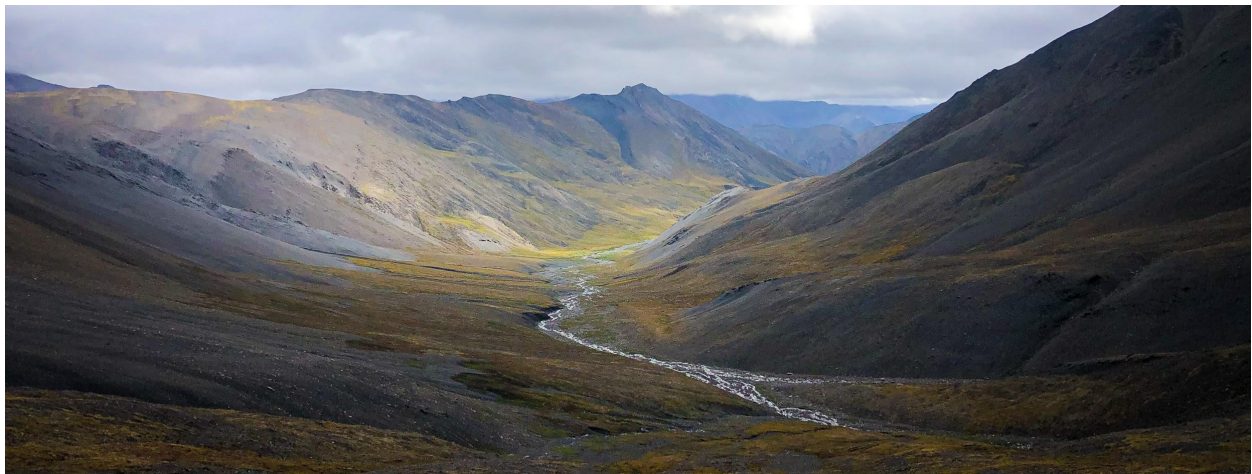


HEART OF THE BROOKS RANGE CABIN FLY-IN

GATES OF THE ARCTIC NATIONAL PARK

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ALASKA WILDLIFE ALLIANCE



EXPEDITION VISION

Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve, encompassing 8.4 million acres of roadless wilderness, lies entirely above the Arctic Circle, at the heart of the wild Brooks Range mountains. With the adjacent Noatak National Preserve and Kobuk Valley National Park, Gates of the Arctic comprises one of the world's largest parkland areas, a vast expanse of wilderness where humans have lived with the land for thousands of years. Herds of hundreds of thousands of caribou migrate through this landscape, while Dall sheep, grizzly bears, grey wolves, wolverines, lynxes and moose call this landscape home. While remote and wild, this area faces unprecedented threats, such as the proposed construction of the Ambler mining access road cutting through the southern end of the Preserve. Our expedition aims to encounter and relish

some of the Brooks Range's wild, challenging, spectacular landscapes while illuminating the complex pressures facing this region.

Flying into the heart of Gates of the Arctic, to a remote cabin at the Continental Divide, allows unique immersion in this very remote landscape. We've designed this expedition as a hospitable welcome to the Arctic, through using this simple but tasteful cabin as our base to get settled, before setting out on a several-day backpacking trip to the headwaters of the Nigu River, across the sweeping, treeless Arctic tundra. We'll fly out from a small lake near the headwaters of the Nigu. This expedition will be run as a partnership with the Alaska Wildlife Alliance, as an opportunity to learn more about the context of AWA's work, build community among supporters, and meet current staff members, at least one of whom will join the expedition.

EXPEDITION DETAILS

Key Points:

- Expedition begins and ends in Fairbanks, Alaska
- Hiking in the central Brooks Range, in Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve
- Access via substantial float plane fly-in, from Coldfoot on the Dalton Highway
- Fully off-trail hiking, entirely above treeline
- Notable hazards include grizzly bears, river crossings, and rockfall
- We'll ask participants to bring personal gear; [gear list here](#)
- Estimated pack weight: 15 - 20lbs (dayhikes); 25 - 30 lbs (backpack)
- Cost: \$5,000, including two lengthy float plane trips, travel up and down the Dalton Highway, four nights in a remote cabin, and all food, guiding and logistics

Expedition Overview

This expedition offers a **spectacular, approachable introduction to Arctic landscapes and travel**. We have the rare opportunity to use the Caribou Cabin, an inholding built by the Gaedeke family before the area became a national park, as our base for explorations and day hikes for the first half of our time together. These days, roaming the ridges and valleys at the headwaters of three major river systems, let us enjoy and adjust to off-trail hiking without the burden of a big backpack. Once we've gotten our footing, so to speak, we'll set off on a two-night backpacking trip to the headwaters of the Nigu River, letting us deepen our sense of place as we sleep in the tundra and cook looking out across the sweeping valleys.

Moments & Rhythms

Each day in the backcountry unfolds organically, but we tend to fall into certain rhythms, and make space for moments worth savoring. Given almost constant daylight, the exact timetable we fall into matters less than balancing efficiency and relaxation.

