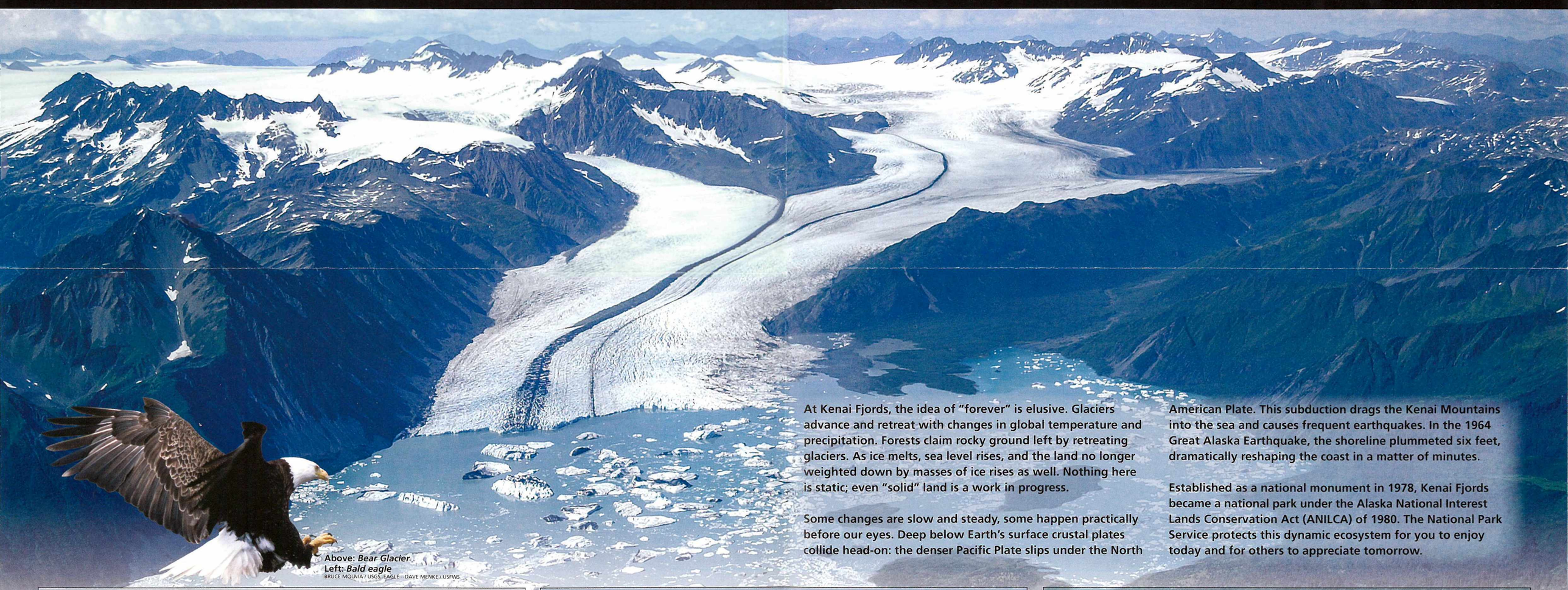
Kenai Fjords

Kenai Fjords National Park
Alaska

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Above: *Bear Glacier.*
Left: *Bald eagle*
BRUCE MOLNIA / USGS, EAGLE—DAVE MENKE / USFWS

At Kenai Fjords, the idea of "forever" is elusive. Glaciers advance and retreat with changes in global temperature and precipitation. Forests claim rocky ground left by retreating glaciers. As ice melts, sea level rises, and the land no longer weighted down by masses of ice rises as well. Nothing here is static; even "solid" land is a work in progress.

Some changes are slow and steady, some happen practically before our eyes. Deep below Earth's surface crustal plates collide head-on: the denser Pacific Plate slips under the North American Plate. This subduction drags the Kenai Mountains into the sea and causes frequent earthquakes. In the 1964 Great Alaska Earthquake, the shoreline plummeted six feet, dramatically reshaping the coast in a matter of minutes.

