

**Points of Interest, continued from previous page**

**10) Palsa** MP 41.0/94.0

(no parking spot) Road construction in 1957 cut into the partially collapsed palsa on the south side of the road and initiated its deterioration. A palsa is a small dome-like frost mound, usually 10 to 20 feet high, containing peat. Closer examination reveals individual ice and peat layers typical of a palsa.

**11) Ketti Lakes** MP 41.5/93.5

Several small lakes and depressions in this area were formed when chunks of ice broke off retreating glaciers and were buried in the glacial debris. The ice eventually melted, leaving circular-shaped depressions called kettles.

**12) Maclaren Glacier Viewpoint, Maclaren River Bridge** MP 42.0/93.0

The Maclaren Glacier is about 16 miles north.

**13) Crazy Notch** MP 46.0/89.0

The Crazy Notch was formed by the actions of ice and water. The Maclaren Glacier once flowed through the Maclaren River Valley and deposited a lateral moraine, which is a buildup of rocks on the sides of the glacier. Crazy Notch was created when a glacial stream cut through the moraine. The notch acts as a natural snow catchment, closing the Denali Highway in winter with huge snowdrifts.

**14) Waterfowl Lakes** MP 49.5/85.5

These lakes and ponds are excellent summer habitat for many species of waterfowl and shorebirds. Look for diving and dabbling ducks, geese, grebes and shorebirds. You may also spot bald eagles, moose, caribou, beaver and fox in the vicinity. Look for the interpretive sign on the north side of the road.

**15) Clearwater Wayside/Outhouse** MP 55.5/79.5

**16) Eskers** MP 59.0/76.0

You are driving on an esker, a sinuous ridge of silt, sand, gravel and cobbles that were carried and deposited by a stream that flowed within the



**Alaska Range towers above cyclists between Paxson and Tangle Lakes.**

glacier, confined by walls of ice. When the glacier melted away, these deposits were left as elongated mounds. Eskers along this highway are some of North America's most outstanding examples of this type of glacial feature.

**17) Susitna River** MP 79.5/55.5

The Susitna River is a major drainage system in the Denali region. The river flows south from the Susitna Glacier and the Alaska Range and eventually turns west to flow through the Talkeetna Mountains and then south to Cook Inlet. The Susitna is not floatable because of Devil's Canyon downstream.

Access to the historic Valdez Creek Mine is on the east side of the Susitna River. The mine is now closed and the land is being reclaimed.

**18) Valdez Creek Mine Viewpoint** MP 85.0/50.0

Look across the Susitna River to the east for a view of the Valdez Creek gold mine reclamation in the foothills of the Clearwater Mountains. Originally discovered by the Peter Monahan party in 1903, about 495,000 Troy ounces of gold were produced before the mine closed in 1995.

**19) Alaska Range Viewpoint** MP 85.5/49.5

Watch for a small hill on the north side of the highway. The slight climb for about 600 yards is

well worth the effort. You will be rewarded with a breathtaking view of Mount Deborah (12,339'), Mount Hess (11,940') and the Susitna River valley.

**20) Alaska Range Interpretive Sign** MP 95.0/40.0  
(gravel "road" on north side of highway)

**21) Brushkana Creek Campground** MP 104.0/31.0

BLM campground with fire pits, water, toilets, trail and 22 campsites that are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

**22) Taiga** MP 111.5/23.5

At northern latitudes, there is a short, cool growing season followed by a long, cold winter. Trees that survive under these harsh conditions have stunted growth caused by permafrost, climactic conditions, elevation exposure and other factors. These boreal forests, called taiga, are dominated by spruce trees.

**23) Denali Highway Orientation Sign** MP 115.0/20.0

**24) Nenana River** MP 116.5/18.5

(gravel turnout) The Nenana is a glacial river whose primary source is the Nenana Glacier. The river flows into the Tanana River west of Fairbanks. The Tanana River then flows into the Yukon River and out to the Bering Sea. The Nenana is not good for fishing because it carries a heavy glacial silt load during the summer, but its whitewater rapids make it increasingly popular for river running.

**25) Mount McKinley View** MP 124.0/11.0 to 130.5/4.5

During clear weather, there are excellent views of North America's highest peak on this section of road. Approximately 80 percent of its 20,320' elevation rises above the surrounding landscape, making its base-to-summit rise greater than that of Mount Everest.

**26) Pavement Break** MP 132.0/3.0

Pavement begins/ends

**27) Junction with Parks Highway** MP 135.0/0.0

Cantwell is approximately two miles to the west.

## Introduction

The Denali Highway is often overlooked by motorists, yet offers some of the most spectacular scenery and recreation opportunities in Alaska. For those with a heart for adventure and a little extra time, the highway presents a historic glimpse of the Last Frontier – wilderness in all directions. An abundance of camping, fishing, wildlife viewing and hiking opportunities can be yours with planning.

