

Denali 20,320 ft / 6194 m
Alaska Range
Highest Peak in North America
63° 07' N, 151° 01' W



Denali guides since
1976.



No compromises...
Highest quality all the way



Experienced guides and
incredible climber support

MOUNTAIN TRIP INTERNATIONAL

DENALI Expedition Information



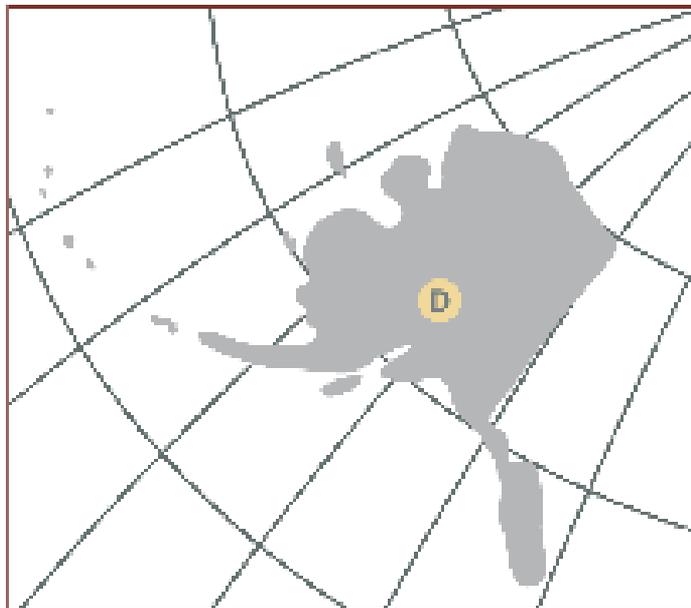
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60° 70°

50°



170°
180°
150°
140°
130°

FIELD NOTES™



*Todd Rutledge
Denali 2008*

I was working in a climbing shop to help pay for grad school in Wisconsin in 1991, and my boss was the first person I'd ever met who had actually climbed Denali. Although I'd climbed higher peaks in South America by that time, his tales of huge packs, high winds and bitter cold captivated me and left me wondering if I'd ever have the mettle necessary to venture into the Alaska Range. Denali... "The Great One," seemed a world away from anything I'd ever considered.

Three years later, life led me to Alaska and I received an invitation to assist a friend on a Mountain Trip expedition on the West Buttress. While I'd honed my alpine skills in SE Alaska by this time, the prospect of testing myself on the mountain's flanks was still intimidating. Apparently I did well, and was thrilled to be invited back the following year for two more expeditions. I still get chills thinking of those first trips and my initiation to high-altitude, Arctic climbing. Having three meters of snow fall on us in two days was a serious wake-up call that, "We weren't in Kansas anymore."

Years after those first forays into the Alaska Range, I still get excited gazing up at the large photo of Denali on my office wall. Somehow, life has conspired to allow me to make a living talking to potential Denali climbers about the experience and helping them follow through with their dreams. Part of our job as guides is to help you manage your expectations of the experience, and I try to keep my original sense of apprehension and intimidation close to heart when I talk to climbers, as it is a necessary part of every climber's experience.

Mountain Trip was born of an Alaskan daydream in 1973 and all of us in the extended Mountain Trip family still embrace that daydream, and support every climber's dreams of experiencing big, cold mountains and huge vistas stretching off to the horizon. We hope you find this Denali Planning Booklet helpful and that you consider joining us on an expedition to face your own apprehensions and fulfill your dreams on the glaciers and snowy slopes of "The Great One."



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the GREAT ONE

Thanks for joining Mountain Trip for the adventure of a lifetime!
We want you to be as prepared as possible for your upcoming expedition and hope that the following information will help you toward that goal.

“What we are about to embark on is high altitude, Arctic climbing,” our senior guide Dave Staeheli always reminds his climbers. As the most experienced Denali guide working today, he should know. Nowhere on the planet can you find the combination of high elevation and high latitudes that conspire to create the challenges unique to this mountain.

