



The Dalton Highway

Highway

Visitor Guide



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The Dalton Highway

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Produced and Designed by



All photos courtesy of BLM unless otherwise noted.

Printed on recycled paper using soy-based inks.

The Dalton Highway Visitor Guide is published by the Alaska Geographic Association in cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management. This free publication is made possible by Alaska Geographic bookstore sales.

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Cover photo: Bluethroats migrate from Asia, Africa and the Mediterranean. They are sometimes seen in willow thickets along the Dalton on the North Slope. Photo by Erik Hendrickson.

Ultimate Road Adventure

The Dalton Highway is a rough, industrial road that begins 84 miles (134 km) north of Fairbanks and ends 414 miles (662 km) later in Deadhorse, the industrial camp at Prudhoe Bay. It provides a rare opportunity to traverse a remote, unpopulated part of Alaska to the very top of the continent. Traveling this farthest-north road involves real risks and challenges. This publication will help you decide whether to make the journey, how to prepare, and how to enjoy your experience. Please read this information carefully.

Know Before You Go

- There is no public access to the Arctic Ocean from Deadhorse. You must be on an authorized tour. Call 1-866-659-2368.
- There are no medical facilities between Fairbanks and Deadhorse, a distance of 500 miles (800 km). For emergency information, see the back page.
- Food, gas, and vehicle repair service are extremely limited. See page 5.
- There is no cell phone service or public Internet connection between Fairbanks and Deadhorse.



Arctic Interagency Visitor Center

Where can I look for musk oxen? How should I plan a hiking trip in the Brooks Range? How does permafrost shape the land? Resource interpreters and volunteers can help you discover Alaska's Arctic through exhibits, presentations, trip-planning, and the Alaska Geographic bookstore at the visitor center in Coldfoot.

Open daily from late May through early September. Call for hours of operation. Phone: 907-678-5209 or 907-678-2014; FAX: 907-678-2005 (summer only).

www.blm.gov/ak/dalton

Click on "Visitor Centers" and then on "Arctic Interagency Visitor Center"

Built for Black Gold

In 1968, oil was discovered at Prudhoe Bay on Alaska's North Slope. Excitement was high at the prospect of new money to fuel Alaska's boom-and-bust economy. The nation was in the throes of an energy crisis and pushed for an 800-mile long pipeline. But first, Native land claims had to be settled, permits granted, environmental safeguards designed, and a road built to get workers and supplies north to the oilfield.

When finally approved, construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline was run like a wartime project—money was no object and time was of the essence. The weather conditions, terrain, and the immensity of the project were all extreme. Engineers overcame permafrost, mountain ranges, and the relentless flow of the Yukon River in the process. Incredibly, the Haul Road was completed in just five months and the pipeline in three years (1974-77). The previously remote Arctic was changed forever.

Haul Road or Highway?

At first, the highway was called the Haul Road because almost everything supporting oil development was "hailed" on tractor-trailer rigs to its final destination. In 1981, the State of Alaska named the highway after James B. Dalton, a lifelong Alaskan and expert in arctic engineering who was involved in early oil exploration efforts on the North Slope.

In Their Own Voices

Hear the stories of those who worked on the pipeline, searching for archeological remains ahead of the construction crews, engineering the Yukon River Bridge, and surveying the route. The Project Jukebox oral history program, developed by the University of Alaska Fairbanks, integrates interviews with photographs, maps, and text to bring the past alive and includes oral histories from Coldfoot, Wiseman, and the Koyukuk River region. Financial support for the Haul Road Jukebox Project is provided by Alaska Geographic.

For more information: <http://jukebox.uaf.edu>
Search "Projects" for "Dalton Highway"

The highway was open only to commercial traffic until 1981, when the state allowed public access to Disaster Creek at Milepost 211. In 1994, public access was allowed all the way to Deadhorse for the first time.

Today, the Dalton Highway beckons adventurous souls to explore a still-wild and mysterious frontier. Respect this harsh land and appreciate the opportunity to visit a special part of our world.



"...I trucked the Haul Road to Prudhoe a few hundred times and fished Grayling Lake and hunted the South Fork Koyukuk for 10 years in a row. I really, really miss it—the beauty, quiet, and the freedom it brings one's mind. It's definitely the best mental medicine on earth."

Marshall Casteel
Myrtle Creek, Oregon

Preparing for the Long Haul

Before you leave Fairbanks

- Inspect all tires and make sure they are properly inflated
- Check all vehicle fluids
- Replace worn hoses and belts
- Empty your RV's holding tank and fill the water tank
- Purchase groceries and supplies

Bring for your vehicle

- At least two full-sized spare tires mounted on rims
- Tire jack and tools for flat tires
- Emergency flares
- Extra gasoline, motor oil, and wiper fluid
- CB radio

Bring for yourself

- Insect repellent and head net
- Sunglasses and sunscreen
- Rain jacket and pants
- Warm clothes, including hat and gloves
- First aid kit
- Drinking water
- Ready-to-eat food
- Camping gear, including sleeping bag
- Personal medications
- Toilet paper and hand sanitizer
- Garbage bags

Safety Tips

Phones and Internet

- There is no cell phone coverage or public Internet access between Fairbanks and Deadhorse. Both are available in Deadhorse.
- Pay phones: You can use a calling card at the Yukon River Camp, Coldfoot, Wiseman, and Deadhorse.
- Satellite phones: Some companies in Fairbanks rent satellite phones; check the phone directory under radio.

Drinking Water

It's best to bring water with you. If you must use stream water for cooking or cleaning, treat it first by boiling rapidly for 3-5 minutes, or by using iodine tablets or a water filter. *Giardia* is widespread in Alaska waters and is highly contagious.

Weather

Summer temperatures can occasionally reach the high 80s F (27-30°C) south of the Brooks Range and average in the 50s F (10-15°C) in Coldfoot. Thunderstorms are common in early summer, especially between Fairbanks and the Yukon River, and may bring lightning and sudden squalls. In general, June and July are drier months, but rainy days are frequent throughout the summer.

Weather on the North Slope is frequently windy, foggy, and cold. Snow can occur at any time of the year, especially from the Brooks Range north. In Deadhorse, average summer temperatures are in the 30s and 40s F (0-5°C).

Flash Floods

Heavy or prolonged rain can cause local flash floods anytime during the summer. Running water may cover the road or wash out culverts and bridges. Do not attempt to cross flooded areas.

Wildfires

Wildfires may burn out of control and across the highway. Do not drive through areas of dense smoke or flames—you could get trapped by swiftly changing conditions and unable to reach safety.

Wildlife

Treat all wild animals with caution. Keep a clean camp so you don't attract wildlife. Do not approach or feed any animals. Moose and muskoxen may appear tame, but can be dangerous if approached too closely. Never get between a cow and her calves. If moose feel threatened they will flatten their ears, raise the hair on their neck, and may charge. Wolves and foxes on the North Slope may carry rabies. Avoid all contact between these animals and yourself and your pets. See page 17 for more information on where to look for wildlife.



Fireweed brightens a recent burn at Mackey Hill, ► Dalton Milepost 87, one of many steep hills.

Visitor Information Centers

In Fairbanks

Alaska Public Lands
Information Center
101 Dunkel Street, #110
Fairbanks, AK 99701
Phone: 907-459-3730
Fax: 907-459-3729
fair_interpretation@nps.gov
Open: year-round

At the Yukon River

Yukon Crossing Visitor
Contact Station
Located on the east side of
the highway just north of
the Yukon River bridge.
No phone. Closed in winter.

In Coldfoot

Arctic Interagency
Visitor Center
Coldfoot, MP 175
Phone: 907-678-5209
Open daily from late May
to early September.
Closed in winter.



Services Are Limited

Notice: There are no public services at Department of Transportation maintenance stations or Alyeska Pipeline Service Company pump stations.

Medical Facilities: There are no public or emergency medical facilities along the Elliott or Dalton highways.

Banking: There are no banks. ATM machines are available in Deadhorse. Most services accept major credit cards and traveler's checks.

Groceries: There are no grocery stores along the highway. Snack food and cafés are available at several locations.

