



# Bear Viewing Alaska



Alaska's vast and largely untouched wilderness areas make it an ideal location to see bears. The following list highlights a few locations to see bears in their natural habitat. Before you go, educate yourself on safe travel in bear country. Read and observe all bear safety information provided for your viewing area. All wild bears are potentially dangerous animals and should be viewed with extreme caution and respect. For more information, ask for the free interagency brochure "Bear Facts." Following the guidelines outlined in

these documents will keep you safe and Alaska's bears wild.

*Please note: All information in this packet is subject to change. This is especially relevant for information detailing fees, reservations, and permits.*

## McNeil River State Game Sanctuary

- What You See: Brown bears fishing for salmon and interacting with each other.
- Best Viewing Times: Mid-June (at Milkfik Creek) or July to mid-August (at McNeil River).
- Location: Alaska Peninsula, southwest of Anchorage, adjacent to Katmai National Park.
- Access: By charter air service from Anchorage or Homer. Cost: approximately \$800 round-trip from Homer. There is no road access.
- Management: Alaska Department of Fish & Game.
- Facilities: Primitive camping in designated camping area only. Four mile round-trip hike to bear-viewing pad. Bring your own tent, sleeping bag and pad, hip boots, cook stove and cooking gear, clothes and food. Good physical condition is essential. Because of the hike and confinement to the viewing pad, traveling with children is not recommended. Pets are not allowed.
- Reservations: Permits are required and awarded by lottery drawing. Applications are available in April of the previous year. *Applications must be received in the Sanctuary office by March 1st and must*

*include a nonrefundable \$25 fee per person. Your name may only appear on one application. Applications must be mailed in or filled out online (see "information" for web address). Up to three (3) persons may apply as a party. Winners of the lottery pay a user fee: \$150 for Alaska residents and \$350 for non-residents. Through the standard application, you can also apply for a standby permit, which allows access to the viewing pad if a regular permit holder decides to stay in camp (access is not guaranteed). Standby permits are also awarded by lottery and cost \$75 for residents and \$175 for non-residents. No more than ten (10) people per day are allowed to visit McNeil River or Milkfik Creek from June 7 through August 25.*

- Information: McNeil River Sanctuary Manager; Alaska Department of Fish & Game; 333 Raspberry Road; Anchorage, AK 99518-1599. Phone: (907) 267-2253. Online: [http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=viewingpermits.mcneil\\_apply](http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=viewingpermits.mcneil_apply)

## Katmai National Park: Brooks Falls

- What You See: Brown bears fishing for salmon and interacting with each other.
- Best Viewing Times: Peaks in mid-July and again in September (but be prepared for cool, wet weather).
- Location: Alaska Peninsula, southwest of Anchorage.
- Access: By commercial air service to King Salmon, then charter air service to Brooks Camp. Cost: approximately \$500-\$600 round-trip from Anchorage or \$700 from Homer. There is no road access.



- Management: National Park Service.
- Facilities: National Park Service and concessionaire services are available at Brooks Camp from June 1 through September 17. Lodging at Brooks Camp consists of the Brooks Camp Lodge or Brooks Camp Campground. Campers pay \$8 per night per person. Campsite reservations: [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) or 1-877-444-6777. Lodging reservations: [www.katmailand.com](http://www.katmailand.com) or 1-800-544-0551. It is less than a two mile walk from the visitor center area to Brooks Falls.
- Information: Katmai NP: [www.nps.gov/katm/](http://www.nps.gov/katm/) or (907) 246-3305.

### Stan Price State Wildlife Sanctuary

- What You See: Brown bears fishing for salmon at Pack Creek.
- Best Viewing Times: July and August.
- Location: Admiralty Island National Monument/Kitznoowoo Wilderness Area.
- Access: By charter boat or float plane via the South Sand Spit from Juneau. Cost: approximately \$950-1500 round trip per person. There is no road access.
- Management: This U.S. Forest Service area is co-managed with the Alaska Department of Fish & Game.
- Facilities: A bear-viewing tower is accessible by trail one mile from the

beach. The main bear-viewing area is on the creek bank about 1/2 mile from the beach. This is a designated Wilderness Area. No camping is allowed in the viewing area. There are **no** overnight accommodations, developed campsites, outhouses, picnic tables or other facilities. *Leave No Trace* camping is allowed on nearby Windfall Island and Swan Island. You must have your own boat to camp on the islands.

