
KONGAKUT RIVER

Rafting & Hiking in the Arctic Nat'l Wildlife Refuge

COST: \$3,995 (includes bush plane flights)

10 days, 9 nights.

Begins and ends in Fairbanks

Trip Level: Strenuous

DEPARTURES IN 2005

June 15 – 24

June 24 - July 3

July 29 - August 7

August 7 - 16

HIGHLIGHTS

- Spectacular 300-mile bush flights across North America's last great wildlands.
- River rafting, hiking, camping in the pure wilderness of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.
- June trips are timed for the migration of the Porcupine Caribou herd and the longest daylight hours.

WHEN TO ARRIVE

Guests must arrive in Fairbanks at least one day prior to their departure date for a pre-trip meeting. Guests are responsible for arranging their own lodging. Consult our "Trip Planning Information" section for transportation and lodging information. We suggest you stay at the Fairbanks Bed & Breakfast, the site of your pre-trip meeting.

PRE-TRIP MEETING

WHEN: 6:00 p.m. the night before your trip begins.

WHERE: The meeting will be at the Fairbanks Bed & Breakfast, 902 Kellum St., (907) 452-4967.

At the pre-trip meeting you will meet your guides and other guests, go over trip logistics, discuss bear-country camping techniques and go over the trip route. Guides will distribute raingear, rubber boots, and river bags at the meeting. Dinner and lodging is on your own this evening.

OVERVIEW

This spectacular rafting trip begins and ends with a 300-mile flight across the top of North America between Fairbanks and the high Arctic. No other place in the world can compare to the Brooks Range for its sheer magnitude of wildness. We make the most out of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to visit the Land of the Midnight Sun. Our ten-day trip includes five days of paddle rafting and three full layover days where we can break into smaller groups for birding, photography, nature walks or a strenuous hike up to a mountain summit.

The Kongakut River flows through mountains, rolling tundra, and eventually through the coastal plain to the Arctic Ocean. At first glance, the country appears quite barren from our plane. But a closer look reveals a lush, alpine landscape blanketed with wildflowers, intricate valleys, ancient rock formations and cascading waterfalls. Like all river trips, the peaceful sounds of the river will be a constant companion. In June, the country is enlivened by the passing of the Porcupine caribou herd to their calving grounds. We may also see Dall sheep, numerous migratory birds, and, occasionally, wolves, fox, moose, grizzlies, and wolverine. Our trip ends at the edge of the northernmost mountains in Alaska. A highlight of this voyage is saved for the last full day: a hike to a vantage point on top of a ridge which gives a stunning view of the Arctic Ocean and offshore ice pack.

DAILY ITINERARY

We will try to adhere to the following itinerary as closely as possible. However, it is subject to change due to weather, flight delays, and government regulations.

DAY ONE

Plan for an early breakfast. This day is mostly devoted to flying north! We drive to the airport and begin our long flight across the Yukon River Flats to the Native community of Arctic Village. We then switch to smaller planes and continue north over the Brooks Range and on to the upper Kongakut River. We'll land on a small gravel bar along the river, about 10 miles north of the Continental Divide, and set up our first camp.

DAYS TWO - NINE

Our schedule on the Kongakut will be leisurely and flexible. We will have ample opportunity for short walks, day hikes, photographing wildlife and fantastic displays of wildflowers, and fishing for Arctic char and grayling (for those who bring fishing gear and license). We'll float the river in paddle rafts, each propelled by participants dipping paddles into the swift current. We'll encounter several small rapids to negotiate and breathtaking mountain and valley scenery along the entire route. This area is one of our most fascinating and ecologically diverse national treasures. There will be much to see and explore.

The weather is highly variable. Prepare yourself for temperatures ranging from the brisk 30s to the scorching 80s by bringing a variety of clothing layers (see Gear List). At this far-north latitude, a light dusting of snow is even possible. Often, there will be a breeze on the river, which can help in keeping away mosquitoes. Although our trip is timed to avoid the heaviest insect populations, bring your favorite bug repellent. You may wish to purchase a good mosquito head net and a "bug jacket."

DAY TEN

After hiking in Caribou Pass, we'll break final camp and await the arrival of the bush planes for our flight to Arctic Village and then take a flight to Fairbanks. We plan to arrive by 5:00 p.m., but we highly recommend booking another night in Fairbanks as flight delays are possible. We often gather for a no-host dinner on this final evening.

PHYSICAL EXPECTATIONS

Trip Level: Strenuous, please refer to the Physical Expectations checklist which defines the levels and is available on our website or upon request.

This trip operates at a relaxed pace and no prior paddling experience is required. This is an active trip into remote wilderness. There are no facilities of any kind and the ability to contact help during an emergency is limited.

It is necessary for everyone to assist in paddling the rafts downstream. If there is a headwind, the paddling will be more strenuous. Depending upon water levels, it is also possible that you will need to help pull rafts over gravel bars. Everyone helps to carry personal and group gear to and from the rafts. The terrain can be uneven and slippery. Good physical condition, an adventurous spirit, a positive attitude and a willingness to deal with possible wet, cold and windy conditions are a must! Guests set up their own tents (after a demo by the guide) and are welcome to assist with other tasks of wilderness camping.

Physical conditioning before your trip will increase your enjoyment. If you don't normally follow a fitness or exercise regime, we recommend beginning one now! Incorporate any activities that build up arm strength and flexibility. In paddling, it is more important to be able to maintain a steady pace than it is to have a powerful stroke.

We try to accommodate different hiking speeds, but the greater your level of fitness the more you will enjoy the wonderful hiking opportunities available in this area. The hiking days may be long and can be strenuous as there are few trails and the terrain can be uneven and steep. Be sure to do some hiking or long walks in the boots you plan to bring with you.

AREA INFORMATION

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, 101 12th Ave., Box 20, Fairbanks, AK 99701; (907) 456-0250

To obtain topographic maps, contact the U.S. Geological Survey, Fairbanks, AK, 99701. 907-786-7011. Ask for map quadrants: Demarcation Point: B-1, B-2, and A-2; Table Mtn. D-2, and D-3.

Alaska Discovery, 5310 Glacier Highway, Juneau AK 99801. Phone: 907-780-6226

<http://www.akdiscovery.com>