Phone: There is no cell phone coverage from Elliott Highway Milepost 28 until just outside of Deadhorse.

SERVICES	Yukon Crossing [▲]	Five Mile [▲]	Coldfoot	Wiseman ^{▲▲}	Deadhorse
Gas	✱		✱		✱
Tire/Vehicle Repair	✱		✱		✱
Restaurant	✱	✱	✱		✱
Lodging	✱	✱	✱	✱	✱
Public Phone	✱		✱	✱	✱
Post Office			✱		✱
Shower	✱	✱	✱		✱
Water		✱	✱		✱
Laundry			✱		✱
Dump Station		✱			
Tent Camping		✱	✱		
RV Parking		✱	✱		✱
Gift Shop/Local Crafts	✱	✱	✱	✱	✱
Visitor Center/Museum	✱		✱	✱	

[▲] closed in winter

^{▲▲} limited services in winter

Driving the Dalton

Road Conditions

The road is narrow, has soft shoulders, high embankments, and steep hills. There are lengthy stretches of gravel surface with sharp rocks, potholes, washboard, and, depending on the weather, clouds of dust or slick mud. Watch out for dangerous curves and loose gravel, especially between Livengood and the Yukon River (MP 0-56). You may encounter snow and ice north of Coldfoot any month of the year. Expect and prepare for all conditions. Road construction occurs in various areas and can cause some delay.

The Dalton Highway is paved from Milepost 37 to 49 and from Milepost 90 to 197 (Gold Creek). Beyond that there is pavement (with breaks) from Milepost 335 (Happy Valley airstrip) to 362. Road construction occurs in various areas and can cause some delay.

For current road conditions:

- Fairbanks: Alaska Department of Transportation
907-456-7623, Alaska Public Lands
Information Center 907-459-3730 or
511.alaska.gov
- Yukon River: BLM's Visitor Contact Station (summer only).
- Coldfoot: Arctic Interagency Visitor Center
907-678-5209 (summer only), or Coldfoot Cafe.

Rules of the Road

- ✓ Big trucks have the right of way.
- ✓ Slow down when passing other vehicles to avoid damaging them with flying rocks.
- ✓ Always drive with your lights on so others can see you.
- ✓ Keep your headlights and taillights clean so they are visible.
- ✓ Stay on the right side of the road.
- ✓ Don't stop on bridges, hills, or curves.
- ✓ Check your rear-view mirror regularly.
- ✓ If you spot wildlife, pull over to a safe location before stopping.
- ✓ Slower traffic should pull over at a safe location and allow other vehicles to pass.

Mileage Chart



Miles (km)	Fairbanks	Livengood	Yukon River	Arctic Circle	Coldfoot	Atigun Pass	Galbraith Lake	Deadhorse
Fairbanks	•	84 (134)	140 (224)	199 (318)	259 (414)	328 (525)	359 (574)	498 (797)
Livengood	84 (134)	•	56 (90)	115 (184)	175 (280)	244 (390)	275 (440)	414 (662)
Yukon River	140 (224)	56 (90)	•	59 (94)	119 (190)	188 (301)	219 (350)	358 (573)
Arctic Circle	199 (318)	115 (184)	59 (94)	•	60 (96)	129 (206)	160 (256)	299 (478)
Coldfoot	259 (414)	175 (280)	119 (190)	60 (96)	•	69 (110)	100 (160)	239 (382)
Atigun Pass	328 (525)	244 (390)	188 (301)	129 (206)	69 (110)	•	31 (50)	170 (272)
Galbraith Lake	359 (574)	275 (440)	219 (350)	160 (256)	100 (160)	31 (50)	•	139 (222)
Deadhorse	498 (797)	414 (662)	358 (573)	299 (478)	239 (382)	170 (272)	139 (222)	•

Road Tips

Break Downs

If your car breaks down, get off the road as far as possible and set flares. If you need a tow, ask a passing motorist to contact a towing service in Fairbanks (service may be available in Coldfoot and Deadhorse). Towing is extremely costly but may be covered under your insurance policy.

CB Radios

Truckers and road workers monitor Channel 19. With a CB you can ask them if it's safe to pass or tell them when it's safe to pass you. In poor visibility, you can warn oncoming trucks if there are other vehicles close behind you. You can communicate with flaggers, pilot cars, and heavy equipment operators.

Emergency

Be prepared for minor emergencies. In a critical emergency, use a CB radio to call for help and relay a message to the State Troopers. If you are in cell phone range (Fairbanks or Deadhorse) you can call the Troopers at 800-811-0911. It may be many hours before help arrives.

Rental Cars

Many rental car agreements prohibit driving on the Dalton Highway and other gravel roads. Violating the rental car agreement can be very expensive, especially in the event of a malfunction or accident.

Repairs

Prepare to be self-sufficient. Limited tire and repair services are available at only two service stations between Fairbanks and Deadhorse—a distance of 500 miles (800 km). They can have parts delivered from Fairbanks, but that's expensive.



Fueling up in Deadhorse.

Frequently Asked Questions

How long does it take to make the trip?

Much depends on weather, road conditions, road construction, and your own interests. The roundtrip to Prudhoe Bay and back demands at least four days. Under good conditions, expect the following driving times from Fairbanks to:

Yukon River	3 hours
Arctic Circle	5 hours
Coldfoot	6 hours
Atigun Pass	8 hours
Deadhorse	13+ hours

Factor in an additional 1-2 hours per day for rest stops, wildlife viewing, construction delays, and bad weather.

Can I drive, walk or cycle to the Arctic Ocean?

NO. Public access ends at Deadhorse, about 8 miles (13 km) from the ocean. Security gates on the access roads are guarded 24 hours a day and permits for individuals to travel on their own are not available. For information on authorized tours to the Arctic Ocean, contact the Fairbanks Convention and Visitors Bureau or Alaska Public Lands Information Center (back page).

Are the bugs really that bad?

YES! Hordes of mosquitoes emerge in mid-June and last into August. Biting flies and gnats last into September. Insects are worst on calm days and in low, wetland areas. Hike and camp on ridges or wide gravel bars along rivers where a breeze may provide relief. Insect repellents containing DEET are most effective. A head net and bug jacket are essential if you plan on any outdoor activities.

When is the best time to visit?

A late May trip offers a chance to see thousands of migrating birds, but snow may still cover the ground. From June until mid-July wildflowers brighten the tundra and caribou congregate along the Coastal Plain. Mid-August brings rain, cool days, frosty nights, and the northern lights. Brilliant autumn colors peak around mid-August on the North Slope, late August in the Brooks Range, and early September south of the Yukon River. Snow begins to fly by late August or early September.

Does the highway close in the winter?

No. The road remains open for trucks hauling supplies to the oilfields and camps. Although the highway is maintained year-round, in winter services of any kind are only available in Coldfoot (MP 175) and Deadhorse (MP 414). Winter driving conditions are extremely hazardous. Drivers face snow, ice, wind, whiteouts, and dangerous cold with windchills to -70° F (-57° C). Travel between late October and early April is not advised.



Dwarf birch in autumn.

Points of Interest

Hess Creek Overlook (MP* 21)

This pullout looks over Hess Creek meandering west to meet the Yukon River. In 2003, the Erickson Creek Fire burned almost 118,000 acres (47,200 ha) in this area.



▲ Take a break at BLM's Yukon Crossing Visitor Contact Station, located on the right just after crossing the bridge. Volunteers are there to assist daily in summer.

Yukon River (MP 56)

The mighty Yukon River winds nearly 2,000 miles (3,200 km) from Canada to the Bering Sea. Athabaskan people first traveled this river in birchbark canoes. During the gold rush, wood-fired sternwheelers ferried gold seekers and supplies for trading posts. Today, Yukon River residents use motorboats in summer and snowmachines in winter to travel this natural highway.

Five-Mile (MP 60)

This undeveloped campground is operated by the BLM. See page 18 for details.

