

## 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) Kettle 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, climatic 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:

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management

Glennallen Field Office  
Milepost 186.5 Glenn Hwy  
P.O. Box 147  
Glennallen, Alaska 99588  
(907) 822-3217

Visit us on the Internet at:  
[www.blm.gov/ak](http://www.blm.gov/ak)