With the Caribou Cabin as our base, we'll have excellent flexibility to shape our schedule around the weather, wildlife, and the group's energies. The guide team will prepare a hot breakfast and fresh coffee, giving each group member the chance to spend a little time waking up and observing the spectacular surroundings at their leisure. After breakfast, we might gather for a stretching circle and map overview of where that day's hikes will travel, then perhaps pause for some minutes of silent reflection or journaling.

Hiking in two small pods offers a more intimate, fluid rhythm; the hours pass easily, alternating between expansive conversation, giddy laughter, and easy silence. Sometimes, group members will try their hand at off-trail route finding, feeling the flow state of fine-tuned micronavigation, while at other times, your leader will guide the group in picking a route. When we encounter a particularly appealing spot, we'll stop for snacks and views, discussing some element of Arctic ecology or sharing a joke.

Evenings at the cabin will offer time for reading, wildlife watching, or simply basking in the soft, endless Arctic daylight. There's a wonderful feeling of community and accomplishment as we share a warm, tasty dinner at the end of a solid day of hiking. Whether pesto pasta or burritos, delicious food nourishes our bodies and rejuvenates spirits. After dinner, we'll gather as a group to share conversation and reflection, usually facilitated by a group member, around a topic related to wilderness, environmental activism, or finding purpose. These evening circles have stood out as a highlight for past participants, offering a chance to delve deeper into exchange and peel back layers of understanding. We'll conclude the evening with a quick overview of the plan for tomorrow, and then transition into unstructured time in the spectacular, almost-constant Arctic daylight.

Once we start backpacking, our days will unfold a little differently, with more time spent on the nuances of camp craft. Our campsites are simply Xs on the map—spots where we suspect we'll find comfortable and scenic camping. Days will vary in length, but once we reach camp, we'll

organize food and group gear before setting up tents, then have a bit of free time for reading, wildlife-watching, bathing or general relaxing—keeping in mind that grizzly bear protocol limits possibilities for solo walking. A few members of the group will jump into preparing dinner while others might set up kitchen tarps if the weather looks iffy.

Who Is This a Fit For?

This expedition, in particular, aims to offer those eager to experience remote Arctic landscapes, wildlife, and sense of place without the burdens of backpacking every day. Our cosy basecamp is still rustic and simple, and we will spend several days backpacking, so a certain level of comfort living in the elements, and hiking with a pack, is necessary.

Chulengo's approach combines the learning focus of outdoor and environmental education, the team spirit of a personal expedition, and the risk management and support of a guided trip. We teach the backcountry skills that you need to live comfortably and move competently through the wilderness, and tailor instruction to a range of experience levels, such that both a novice backpacker and an experienced wilderness hiker can thrive on the same expedition. While you don't need to have substantial backpacking experience prior to joining an expedition, we do find that expeditions are more rewarding for everyone involved if participants:

- Relish the chance to live outdoors throughout all weather the Arctic might bring
- Prepare themselves to hike 6 - 7 miles a day, with up to 2,000 feet of elevation gain, off trail, with an up to 30 lb pack
- Enjoy diving into group conversations about conservation and working cooperatively with others
- Embrace the risk and uncertainty that's inherent to remote backcountry travel

Here's a little more detail on what to expect:

The Brooks Range are rugged mountains, stretching far above the Arctic Circle; even in summertime, weather can be chilly and rainy. We'll be outside for most of our week together, so you should be prepared to camp and hike through all sorts of weather, ideally with a smile! Summer brings almost continuous daylight, so nights tend not to be much chillier than days, but temperatures could range from the low 40s to high 60s. Mosquitoes are essentially a given; depending on the exact timing of the expedition, bug levels may range from very mild to more intense. Expect to wear a mesh bug headnet at least some of the time.

Six miles may not sound like a lot, but hiking with a pack, off-trail across the sometimes-boggy tundra, is a far cry from an on-trail day hike. We don't expect anyone to be a super athlete to join an expedition, but a solid base of fitness (think: can you comfortably run / hike/ walk six to seven miles?) will make travel more enjoyable. We can help craft a training plan for you if helpful!

We lean into building a curious and compassionate community on our expeditions. As environmental educators, we ask you to engage deeply with the places we travel through, including wrestling with conceptions of wilderness, realities of stolen land, and inequity of access to nature. We hope *not* to agree about everything, but to listen thoughtfully across difference and to make space for shifting our beliefs. Backcountry expeditions ask us to rely on each other and put group needs ahead of our own, an experience which can bring transformative lessons for all of us. We'll expect you to help with camp chores like cooking and tarp set-up, and count on you to set up your own tent.

Our expedition team brings decades of wilderness guiding experience and excellent risk management practices, yet part of the allure of wilderness travel comes from the very fact that we cannot eliminate all risk from the realities of moving through this landscape. We'll encounter hazards such as grizzly bears, river crossings, and steep scree slopes. We will follow well-researched protocols to minimize the transmission of infectious diseases such as Covid-19, but cannot completely eliminate this risk.

Highlight Photos