Roller Coaster (MP 75)

North of the Yukon River, travelers encounter a series of steep hills named by truckers in the early years of pipeline construction, including Sand Hill (MP 73), Roller Coaster (MP 75), Mackey Hill (MP 87), Beaver Slide (MP 110) and Gobblers Knob (MP 132). Truckers today use the same names.

86-Mile Overlook

At MP 86.5, turn west and follow an access road uphill to an active gravel pit for an excellent view of the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge to the east. Watch out for heavy equipment.



Photo by Whitney Root

▲ Finger Mountain Wayside (MP 98)

Stop at Finger Mountain to take in the panoramic views, explore the alpine tundra, and stroll the half-mile interpretive trail. Expect strong winds on this high ridge.

Arctic Circle Wayside (MP 115)

Follow the side road a short distance to the Arctic Circle sign and viewing deck with interpretive displays. Enjoy your lunch in the picnic area or drive up the hill to camp.



▲ Heading down Roller Coaster Hill

*MP refers to milepost from the beginning of the Dalton Highway.

Gobblers Knob (MP 132)

The pullout here offers an excellent view of the Brooks Range to the north. To see the midnight sun on solstice, climb up the hill to the east.

Grayling Lake Wayside (MP 150)

An ancient glacier carved this U-shaped valley and left a shallow lake. Moose feed on the nutrient-rich aquatic plants in summer. Charcoal, stone scrapers, and other artifacts found nearby indicate that Native hunters used this lookout for thousands of years.



▲ While in Coldfoot, visit the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center. Open daily from late May to early September.

Coldfoot (MP 175)

The original gold rush town of Coldfoot was located on the Middle Fork of the Koyukuk River near the mouth of Slate Creek. It got its name in 1900 when early prospectors reportedly got “cold feet” and left before winter set in.

Marion Creek Campground (MP 180)

This developed campground is operated by the BLM and offers 27 sites. See page 18 for campground details.



▲ Please note that all buildings in the Wiseman area are private property. Please stay on the roads.

What is the Arctic Circle?

The Arctic Circle is an imaginary line encircling the Earth at latitude 66°33' North where the sun does not set on summer solstice (June 20 or 21) or rise on winter solstice (December 21 or 22). As you travel farther north there are more days with 24-hour sunlight in summer or 24-hour night in winter. At the top of the world—the North Pole—the sun doesn't set for 180 days.

Wiseman (MP 189)

Just after crossing the Middle Fork Koyukuk Bridge #1, take the turnoff to the west and follow the signs 3 miles (5 km) to the historic village of Wiseman. Established in 1907 when miners discovered gold in nearby Nolan Creek, the town was once a bustling community. Many residents today subsist by hunting, trapping and gardening, and welcome visitors.



Sukakpak Mountain (MP 203)

A massive wall rising to 4,459 feet (1,338 m) that glows in the afternoon sun, Sukakpak Mountain is an awe-inspiring sight. Peculiar ice-cored mounds known as palsas punctuate the ground at the mountain's base. “Sukakpak” is an Inupiat Eskimo word meaning “marten deadfall.” Seen from the north, the mountain resembles a carefully balanced log used to trap marten.





“...we enjoyed the vast panorama of the Brooks Range... endless mountains rising and falling as if the waves of some gigantic ocean had suddenly become frozen in full motion.”

Robert Marshall, *Alaska Wilderness*

Farthest North Spruce (MP 235)

As you approach the headwaters of the Dietrich River, trees grow scarce until they disappear altogether. This last tall spruce, approximately 273 years old, was killed by a vandal in 2004.

Chandalar Shelf (MP 237)

Dramatic views encompass the headwaters of the Chandalar River to the east. The next few miles traverse a major winter avalanche zone. State transportation workers stationed here fire artillery shells to clear the slopes above the highway.

Atigun Pass (MP 244)

You cross the Continental Divide at Atigun Pass (elev. 4,739 ft/1422 m). Rivers south of here flow into the Pacific Ocean or Bering Sea, while rivers to the north flow into the Arctic Ocean. Watch for Dall sheep, which are often on the road or on nearby slopes. Storms can dump snow here even in June and July.

Galbraith Lake (MP 275)

This is all that remains of a large glacial lake that once occupied the entire Atigun Valley. Just downstream from the bridge is the spectacular Atigun Gorge and the western boundary of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Follow the turnoff 4 miles (6.4 km) to the BLM undeveloped campground.

Toolik Lake (MP 284)

The University of Alaska Fairbanks established a research station here in 1975, and conducts studies on arctic ecosystems and global climate change. Please take care to avoid their research sites, scattered throughout the surrounding area. There are no public facilities here and access to the station is by invitation only.

Slope Mountain (MP 300)

Slope Mountain marks the northern boundary of the Bureau of Land Management public land. From here north, the Alaska Department of Natural Resources manages the land around the Dalton Highway and Prudhoe Bay.

Happy Valley (MP 334)

Originally the site of a pipeline construction camp, Happy Valley offers easy access to the Sagavanirktok River as well as room for camping. The airstrip is active, so avoid camping or parking there.



Photo by Dennis R. Green

◀ Watch for muskoxen near the river from here to the coast. When resting, they look like large, dark humps with a cream-colored “saddle.”

Sag River Overlook (MP 348)

A short trail leads to a viewing deck with interpretive displays. On a clear day, you can see the Philip Smith Mountains 35 miles (56 km) away.

Last Chance (MP 355)

Parking, an outhouse, and trash containers are available here. Scan the willow thickets nearby in June for the elusive and beautiful bluethroat, a rare songbird that winters in Central Asia and Africa.

Franklin Bluffs (MP 383)

Iron-rich soils on the far bank of the river give the bluffs their vivid colors. They are named after Sir John Franklin, the British explorer who mapped the arctic coastline and searched for the Northwest Passage. Scan the gravel bars along the river for muskoxen and caribou.

Deadhorse (MP 414)

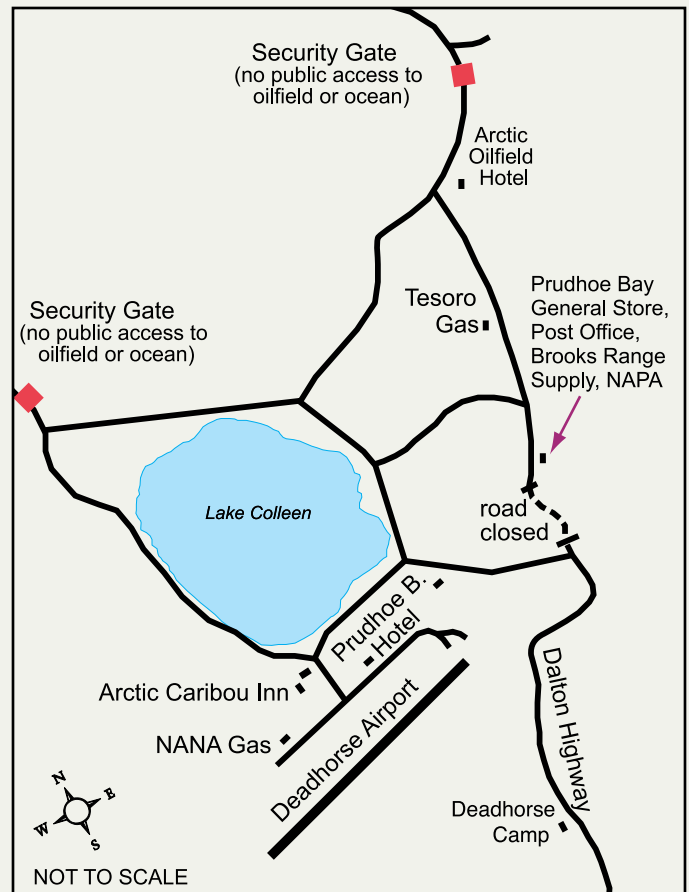
Deadhorse is the industrial camp that supports the Prudhoe Bay oilfield. The public highway ends here, about 8 miles (13 km) from the Arctic Ocean. There are no public outhouses or tent-camping areas.

Permafrost lies only inches beneath the surface of the Coastal Plain, creating a bizarre landscape of wetlands and ice-wedge polygons. From Deadhorse, you travel over permafrost up to 2,000 feet (600 m) thick. This aerial photo shows caribou on polygonal ground.