- Reservations: Permits are required between June 1 and September 10. Shoulder season permits (June 1 - July 4, August 26 - September 10) are unlimited and cost \$20 for adults, (16 - 61) \$10 for children, (under 16) and \$10 for seniors (over 61). Peak season permits (July 5 - August 25) cost \$50 for adults, \$25 for children, and \$25 for seniors. Peak season permits are limited and awarded on a first-come, first-serve basis. The Forest Service begins accepting mailed applications after February 20 (anything postmarked prior will be returned). See below (information) for more details and applications. Starting in 2012, permits will be processed online through [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov).
- Information: US Forest Service, Admiralty National Monument. (907) 586-8800. Online: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass/districts/admiralty/packcreek/permit.shtml>

### Ketchikan-Misty Fiords Ranger District--near the town of Hyder

- What You See: Brown and black bears fishing for salmon in Fish Creek. Also harlequin ducks, herons, eagles and beavers.
- Best Viewing Times: July - September.
- Location: Three miles outside the town of Hyder in Southeast Alaska.
- Access: The Cassiar Highway provides road access from British Columbia. Take the 41-mile detour to Hyder from Meziadin Junction and then head three miles north on Salmon River Road to access the viewing site.
- Management: U.S. Forest Service.
- Facilities: A Wildlife observation deck provides opportunities for viewing and photographing bears. A parking lot is located 200 feet north of the deck. Forest Service interpreters are on site to assist with questions. The site is open from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily.
- Information: Tongass National Forest; Misty Fiords National Monument; 3031 Tongass Ave.; Ketchikan, AK 99901. Phone (907) 225-2148. Southeast Alaska Discovery Center, 50 Main Street, Ketchikan, AK 99901. Phone (907) 228-6220, fax (907) 228-6237, TTY (907) 228-6237.

### Tongass National Forest: Anan Wildlife Observatory



- What You See: Black and sometimes brown bears fishing for salmon. Anan Creek supports the largest run of pink salmon in Southeast Alaska.
- Best Viewing Times: July through mid to late August.
- Location: Anan Creek is 31 miles south of Wrangell, on the mainland of the Cleveland Peninsula in Southeast Alaska.
- Access: By boat or float plane from

Wrangell or Ketchikan (there is no road access). Cost: air charters from Ketchikan start at about \$390 per person round trip; from Wrangell about \$400 each way per person. Guided one-day boat trips start at about \$200 per person. Contact the Wrangell Ranger District for a list of authorized guides.

- Management: U.S. Forest Service. During the main viewing season, interpreters staff the trailhead and the observatory.

- Facilities: The half-mile trail to the observatory begins at the red and white diamond-shaped trailhead marker just above the rocky beach at the mouth of Anan Lagoon. The beach can have treacherous footing. The trail is a partial board-walk and moderately steep, and has many staircases and bridges which are slippery when wet. The observatory consists of a deck overlooking the falls, covered shelter and nearby outhouse. The following are not allowed: camping, pets, food or beverages (except water), and off-trail travel.

- Reservations: From July 5 through August 25, individual permits are required to visit the wildlife observatory. Permit applications for parties is limited to ten persons or less and are awarded by lottery. The application period begins for the public on February 15 (earlier for guides). If you are chosen, there is a \$10 fee. A maximum of 4 permits per day are set aside for the Anan Bay cabin, reservable at [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) or 1-877-444-6777. Reservations can be made up to six months in advance. For additional information and application requests, see "information" in the next section.

- Information: US Forest Service; Wrangell Ranger District; 525 Bennett Street, Wrangell, AK 99929. Phone (907) 874-2323. Online: [https://fsplaces.fs.fed.us/fsfiles/unit/r10/tongass/r10\\_anan\\_reservations.nsf/MainPage?OpenForm](https://fsplaces.fs.fed.us/fsfiles/unit/r10/tongass/r10_anan_reservations.nsf/MainPage?OpenForm)

## Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge

- What You See: Kodiak brown bears fishing for salmon.

- Best Viewing Times: Early July to early August, although seeing bears is not guaranteed.

- Location: Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge on Kodiak Island.