Established as a national monument in 1978, Kenai Fjords became a national park under the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) of 1980. The National Park Service protects this dynamic ecosystem for you to enjoy today and for others to appreciate tomorrow.

Coastal Rainforest

You might be surprised to find so much greenery in this otherwise icy place. Until about 200 years ago, much of what is now green was covered by ice. As the glaciers retreated—and continue to retreat—lush temperate rainforest has taken hold.

Between the icefield and the fjords, the stages of plant succession are ongoing. Mosses, lichens, lupine, and fireweed are the first to colonize glacial till. Black cottonwoods, Sitka alders, and several species of willows mark the middle stage of this progression. Eventually pioneer species give way to conifers like Sitka spruce and mountain hemlock. These giants of the temperate rainforest create a canopy for shade-loving ferns, shrubs, and mosses.

Each stage of plant succession creates habitat for different animals. Mountain goats pick their way on precipitous slopes. Moose browse hedges of willow and alder. You can see results of their foraging along trails. Bears—black and brown—search for grasses and berries, but also feed on salmon and carrion. Forest dwellers include wolverines, marmots, beavers, snowshoe hares, and many others.

From left: ***black bear; hiker and fireweed along Harding Icefield trail; glacier-carved landscape, coastal rainforest, and fjord.***
FROM LEFT: PAIGE GALAMARI / NPS; © RON NIEBRUGGE / ACCENT ALASKA; © QT LUONG / TERRAGALLERIA







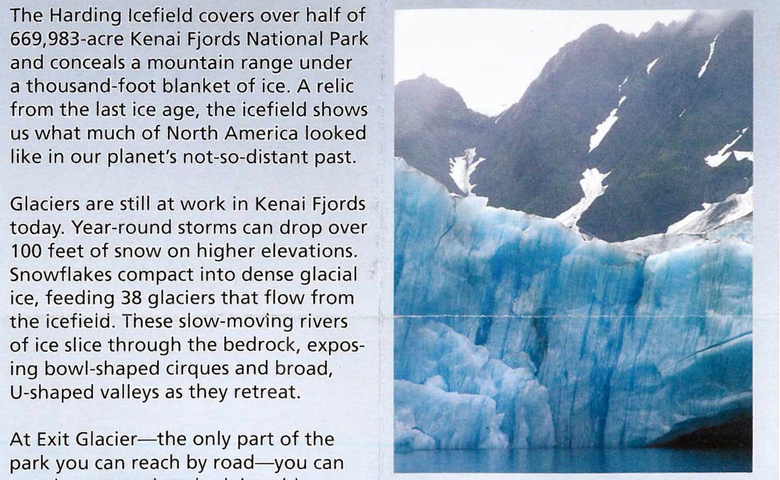
Rivers of Ice

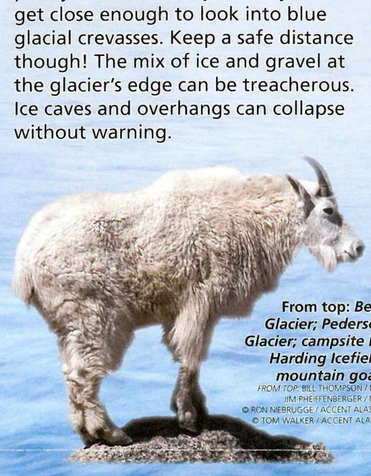


The Harding Icefield covers over half of 669,983-acre Kenai Fjords National Park and conceals a mountain range under a thousand-foot blanket of ice. A relic from the last ice age, the icefield shows us what much of North America looked like in our planet's not-so-distant past.

Glaciers are still at work in Kenai Fjords today. Year-round storms can drop over 100 feet of snow on higher elevations. Snowflakes compact into dense glacial ice, feeding 38 glaciers that flow from the icefield. These slow-moving rivers of ice slice through the bedrock, exposing bowl-shaped cirques and broad, U-shaped valleys as they retreat.