We led our first commercial expedition of the West Buttress in 1976, and over the years, Mountain Trip has grown into an industry leader, organizing the highest quality expeditions to big, remote mountains around the world. As we’ve grown, we’ve held on to the principles of our original daydream and are a company of climbers leading climbers up difficult mountains in a spirit of teamwork.

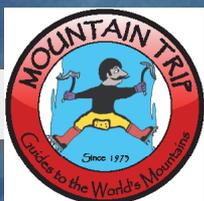
Our commitment to providing the absolute best customer service from your first contact with us sets us apart in the guiding community. Rather than making decisions based on the “bottom line,” we approach each decision from the standpoint of, “What is the best possible outcome for our climbers?” From our gourmet meals to our use of the highest caliber equip-

ment available, we strive to exceed our climbers’ expectations every step of the way.

Historically, Denali has been the focal point of our business and we are one of the original concession holders to be permitted to guide the mountain by the National Park Service, which, in 1981 limited the number of permitted guide services in an attempt to better protect the fragile alpine resources in the Park. Mountain Trip has single-handedly changed how Denali can be guided, as our expeditions now climb the mountain in a spirit and system that enables each team to support one another, creating a dynamic network of multiple expeditions working in concert. What this means for our climbers is that our teams often have many more options open to them than those from other guide services. We receive a tremendous amount of feedback about the level of teamwork amongst our expeditions.

We believe that another one of the benefits of climbing with Mountain Trip is our commitment to providing you with unlimited, knowledgeable, pre-trip support and advice. An expedition begins long before you start up the trail and your training program and equipment selection are extremely important for an expedition like this. Please use our office staff as a resource for any and all questions about Denali.

Denali // 20,320 ft // 6194 m
Length: 14 - 22 days
Clients: 9 climbers / 3-4 guides



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T E A M W O R K



Climbing big mountains anywhere in the world is serious business. Adding the harshness of the Alaskan, arctic environment, with temperatures that can plunge far below zero, vicious winds and the need to be extremely self-sufficient because rescue services are essentially non-existent in poor weather, makes for an especially serious undertaking. A Denali climb can be very enjoyable, but it takes an incredible level of organization to prepare a team for such an endeavor.

It is our goal at Mountain Trip to provide you with an experience that you feel ultimately prepared for, and we work hard with all the necessary logistics so that you don't ever notice the complexity of a given situation. We want all of our team members to feel just that: members of a team of climbers heading to a remote, beautiful place to test themselves on an unforgiving mountain.

We are much stronger as a team than as individual climbers. The cold, dry air of the Alaska Range, combined with the long days of travel to get there often conspires to create health challenges early in an expedition. As a team, we can help one another overcome many such obstacles that we, as individuals, might find overwhelming. Team members are also expected to show up as best prepared for the expedition as possible. Please use the experienced staff in our Colorado office to help ensure that you are ultimately prepared for this climb.

In the months prior to your climb, we will provide you with numerous informative emails designed to prepare you in a measured, relaxed atmosphere, as opposed to inundating you with heaps of information that might prove too much to effectively digest. Our guides will pass along tips that they have learned over the years that should help you as you select climbing gear, photographic equipment and clothing layers. We'll present a very detailed itinerary of your first days in Alaska and of the first days on the glacier as part of our ongoing efforts to best prepare you for this experience.



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West Buttress Itinerary

Denali is a big, serious mountain with big mountain weather, geography and acclimatization issues. The following itinerary represents a very simplistic outline of what could happen on a given day during the course of a Denali expedition. Many factors can, and probably will, contribute to cause the following schedule to change. Our guides know the mountain and may elect to stray from this itinerary in order to give you the best possible shot at getting to the summit as their goals are to help you get up and down the mountain as safely as possible.

