

Cottonwood Creek Trail

Round Trip: 5.0 miles
Difficulty: Strenuous
Hiking Time: 4 to 6 hours

U.S.G.S Maps: Kenai B1
Elevation Gain: 2,200 feet
High Point: 2,200 feet



Trailhead: The trailhead can be reached only by boat or floatplane. The closest boat launch is at Upper Skilak Campground. Lower Skilak Campground provides additional boat access. The trailhead is on the south shore of Skilak Lake on the west side of Cottonwood Creek. Winds can develop suddenly without warning on Skilak Lake, making a lake crossing extremely rough and dangerous. If the lake is rough – STAY ON SHORE!

DESCRIPTION: Cottonwood Creek Trail provides quick access to alpine country above Skilak Lake. The trail is generally dry in the forest, but can be very wet just below timberline. The trail disappears in the alpine tundra and you are free to hike wherever you wish. Sturdy hiking shoes are recommended.

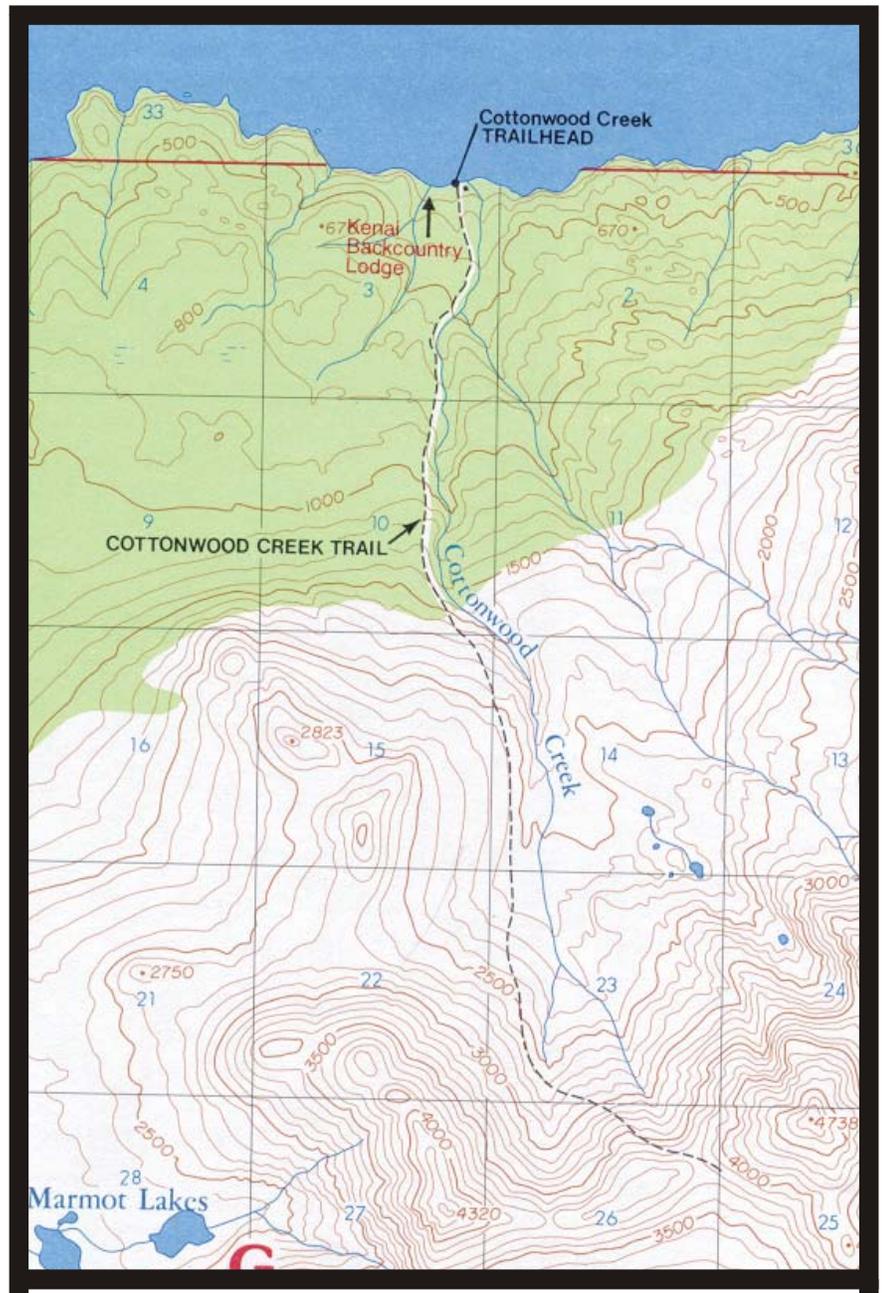
SCENIC VIEWS: Spectacular views of Skilak Lake and the surrounding mountains can be had above timberline. Mt. McKinley (Denali) can be seen to the North from above timberline on clear days.

CAMPING: There are no established campsites and few areas suitable for tents below timberline. However, suitable areas are available in the alpine tundra. Above timberline no firewood is available and backpacking stoves are a necessity. After snow melt little or no water is available.

FISHING: Fishing along Skilak Lake can be fair to good. Know the current fishing regulations BEFORE you go. No fishing is available along the trail.

OTHER ACTIVITIES: Berry picking can be good during late summer. This is also an excellent area to see wildlife. Look for Dall sheep, marmots, bears and various species of birds.

WINTER ACTIVITIES: The trail provides good snowshoeing opportunities. Avoid avalanche areas. Check with Kenai Refuge Headquarters BEFORE crossing Skilak Lake on the ice.



Each square = 1 mile