At Exit Glacier—the only part of the park you can reach by road—you can get close enough to look into blue glacial crevasses. Keep a safe distance though! The mix of ice and gravel at the glacier's edge can be treacherous. Ice caves and overhangs can collapse without warning.





From top: ***Bear Glacier; Pedersen Glacier; campsite by Harding Icefield; mountain goat.***
FROM TOP: BILL THOMPSON / NPS; JIM RHEITENBERGER / NPS; © RON NIEBRUGGE / ACCENT ALASKA; © TOM WALKER / ACCENT ALASKA

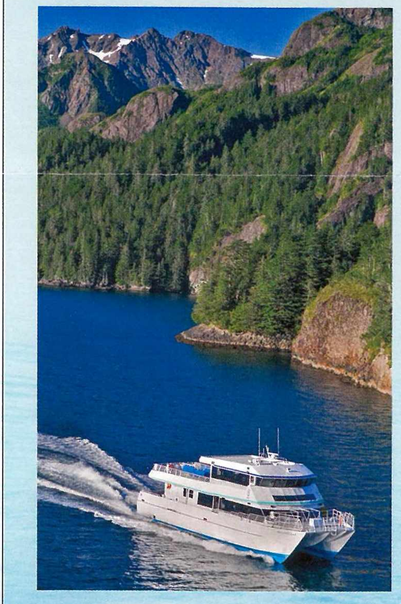
Glacial Fjords

Deep, glacier-scoured valleys fill with sea water to create the fjords. Massive icebergs crash from tidewater glaciers into the sea, adding fresh water and nutrients to the cold ocean. This mixture, further energized by long Alaskan summer days, creates one of the most productive ecosystems on Earth.

Kenai Fjords provides habitat for at least 191 species of birds. The black oystercatcher spends most of its time feeding in the rich intertidal zone. Tufted and horned puffins nest in rock crevices along the coast. Bald eagles patrol the waters in search of salmon and other fish.

The park was established in part to protect marine mammals. The waters around Kenai Fjords provide habitat for several threatened or endangered species including humpback, sei, and gray whales and the Steller sea lion.

The orca—"killer whale"—is easy to recognize with its large dorsal fin and white markings. Though you can't tell by looking, there are three different kinds of orcas in these waters: residents, transients, and offshore. Their diets range from fish to other marine mammals, including whales and sharks.



From left: ***Tour boat in fjord; horned puffins; sea otter; orcas.***
FROM LEFT: © RON NIEBRUGGE; © DONNA DEWHURST; © KEVIN SCHAFER; ALL PHOTOS: ACCENT ALASKA



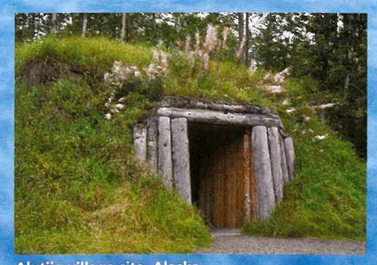




At Home in Kenai Fjords

The oldest documented inhabitants of the Kenai Fjords area were the Sugpiaq, commonly known as the Alutiiq. Coastal hunters and gatherers, the Alutiiq subsisted on marine and land mammals, fish, birds, and a variety of edible plants. They lived in permanent villages and used outlying hunting and fishing camps seasonally. Today some of their descendants live in coastal fishing communities nearby.

Russian fur traders arrived in the late 1700s, followed by other Europeans and Americans in search of wealth. The 1800s and early 1900s saw commercial fisheries, homesteaders, and gold-seekers. American painter Rockwell Kent lived and worked here 1918–19. Today visitors from all over the world come to marvel at the scenery and wildlife in this setting where mountains, ice, and ocean meet.