Day 1: Meeting Day in AK (Start Date)
Day 2: Fly to Base Camp
Day 3: Move to 7,800' (2377m)
Day 4: Carry to Kahiltna Pass
Day 5: Move to 11,200' (3415m)
Day 6: Back-carry day
Day 7: Carry to 13,500' (4115m)
Day 8: Move to 14,200' (4330m)
Day 9: Back-carry day
Day 10: Carry to 16,400' (5000m)
Day 11: Rest/Acclimatization day
Day 12: Move to 17,200' (5244m)
Day 13: Rest day
Day 14: Summit Day!
Day 15: First descent day
Day 16: Descent and fly to Talkeetna
Day 17-23: Contingency days
Day 24: Fly home

DAY 1

Arrival in Anchorage

Your team meeting is scheduled 10 A.M. on the “Meeting Day” for your expedition orientation and equipment check. This is a very important meeting, which you must attend. Be sure to arrive in Anchorage early enough to make the meeting, which may require that you arrive a day before your team meeting. We have booked rooms for the entire team for the day before and the day of our Meeting Date at the Earth B&B, located near downtown Anchorage. If you are planning on staying elsewhere, you must still make arrangements to attend this meeting.

DAY 2

Travel to Talkeetna and Fly to the Glacier

Mountain Trip provides our own shuttle service for the three-hour drive to Talkeetna. Once in Talkeetna, everyone must register with the National Park Service prior to flying to the glacier. Weather permitting, we will fly into the Kahiltna Glacier at 7,200 feet that afternoon. Once on the glacier, everyone will need to help get our Base Camp established so we can proceed with our on-glacier expedition orientation that will cover glacier travel, crevasse rescue, sled rigging, rope management and camp site procedures, and more.

DAY 3

Single Carry to Camp

We'll load up our packs and sleds and depart base camp, dropping down the infamous Heartbreak Hill and onto the broad Kahiltna glacier. The first camp is generally located at 7,800 feet, near the junction with the NE Fork of the Kahiltna Glacier. Throughout the expedition we will follow the “climb high, sleep low” technique for better acclimatization, however the altitude difference between Base Camp and 7,800' Camp is minimal enough to permit us to “single-carry” this stretch. On the late May and June expeditions, we might do our climbing early in the morning to avoid the excessive heat and soft snow conditions on the Lower Glacier. This is a challenging, but manageable, 4+ hour-day and a good shakedown for the days to come.



ITINERARY

DAY 4

Haul Loads Up to Kahiltna Pass

We'll head out of camp and carry loads up the intimidating Ski Hill. We have lots of options for this section of the route, but we often try to cache supplies at around 10,000'. This is a moderately difficult carry of 7-9 miles round-trip, with 2-3,000 feet of elevation gain and a return to our 7,800' Camp for the night. (5-7 hours)

DAY 5

Moving Everything to Camp 2

We will retrace the previous day's steps up Ski Hill and to Kahiltna Pass. At this point we'll head up toward the West Buttress proper and put in a camp in the 11,200' basin at the base of the moderately steep Motorcycle Hill. This is an incredibly beautiful camp that basks in alpenglow when the sun travels around the north side of the mountain. "Move Days" like this are tough, because we need to work hard to get everything to camp, and we also need to do a lot of digging to get camp established. (6-8 hours)

DAY 6

Back-Carry Day

This is an "active rest day" during which we drop back down and pick up the cache we left down near Kahiltna Pass. The workload for the day is minimal, but it helps give us another day to acclimatize before moving higher. (2 hours)

DAY 7 & 8

Haul Loads Around Windy Corner

Steep snow climbing up Motorcycle Hill rewards you with spectacular views of the immense Father and Son's Wall, and out across the tundra stretching off to the west of the Alaska Range. The total distance to put a cache in around Windy Corner is about 4 miles round trip with a little over 2,000 feet of elevation gain. Fun climbing with crampons and ice axe gets you around Windy Corner where the upper mountain comes into view-have your camera ready! (5-7 hours)

***Please note that we have not planned on a "real" rest day before this point. 30+ years of guiding Denali has taught us that climbers fit enough to safely climb the upper mountain do not need rest days below 14,200'.