## What to do

**Camping:** Permits are not required for non-commercial camping on BLM-administered lands. All camping is limited to 14 days within a 60-day period. BLM campgrounds fill on a first-come, first-served basis.

**Hiking:** Bring topographic maps. Most trails are unmarked. Rubber boots are recommended for crossing wet spots.

**Fishing:** Lake trout and grayling are found in many lakes and streams. For further information, consult the BLM brochure *Alaska Freshwater Fishing* or contact the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

**Sightseeing:** The entire route presents outstanding opportunities for scenic views of the Alaska Range, boreal vegetation, glacial features and wildlife. Look for caribou, moose, fox, ptarmigan, trumpeter swan and other waterfowl.

**Bicycling:** The Denali Highway and trails in the area can be rough and dusty, with wet, boggy areas and sharp rocks. Mileposts and many trail heads are not marked. Come prepared with adequate maps, spare parts and repair equipment.

**Canoeing/floating:** Tangle Lakes and the upper Nenana, Delta and Gulkana rivers offer various boating opportunities. Refer to BLM brochures *Delta National Wild & Scenic River*, *Gulkana National Wild River* and *Gulkana National Wild River Floater's Guide*.

## Travel Tips

The Denali Highway is 135 miles long and connects Paxson on the Richardson Highway with Cantwell Junction on the Parks Highway. A loop trip from Fairbanks is 436 miles and a loop trip from Anchorage is about 600 miles. Allow several days for these trips.

The highway is generally open from mid-May to October 1; do not attempt to travel the road at any other time as snowdrifts can block your way. It is paved for the first 21 miles west of Paxson and for three miles east of Cantwell Junction; the rest is gravel road. When driving on gravel, SLOW DOWN when passing another vehicle. Just one small flying rock can damage a windshield and it could be yours! The maximum recommended speed for travel when no other vehicles are in sight is 30 mph.

Before venturing on this road, be sure your vehicle is in good working order. Check your spare tire and see that you have a jack and lug wrench. Carry extra water and sufficient food for an emergency situation. You cannot predict how long it will take to get help if you become stranded.

Limited services are available at distances of 20 to 55 miles apart along the Denali Highway.

Expect to encounter subsistence hunting and harvest activities along the highway from the beginning of August until the road closes.

For more information about the Denali Highway, obtain a copy of the 92-page full color book *Rocks, Ridges & Glaciers: A Geologic Tour Along the Denali Highway*. Price \$10, available from:

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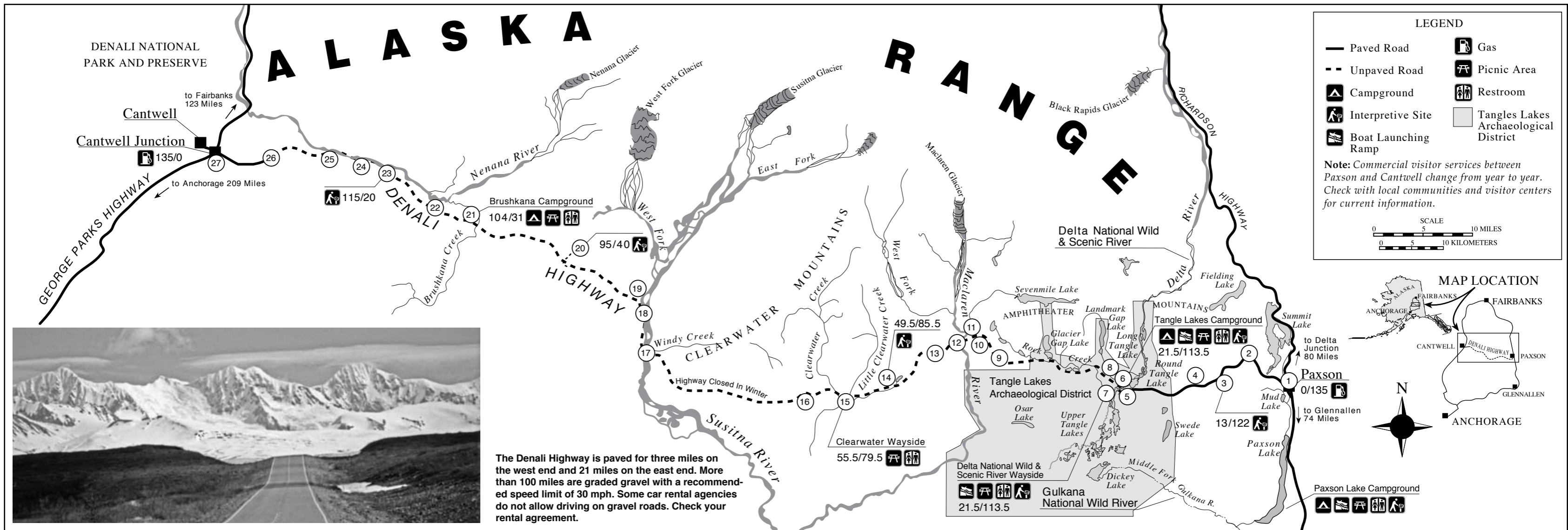
# Denali Highway

