# Area History

Once a bear and caribou hunting ground of the Native Dena'ina people, this slice of wilderness is blessed with striking views of a distant slab of granitic pluton that is the tallest mountain in North America. Established in 1970, Denali State Park encompasses 325,240 acres of land between the Talkeetna Mountains and the Alaska Range.

Although Denali itself peaks more than 24 miles away from the boundary of the park, Denali State Park's unique vantage allows you to see the mountain's dominating bulk in relation to the surrounding landscape, and offers commanding views of the Alaska Range.

Denali is known to the Dena'ina as *Dahelay* Ka'a, and to the Aleuts as Tralieka. The mountain's unsurpassed height on Alaska's landscape marks it with special significance to many Native cultures.

K'esugi Ridge, in Dena'ina means "Ancient One" and was used as caribou hunting grounds. The K'esugi Ken Campground is named after the "low ridge south of K'esugi" that we know today as Curry Ridge.



### For More Information Alaska State Parks Matanuska-Susitna/Copper Basin Area Office 7278 E. Bogard Road Wasilla, AK 99654 (907)745-3975

Welcome to

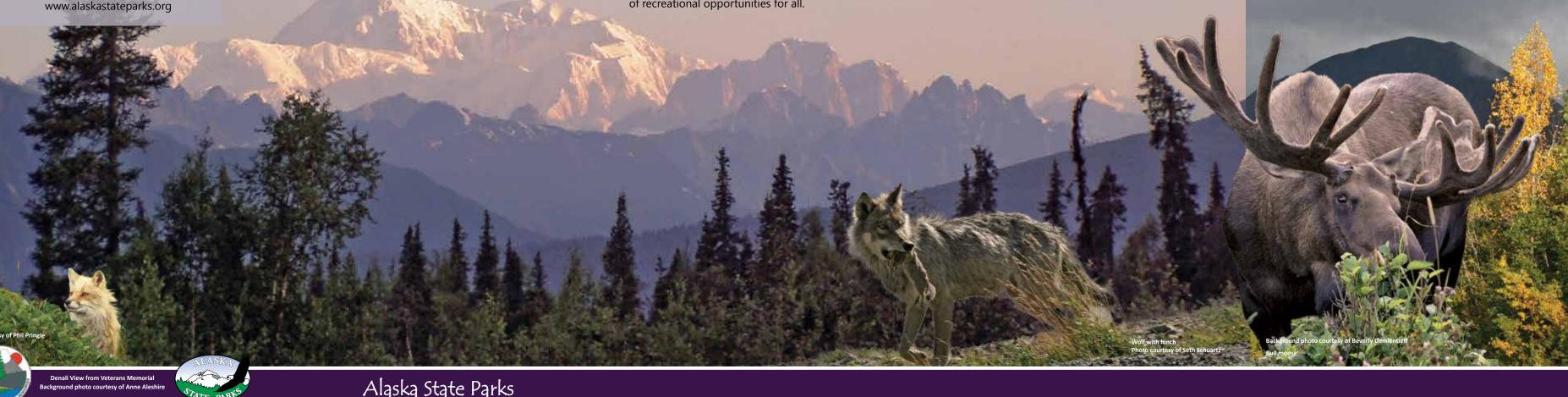
## Welcome

With the Talkeetna Mountains to the east and the Alaska Range to the west, Denali State Park lays claim to some of the most magnificent views in Alaska. The park is roughly divided in half by the George Parks Highway National Scenic Byway, allowing for breathtaking vistas along the road and easy access to the backcountry. From kayaking the white waters of the Chulitna River to cross-country skiing and snowmachining, Denali State Park offers a wide range of recreational opportunities for all.

Denali, "The High One," looms large and proud on the horizon throughout the park. At 20,320 feet, the peak dominates the towering Alaska Range and is the highest point in North America. Whether you want to spy Denali through the clouds from a drive-in campsite, or hike an alpine ridge in search of that perfect 360° view of Interior Alaska, Denali State Park offers unmatched perspectives of the mountain that serves as its namesake.

# Denali or McKinley?

Until August 30, 2015, the official name for the peak, according to the U.S. Board of Geographic Names, was Mt. McKinley, in honor of William McKinley, the 25th president of the United States. The mountain's original name (and the one preferred by Alaskans) is Denali, which translates from Koyukon as "The High One." Starting in 1975, the Alaska State Legislature requested to change the name back to Denali, but it was blocked by representatives from McKinley's home district in Ohio. After a 40-year procedural stalemate, the mountain is officially known again as Denali.