DAY 9

Move Camp to 14,200 ft

This is usually a long, hard day to set camp at the well-equipped 14,200' basin. Though our loads are getting lighter, the air is getting thinner and climbers often feel the altitude of this elevation. Hopefully, everyone will have enough energy left to help establish camp, as we need to fortify our tents with snow walls due to the possibility for fairly severe weather. (5-7 hours)

DAY 10

Back-Carry Day

This is another active rest day, during which the team will make the quick descent from Camp to our cache at Windy Corner, dig it up, and then bring everything up to 14,200 feet. We'll spend the afternoon going over climbing techniques that we will use in the upcoming days. (2 hours)

DAY 11

Climb the Headwall to the Ridge

Our goal is to cache supplies on the ridge at about 16,400'. Climbing up the Headwall (the fixed lines that run from 15,500 to 16,100') with a heavy pack is one of the more strenuous days of the trip, because of the steep terrain, heavy pack and thinning air. The views from the ridge can be as breath taking as the rarified air! It takes an hour or two to reach the fixed lines and can take another hour to climb them. Using an ascender with thick gloves and mittens is challenging and you should practice this at home. (4-6 hours)

DAY 12

Rest Day

It is often prudent to take a rest/acclimatization day prior to moving up to High Camp, but weather, group acclimatization and health will dictate whether we take this rest day or not.



ITINERARY

DAY 13

Move to High Camp

This is a really tough day, as our loads are often big and the terrain is quite steep in sections. Rewards for our work are in the great climbing along the ridge, which is some of the best on the route. Weaving in and out of the rocks and occasionally walking a knife-edged stretch combine with big exposure to create one of the most memorable parts of the route. Once at the 17,200' High Camp, we need to fortify our tents with thick snow walls to protect us against the incredibly high winds that can rake camp. Cutting and stacking snow blocks at this elevation is brutally difficult work. (6-8+ hours)

DAY 14

Rest Day

As mentioned previously, moving to 17,200' and getting High Camp established can be a huge day, so we usually take a rest day before attempting the summit.

DAY 15

SUMMIT DAY

If the weather is favorable, we'll push for the summit. However, if the weather is not good we will not go. It is very important to be patient, as we will only try for the summit when the weather is good, which means mostly clear and calm. Our guides are the most experienced on the mountain and will make this sometimes difficult decision. The round trip climb will take eight to twelve hours or more

and we usually depart camp early (8-9 a.m.), climb up to Denali Pass (18,300') and follow the route past such iconic features as Arch Deacon's Tower and the Football Field to gain the slopes leading to the Summit Ridge. On this spectacular ridge you can often see down into the Ruth Glacier with views of beautiful peaks such as Mooses Tooth, Mt Huntington and Mt Hunter.

*****Summit Day is serious.**

The weather needs to be good and everyone attempting the summit needs to have demonstrated that they can safely make the attempt. This is often the most grueling day of the expedition (some climbers say of their lives!). The guides have the ultimate decision as to when the team will make a summit bid and they also have the discretion to decide that a team member has not shown that he or she is capable to safely make a summit bid. Such occurrences are rare; but remember— your safety is our primary concern.

DAY 16

Descent

The descent from High Camp takes from one to two days, depending on the team's strength, snow conditions and everyone's motivation to get home. The descent can beat you up more than the ascent, as we often have the heaviest loads of the trip as we drop down from High Camp to Camp 2. Weather dictates when we can fly out to Talkeetna for food and showers. Not much beats a steak and salad at the West Rib Tavern after weeks of hard work on Denali! Do not worry about post-climb lodging. We will help you make reservations after we get off the mountain.



