



ALASKA DISCOVERY
A Mountain Travel Sobek
Company

P.O. Box 35003
Juneau, Alaska 99803

T: 1 800 586 1911
F: 1 800 956 7488
info@alaskadiscovery.com
www.alaskadiscovery.com



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THE ELSEK RIVER

"Hiker's Special"

TRIP DETAILS

16 days ~ Alaska

16 days scenic float with some
Class III and one Class IV rapid,
optional day bikes

15 nights camping

2009 DATE

June 28-Jul 13

2009 LAND COST

\$4,095 per person + tax
(6-12 members)

\$4,395 per person + tax
(4-5 members)

\$120 charter flight

TRIP LEVEL
MODERATE TO STRENUOUS

HIGHLIGHTS

- Enjoy an ultimate wilderness experience and scenery on the grandest scale imaginable
- Take an exciting helicopter portage over an unrunnable canyon with Class VI whitewater
- Many day hikes in search of wildlife: mountain goats, moose, and grizzly bears
- See the largest icebergs in all of Glacier Bay National Park in Alsek Bay

Revised September 25, 2008



THE ELSEK RIVER

“Hiker’s Special”

Go ahead, run the risk of scenic overload! A float on the Alsek River is an entry to a wilderness of unparalleled beauty and scale (it even makes places like the Grand Canyon seem small). Once under threat from mining interests, the river is now entirely protected as a World Heritage Site, encompassing the vast preserves of Canada’s Kluane National Park and Tatshenshini-Alsek Provincial Wilderness Park, and the United States’ Glacier Bay and Wrangell-St. Elias National Parks. Together, these four parks create the largest contiguous protected wilderness on the planet—more than twenty million acres of land.

The great glacial forces that shaped our continent are alive and well on this river and plainly evident as we float past huge calving glaciers and jaw-dropping mountain scenery. This is not known as a whitewater river, although there are a couple of good rapids—like Class IV “Lava North”—and a few days of continuous standing waves. Rather, it’s the overwhelming grandeur and beauty of this land that’s the biggest draw—day after day of stunning natural scenery untouched by human hands. Huge snowy peaks and vast glaciers—some that spill right down to the water—fill our every view, culminating in an awesome vista at Alsek Bay, where we share the placid currents with sculptured icebergs and will possibly have a chance to see 15,000-foot Mount Fairweather reigning above.

Fairly wide and slow at our put-in, the Alsek’s volume and speed gathers steam as countless side streams and glaciers pour into it on its relentless roll toward the Gulf of Alaska. Midway through the trip, we come to Turnback Canyon, an eight-mile long, 40-foot wide, virtually impassable gorge. Only a few daredevil kayakers have made it through unscathed, and an exciting helicopter portage—with a bird’s-eye view of the magnificent landscape—helps us bypass this chasm.

On this special departure, we have extra time to hike to extraordinary views, admire the profusion of wildflowers, and search for mountain goat, moose, grizzly bear, and other wildlife. We’ll have a chance for more layover days and a more leisurely pace to explore and enjoy this remarkable landscape. The utter raw beauty of this unspoiled corner of the world, and the fast friendships formed with each other and the wonderful guides, make this journey one of great and lasting rewards. Our group is limited to 12 lucky adventurers



The Alsek was rated as one of the top ten rivers in the world in the December 2006 issue of Men's Journal!

"It's not unusual to find dinner plate-size grizzly tracks in your camp during a 12-day blitz through the Alaska panhandle, borne by this river's Class II-IV glacial silt-laden waters. Mountain Travel Sobek knows the Alsek better than anyone."

ITINERARY

☞ **Rendezvous**—The trip begins in Haines, Alaska, 40 minutes north of Juneau by air taxi. You will need to arrive in Haines no later than 5:00 p.m. the night prior to the trip in order to attend the mandatory **pre-trip meeting that begins at 7:00 p.m. at** the Halsingland Hotel (907-766-2000). Your trip leader will go over trip logistics, bear-country camping techniques, water safety instructions, and distribute personal camping equipment. The meeting will take about two hours; we recommend eating dinner before the meeting. Dinner and lodging is on your own this evening. The next morning we pick everyone up early, so you will want to get plenty of rest tonight.

