



The Alaska and Aleutian ranges join here. Between them stand the awesome Chigmit Mountains,

formed by violent earth movement and sculpted by glaciers.



Backpacking, river running, and fishing are the major summer-season activities.



Dall sheep graze diminutive plant species adapted to withstand severe conditions. Rams develop

curved horns, battering rams when mating season comes.



Storm clouds gather over lower Twin Lake. In the foreground are richly

hued arctic tundra and stands of boreal spruce forest.



These Dena'ina Indians were photographed at the village of Kijik on Lake Clark in 1902.



Caribou of both sexes grow antlers. Caribou are the only members of the deer family for which that

is true. Nomads of the north, caribou travel incessantly, usually in groups.

## Wild, Spectacular Scenic Diversity

Cover photo: Island Cove above Portage Creek, Lake Clark, NPS Photo

Earth's deep time and raw newness live side by side at Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. Coastal cliffs on Cook Inlet hold fossil remnants of 150 million years of sea life. But, 10,000 feet above them two active, snow-clad volcanoes—Iliamna and Redoubt—can spew out recycled Earth crust as new land surface. Mountain glaciers daily pluck and etch the spectacular scenery here where mountains of the Alaska and Aleutian ranges join. An awesome, jagged array, the park's Chigmit Mountains record centuries and millennia of crustal uplift, intrusion, earthquakes, volcanism, and glacial gouging, scouring, and mounding. Continuously inhabited since early prehistoric times, this region nevertheless remains wild and sparsely populated by humans. Its several ecosystems suggest many diverse regions across Alaska. Aircraft provide primary access, but recreation opportunities are varied and plentiful.

The eastern flank of the Chigmits descends rapidly to Cook Inlet. Rivers cascade dramatically to the sea through forests of Sitka and white spruce. Marshes and outwash plains are nesting places for swans and

other waterfowl. The rocky cliffs in and next to the park provide rookeries for puffins, cormorants, kittiwakes, and other seabirds. Seals and whales are sometimes seen off shore. The western flank of the Chigmits descends through tundra-covered foothills to boreal forest. Spectacular lakes and wild rivers fill the valleys, flowing southwestward to Bristol Bay. Fish include five species of salmon, rainbow trout, Dolly Varden, lake trout, northern pike, and arctic grayling. Dall sheep, caribou, and moose forage the area. Brown and black bear are present. So are wolves, lynx, foxes, and other mammals.

This western side of the park and preserve provides many recreational opportunities. Anglers find trophy fish, hikers explore high tundra slopes, campers find inspirational lakeshore sites, and river runners thrill to the Tlikakila, Mulchatna, or Chilikadrotna wild rivers. This vast area also may be harsh. Planning and preparing for a wilderness experience is critical to the enjoyment of the area in all weather conditions: wind, rain, snow, and sunshine.

Winter is long—October through April. In some places the sun does not rise above the peaks for several months. A fresh snow can veil the area or winter winds may uncover a landscape of subtle brown highlighted by ice-blue frozen lakes. Break-up in spring can immobilize the area as ice melts, and frozen ground turns to mud. Summer is the time of life as caribou calve, buds turn to leaves, mosquitoes hatch, and salmon return to spawn. Clouds often cap the Chigmit Mountains and can close the passes to aircraft. Precipitation is about a third less on the west side, but everywhere rain produces a summer display of flowers. Fireweed, lupine, blueberry, and bearberry abound. In autumn the burgundy-hued tundra blankets the slopes around aptly named Turquoise Lake. A light dusting of snow over the yellow birch and red bearberry produces a truly rare visual pleasure.

The area has been occupied since prehistoric times, and archeological investigations are continuing to trace early settlement that is Alaska's largest single Athabascan site. Dena'ina Indians lived in villages at Kijik

and Old Village until the early 1900s, when they moved to Nondalton and other sites. Russian explorers, traders, and missionaries began traversing the region in the 1790s. Lake Clark's rivers and lakes are part of the world's most productive spawning and rearing habitat for sockeye salmon. The salmon industry began attracting American and foreign settlers in the early 1900s. Around Lake Clark most were trappers and miners. The economy is now based on subsistence lifestyles, commercial fishing, and recreation.

Lake Clark National Park and Preserve was established in 1980 to preserve its wilderness values and related recreational opportunities. The park contains some 2.6 million acres; the preserve contains 1.4 million acres. Congress has designated 2.4 million acres of the total for preservation as wilderness.