GENERAL INFORMATION



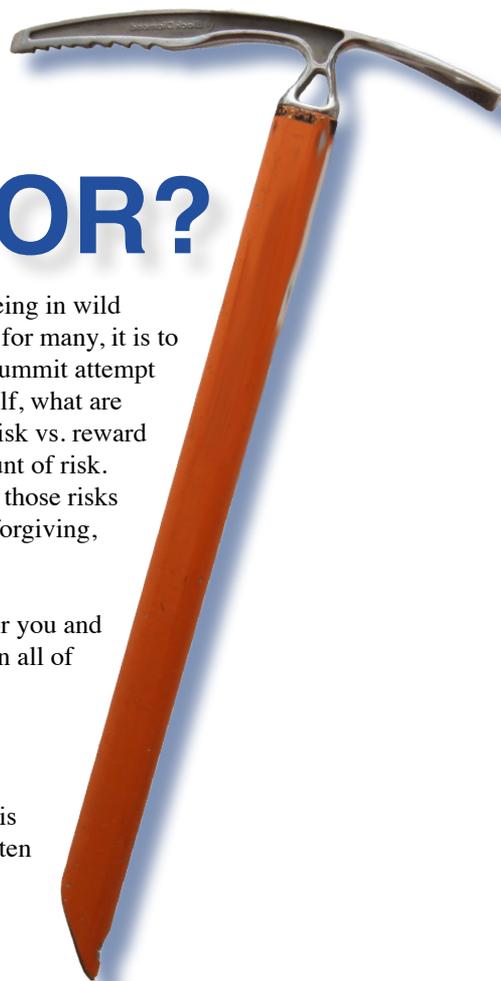
► SO WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

People climb peaks like the seven summits for many reasons. Some just love being in wild places, while others want to challenge themselves mentally and physically, and for many, it is to fulfill a lifelong dream. Climbing big mountains is serious business and every summit attempt requires a very deep sense of commitment and dedication. So please ask yourself, what are your goals on Denali? Please do your best to take an introspective look at the risk vs. reward as you make your decision. Any ascent to high altitude involves a certain amount of risk. Our use of conservative, experience-based decision-making will help minimize those risks and increase your chances for success, but ultimately, big mountains can be unforgiving, therefore climbing them requires serious commitment and reflection.

If you are of the “summit at any cost” mindset, perhaps a guided climb is not for you and certainly a Mountain Trip expedition is not the right place for you. Our goals on all of our expeditions are three-fold:

1. Everyone comes home safely
2. Everyone has a great experience
3. Everyone reaches the summit

We will not sacrifice the first two goals for the sake of the third. Fortunately, this philosophy has proven itself effective in reaching all of the goals much more often than not.



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▶ SAFETY

–Experienced Guides:

We are firm believers that guides working in a high altitude, arctic environment should have plenty of relevant experience before leading an expedition. All our lead Denali guides have led at least five climbs of the peak before leading an expedition for Mountain Trip, which enables them to bring a higher level of client care as they are very comfortable operating in cold places. Alpine climbing skills are relatively easy for anyone to learn, but the larger skill set of taking care of your clients, nurturing them and setting your own personal ambition aside to better help the team are, to a large extent, the result of a guide service's "corporate culture." Mountain Trip is an industry leader in developing exceptional guides long before we allow them to lead any of our expeditions. Our guides serve lengthy apprenticeships in the mountains working under patient, experienced mentors. We have an almost 100% return rate amongst our guides, and have many guides who have worked for us for 5-15 years or more. Our team of guides are caring and compassionate, yet they know how to get the job done when the situation dictates it.

–Medical Training and Protocols

All our guides hold current medical certifications and are well versed in the most current protocols of altitude medicine, administered over by our company physician, Dr. Peter Hackett, perhaps the foremost altitude medicine practitioner in the US, and founder of the Institute for High Altitude Medicine in Telluride, Colorado.

–Acclimatization Schedule

There are many options for camping as a climbing team ascends Denali. We have some preferred camps, which we outline in our itinerary, but ultimately, the decision as to which elevation to camp will be dictated by the weather and the health of the team. Regardless of where a team camps on a given expedition, we will average approximately 1000' (300m) of elevation gain per day, which we feel is an appropriately conservative acclimatization schedule for almost every climber.

–The Importance of Communication

Our guides facilitate on-mountain communication, but we cannot stress how important it is that you keep them apprised of how you are feeling on a daily basis. They have deep resources to call upon if they know of a developing situation. Many mountain ailments or minor injuries are easily dealt with in the early stages, but can become serious if not addressed.