We recommend you stay at the Halsingland Hotel, which has a complementary transfer from the ferry terminal. Most of the air taxis also offer complementary transfers from the Haines Airport. Please call ahead to verify. For transportation and lodging recommendations, consult the information in your trip packet.

Note—The following itinerary may vary according to water levels and weather conditions.

DAY 1 ~ Travel to Haines Junction in Yukon Territory, Canada

After breakfast on your own, meet at the Halsingland Hotel lobby at 8:00 a.m. and board a van for a beautiful 3½-hour drive (155 miles) up the Chilkat River Valley, across the border into British Columbia, and on to Haines Junction in Yukon Territory, Canada. En route we'll stop at the Kluane National Park visitor's center to learn a bit about this vast wilderness. After lunch, we drive to the put-in point on the Dezadeash River, about an hour from Haines Junction. (There is an opportunity to hike part of the way to the river; this is an easy hike with good views of the surrounding mountains.) Launch rafts and begin the river trip, floating down the Dezadeash to the confluence with the Kaskawulsh River, where the true Alsek River begins. (If it's very windy, the guides may elect to stay at this campsite overnight and put in on the river early the next morning.)

Note—Because we are making a border crossing into Canada, you will need a passport as proof of nationality. Please check visa requirements for entering Canada if you are not a U.S. or Canadian citizen. If you are traveling with children and both parents are not present, Canadian customs requires a notarized letter from the child's absent parent(s) saying that they are aware of their child's whereabouts. A photocopy of the absent parent's ID(s) and phone number are needed. Minimum age for child participation on this trip is 14.

L,D...Camp

DAYS 2-15 ~ Rafting and Hiking along the Alsek River

Continue downstream, passing through mostly Class II rapids and enjoying the vast scenery. As the river current speeds up we'll begin to realize the volume and force of the Alsek. All along the way, we'll take time to stop and hike up into the heights above the river for spectacular panoramic views and to search for wildlife in the mountains.

We float further into the wilderness and will camp near the Lowell Glacier, part of the icefields of the St. Elias Range. The river forms a lake where it is working its way back through the terminal moraine of the glacier. We may have a chance to row near some of the awesome icebergs calved off from the glacier. We'll layover here and spend the day hiking up 3,500-foot Goatherd Mountain, where wildflowers bloom all summer long. It's about four hours to the summit, where we'll be rewarded with outstanding vistas of the St. Elias range and the huge, spilling Lowell Glacier. On clear days, it's possible to see Mounts Kennedy, Hubbard and Alverstone, over 35 miles to the west. Mountain goats are often seen on the cliffs and in the meadows along our route.

When we leave Lake Lowell the river picks up speed dramatically as it begins to cut through narrower canyons and increase in volume. We take easy routes through some of the rapids; by mid-afternoon, though, we encounter "Lava North," a challenging section of Class IV whitewater that's exciting and thrilling. Our guides will scout the rapid beforehand and determine the best route through; you'll be in the most capable of hands (in fact, they make running this rapid look easy).

For the next few days the water is swift with continuous small rapids as the river cuts through the Alsek Range. During these days on the river, we'll take several day hikes to explore the area. We may spot grizzly and black bear, moose, mountain goat, beaver, wolf, muskrat, wolverine, mink, weasel, snowshoe rabbit, hoary marmot, and red fox along with numerous species of birds. The scenery changes constantly until we come to the Tweedsmuir Glacier, where the river cuts through the sheer rock walls of Mount Blackadar on the east and the massive, boulder-strewn terminal moraine of the Tweedsmuir on the west. As the glacier pushes the river against the mountain, it forms Turnback Canyon, only 40 feet wide in places, and filled with sharp drops and horrendous currents. We may take a relatively easy hike to the canyon, and once there, the impossibility of rafting this section of the Alsek is apparent.