Points of Interest

Glennallen Field Office, Alaska

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

**BLM Recreation Guide**



## Points of Interest

**Note:** Points of interest are listed in numeric order traveling east to west. Approximate milepost (MP) numbers are also listed for travel in either direction. For travel east to west, set your odometer at 0 at the Paxson Lodge and use the first set of MP numbers. For travel west to east, set your odometer at 0 just as you turn onto the Denali Highway at Cantwell and use the second set of MP numbers.

- 1) Paxson Lodge on Richardson Highway** MP 0.0/135
- 2) Alaska Range/Glacial Geology** MP 6.5/128.5  
To the north is one of the state's greatest mountain ranges, the Alaska Range. Several peaks in view have elevations greater than 12,000 feet. This range extends in a great arc from Cook Inlet through the Mount McKinley massif (a prin-

cipal mountain mass) and on to the Canada border, a distance of 650 miles. The Gulkana Glacier, seen from this point, was formed from the buildup of snowfields high in the Alaska Range. Layers of snow accumulated year after year and compacted into ice. As the glacier became heavier, it began to move downslope, scraping and gouging the rock. This action, called glacial erosion, contributed to the rugged, jagged appearance of the Alaska Range and created the long U-shaped valleys seen from the road.

- 3) Wrangell Mountain Viewpoint** MP 13.0/122.0  
The Wrangell Mountains are about 78 air miles to the southeast. Mount Sanford (16,237') is the prominent peak on the left, Mount Drum (12,010') is on the right. In the center is Mount Wrangell (14,163'), which occasionally releases steam. It is the northernmost active volcano

- on the Pacific Rim. Look for the Denali Highway orientation sign on the south side of the road.
- 4) Tangle Lakes Archaeological District** (east boundary) MP 16.0/119.0  
More than 500 archaeological sites indicate that ancient peoples inhabited this area for at least 10,000 years. Because this district has some of the densest concentrations of archaeological resources in the North American subarctic, it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. To protect these prehistoric reminders of the past for further study, off-road vehicle travel is limited to designated roads and trails from this point west to MP 38. Collection of artifacts is illegal.
- 5) Pavement Break** MP 21.0/114.0  
Pavement ends/begins.

- 6) Tangle Lakes Campground** MP 21.5/113.5  
This BLM-managed campground, equipped with water pumps, toilets and a boat launch, rests amid a series of long, narrow lakes known as the Tangle Lakes. The lakes are connected by the Tangle River and form the headwaters of the Delta River. The campground boat launch provides access to the lakes and is also the designated put-in for the popular 30-mile Delta National Wild & Scenic River float trip (refer to the BLM brochure *Delta National Wild & Scenic River*). An interpretive sign at the campground entrance explains the importance of this area to caribou migration.
- 7) Delta National Wild and Scenic River Wayside** MP 21.5/113.5  
This BLM wayside is for day-use only (no camping) and is equipped with a picnic area and toilets. The boat launch provides access and

- parking for extended wilderness canoe trips in the Upper Tangle Lakes system to the south, where numerous lakes of all sizes provide important wildlife habitat.
- 8) Landmark Gap View** MP 22.5/112.5  
Landmark Gap is a glacially scoured cut in the mountains that formed during an Ice Age more than 10,000 years ago. The gap was a caribou migration route and a favorite Indian hunting area in centuries past. The Nelchina caribou herd still migrates through this area. The mountain peaks visible through the gap are McGinnis Peak (11,400') and Mount Moffit (13,020').
- 9) Alaska Range and Maclaren River Viewpoint** MP 37.0/98.0  
You are now at an elevation of about 4,000 feet, just a short distance from Maclaren Summit (4,086'), the second highest highway sum-

mit in Alaska. Stop and enjoy the panoramic view of the Alaska Range and the Maclaren River. Mount Hayes (13,832') and the Maclaren River and Glacier are dominant features, but Aurora Peak, Mount Shand and Mount Geist may also be seen. The Maclaren River flows from the Maclaren Glacier south to the Susitna River and then into Cook Inlet just west of Anchorage. Vegetation at this elevation is low-growing alpine tundra. Wildflowers bloom in abundance during the short Alaska summer (June and July). Look for pikas, ground squirrels and ptarmigan.

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