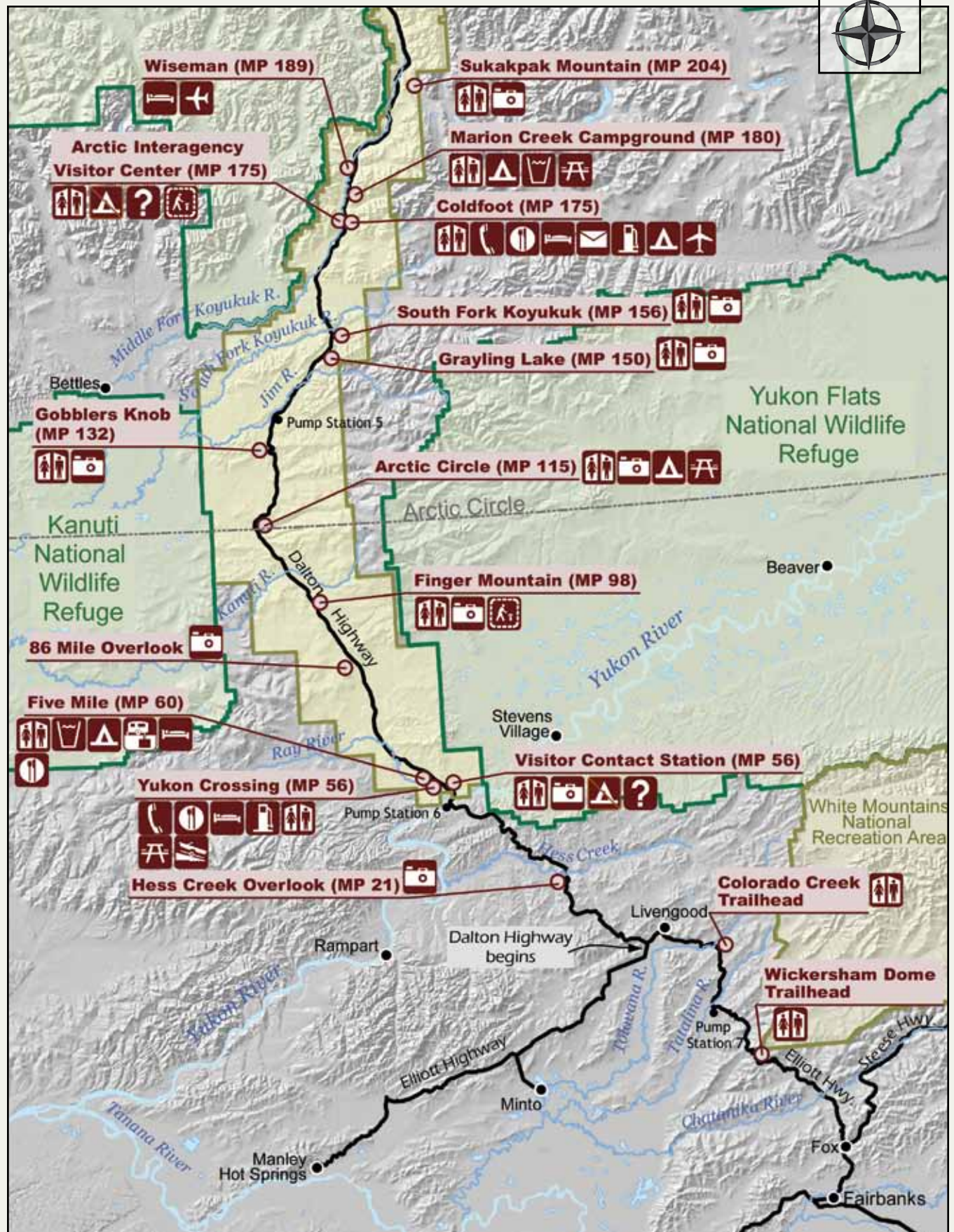


▲ Visitors size up the Arctic Ocean.

