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# NOATAK RIVER

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## Canoeing and Hiking in Gates of the Arctic Nat'l Park

**COST:** \$4,395 (6 – 8 guests)

10 days, 9 nights

Begins and ends in Fairbanks

**Trip Level:** Moderate to Strenuous

### Departures in 2006

August 2 - 11

August 11 – 20

August 20 - 29

### Highlights

- Spectacular 300-mile bush flights across the top of North America and the Brooks Range.
- Canoeing and hiking in the pure wilderness of Gates of the Arctic National Park.
- Timed for the beautiful fall foliage and the migration of the Western Arctic Caribou herd.

### When to Arrive

Guests must arrive in Fairbanks at least one day **prior** to Day One, in time for the 6pm pre-trip meeting. Guests are responsible for arranging their own lodging. Consult our "Trip Planning Information" section for transportation and lodging information.

### Pre-Trip meeting

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

**WHERE:** Fairbanks B&B, 902 Kellum St, Fairbanks, AK 99707, Phone: (907) 452-4967, Fax: (907) 451-6955

### Overview

These trips are timed to coincide with the autumn tundra colors and wildlife migration. In addition to the scenic wonder of the river valley, the river corridor is frequented by caribou, moose, grizzlies, wolves, musk ox, and fox. Small bands of caribou from Alaska's most impressive herd, the 400,000-member Western Arctic herd, travel the river as they begin their migration south to winter below the Arctic tree line.

We envision spending five to six days floating on the river, with the remaining days spent on foot exploring the dramatic upper Noatak and its scenic tributary valleys. The Hikes can be long days on uneven terrain.

This canoe trip travels through some of Alaska's most wild and remote areas. Previous paddling experience, either on lakes or rivers, is expected.

Daylight hours will still be long, with a gradual twilight and dawn that will maximize photographic opportunities. Nights will be cool, and seeing the Northern Lights is a possibility. Expect daytime temperatures in the 40s to 60s, and nights possibly dipping below freezing.

There is always the chance of an early season snowfall, and the mountaintops will likely be covered with a descending snow line during mid- to late August trips. With the changing colors, diminishing mosquitoes, and glistening snow on the mountain peaks, there is no better time to be in the high Arctic!

### Daily Itinerary

The morning after the pre-trip meeting begins Day One of the trip.

#### DAY ONE

We will pick you up at your place of lodging in downtown Fairbanks and head to the airport for our 1 1/2-hour flight to the small bush community of Bettles.

Situated just above the Arctic Circle, on the Koyukuk River, Bettles is the jumping off point for our flight to the headwaters of the Noatak. By early-afternoon, we'll board a floatplane for another scenic flight, deep into Gates of the Arctic National Park, to an oxbow lake at the edge of the Noatak River. We begin our short portage to the river and set up camp further downstream.

### **DAYS TWO TO NINE**

We'll explore the broad river valley on a flexible itinerary. Canoeing on this often gentle, but sometimes swift-moving river will allow us to travel approximately 50 miles, and we'll explore more on foot.

Immense sweeps of tundra make this area ideal for hiking. Hikes to the ridges and up the tributary valleys provide us with incredible scenic vistas of the valley and surrounding peaks. We'll camp on riverbanks with the peaceful river sounds nearby. We will spend the last night or two camped at our take out lake, and enjoy some spectacular hikes from camp. The portage from the river to the lake (where the float plane will pick us up) is about  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile.

### **DAY TEN**

After a good breakfast, we'll be on our way back to Bettles and then south to Fairbanks. We plan to arrive in Fairbanks by late afternoon (approximately 4:00 p.m.). Often, the group gets together for one last no-host dinner on this night. **Departure information:** due to possible flight and weather delays, we recommend you stay this evening in town and make plans to leave Fairbanks the next day. Many guests elect to stay on in Fairbanks a few days after the expedition is complete. We will be happy to provide you with information on what to do.

## **Physical Expectations**

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

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. We travel by two-person canoes. If there is a headwind, the paddling will be more strenuous. Be prepared to experience a variety of water conditions on this trip; low water, requiring skilled maneuvering around shallow gravel bars, or high swift water. You must be prepared to carry canoes (about 60-80 pounds between two people) across gravel bars and at the portage sites. You should also be prepared to help carry group gear up and down the beach and to help portage gear at the put in and take out. 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 demonstration 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**

Gates of the Arctic National Park, PO Box 74680, Fairbanks, AK 99701, (907) 456-0281

To obtain topographic maps contact:

USGS-ESIC, 4230 University Dr., Rm 101, Anchorage, AK 99508, (907) 786-7011

Ask for maps: Survey Pass C-5 & C-6, and Ambler River D-1 & C-1.

Or large scale quad maps: Ambler River and Survey Pass

*Alaska Discovery, 5310 Glacier Highway, Juneau AK 99801. Phone: 800.586.1911*

[www.AlaskaDiscovery.com](http://www.AlaskaDiscovery.com)