) deep and at least 100 ft (30 m) away from water.
 - Pack out all sanitation products, including used toilet paper.
- **Take Only Pictures** - Do not collect items including natural specimens (rocks, plants) or artifacts. Leave items where you find them.
- **Pets** - Pets may be walked on roadways, parking areas, campground loops, the Roadside Trail, or the Bike Path. Make sure to use a leash (6' or shorter) and dispose of pet waste.

Learn more at go.nps.gov/DenaliBackcountry

If you are interested in an overnight trip, follow these steps:

Go online to go.nps.gov/DenaliBackcountry and do some research before your trip. Answering the questions below will make it easier and faster to get your permit.

- **What Type of Terrain Do You Want to Avoid?**
There are five major terrain types in Denali—gravel river bars, wet tundra, dry tundra, brushy tundra, and glacial moraines. Before getting your permit, think about if you are prepared to cross rivers or travel on glaciers.
- **How Much Time Do You Have?**
The amount of time you have for your trip will determine where you can go in the park. It is recommended that visitors arrive at least one day before their intended dates of backcountry travel.
- **What is Your Skill Level?**
Can you read a topographic map? Have you hiked off-trail before? Have you camped in extreme weather? These are all things you may need to do while camping in Denali's backcountry.
- **What Backcountry Unit Do You Want to Explore?**
Denali is divided into 87 units. To prevent over-crowding in a single area, only a certain number of people can camp in a given unit each night. Be flexible when thinking about what unit you would like to explore. Go online to [go.nps.gov/DenaliUnits](https://www.nps.gov/denali/units) to learn more about individual units.



- **Stay Away** - Never approach wildlife. Stay 300 yards (275 m) away from bears.
- **Be Alert and Noisy**- Travel in groups and make plenty of “people sounds” like talking, shouting, and singing to let bears know where you are.
- **Don't Run** - If you encounter a bear at close range, do not run or drop your pack! Moving away quickly makes you look like prey. Make yourself look big and back away slowly, keeping your eyes on the bear.
- **Bear Spray** - Carry bear spray and know how to use it. If a bear charges, pepper spray formulated for bears is the best defense.
- **Play Dead** - If contacted by a grizzly bear, curl into a ball with your knees tucked in to your chest and your hands over your head and neck. Leave your pack on. Grizzly bear attacks are statistically short, defensive reactions.
- **Fight Back** - If a black bear makes contact or you encounter a prolonged grizzly bear attack, fight back.
- **Report to a Ranger** - Report all bear encounters to a ranger. This information is important to for research and management purposes.

- **Stay Away** - Moose look docile but may charge unexpectedly. Stay at least two bus-lengths (25 yards, 23 m) away from moose.
- **Run Away** - If a moose charges you, it is because you are in its space. Get away as fast as you can. Moose may try to trample a perceived threat.

- **Keep Wildlife Wild** - Do not feed wildlife, including small animals like squirrels and birds.
- **Stay Away** - Do not approach or follow wildlife. Stay 300 yards (275 m) away from bears and maintain a minimum 25 yards (23 m) distance from all other animals, dens, and nests. If your presence alters an animal's behavior then you are too close.

- **Drones** - Unmanned aerial systems are prohibited in all areas of the park.
- **Firearms** - Firearms are not permitted in federal buildings; elsewhere, Alaska state laws apply.