–Pre-Trip Communication and Training

Our office is staffed by Alaska veterans. Use us as a resource as you train for your expedition. A Denali expedition represents a true test to a climber's ability to manage his or her clothing layers so as to not get too cold or too hot. The technical aspects of the ascent are generally moderate and we will work with you in the months before your climb to ensure you are comfortable with all necessary technical skills. Good physical fitness is important and we encourage you to train specifically for this climb. We like to see all our climbers develop safe and self-reliant habits that will last long after our expedition. Contact

us for details on what skills to specifically practice before your climb and to provide advice as you assemble your clothing and equipment.

–First Aid and Health Checks

An important part of climbing in remote areas like the Alaska Range is to closely monitor everyone for signs of any potential health problems. Dehydration, coughs, or serious fatigue all can be managed if caught early and

treated correctly. We carry well-equipped medical kits complete with pulse oximeters. This latter tool is helpful in distinguishing between certain ailments and an altitude related issue, and is part of a larger, comprehensive program of checking everyone's health at each step on the hill. As we previously mentioned, communication with the guides is important so that we can help mitigate an arising health problem before it becomes a more serious issue.

–Satellite Phones

We have a satellite phone on every expedition. Phones are primarily for emergent use and for communicating daily updates with our office, but are available for personal use as well. If you expect to need to use a phone regularly, you should bring your own.



GENERAL INFORMATION

▶ TEAM RESPONSIBILITY

Team members are ultimately responsible for their own well being. This includes making all necessary preparations to ensure good health and physical conditioning. We highly recommend consulting your personal physician to help determine if a Denali ascent is an appropriate choice for you. Our guides will oversee and discuss important issues along the way, but you should arrive in Anchorage very well prepared. Team members are responsible for understanding the conditions that may exist on the climb and choosing a climb that is appropriate for their abilities and interests. Over the course of an expedition, it is not unusual to have doubts or a change in focus, so you need to keep in close communication with your guides at all times so that we can better help monitor your progress. Before an expedition, team members are responsible for having knowledge of all pre-departure information, preparing themselves to be at a very high level of fitness, and for assembling the appropriate clothing and equipment for the expedition. We will provide detailed guidance, but please



contact us with any and all questions. While on the expedition, team members are responsible to listen closely to the guides at all times, maintain basic levels of hygiene and to conduct themselves respectfully with other team members, staff and members of other expeditions. We cannot stress the importance of open communication between everyone is on this trip. People climb Denali for many reasons and a fun part of joining a team is sharing in the diverse experiences of the group. We like to put team members in contact with one another before their climb. If you would prefer to not be included on team contact lists, please let us know.

▶ Travel DETAILS

Paperwork

We must have all of your application paperwork in order to confirm your spot on an expedition. You also need to register with the National Park Service prior to your expedition. Registration options, including their online service can be found at: <http://www.nps.gov/dena/planyourvisit/registrationinfo.htm>

Airline Arrangements

Our Denali expeditions take from 15-22 days. Do not book your return flight too early. We recommend that you plan to spend at least 24 days in Alaska for a West Buttress attempt. You must arrive in Anchorage in time for the team meeting and equipment check at 10:00 am on the Meeting Date for your climb. We strongly recommend you arrive a day early, as this will allow you time for any unexpected travel delays or lost baggage.

Lodging

We provide two nights lodging before the climb at the Earth Bed & Breakfast. This is the location of our team meeting on the Meeting Date of your expedition. If you arrive earlier than the night before your Meeting Date, you will need to book your own



lodging for those nights. Lori Lambert runs the Earth B&B, which is located at: 1001 W. 12th Avenue, Anchorage, AK 99501. Their contact phone and email are: 907-279-9907 and info@earthbb.com. This B&B is centrally located and has convenient access to gear shops and downtown. There are many other options for lodging in Anchorage ranging from five star hotels to hostel accommodations. If you will not be staying at the Earth B&B you still need be there at 10:00 am on the day your trip is scheduled to begin. Please let us know where you will be staying in Anchorage.

Park Service

You are responsible for the National Park Service Mountaineering Fee of \$200 as well as the Park Entrance Fee of \$10, which are payable to the National Park Service when we check in for the climb in Talkeetna. The NPS will accept cash or credit cards, but not checks.