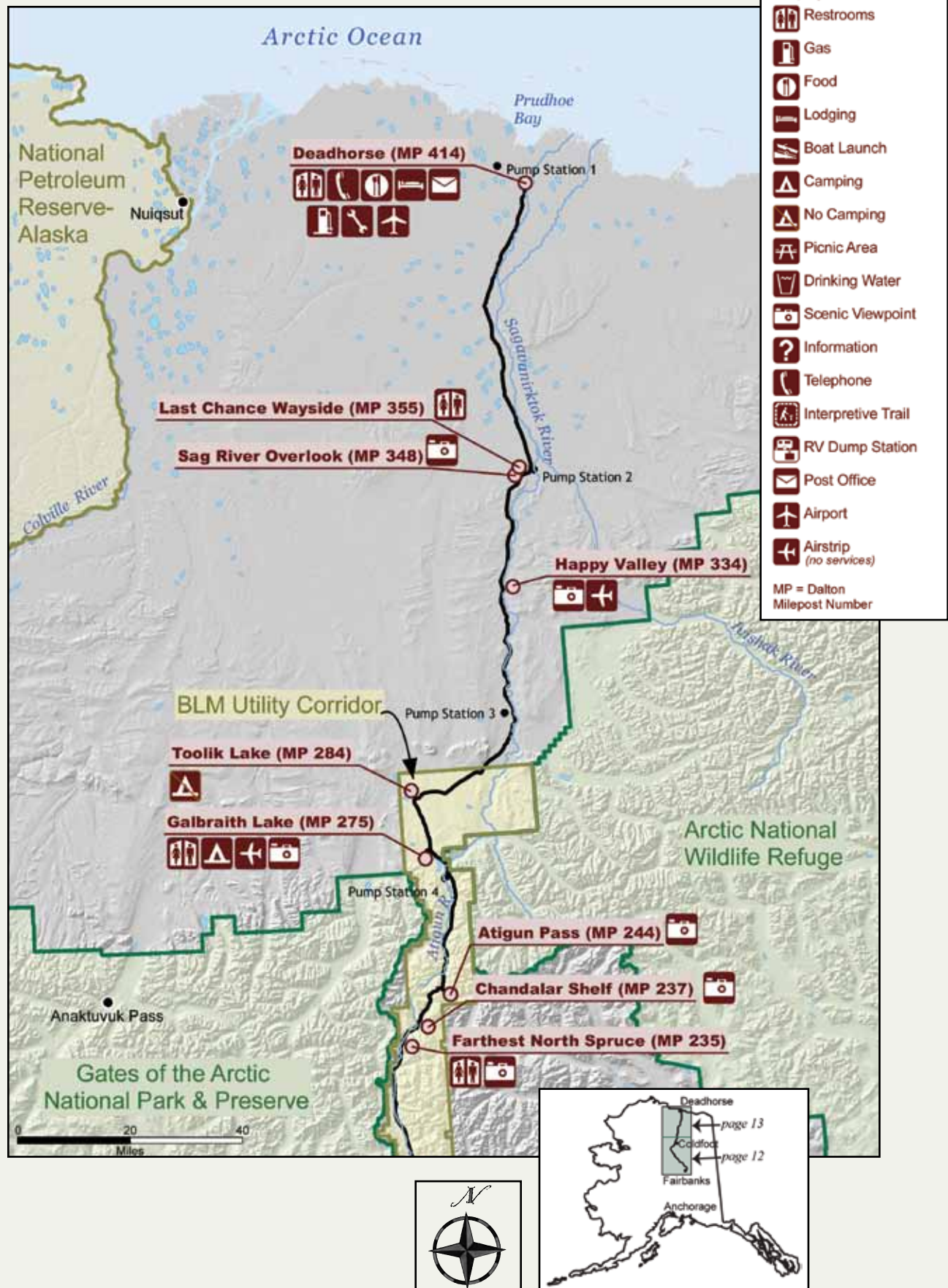
Deadhorse vicinity map



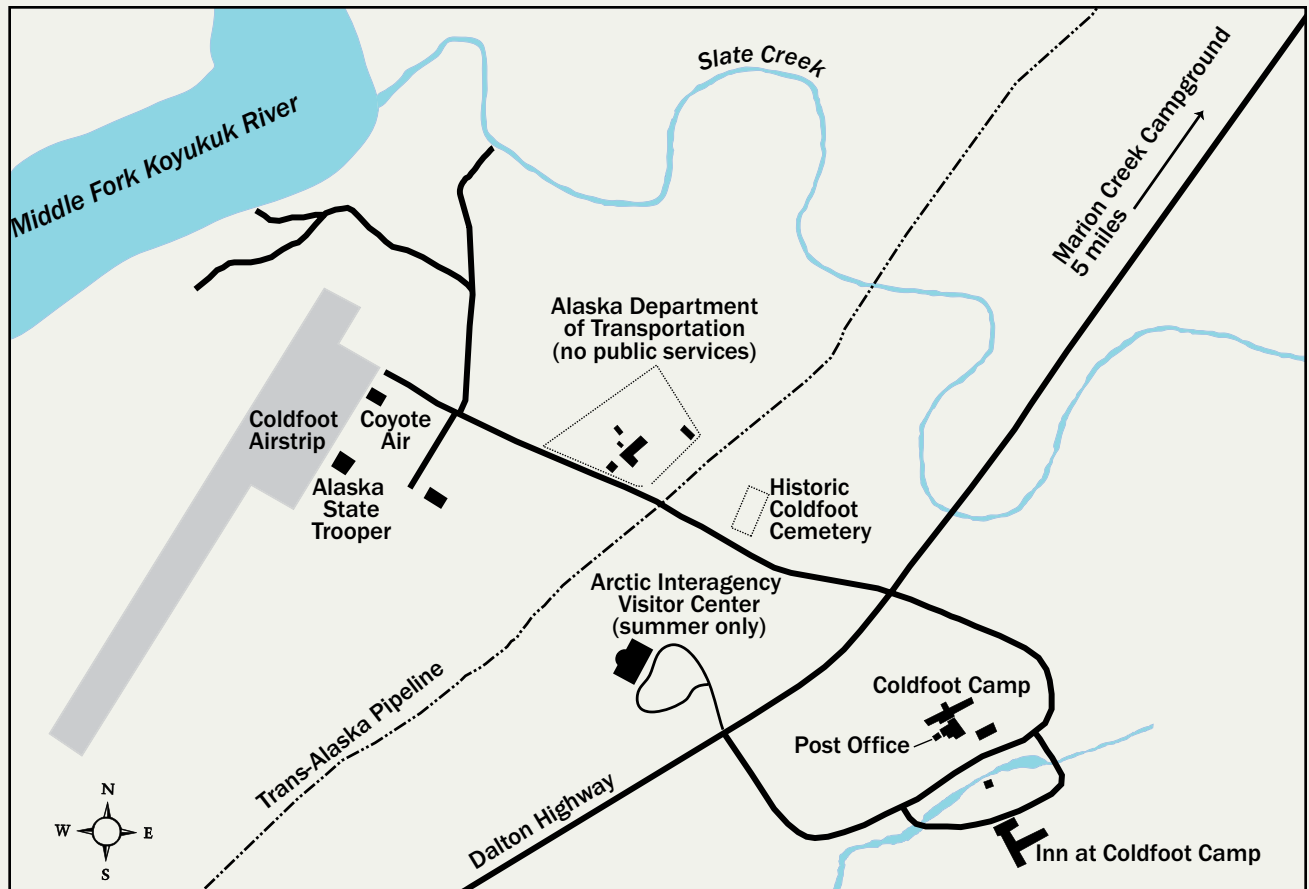
Fairbanks to MP 215



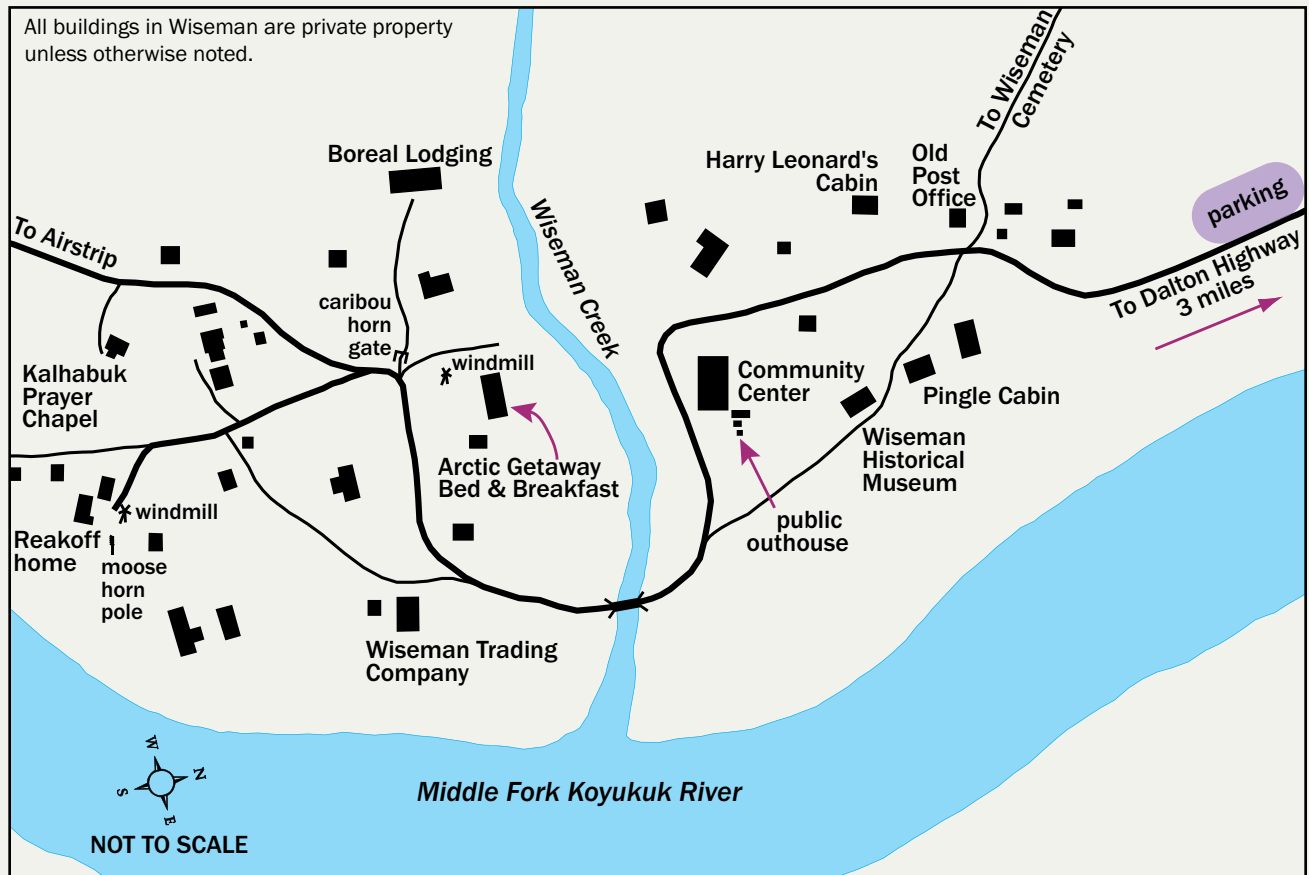
MP 215 to Deadhorse



Coldfoot



Wiseman



An Icebound Land

The low angle of the sun means less heat to combat frigid temperatures. Thus, permanently-frozen ground, or *permafrost*, lies beneath much of northern Alaska and keeps water close to the surface. Ice creates strange features in arctic landscapes, some of which you can see along the Dalton Highway.

Pingos look like isolated hills but have thick cores of ice. As groundwater freezes it forms a lump of ice. As more water migrates inward the lump slowly grows and forces the ground upwards. Pingos can be decades or thousands of years old. Open-system pingos arise from artesian water in the warmer Interior: a tree-covered one lies west of the road at Milepost 32.7. Closed-system pingos form out of ice beneath old lake beds on the much-colder North Slope.