We'll prepare our gear for transport, and a helicopter flies in to ferry us and the equipment to the gravel flats south of the canyon. From the chopper you can see every hairpin turn and the churning water crashing into the canyon walls. This is the narrowest part of the river, and once on the other side the scenery changes. The river is wider and there are numerous braided channels. There is more vegetation, and bald eagles perch along the mossy cliffs of the Icefield and Noisy Ranges. Depending on the time of portage, we relaunch the rafts and drift through the wide valley to the majestic confluence of the Tatshenshini and Alsek Rivers, easily one of the most extraordinary places on the planet.

On the southern horizon, a dozen or more glaciers flow down from the summits of the Fairweather Range. To the west, the main channel of the Alsek flows into the Icefield Range where it seems to sink into the forest. In the middle of all this is a vast, gravel flat, braided with constantly changing channels and ringed with forests of willow, birch, and alder. We continue down the river through the deep forested canyons toward the coast. The climate becomes more maritime and the glaciers more numerous as we approach the Gulf of Alaska. Farther down the river, a large glacier has sprawled down its valley to within striking distance of the river's edge. Named the "Walker Glacier" by river-runners, it offers a venue for those who are eager to try a glacier hike.

We continue to float toward Alsek Bay, and the scenery grows to awe-inspiring proportions. The river is more than two miles wide, braided into numerous large and small channels. The gravel bars provide nesting places for several species of gulls, and we may have the chance to see other species of sea and shore birds such as semi-palmated plovers, spotted sandpipers, northern phalaropes, and parasitic jaegers. The Alsek and Grand Plateau Glaciers flow into Alsek Bay, and we'll watch and listen as giant chunks of ice calve into the water from the seven-mile face of the

Alsek glacier. Some icebergs are 75 feet high, indicating a depth below the surface at least twice as great.

B, L, D each day...Camp

DAY 16 ~ Dry Bay – Departure

After floating into the flat, forested plains beyond Alsek Bay, we arrive at the Dry Bay Fishing Company outpost along the estuary of the Alsek River. (Dry Bay is named for the mud flats in low tide, certainly not for the weather patterns here.) Small aircraft will meet us for our spectacular charter flight to Yakutat in time for the scheduled Alaskan Airlines service to Juneau (we have tailored this trip around this flight, and Juneau is your gateway city to other destinations). Most guests choose to return to Juneau this night and often get together for a no-host dinner at a local restaurant. We recommend you stay in Juneau this evening as some flights homeward necessitate a forced overnight in Seattle before connecting with onward-bound flights. We'll provide you with a list of hotels in the pre-departure information booklet.

Please note—There is only one Yakutat/Juneau Alaska Airlines flight a day, and **you must arrange for this flight on your own as it is not provided by Alaska Discovery**. Alaska Discovery will meet you at the airport in Juneau and take you to your preferred lodging. We will also bring any excess luggage you may have had shipped from Haines. If you are planning to fly to Anchorage, you will need to stay overnight in Yakutat and catch a flight to Anchorage the next morning.

B,L...

Note—The weather at Dry Bay occasionally prevents landing or take-off of small planes, in which case the end of the trip will be delayed until the weather clears. All extra costs caused directly or indirectly by this delay will be solely at the expense of the participant.

EXTEND YOUR ADVENTURE – DENALI NATIONAL PARK!

Make the most of your visit to the Land of the Midnight Sun! For an incredible wildlife experience, consider a stay at Camp Denali, a beautiful natural haven deep in the heart of Denali National Park. Daily activities include hiking the backcountry with expert naturalist-guides, canoeing, mountain biking, fishing, and flight seeing. Each day you can choose which suits you best! Rustic but beautifully-appointed guest cabins have superlative mountain views of Denali, and are a short walk to the historic hand-hewn lodge and informal dining room where sumptuous meals are served. Evening programs presented by staff naturalists and visiting specialists are designed to further acquaint you with the Far North. Call us for details! *3- to 7-night stays. June-September*

Land Cost: \$1,425-\$3,325; \$1,069-\$2,494 (children 11 and younger) + per night tax (per person, double occupancy)

2009 LAND COST

\$4,095 per person + tax (6-12 members)

\$4,395 per person + tax (4-5 members)

\$120 charter flight from Dry Bay to Yakutat

Rates quoted are per person, based on sharing double accommodations in tents. Please note that due to space concerns on the boats, we do not normally have the ability to allow people their own tent. The tents we provide are quite spacious and work very well for two people.