Alutiiq village site, Alaska Native Heritage Center
ABOVE: © ERIN ERKUN
BACKGROUND: © WAYDE CARROLL / ACCENT ALASKA

Get Set to Explore Kenai Fjords

VISITOR INFORMATION
The visitor center in Seward has exhibits, films, maps, publications, and information. Open daily in summer. The Exit Glacier Nature Center offers exhibits, maps, publications, information, and ranger-led hikes in summer. *See map below for more about Exit Glacier.*

The nonprofit Alaska Geographic Association sells detailed maps and publications at the visitor and nature centers.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO
In summer boat tours travel along the coast. You may see calving glaciers, seabirds, and marine mammals.

Boat charters offer overnight fjord trips and fishing trips to the fjords and Resurrection Bay.

Authorized commercial guide services offer camping, fishing, and kayaking experiences. Air charters from Seward or Homer fly over the coast for sightseeing and access to the fjords.

ACCOMMODATIONS
Seward offers visitor services and campgrounds. Exit Glacier has walk-in, summer-use campsites. Two summer-use, backcountry, public-use cabins in the fjords at Holgate Arm and Aialik Bay can be reached by boat, kayak, or float plane. In winter, a public-use cabin at Exit Glacier is available. Public-use cabins have a three-day stay limit. Reservations are first-come, first-served, starting in January. Contact: Alaska Public Lands Information Center, 605 West Fourth Ave., Suite 105, Anchorage, AK 99501; 866-869-6887.

IN THE BACKCOUNTRY
You need to be in good physical condition, use proper equipment, and take reasonable precautions. If you are planning a backcountry trip with no guide, get current, specific information from the park staff before setting out.

On the Harding Icefield, you must prepare for sudden storms, blinding sunlight, high winds, and extreme changes in temperature. At Exit Glacier in winter you may face deep snow and cold temperatures. Know hypothermia symptoms and their treatment.

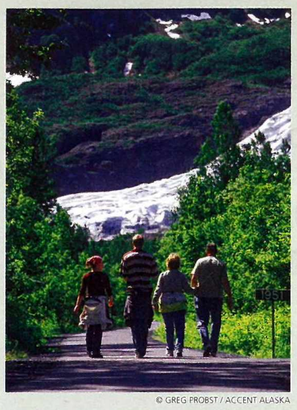
STAY SAFE, PROTECT THE PARK
Hunting and Fishing All lands and waters in the national park are closed to hunting and trapping. Alaska state fishing licenses are required.

Boating All federal and state boating regulations apply. A seaworthy craft and rough-water boating experience are absolutely necessary. Know your boat and its operation. Carry a maritime radio, signal equipment, and a survival kit that includes shelter, warm clothing, and extra food. Icy waters can lead to hypothermia and death in minutes. File a float plan with a responsible person.

Kayak travel in the fjords is recommended only for experienced paddlers because of rough seas and strong tidal currents. Glaciers calve without warning, posing extreme danger from falling ice and cresting waves. Never approach within ¼ mile of a tidewater glacier. Although very experienced paddlers can travel to the fjords from Seward, most kayakers arrange charter boat drop-offs and pick-ups.

Pets At Exit Glacier, dogs are allowed only in the parking lot, on a leash no longer than six feet. Dogs (other than service animals) are not permitted on park beaches or trails.

Camping and Parking Campers in the tents-only campground must camp in established sites. There is no overflow camping. Sleeping in vehicles is prohibited.



© GREG PROBST / ACCENT ALASKA

Wildlife Bear and moose are commonly seen in the park. Treat them with respect for your safety and theirs. Do not approach, disturb, or feed wildlife. Travel in groups and make noise while hiking to avoid surprising animals. Do not take pets on trails or beaches. In the backcountry, carry and know how to use bear pepper spray. Ask staff about wildlife safety, and report encounters with bear or moose.

To minimize bear encounters in the campground, cooking is permitted only at the central cooking area. Food must be secured in the bear-proof storage locker provided. Proper food storage is mandatory in the park. All food or anything that contains food odors, including fishing catch, garbage, containers, and utensils, must be stored out of reach. Ask park staff or check our website for information.