# Highlights

Scenic Viewpoints and Camping

Perhaps the best roadside view of the Alaska Range is from the Denali View South wayside in Denali State Park. Interpretive panels familiarize visitors with the peaks of the Alaska Range, and nine drive-in campsites offer the chance to wait out the weather for that perfectly clear day. Denali View North offers 20 drive-in camping spots and equally gorgeous views. The Lower Troublesome Creek Campground also provides 20 campsites and is located near the Chulitna River.

The Byers Lake Campground, located at the foot of K'esugi Ridge, has 73 campsites and is a great place to relax and take in spectacular views of the lake. The Lakeshore Campground is across the water, about two miles from the loop trailhead, and offers six secluded campsites.



Winter camping in Denali State Park Photo courtesy of Jason Nielsen

### Public-Use Cabins

Denali State Park has three public-use cabins around Byers Lake. All cabins are equipped with a wood stove, wood bunks, a picnic table, a fire ring, and outhouses. Cabin 3 is wired for electricity, but you'll have to pack in a generator. To reserve a cabin, go to www.alaskastateparks.org.

Alaska Veterans Memorial

Denali State Park Visitors Center

and Gift Shop

Mile 147.1 George Parks Highway



### Chulitna River

Braiding through the heart of the park, the Chulitna River is a glacially fed, wild river that offers breathtaking views of the Susitna valley, Alaska Range and Tokosha Mountains. Rafting is the most popular way to travel the Chulitna, and rafters can access the East Fork of the Chulitna River near milepost 186, north of the park. The East Fork's water levels can be extremely high or low at times.

There is no easy river access in the southern end of the park. The river can be accessed beneath the bridge at milepost 132 on the north side of the river. However, there is no public access up or downstream from the bridge. Remain within the highway right-of-way and climb a steep riverbank under the bridge to reach the highway. There is a small parking area just north of the bridge on the west side of the highway. The next access is in Talkeetna approximately 4.5 hours downstream.

Open fires are only allowed on gravel bars.

### **Hunting and Trapping**

The park is open to hunting and trapping. Hunters should consult with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game regarding applicable hunting rules and regulations. Weapons may not be discharged within one-half mile of a developed facility and the trail around Byers Lake, or within a quarter mile of the Parks Highway between mile 132 and 170.

### Alaska Veterans Memorial

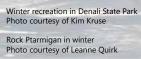
This multi-war memorial honors the Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard veterans of Alaska. Each branch is represented by a plaque that shares a short history of their contributions to Alaska. The small visitor information center and gift shop is generally open Memorial Day through Labor Day.



Create" Arts in the Parks event held at Byers Lake, August 2011







Winter Recreation

adequate.

Denali State Park offers plenty of reasons to visit

after the snow flies. You can enjoy backcountry

K'esugi and Curry ridges, or explore the park by

snowmachine or dog sled when snow depth is

If you enjoy speed in the cold, try the groomed

in the Peters Hills area. Be prepared for quickly

changing conditions, particularly if traveling on

tell someone where you are going. Visit:

www.alaskastateparks.org for snow reports.

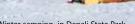
frozen waters. Take a friend along for the ride and

trails in and around the Tokositna River area, and

snowshoeing and cross-country skiing on



Many mammals, large and small, inhabit this land of mountains, valleys, streams, and lakes. The area's diverse habitat also makes it a haven for more than 130 bird species including majestic golden eagles and, the belles of the ball, elegant swans. Photographers, rejoice!



### Trails Descriptions

For more information on trails in Denali State Park, visit www.alaskastateparks.org.

### K'esugi Ridge Trail 1

Access: Little Coal Creek, Ermine Hill, and Cascade Trailheads

**Travel Means**: Foot

Distance: 22 miles from Little Coal Creek to Cascade Trail Junction (an additional two to four miles are

required to reach the ridge)

**Elevation Gain:** 2,000 feet (north to south)

The K'esugi trail system traces the K'esugi Ridge and is the centerpiece of the park, with miles of rolling alpine terrain offering incredible views of Denali's south face and the heart of the Alaska Range. However, this is challenging country and it is imperative that you come equipped with a map and compass, and know how to use them. You should also be prepared to turn around or hunker down and wait out poor weather. It is best to traverse the trail from north to south and the best time to hike the trail is between late June and mid-September.

The northern end of the K'esugi Ridge Trail is the high point of the trail at 3,550 feet elevation. The route traces the top of the ridge and is exposed to the elements, but the 360° views of the Alaska Range and Talkeetna Mountains on a clear day are worth the climb. After the Ermine Hill Junction, the path drops about 900 feet before ascending past Skinny Lake to the 2,970-foot rounded summit of Golog. The rolling landscape offers good camping and jaw-dropping views of the peaks across the valley. The only restroom and designated campsite along the route is at Skinny Lake. If you plan to descend to Byers Lake, it's worth hiking past the junction to check out Tarn Point, a 2,880-foot scenic lookout about a mile down the trail.