Frost mounds at Sukakpak Mountain.

Frost Mounds look like miniature pingos and also have cores of ice. Mounds in various stages occur at Sukakpak Mountain, Milepost 203. They arise as groundwater moves downslope through the soil above the permafrost and freezes, pushing up the tundra. Mounds may appear and melt over one or more seasons or last for many years.

Thermokarsts form when lenses of underground ice thaw, often after a disturbance such as

wildfire, earthquake, clearing ground for construction, or a warming period. Thermokarst ponds and lakes often have unstable shores with trees or tundra collapsing inwards along the edge. You can see one west of the highway at Milepost 215.



Aerial view of high-centered polygons.

Ice-wedge polygons form when the ground freezes, contracts and cracks in geometric patterns. Water seeps into the cracks and over thousands of years, forms thick wedges of ice that push the soil up into ridges. If the ice in the ridges melts they subside, leaving high-centered polygons. Look for geometrically patterned ground alongside the highway north of Galbraith Lake. Polygons are especially prominent around Deadhorse.

Aufeis, or overflow, forms on streams during winter when the channel ice thickens, constricting the stream flow beneath. The water is forced through cracks onto the surface where it freezes. Over the winter, these sheets of water freeze into thick layers that can fill river valleys and last into August.



Percy Pingo rises south of Deadhorse near Milepost 376.



Small thermokarst near the Trans-Alaska Pipeline.



Aufeis at Galbraith Lake.

To learn more

Permafrost and ice-related features in Alaska are clearly explained and illustrated in *Permafrost: A Guide to Frozen Ground in Transition* by Neil Davis. This book is available at the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center in Coldfoot (in summer) and in Fairbanks bookstores.

This Is Bear Country!

You may encounter bears anywhere along the Elliott and Dalton highways. Both black and grizzly bears are found south of the Brooks Range, and grizzlies roam all the way to the Arctic Ocean. All bears are potentially dangerous. It is illegal to feed wildlife or leave food where they can get it. Food-conditioned bears become a threat to people and frequently must be destroyed.

These tips provide minimum guidelines. Learn as much as you can about being safe around bears!

Avoid Encounters

LOOK AND LISTEN: Bears are active both day and night and may appear anywhere. Fresh tracks and droppings indicate that bears may be close.

DON'T SURPRISE: A startled bear may attack.

MAKE NOISE: Let bears know you're in the area—sing, yell, or clap your hands loudly. Bells may be ineffective. Be especially careful in thick brush or near noisy streams.

NEVER APPROACH: Stay at least 1/4 mile (400 m) from any bear. Sows may attack to defend their cubs.

KEEP A CLEAN CAMP: Store food, scented items, and trash in airtight containers away from your tent.

If You Encounter a Bear

DO NOT RUN! Running may elicit a chase response. If the bear does not see you, backtrack or detour quickly and quietly away. Give the bear plenty of room. If the bear sees you, back away slowly. Speak in a low, calm voice while waving your arms slowly above your head.

IF A BEAR APPROACHES stand still and keep your pack on. Remain still until the bear turns, then slowly back off.

IF A GRIZZLY MAKES PHYSICAL CONTACT, PLAY DEAD. Lie flat on your stomach and lace your fingers behind your neck. Your pack will help protect your back.

IF A BLACK BEAR ATTACKS, FIGHT BACK.



▲ Bears often appear tame but are unpredictable. Keep your distance!

Should I carry a firearm?

Firearms are permitted for personal protection in the Dalton Highway Corridor although they are prohibited for sport hunting within 5 miles (8 km) either side of the highway. If you are inexperienced and cannot load, aim, and fire accurately in an emergency, you probably should not carry one. An injured bear may attack more violently or create a problem for other people.

Does pepper spray work?

Pepper sprays have been used successfully to deter bears. Most sprays have an effective range of about 30 feet (9 m), but are greatly affected by wind. Spray should not be used like insect repellent—don't spread it on your clothes or equipment. Before taking it on an airplane, tell the pilot so it can be stored safely.

Wolves may approach people along the Dalton. In 2006, two people were chased and one was bitten. Some incidents appear to involve food-conditioned wolves. Never approach or feed wolves. Do not walk pets in an area where you see wolves or fresh wolf sign—wolves may act aggressively toward pets, even those on a leash. For more information go to www.adfg.alaska.gov and type “wolf safety” in the search bar.

Do your homework

- Ask for the brochure *Bear Facts*, free at any state or federal visitor center. Go to www.adfg.alaska.gov and type “living in bear country” in the search bar.
- View the video *Staying Safe in Bear Country* at the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center.
- Read the book *Bear Attacks* by Stephen Herrero, available at any Alaska Geographic bookstore.

Watching Wildlife

Boreal Forest

The boreal forest is the largest forest ecosystem in the world, encircling the entire northern hemisphere. A cold, dry climate and areas of permanently frozen ground dictate what grows here. Scraggly spruce trees may be more than a century old. Wildfires recycle nutrients into the soil and create new sources of food and shelter for wildlife.

Here you will see few animals unless they cross the road. The forest hides moose, wolf, fox, black bear, snowshoe hare, lynx, and over 50 species of songbirds. Beaver, muskrat, and mink may be glimpsed in streams and ponds along with Pacific loon, horned grebe, widgeon, scaup, and northern shoveler.

Brooks Range

Steep, rocky peaks and glacier-carved valleys dominate this rugged landscape. Extending over 700 miles (1120 km) from east to west, the Brooks Range separates the Arctic's plants, birds, and weather systems from Interior Alaska.

Scan open areas and alpine valleys for moose, caribou, wolf, wolverine, and grizzly. Search the sky for golden eagle and rocky slopes for northern wheatear, Dall's sheep, and Alaska marmot—a species unique to the Brooks Range.

North Slope

From Slope Mountain north, continuous permafrost lies beneath the surface. Only tough, ground-hugging plants can survive the frozen ground, frigid temperatures, icy winds, and weak sunlight. In this treeless landscape you can see animals from great distances.



▲ Dall sheep rams on the road at Atigun Pass.



Keep a safe viewing distance to avoid disturbing wildlife.

Tips for Viewing Wildlife

- Be patient.
- Scan open areas such as mountain slopes, riverbanks, lakes and meadows.
- Use binoculars, spotting scopes, and telephoto lenses to bring animals closer.
- Stay inside your vehicle—it acts as a viewing blind and animals are less likely to flee.
- Animals tend to be more active in the evening and early morning hours.

Wolf, wolverine, grizzly, red fox, caribou, and musk ox sometimes forage near the highway. Hunting birds such as northern harrier, short-eared owl, peregrine, and gyrfalcon search for arctic ground squirrels, lemmings, and small birds such as Lapland longspur and golden plover. Scan brushy swales for unusual songbirds, especially Smith's longspur, yellow wagtail, and bluethroat.

Coastal Plain

With annual precipitation of about five inches—less than the Sonoran Desert—we expect the Arctic to be dry. But underlying permafrost seals the ground. Vast wetlands provide protein-rich sedges and huge populations of insects and other invertebrates—a banquet for migratory birds and other grazers.

Here you may see truly Arctic species such as arctic fox, snowy owl, and pomarine jaeger. Caribou congregate to feed in late June and early July. Muskoxen browse along the Savanirktok River. Around the numerous ponds, look for tundra swan, ruddy turnstone, phalarope, white-fronted goose and long-tailed duck. At the coast, you may see yellow-billed loon, Sabine's gull, and three species of eiders—common, king, and spectacled.

Recreation Along the Dalton

Here you can experience wild Alaska, where the land beyond the highway and pipeline lies virtually untouched. There are no trails, bridges or signs to point the way. Choose your own route, encounter your own challenges, and make your own discoveries.

This wild country demands caution, preparation, and self-reliance. Even for a short day-hike, prepare for challenging terrain, unpredictable weather, and medical emergencies. If you have questions about where to go or how to prepare, talk with staff at the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center in Coldfoot.

Camping

Recreational camping is limited to 14 days at any one spot. Park well off the road—passing vehicles can fling rocks more than 30 feet (9m) off the highway—and do not block access roads to the pipeline.