Learn more at go.nps.gov/DenaliBackcountry

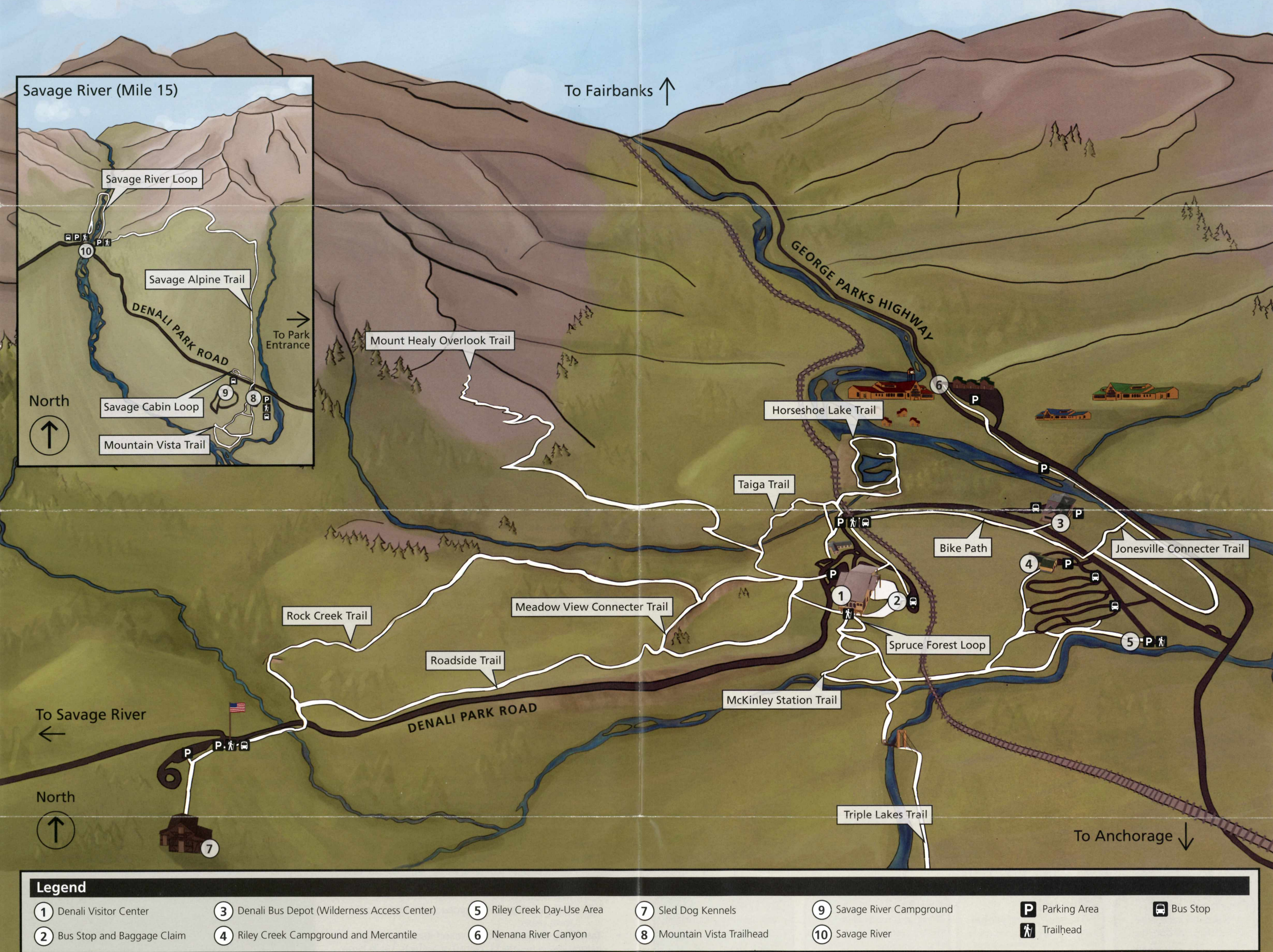
Most overnight trips in the backcountry require a permit. Here is what you should know before getting your permit.

- **Cost** - Free
- **Where to Get Your Permit** - The Denali Visitor Center, located at Mile 1.5 on the park road (open 8 am to 5 pm).
- **How Long Does it Take?** - The permit process takes about one hour and includes planning your itinerary, watching a safety video, and receiving a safety briefing.
- **Can I Get My Permit Online?** - No. Permits are issued in-person, no more than one day in advance.
- **How Do I Keep Food Safe?** - You can use one of the park's Bear Resistant Food Containers for free. All food, toiletries, and garbage must be stored in it.
- **Can I Buy a Map?** - Relevant topographic maps may be purchased. It is strongly recommended that you purchase a map before starting your trip.

Most backpacking trips start with a bus ride to your starting location. Here is what you need to know before getting your bus ticket.

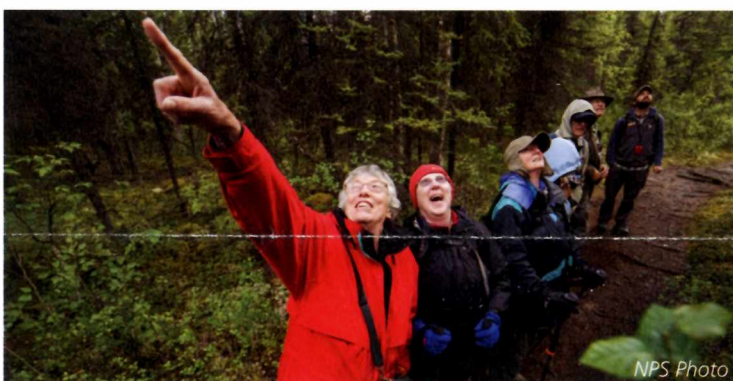
- **Where Can I Purchase a Bus Ticket?** - Tickets can be purchased at the Denali Bus Depot (Wilderness Access Center) and the Riley Creek Mercantile.
- **What Bus Ticket Do I Need?** - Purchase a Camper Bus ticket. Only backpackers or campground-users can buy tickets for camper buses. You must present a backcountry permit or campground permit to be able to purchase this ticket.
- **Where Should I Park My Car?** - Those staying in a campground beyond Mile 15 should park in overnight parking located at the Riley Creek Day-Use Area. Backpackers may park overnight at the Denali Visitor Center. There is no overnight parking at the Denali Bus Depot (Wilderness Access Center).
- **Where Does the Bus Pick Up?** - You can get on your bus at the Riley Creek Campground Bus Stop, the Denali Bus Depot (Wilderness Access Center) or Denali Visitor Center. Try to arrive 15 minutes before your departure.