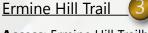
### Little Coal Creek Trail



Access: Little Coal Creek Trailhead (mile 163.9)

**Travel Means:** Foot **Distance:** 3.3 miles one way Elevation Gain: 2,200 feet

The trail ascends parallel Little Coal Creek up to the northern end of the K'esugi Ridge Trail. This is the place to start if you want to hike K'esugi Ridge in its entirety.



Access: Ermine Hill Trailhead (mile 156.5) **Travel Means:** Foot **Distance:** 3.7 miles Elevation Gain: 1,000 feet

This trail winds through the woods and over Giardia Creek (hint, hint) before ascending to the ridge in switchbacks. This route provides the easiest access to the K'esugi Ridge Trail.

### Cascade Trail 4



**Access:** Byers Lake Campground (mile 147) **Travel Means:** Foot

Distance: Over 2 miles one way Elevation Gain: 1,700 feet

Departing from the Byers Lake Loop Trail at the eastern end, this reconstructed trail ascends steeply past a tumbling waterfall and onto the ridge crest. Tarn Point, a popular viewpoint and day hike destination, can be found a mile down the trail to the west from the trail junction.

### Byers Lake Loop Trail 5



**Access:** Byers Lake Campground (mile 147) **Travel Means:** Foot

Distance: 5.3-mile loop **Elevation Gain:** <100 feet

This flat lakeside trail features spectacular views of Denali and provides access to three public-use cabins and campsites along the lake. Two bridges, one of them a long suspension bridge, assist hikers across the inlet stream and the outlet stream and offer views of spawning salmon in late July and early August. On the trails a short distance from the campground, an old cabin beckons photographers to capture its slow return to nature.

### Troublesome Creek Trail 6



Photo courtesy of Kyle Joly

Access: Upper Troublesome Creek Trailhead (mile 137.6)

**Travel Means:** Foot **Distance:** 11.68 miles to the junction of Cascade and K'esugi Ridge trails

**Elevation Gain: 2,150 feet** 

Troublesome Creek Trail is now re-opened after damage from a storm in 2006. Repairs are ongoing, but it is functional. The trail offers great views as it parallels Troublesome Creek up to timberline. When salmon are spawning in July and August, encounters with black and brown bears are likely. Hikers are encouraged to be "bear aware" during

### K'esugi Ken Campground

salmon season.



OPENING SOON! The K'esugi Ken Campground will have tent and RV camping, an interpretive center, trails, and two public-use cabins. It is the first phase of the proposed South Denali Visitor Center development to provide a wide range of recreational opportunities in the Curry Ridge region.

### Tokositna Flats Winter Trail



Access: Mile 121 or 131 Parks Highway Travel Means: Snowmachine, mushing Distance: 11 miles one way within the park, connecting with a network of winter trails south of the park

Elevation Gain: <200 feet

The Tokositna Flats Winter Trail is the northern end of the 100+ mile Susitna Valley winter trail system that originates at Big Lake. This 11-mile trail crosses the Tokositna River Flats and is only usable during the winter months. Although it is mostly used by snowmachiners, cross-country skiers and dog mushers also enjoy the trail.





Campground MP 137.2

Public-Use Cabin 1

Public-Use Cabin 2

Public-Use Cabin 3

Byers Lake

Remote Campsites

0.8 Kilometers

1 Miles

/isitor Center and Alaska

0.5

0.25

0 0.2 0.4



Snowmachine Trailhead MP 131.0

Tokositna River State Recreation Area

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Campground MP 135.4

### Blair Lake State Recreation Area







# <u>Legend</u>

Area Boundary

Indian River State Recreation Area HE HP 274 2

Bridge Hiking Trail

Trailhead P **Parking** 

Toilet

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Information

Scenic View

**Drinking Water** 

Public-Use Cabin

Interpretive Trail

Snowmachining

Cross-Country Skiing

Recreational Vehicle Camping

Δ Camping <del>||</del> Picnicking

Drinking water advisory: always purify 0 drinking water to avoid Giardiasis.

Be bear aware. Make noise to avoid surprising bears. For tips on safety in bear country, go to www.alaskabears.alaska.gov.

Outdoor Etiquette and Safety Tips

Always bring warm, rainproof gear; you

when you plan to return.

· Always tell someone where you're going and

can get hypothermia even in the middle of

Bear resistant food containers may be available at the Veterans Memorial Visitor Center at MP 147 of the Parks Highway. Call the area office at (907) 745-3975.

Please be careful to minimize your impacts in the backcountry. For tips on minimal impact camping go to www.lnt.org.

Backcountry chefs must bring a portable camp stove; open fires are prohibited in Denali State Park except on gravel bars.



Non-motorized Boat Launch

Dog Mushing