Tier Pricing

Adventure travel works best with a small group of people. In order to operate these small groups, our trips are priced according to the number of full-price passengers on the trip. (Alaska Discovery staff, trip doctors, and other discounted travelers are excluded from the count for this purpose.) We initially invoice you at the highest tier level price (the smallest group size we can operate). If the price drops due to an increase in group size, you will be refunded the difference.

What's Included

- ◆ expert leadership
- ◆ all arrangements in the field, including camp meals, guides, group gear and equipment (2-person tents)
- ◆ sleeping kit that includes sleeping bag and Thermo-Rest
- ◆ meals as noted (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- ◆ bush plane charter (see separate cost above)
- ◆ rafting gear
- ◆ permits
- ◆ ground transportation
- ◆ basic medical and evacuation insurance

What's Not

Airfare to and from Haines, Alaska; airfare from Yakutat to Juneau; meals not noted in itinerary; daypack for yourself to carry daily items; insurance other than basic medical and evacuation insurance as noted above (we strongly recommend you purchase the supplementary trip insurance offered by Alaska Discovery, which includes trip cancellation insurance); optional tipping to leader, guides and local staff; airport transfer to Haines the day before the trip begins; excess baggage charges; airport taxes; and items of a personal nature (sodas, alcoholic beverages, laundry, etc.).

Air Travel

Airfare is not included in the land cost of our trips. For air reservations, we recommend you contact the airlines directly. Please refer to the link or document called "Planning Your Trip to Alaska," included in your Trip Packet. **But please check with our staff before purchasing or obtaining your tickets.** We need to verify your arrival and departure schedule and ensure we have enough participants to operate the trip.

Dollar-a-Day: An easy way to contribute to conservation efforts in Alaska is to participate in Alaska Discovery's "Dollar-a-Day" program. Most of our guests donate two dollars for each day of our trips in the Alaskan wilderness. In turn, we distribute these funds among Alaskan organizations that work for conservation of the areas of Alaska in which we operate. If you choose to make an optional contribution, your donation will be included in your invoice and distributed amongst the following organizations:

- ◆ The Alaska Conservation Foundation (www.akcf.org)
- ◆ Alaska Wilderness Recreation and Tourism Association (www.awrta.org)
- ◆ Discovery Southeast (www.discoverysoutheast.org)
- ◆ Friends of Admiralty Island (www.friendsofadmirty.org)
- ◆ Friends of Glacier Bay (www.fogb.org)
- ◆ Southeast Alaska Conservation Council (www.seacc.org)
- ◆ Alaska Wilderness League (www.alaskawild.org)
- ◆ Audubon Alaska (www.audubonalaska.org)

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

Expert Leadership

Expert leadership is the key to an exciting, unforgettable experience. Our trips feature gifted leaders for whom leading trips is a true vocation. Besides showing you wonders you'd never find on your own, they make sure everything runs smoothly and safely without a hitch. They are knowledgeable about all aspects of your trip, and take great pleasure in sharing their insights with you. More than just guides, they positively elevate your experience by being teachers, companions, and the best of friends. You'll be in good hands with them every step of the way.

We are fortunate to have the best whitewater rafting guides in the world working for us. Each has a minimum of five years professional guiding experience; most have been boating with us over 10 years, on rivers from the Alsek to the Zambezi. All possess certifications in advanced wilderness first aid and swiftwater rescue. Many of them teach guiding and rescue skills at local guide schools in the off-season. They are mature, well educated and personable (not to mention incredible cooks!). They are the first to rise and the last to sleep, and in between will make you gourmet meals, guide you safely down the river, tell stories around the campfire, and ensure you come away from the journey with a true appreciation of the culture, natural history, and other important aspects of the trip. You won't find a more competent crew anywhere!

Leader assignments will be confirmed in the Final Bulletin sent to you three weeks prior to departure.