Emergencies
Seward area: call 911
On the coast: call the Coast Guard, Marine Channel 16. Rangers patrol Nuka and Aialik bays in summer; Marine Channel 16.

MORE INFORMATION
Kenai Fjords National Park
PO Box 1727
Seward, AK 99664
907-422-0500
www.nps.gov/kefj

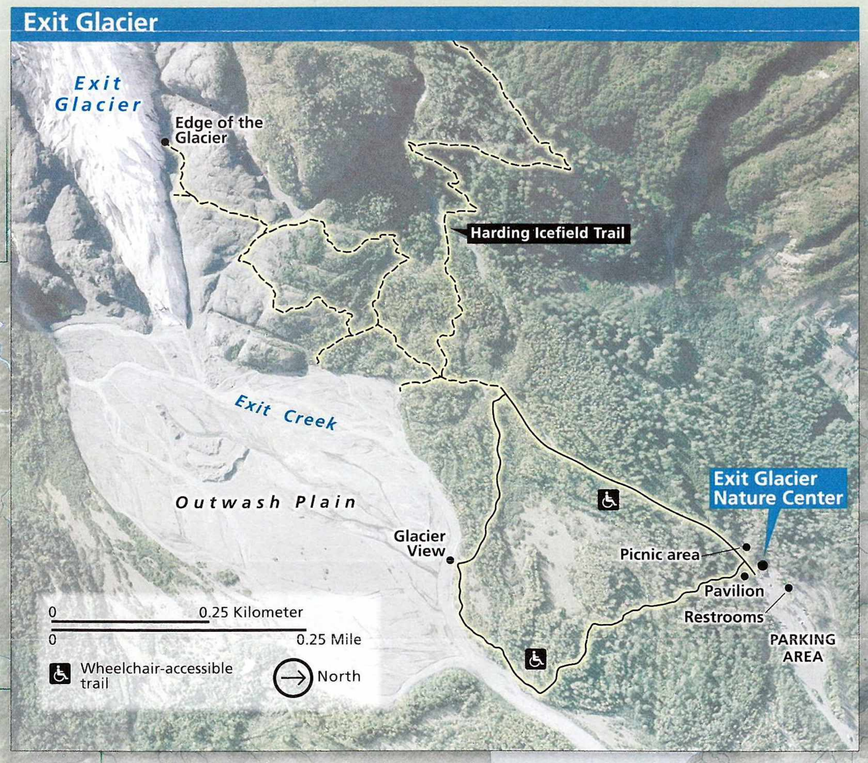
Kenai Fjords National Park is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities, visit www.nps.gov.

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, and other social media.

