Pinnell Mountain National Recreation Trail

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

Alaska

Sweeping mountain vistas and brilliant wildflower displays under the unceasing light of the midnight sun…. the Pinnell Mountain National Recreation Trail, one of Interior Alaska's premier hiking trails, offers an unforgettable experience whether your visit lasts a few hours or a few days.

Located about 100 miles (161 km) northeast of Fairbanks, this 27-mile (44 km) trail traverses a series of alpine ridge tops entirely above timberline. The Pinnell Mountain Trail is marked with rock cairns as it crosses open tundra with views north to the Yukon River and south to the Alaska Range. Wooden posts along the trail show the mileage from the start at Eagle Summit (milepost 107 on the Steese Highway) to the trail's end at Twelvemile Summit (milepost 85.5, Steese Highway). Two emergency shelters provide refuge from storms, but hikers should come prepared for unpredictable, dramatic alpine weather. Thunderstorms are common during the summer.

Shelters

There are two shelter cabins located on the Pinnell Mountain Trail. The Ptarmigan Creek Shelter is just south of the trail approximately 10.1 miles (16.2 km) from Eagle Summit in a saddle west of Pinnell Mountain.

The North Fork Shelter is tucked around the south face of the ridge. A side trail to the shelter is located at mile 17.8 (28.6 km), 9.5 miles (15.3 km) from Twelvemile Summit. These small, unfurnished shelter cabins provide emergency shelter, away from strong wind and blowing rain or snow.

They operate on a first-come, first-served basis. Hikers should always carry tents and be prepared to use them in case the shelter cabins are occupied.

North Fork Shelter

Water

Finding drinking water along the trail can become difficult later in the summer, when snowfields and small ponds dry up. Water is generally available at both shelter cabins, where catchment systems collect melting snow and rain. All water should be treated before use. Day hikers should carry enough water for a full day (at least 2 quarts or liters), and backpackers should always carry at least 3 quarts or liters of water.

Giardia: This intestinal parasite can leave you feeling miserable for weeks. Boiling your drinking water is the best way to kill the organism.

Trail Conditions

The Pinnell Mountain Trail is an alpine trail marked with wooden mileposts and rock cairns to help hikers stay on the trail when clouds cover the ridges. Switchbacks have been constructed to provide safer access across steep talus slopes, and approximately 1.6 miles (2.6 km) of wooden planking provide passage through boggy areas. Please do not 'short-cut' the switchbacks.

Hikers along the Pinnell Mountain Trail should expect a physical challenge. Most of the trail has at least an 8 percent grade. In many areas the grade exceeds 25 percent. At Eagle Summit,Pinnell Mountain, and Table Mountain, the trail features long switchbacks with 600-foot (182 m) elevation changes over a distance of one-half mile (0.8 km).

Who was Pinnell?

Lt. Commander R. Darling of the U.S. Coastal and Geodetic Survey named Pinnell Mountain for Robert Pinnell, killed in an accident on July 17, 1952 while climbing nearby Porcupine Dome.

Pinnell Mountain National Recreation Trail in Profile

Pinnell Mountain Trail - Trail and 50 ft. on either side of trail is closed to motorized use

Steese Hwy. Milepost (MP)

Unmaintained Road

Wild and Scenic River Corridor

Game Management Unit (7/1/2016)

USGS 1:63,360 Index

Open to summer* OHVs and winter snowmachines weighing up to 1,000 pounds curb weight ** and up to 50 inches wide

Open to winter* use of snowmachines weighing up to 1,000 pounds curb weight ** and up to 50 inches wide

Bureau of Land Management

State

Native Allotment

Private

Federal Mining Claim

Map not be used to determine federal subsistence hunting areas.

**** Curb weight is the unloaded vehicle weight with full fuel and oil.**

*** "Summer Use" Defined as May 1 thru Oct 14**
"Winter Use" Defined as Oct 15 thru April 30

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Contact Information

Bureau of Land Management
Fairbanks District Office
Eastern Interior Field Office
222 University Avenue
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709
Phone: 907-474-2200
https://www.blm.gov/alaska

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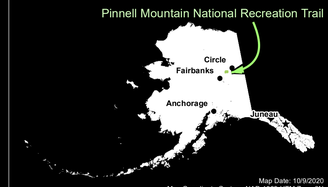

Map Date: 10/9/2020
Map Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 6N