Activity Level

Alaska Discovery trips are designed for flexible, energetic people who like to be active. This is a long and active trip into a remote wilderness with no facilities of any kind. Good physical condition, an adventurous spirit, a positive attitude, and a willingness to deal with possible wet, cold, and windy conditions are a must! Proper gear and robust health are necessary to withstand potentially extended periods of cool, rainy weather. The hiking can be moderate to strenuous as there are few trails and the terrain can be uneven and steep. Hikes are tailored to the strength of the group.

Physical conditioning before your trip will increase your enjoyment. Depending upon water levels, it may be necessary to help pull rafts over gravel bars. Guests should be prepared to help carry personal and group gear to and from camp. The terrain can be uneven and may be slippery. No special conditioning is necessary, but if you don't normally follow a fitness or exercise regime, we strongly recommend beginning one. Be sure to hike in the boots you plan to bring with you.

We row 18-foot oar rafts with one guide and four guests per raft. Although we do not offer paddle rafts, we do encourage guests to paddle in the oar boats whenever they feel so inclined.

THE NEXT STEP

Ready to go? Signing up is easy!

Just call us at 1-800-586-1911 and reserve your spot! You can also reserve a trip online at our website (www.alaskadiscovery.com). If you prefer to use a travel agent, he or she can book your trip at no extra cost and provide other helpful assistance.

Then Leave the Rest to Us

Before you go, we provide you with extensive pre-departure information, including clothing recommendations, suggested reading lists, and other details.

Why Alaska Discovery is Your First Choice for Adventure

We are Alaska's oldest wilderness guiding company! Alaska Discovery has pioneered trips in Alaska by kayak, raft, and canoe for more than 35 years. We led the first tours to sea kayak Glacier Bay, Icy Bay, Russell Fjord, Tracy Arm, Endicott Arm, and to reopen the cross-Admiralty canoe route. We also ran the first commercial descents of the Tatshenshini, Alsek, and Kongakut Rivers. Our permits in Alaska's finest wilderness areas give you greater access than any other company. We are one of the few companies with permits in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Glacier Bay National Park, Wrangell-St. Elias/Tatshenshini-Alsek World Heritage Site, and the Tongass National Forest. We are also a founding member of the Alaska Conservation Foundation and contribute to numerous Alaskan conservation organizations through our "Dollar-a-Day" program. Among our many awards, we have received the prestigious Outstanding Long-Term Program Award of the Alaska Land Manager's Forum for excellence in dedication and commitment to ethically and socially aware use of the land.

References

Don't take our word for how great our trips are. We'll be happy to provide you with references of satisfied past travelers.

Questions?

Feel free to call us at 1-800-586-1911 if you still have any questions or concerns. We're here to help you. You can also check out our website at www.alaskadiscovery.com.

Note on Itinerary

Although we will do our best to adhere to the itinerary schedule as listed, it is subject to change. Please read the Limitations of Liability and Booking Conditions in the four-page Participant Information Form. You can find all this information on the Mountain Travel Sobek website at www.mtsobek.com/faq and the form itself at www.mtsobek.com/pdf/participant_info.pdf.

Terms & Conditions

Once you have made a deposit for a trip, you agree to be bound by all our terms and conditions including the Limitation of Liability Clause. The full Terms and Conditions can be found at www.mtsobek.com/faq/#liability or call 1-888-MTSOBEK (687-6235) for a copy. These are partial conditions. Your participation is contingent on your signature on the full list of terms specified in the four-page Participant Information Form (www.mtsobek.com/pdf/participant_info.pdf). Any dispute concerning, relating or referring to the Terms and Conditions, to any literature concerning this trip, or the trip itself, shall be resolved exclusively by binding arbitration in San Francisco, California, according to the then existing commercial rules of the American Arbitration Association. Such proceedings will be governed by substantive California law (but not procedural law) without regard to the California Arbitration Act.

Note on Services

At Alaska Discovery, we have assembled an outstanding team of guides by taking the greatest care in both recruiting and retaining the fine guides we have. Along with our high standards of qualifications and experience, we conduct our own training. Each spring we hold refresher courses in rescue, gun handling, trip area knowledge, communication, teamwork, and special lectures on the unique natural and social history of Alaska. We also sponsor Wilderness First Responder classes regularly for our guides.

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