- Access: By commercial air service (about \$400 round trip from Anchorage) or ferry to Kodiak, then by charter air service from Kodiak (70 miles, about 40 minutes flying time). There is no road access to much of the Island.

- Management: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.
- Facilities: Bears live throughout the Island but are not extremely common on the roadways near the city of Kodiak. For the best bear viewing, book a air taxi viewing trip, stay at a remote lodge, or fly into one of the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge's many public-use cabins.

- Reservations: Public-use cabin reservations can be made up to six months in advance using [www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov) or 1-877-444-6777.

- Information: Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge; 1390 Buskin River Road; Kodiak, AK 99615. Phone: 1-888-408-3514. Online: <http://www.kodiak.fws.gov/>

- Best Viewing Times: Late May through September.

- Location: By road on the George Parks Highway (Alaska Highway #3). Most of the park road in Denali is accessible by shuttle bus only.

- Management: National Park Service.
- Facilities: Seven campgrounds (no RV hookups), three of which are accessible by private vehicle, the rest by park camper bus. Hotels at Park entrance, and many hotels, cabins, and B&Bs in neighboring Communities. The park concessionaire operates shuttle buses daily which take visitors into the heart of the park.

- Reservations: Shuttle bus tickets and campsites are available by advance reservation: [www.reservedenali.com](http://www.reservedenali.com) or 1-800-622-7275. Backcountry camping permits are issued in person, no more than one day in advance, at the Backcountry Information Center.

## Denali National Park

- What You See: Grizzly bears; usually individuals or small family groups, in Interior Alaska's alpine tundra habitat. They roam over large areas feeding primarily on vegetation and small mammals and are often visible only at a distance.



**Fees:** Entrance fees: \$10 per person or \$20 per vehicle (waived if you possess the Federal Annual, Senior or Access pass\*). Shuttle bus fees are on a sliding scale depending on your age and destination. Camping fees vary based on location (backcountry camping permits are free). Shuttle bus tickets can also be obtained at the Wilderness Access Center.

•Information: Denali National Park PO Box 9; Denali Park, AK 99755. Phone (907) 683-2294.

Online: <http://www.nps.gov/dena>

## **Polar Bear Viewing: Barrow and Kaktovik**

•What You See: Possibility, though infrequent and highly unpredictable, of seeing polar bears in or near the villages.

•Best Viewing Times: Spring and fall whaling season: whale carcasses may attract polar bears. In fall, presence of bears also depends on formations of the pack ice, which varies from year to year but usually occurs in late September or October.

•Location: Arctic Ocean coast, extreme northern Alaska.

•Access: By commercial air service from Fairbanks or Anchorage. Round trip cost is about \$480-\$680 from Anchorage to Barrow and about \$700 from Fairbanks to Kaktovik. There is no road access to Barrow or Kaktovik.

•Management: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is responsible for marine mammals in Alaska.

•Facilities: Hotel accommodations available in Barrow. Taxi service or local residents may take visitors to locations where bears have been seen. Modest accommodations available in Kaktovik as well as a small general store and laundromat, but there are no restaurants or other visitor services. Local residents may offer



informal tours.

•Information: City of Barrow: PO Box 929, Barrow, AK 99723. Phone (907) 852-5211. City of Kaktovik: PO Box 27, Kaktovik, AK 99747. Phone: (907) 640-6313.

### **Warning:**

**Polar bears are extremely dangerous! There have been several deaths and maulings by polar bears coming directly into villages and field camps. A standard passenger vehicle is not a guarantee of safety against polar bears. They are unafraid of humans and may attack them as prey. At this time there are no special facilities or vehicles for safely viewing polar bears in these communities.**

## **Other Bear Viewing Opportunities:**

Many commercial guides and outfitters offer one-day or multi-day bear-viewing and wildlife photography excursions. For listings of these tour operators and others ask for a free copy of the "Official Alaska State Vacation Planner" at many Alaska visitor centers. You can request one online at [www.travelalaska.com](http://www.travelalaska.com).

*\*Federal passes are available for sale at most federal recreation areas that charge entrance fees. For more information on passes, contact the Fairbanks Alaska Public Lands Information Center at (907) 459-3730 or visit <http://www.nps.gov/findapark/passes.htm>*