National Park Foundation
Join the park community.
www.nationalparks.org

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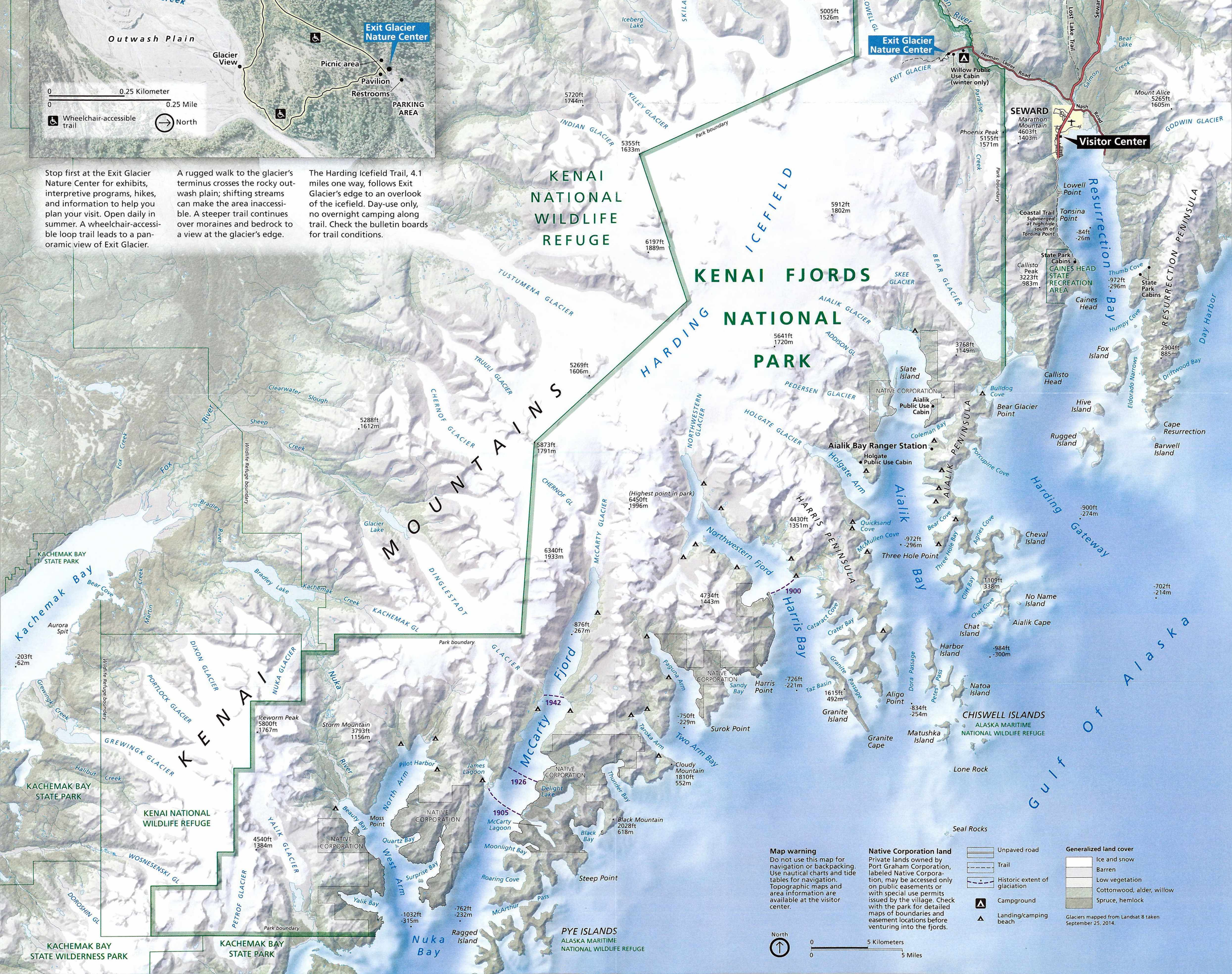
Exit Glacier



Stop first at the Exit Glacier Nature Center for exhibits, interpretive programs, hikes, and information to help you plan your visit. Open daily in summer. A wheelchair-accessible loop trail leads to a panoramic view of Exit Glacier.

A rugged walk to the glacier's terminus crosses the rocky outwash plain; shifting streams can make the area inaccessible. A steeper trail continues over moraines and bedrock to a view at the glacier's edge.

The Harding Icefield Trail, 4.1 miles one way, follows Exit Glacier's edge to an overlook of the icefield. Day-use only, no overnight camping along trail. Check the bulletin boards for trail conditions.



Map warning
Do not use this map for navigation or backpacking. Use nautical charts and tide tables for navigation. Topographic maps and area information are available at the visitor center.

Native Corporation land
Private lands owned by Port Graham Corporation, labeled Native Corporation, may be accessed only on public easements or with special use permits issued by the village. Check with the park for detailed maps of boundaries and easement locations before venturing into the fjords.

Unpaved road
Trail
Historic extent of glaciation
Campground
Landing/camping beach

Generalized land cover
Ice and snow
Barren
Low vegetation
Cottonwood, alder, willow
Spruce, hemlock

Glaciers mapped from Landsat 8 taken September 25, 2014.

North
0 5 Kilometers
0 5 Miles