### Logistics

Access to the Lake Clark area is almost exclusively by small aircraft landing on its many lakes. Planes with wheels land on open beaches, gravel bars, or

private airstrips in or near the park. There is no highway access to the park and preserve. A one to two-hour flight from Anchorage, Kenai, or Homer gives access to most of the park and preserve. Scheduled commercial flights between Anchorage and Iliamna, 30 miles outside

the boundary, also provide access.

Field headquarters for the park and preserve is at Port Alsworth. There are no other National Park Service facilities available in the park and preserve.

### Information

For information about the area, topographic maps, guides, and private accommodations in or near the park, contact the Field Office, Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, General Delivery, Port Alsworth, AK 99653-9999; 907-781-2218.

For other information contact: Superintendent, Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, 4230 University Drive, Suite 311, Anchorage, AK 99508-4626; 907-271-3751; or [www.nps.gov/lacp](http://www.nps.gov/lacp) on the Internet.

### What to See and Do

Summer-season activities in the Lake Clark area for the most part center around backpacking, river running, and fishing. For all activities you must either arrive fully self-sufficient or make arrangements in advance with a guide, outfitter, or lodge operator. There are no trails in the park or preserve, but the western foothills are ideal for backpacking on open, relatively dry tundra. The mountains are steep, rugged, and subject to year-round inclement weather. The lowlands can be boggy, wet tundra punctuated by maddening tangles of alder.

A float trip on any of the three designated wild rivers or other rivers in the area can be spectacular. Commercial float trips, fly-out fishing, and flight-seeing may be arranged.

Sport hunting is permitted in the preserve under federal and State of Alaska regulations. The park is closed to sport hunting.

### Weather

Both continental and maritime elements influence the park's eastern region near Cook Inlet. For June through August, temperatures average between 50° and 65°F, with considerable precipitation. The park's interior—west of the Chigmit Mountains—and the preserve are warmer and drier in summer. Temperatures occasionally reach 80°F. Frost and snow can occur in September and October—and even in mid-summer you should anticipate evening frost. Snow permitting, March and early April are best for crosscountry skiing. From mid-April to late May thawing streams

and lakes make all travel difficult and dangerous. Strong winds—severe in and near mountain passes—can occur at any time. Winter temperatures in the interior can plummet to -40°F, and occasionally lower.

### Precautions

This is a vast area subject to harsh weather, high winds, and rain. Guard against hypothermia.

Animals are wild and must be respected. Both moose and brown bears are present. Information on handling wildlife encounters is available at the National Park Service office. Please review the brochures before traveling in the backcountry.

Mosquitoes and biting flies may make a headnet and/or repellent necessary. All water for drinking purposes should be boiled for one minute before use. You should know—and test—your gear before

you arrive, and you must possess good backcountry skills for wilderness survival. For your safety leave your itinerary with someone and notify that person on completion of your trip.

Winter travel can only be recommended to those experienced at cold-weather camping and survival techniques.

Special Note: Local residents carry on the subsistence way of life in the national park and preserve, with camps, fishnets, and other equipment. Please be courteous and respect private property.

### Guides, Outfitting, and Supplies

For the widest selection of goods, plan to outfit yourself in Kenai, Homer, or Anchorage. The stores in Iliamna and Nondalton offer only limited foodstuffs, equipment, and clothing—and are accessible only by air.

Some merchants and lodge operators along the coast, in Nondalton and Iliamna, and on Lake Clark offer rooms, cabins, and meals, as well as guiding and outfitting services. Make arrangements well in advance. Air and boat charter operators may also provide guides and rental equipment. For a list of businesses licensed to

operate in the area, contact the park superintendent.

In the park and preserve you are on your own and dependent on your own resources. Quality clothing (synthetic pile is recommended), rain gear, and good insect repellent are essential. Tents should have rain flies, mosquito netting, and be designed to withstand strong winds. Always carry emergency food rations because bad weather can delay your scheduled pickup.

### Map Warning

Do not use this map for backpacking or navigation. The following U.S. Geological Survey topographic maps cover the park and preserve: Lime Hills, Lake Clark, Iliamna, Kenai, Seldovia, and Tyonek.

**Private Lands**  
Tracts of private land—both small and large—lie in and next to parklands here. These are not open to public use or to travel without owner permission. Please observe common courtesies and respect private property.

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# Lake Clark

Lake Clark National Park  
Lake Clark National Preserve  
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