Marion Creek Campground has a host on site from Memorial Day to Labor Day. All other campgrounds are undeveloped areas.

Toolik Lake Research Natural Area:
Camping is prohibited from MP 278-293 and the surrounding area without prior written approval from BLM.



▲ Roadside camping near Dillon Mountain.

Hiking

The best hiking is in the Brooks Range, where ridges and stream drainages provide firm footing and the forest thins to low-growing tundra. Throughout the Arctic there are wetlands and bogs that hinder walking. Areas of tussocks — basketball-sized clumps of sedge surrounded by watery moss—are particularly aggravating. Tussock fields occur in mountain valleys and dominate the landscape of the North Slope. Waterproof boots with good ankle support are essential.

Hiking east from the highway will lead you to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge while hiking west leads to Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve. Choose your route with care and bring topographic maps and a compass with you; a GPS can also be useful. Note: the declination varies 27°-30° or more east of true north, be sure you adjust your compass.

Campgrounds

NAME	LOCATION	SERVICES	NOTES
Five Mile undeveloped	4 miles (6.4 km) north of the Yukon River at MP 60.	potable water dump station outhouse host on site	No fee (subject to change). Best sites are on high ground near north entrance.
Arctic Circle undeveloped	MP 115, up the hill behind viewing deck and picnic area.	NO WATER outhouse trash containers	No fee (subject to change). No camping at viewing deck or picnic area.
Marion Creek 27 sites, some for RVs	5 miles (8 km) north of Coldfoot at MP 180.	potable water outhouse trash containers host on site	Fee area. A two-mile hike upstream leads to a 20-foot waterfall.
Galbraith Lake undeveloped	MP 275, follow signs to airstrip, then continue past buildings 2.5 miles (4 km) on unimproved road.	creek nearby, treat water outhouse trash containers	No fee (subject to change). Spectacular views of the lake and Brooks Range. A nearby gravel pit will be active during road reconstruction.



Photo courtesy of Whitney Root

Backcountry

Backcountry visitors to Gates of the Arctic National Park may complete registration and borrow bear-resistant containers at the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center in Coldfoot, free of charge. Bear-resistant containers are first-come, first-served.

Hunting

Sport hunting is permitted in most areas, but there are special regulations. **From the Yukon River north, hunting with firearms is prohibited within 5 miles (8 km) either side of the highway.** Bow hunting is permitted within most of this area. Hunting is prohibited in the Prudhoe Bay Closed Area. Sport hunting is prohibited in Gates of the Arctic National Park, but permitted in Gates of the Arctic National Preserve. Be sure you have accurate maps of the boundaries.

For complete regulations, maps of closed areas, and assistance in planning your hunt, please contact the Alaska Department of Fish and Game at 907-459-7207.

Fishing

Arctic grayling, whitefish, Dolly Varden, arctic char, lake trout, burbot, and northern pike can all be found in the far north. Fish in the Arctic grow and reproduce slowly and are susceptible to overharvest. Anglers are encouraged to practice catch-and-release fishing techniques and to use barbless hooks to minimize injury.

The following regulations are in effect 5 miles (8 km) either side of the highway: fishing for salmon is prohibited; lake trout are catch-and-release only; daily bag and possession limit for arctic grayling is 5 fish. You need an Alaska sport fishing license and a current regulations booklet for the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim Region.

Off-Road Vehicles

State statute prohibits off-road vehicles within 5 miles (8 km) either side of the highway from the Yukon River to the Arctic Ocean.

Canoeing and Rafting

There are several excellent river trips along the Dalton. For more detailed descriptions of these rivers, check with the Alaska Public Lands Information Center in Fairbanks or the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center (see back page).

- The Jim River and Middle Fork, Koyukuk River: Class I-II, several access points along the highway.
- Atigun and Sagavanirktok Rivers: Class III-IV+ whitewater, access Atigun at MP 271; Sag at MP 306.
- Ivishak National Wild River: Class II, access by chartered air service from Deadhorse or Coldfoot.

Gold Panning

Panning is permitted on a few federal stream segments along the Dalton Highway south of Atigun Pass (MP 244). No panning in the pipeline right-of-way (27 feet/8.2 m on either side of the pipeline) and no panning on federal mining claims without permission. **Suction dredging is prohibited in the Utility Corridor.**

For detailed information, pick up a copy of *Panning for Gold along the Dalton Highway* at one of the visitor centers. This free brochure lists creeks and rivers that are open to the public for recreational panning and rates their potential for gold.



Photo by John Schauer

▲ A kayaker tackles the Class III-IV rapids in Atigun Gorge.



Backcountry Hazards

If you venture off the highway, know that there are very real risks and proceed with caution. You will probably not see anyone else and you are likely to be far from help.

- Streams and rivers are bitter cold, and heavy rain or snow can swell them to dangerous levels. Know the proper techniques before attempting to cross, or change your route to avoid hazardous crossings.
- Minimize animal encounters (see page 17); Keep your camp and gear clean; cook at least 100 feet (30 m) from your tent site; use bear-resistant food containers and store them away from camp and cook areas; carry out all waste.
- Treat all water to prevent infection by *Giardia*.
- Prepare for sudden and severe weather; snow can fall anytime in the Brooks Range and on the North Slope. Know how to prevent, recognize, and treat hypothermia before heading out.



LEAVE NO TRACE

- Plan Ahead and Prepare
- Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
- Dispose of Waste Properly
- Leave What You Find
- Minimize Campfire Impacts
- Respect Wildlife
- Be Considerate of Other Visitors

Where's the best place to view the midnight sun?

At the Arctic Circle, the midnight sun circles the northern horizon and drops behind the Brooks Range. For the nearest view, climb the hill above Gobblers Knob 17 miles (27 km) north of the Arctic Circle at MP 132. If you travel north of Atigun Pass (MP 245) you can experience the full 24 hours of sunlight.



Photo by Whitney Root

How cold does it get in winter?

The coldest temperature ever recorded in the United States was $-80^{\circ}\text{F}/-62^{\circ}\text{C}$ at Prospect Camp, 39 miles (62 km) south of Coldfoot in 1971. On January 28, 2012 an unofficial temperature of $-79^{\circ}\text{F}/-62^{\circ}\text{C}$ was recorded at nearby Jim River Maintenance Station. Then the battery died.





Wild Spaces, Public Places



Most of the land you see from the Dalton Highway is federal public land, a legacy for future generations. These areas are so unique that Congress established special designations which honor their special values to the nation and the world.

The Utility Corridor

In 1971 after oil was discovered on the North Slope, the Utility Corridor was established to protect the route of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. The Corridor's boundaries vary from less than a mile to nearly 12 miles from the pipeline. While the corridor's primary function is the transportation of energy resources, the Bureau of Land Management encourages recreational activities such as hiking, fishing, gold panning, and canoeing on these lands.

Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve

Much of the Brooks Range west of the Dalton Highway lies within one of the premier wilderness areas in the National Park System.

Forester and conservationist Robert Marshall explored the area in the 1930s. Impressed by two massive peaks flanking the North Fork of the Koyukuk River, he called them the "Gates of the Arctic."

Encompassing 8.4 million acres, the park and preserve protect primeval landscapes, their flora and fauna, and the culture and traditions of Native people.

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

Bordering the Utility Corridor near Atigun Canyon, this refuge extends east across the Brooks Range and North Slope to Canada.

It offers extraordinary wilderness, recreation, and wildlife values. The Porcupine Caribou Herd (named for the Porcupine River on the herd's migration route), polar bears, muskoxen, and snow geese depend on its unspoiled environment. Pioneer Alaska conservationists Margaret and Olaus Murie traveled the region by dog team and canoe, and were instrumental in gaining refuge status for the area.

Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge

Located west of the Finger Mountain area and slightly larger than the state of Delaware, this refuge protects large wetland areas that are critical to nesting waterfowl and other wildlife. These resources provide sustenance for the people of the Koyukuk River valley.

Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge

Encompassing an area larger than Vermont and Connecticut combined, this refuge protects a vast complex of lakes and rivers in the Yukon watershed upstream from the Dalton Highway. Wildlife, especially migratory birds such as ducks, geese, and songbirds, thrive in these wetlands and support the hunting and gathering tradition of Yukon River villages.



Woolly Lousewort

Food for Thought

By Lisa Shon Jodwalis



How is the northern landscape like an ice cream sandwich? If permafrost—the underlying layer of permanently frozen ground—stays frozen, structures like roads remain firm. The above-ground sections of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline are anchored in permafrost. If permafrost liquifies, these structures can sag or buckle like soggy wafers atop melting ice cream.

In the Far North, ice and permafrost shape the land (see page 15). Glacier ice is ancient, its age measured in tens or hundreds of thousands of years. Pingos and ice wedges grow over centuries or millennia. Because we can't actually see them move, we may assume these features are static and unchanging. But they grow, shrink, swell, burst, melt, sag, and sometimes flow like ice cream.

Dr. Ronald Daanen at the University of Alaska Fairbanks began inspecting some strange formations in the Brooks Range north of Coldfoot several years ago. Earlier geologists thought they were inactive rock glaciers. What caught Dr. Daanen's eye were the oddly-tilting trees on the surface, which often indicate permafrost. He found "... a big mass of sediment and debris that comes from eroding mountainsides. It is mixed with water during snow melt, which forms cave ice. Permafrost keeps the tongue-shaped feature from collapsing down the sides of the mountain during the summer."

Curious, he began taking measurements at one of these "frozen debris-lobes" and found that it's on the move and accelerating. "Now that permafrost is warming, these features seem to move faster and faster. We have measured the feature ... and found rates of up to 7cm/day (0.8 inches), where historically the rates are about 1cm/day."

◀ One of several debris lobes visible from the Dalton Highway. Dr. Daanen warns "It can be dangerous to climb these features because they have steep, slippery slopes and real crevasses that are sometimes big enough for people to disappear in."

One debris lobe is less than 200 feet from the Dalton Highway. Its active face is over 60 feet high and 550 feet wide. When it meets the road—which could happen in less than 5 years—it will bulldoze over 24,000 tons of debris onto the road every year—about 440 truckloads for a 50-ton dump truck. Not far beyond the highway lies the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. Dr. Daanen and his colleagues are working with the Alaska Department of Transportation to answer some urgent questions: How long do these features keep moving? Due to a warmer climate will they move more and for a longer time? The debris-lobe's downhill ooze presents a gigantic problem with no clear solutions.

Ice and permafrost don't always change at a glacial pace or in glacier-sized chunks. Frost mounds and icing blisters swell up and melt away each year along the Dalton Highway. These ephemeral features remind us that the ground can lift and sag as ice forms and melts, much like a wafer on an ice cream sandwich.

Lisa is an Interpretive Park Ranger with the Bureau of Land Management.



▲ A very large ice-cored mound formed at Chandalar Shelf in 2010. See if you can spot two people in this photo.

Partners

As the primary nonprofit education partner of the Dalton Highway region, Alaska Geographic connects people to Alaska's magnificent wildlands through experiential education, award-winning books and maps, and by directly supporting the state's parks, forests, and refuges. Over the past 50 years, Alaska Geographic has donated more than \$20 million to help fund educational and interpretive programs throughout Alaska's public lands.

Alaska Geographic operates bookstores across the state, including two locations along the Dalton Highway: the Visitor Contact Station at the Yukon River Crossing and the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center in Coldfoot. Your purchases at these locations directly support the Dalton Highway Corridor—a portion of every sale helps fund educational and interpretive programs throughout the region.

To find out more, become a member, or browse our selection of Alaska books, maps, and films, stop by any Alaska Geographic bookstore or visit our website at www.alaskageographic.org



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810 East Ninth Avenue
Anchorage, AK 99501
907-274-8440 or toll-free at 866-AK-PARKS
www.alaskageographic.org



Celebrate the Dalton Highway
Pins, patches, hats, and other products feature this unique Arctic Circle design. Exclusively from Alaska Geographic.

Planning Your Trip

Visit the Alaska Geographic bookstore in Coldfoot located at the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center to find these useful guides. In addition to books, visitors will also find maps, journals, posters, field bags, and more.



The Alaska Pipeline

PBS American Experience

The pipeline's construction sparked one of the most passionate conservation battles in American history. This superb documentary details the pipeline's history, engineering marvels, and the environmental controversy that accompanied its development.

\$29.99 DVD



Gates of the Arctic *Alaska's Brooks Range*

Narrated by Glenn Close

By Alaska Geographic

A visually stunning portrait of the Arctic's gaunt beauty, this exceptional film reveals the tenuous nature of life above the Arctic Circle. Captured in high definition and scored with the other-worldly music of John Luther Adams, the film explores the rich cultural and natural heritage of one of Alaska's wildest places.

\$12.95 DVD

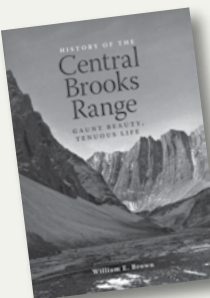


America's Wildest Refuge *Discovering the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge*

By Alaska Geographic and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

With sweeping views of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, its wildlife, and interviews with those that know it best, this documentary is an ecological and historical portrait of this corner of Alaska.

\$12.95 DVD



History of the Central Brooks Range *Gaunt Beauty, Tenuous Life*

By William E. Brown

Discover the challenges of survival in one of Alaska's most remote and rugged mountain ranges. Combining early Western exploration with an ethnohistory of its Native Alaskan inhabitants, Brown details the thriving cultural heritage that continues to exist in the Arctic today.

\$24.95

Also available online at www.alaskageographic.org



Franklin Bluffs, Milepost 375

Recreation and Regulations

Bureau of Land Management

Central Yukon Field Office
1150 University Avenue
Fairbanks, AK 99709-3844
800-437-7021 or 907-474-2200
<http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en.html>

Arctic Interagency Visitor Center

(Summer Only)
907-678-5209 or 907-678-2014

Alaska Public Lands Information Center

101 Dunkel Street, #110
Fairbanks, AK 99701-4806
907-459-3730
www.alaskacenters.gov/fairbanks.cfm

Tours and Commercial Services

Fairbanks Convention and Visitors Bureau

101 Dunkel Street, #111
Fairbanks, AK 99701-4806
907-456-5774 or 800-327-5774
www.explorefairbanks.com

Road Conditions

Alaska Department of Transportation

866-282-7577 or 907-451-2200
<http://511.alaska.gov>

Near the Dalton

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

800-362-4546 or 907-456-0250
TTY 800-877-8339 for hearing impaired
<http://arctic.fws.gov>

Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge

877-220-1853 or 907-456-0329
kanuti_refuge@fws.gov
<http://kanuti.fws.gov>

Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge

800-531-0676 or 907-456-0440
<http://yukonflats.fws.gov>

Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve

www.nps.gov/gaar

Fairbanks Headquarters
4175 Geist Road
Fairbanks, AK 99709
907-457-5752

Bettles Ranger Station
907-692-5494

Alaska Department of Natural Resources

907-451-2705
dnr.alaska.gov/commis/pic

North Slope Borough

Office of the Mayor
907-852-0200
www.north-slope.org

Hunting and Fishing

Alaska Department of Fish & Game

1300 College Road
Fairbanks, AK 99701
www.adfg.alaska.gov
Hunting & Wildlife 907-459-7206
Fishing 907-459-7207

Emergency Numbers

Medical emergency

From land lines at Yukon Crossing, Coldfoot or Deadhorse call the Alaska State Troopers (numbers below), or use CB Channel 19 to relay messages for assistance to the troopers.

Alaska State Troopers

Rural Alaska 800-811-0911
Fairbanks 907-451-5100

To report wildfires:

Alaska Fire Service

800-237-3633 or 907-356-5670

To report hunting or fishing violations:

Fish and Wildlife Protection

Coldfoot: 907-678-5211
Fairbanks: 907-451-5350

Alaska Fish and Wildlife Safeguard

800-478-3377