Trail Maps



Hiking on a Trail

Learn more at [go.nps.gov/DenaliHiking](https://www.nps.gov/DenaliHiking)



Frontcountry Trails			
Trail	Difficulty	Elevation	Distance
Horseshoe Lake Trail	Moderate	250 ft (76 m)	3.2 miles (5.1 km) Round-trip*
Mt. Healy Overlook Trail	Strenuous	1,700 ft (518 m)	2.7 miles (4.3 km) One-way*
Taiga Trail	Moderate	75 ft (23 m)	~1 mile (1.5 km) One-way*
McKinley Station Trail	Moderate	100 ft (30 m)	1.6 miles (2.6 km) One-way*
Rock Creek Trail	Moderate	400 ft (122 m)	2.4 miles (3.8 km) One-way*
Roadside Trail	Moderate	350 ft (106 m)	1.8 miles (2.9 km) One-way*
Bike Path &	Easy	150 ft (45 m)	1.7 miles (2.7 km) One-way*
Triple Lakes Trail	Strenuous	1,000 ft (305 m)	9.5 miles (15.3 km) One-way*
Spruce Forest Loop &	Easy	Negligible	0.15 miles (.24 km) Round-trip*

Savage River Trails (Mile 15)			
Trail	Difficulty	Elevation	Distance
Savage Alpine Trail	Strenuous	1,500 ft (457m)	4 miles (6.4 km) One-way
Mountain Vista Trail &	Easy	50 ft (15m)	0.6 miles (1 km) Round-trip
Savage Cabin Loop &	Easy	50 ft (15 m)	0.8 mile (1.3 km) Round-trip
Savage River Loop	Moderate	Negligible	2 miles (3.2 km) Round-trip

*Distance is measured from the Denali Visitor Center

Day Hikes Off-Trail

Learn more at [go.nps.gov/DenaliHiking](https://www.nps.gov/DenaliHiking)

Information and Safety

The idea of hiking in the wilderness, with no trail to follow, excites some hikers and confuses or intimidates others. However, Denali's bus system can make trail-less hiking more approachable than it may seem at first.

Plan Ahead - Before setting out for your hike, read the entire "Plan Ahead" section of this guide. It provides information about wildlife safety and leave no trace practices. It also gives information about park regulations.

Where to Hike - Every person wants something slightly different out of their day hike. A good strategy is to take an

early transit bus into the park, traveling to either Eielson Visitor Center or Toklat River, and scout the terrain from the park road. On your return towards the park entrance, you can tell your driver to let you off at whatever area looked most appealing.

Ending Your Hike - After your hike, return to the park road and wave down any passing transit bus that is heading in the direction you want to go. If they have room they will pick you up. While uncommon, it is wise to be prepared to wait up to an hour for a bus that has room. Download a bus schedule at [go.nps.gov/DenaliTransit](https://www.nps.gov/DenaliTransit) to know when to expect buses to pass. Tan tour buses will not stop to pick up hikers.

Cycling

Learn more at [go.nps.gov/BikeDenali](https://www.nps.gov/BikeDenali)



Information and Safety

Where to Ride - Cyclists may ride on roadways, parking areas, campground loops, and the designated Bike Path.

Traffic - Travel single file, keep to the right, and comply with traffic regulations.

Transporting Your Bike - Bicycles can be transported for free on all transit buses or on the Savage River Shuttle bus (space is limited to two bikes per bus). Check availability or make reservations at the Denali Bus Depot (Wilderness Access Center) or www.reservedenali.com.

Bike Camping - Bike Camping is shorthand for backpacking and cycling in one adventure. Bike campers must obtain a free backcountry permit. If you're leaving your bike overnight, you must tag it with contact information and carry it off the road.

Terrain - In a trail-less wilderness, it is important to look at the terrain you're planning to cross.

- River Bars:** Hiking on gravel river bars is a great option if you are nervous about hiking off-trail. River bars are simple to navigate and make it easier to see wildlife.
- Bushwhacking:** Brushy tundra will slow your travel. Tall plants also make it difficult to see wildlife. While bushwhacking, stay alert and make lots of noise.
- River Crossings:** If you plan on crossing a river, know how to cross safely. The crossing point should be wide and braided. Unclip pack straps and scan downstream for where you may wind up if you take a fall.

Where to Store Your Bike - Bike racks are available at campgrounds (except Wonder Lake Campground), rest areas, and visitor centers. If you go day hiking along the park road or bike camping, carry your bike 25 yards (23 m) from the roadway and hide it from view.

Wildlife Safety While Biking

- Food and Scented Items:** Do not leave food or scented items unattended on your bicycle.
- Don't Try to Outride a Bear:** If a bear or wolf is on your route, do not try to outride it. Stop and dismount. Keep all your gear with you and back away slowly. Wait for the animal to move away. If there is a vehicle nearby, use it as a barrier between the animal and yourself. Carry bear spray and keep it accessible and ready to use.

Denali Park Road - Elevation Contour