► PRICING

Cost: \$5,800 - \$6,400

depending on early or high season

INCLUDED



- Unlimited pre-trip access to our office resources
- Guidance of our experienced Mountain Trip guides
- Up to two nights pre-trip accommodations in Anchorage (shared room)
- Scheduled round-trip group transportation between Anchorage and Talkeetna
- Scheduled flights between Talkeetna and Base Camp
- All food while on the mountain
- All group equipment (tents, ropes, kitchen, sleds, snow pickets, etc)
- Custom expedition dispatch blog for your climb, complete with podcasts from team members

NOT



- Flights to and from Anchorage
- Personal clothing and equipment per our equipment list
- Meals while not on the mountain
- Additional nights' accommodation in Alaska
- Travel and cancellation insurance (Optional, but highly recommended)
- Costs incurred due to evacuation or unplanned departure from the mountain due to illness or other problems (hence insurance suggestion above)
- Costs of any additional tours while in Alaska
- Costs incurred as a result of delays beyond the control of Mountain Trip
- Customary gratuities for guides
- Costs as a result of force majeure

Loving the live podcast! What a treat to hear the guides and clients as well as a comfort to loved ones at home anxious to hear voices from the "high". —Daniel F.



▶ EXPECTATIONS

We firmly believe that the most successful expeditions are born of teamwork. Anyone can muddle up a hill, with someone holding his hand, tugging on the rope when the going gets tough. We hope to instill a sense in everyone who climbs with us that through active participation, you will walk away with a more positive experience. Strive for quality in everything you do on the mountain, from lacing up your boots in the morning, to taking the extra minute to organize your kit in the tent so your smelly socks don't infringe on your tent mate's airspace. Climbing Denali is a lot of hard work and we really feel that if you strive to do your best at every step of the way, you'll look back at your expedition with a smile and that faraway, Kahiltna glimmer in your eye.

This is a journey that will test your will, your patience, stamina, endurance and good humor. Denali is not a comfortable place. You will, at times, find yourself too hot or too cold, too thirsty or too full, moving too quickly or too slowly. There will be plenty of time to hang out and enjoy your surroundings, but at times you will need to focus all your energies at completing the task at hand. The better prepared you are before you fly on to the glacier, the more fully you will enjoy your climb. Feedback over the years tells us that climbers find the duration of the expedition and the dependency on good weather to be mental challenges. Climbers have also commented that they should have put in more long days training with their pack on (4-6 hours, plus breaks). It is tough to train for pulling a sled, but some inspired climbers have tied old tires to their packs and pulled them through town or along the beach. Get creative!

There will be opportunities on your expedition to review skills necessary for safely traveling in a glaciated environment and we'll teach you a trick or two; however we do expect you to come to Alaska at least moderately proficient in certain skills. Review the following list of skills and take some time before your trip to get outside and practice them. If you have not used these skills in an alpine setting, consider signing up for an expedition prep course. In addition to teaching skills, such a course can serve as a good reality check for what you might encounter on a longer expedition.

We offer springtime Denali Preparation courses in Colorado and summer courses in Alaska. Give us a call for dates and prices. We can also refer you to someone in your area whom we think does a good job.

REQUIREMENTS

KNOTS

- FIGURE 8 ON A BITE
- CLOVE HITCH
- DOUBLE FISHERMAN'S
- WATER KNOT

SNOW SKILLS

- BASIC ICE AXE TECHNIQUE
(including self-arrest)
- CRAMPON SKILLS: FRENCH TECHNIQUE
(alpinist have great french technique!)
- PLUNGE STEPPING DOWN A SNOW SLOPE

THE BASICS

- PACK & HARNESS ADJUSTMENT
- CRAMPONS: putting them on while sitting, standing, overboots and off
- PRUSSIKS/ASCENDERS: how to affix them

RECOMMENDED READING

- Glacier Mountaineering*
by Andy Tyson, 2004
- Freedom of the Hills*
by The Mountaineers, 1960

Mountain Trip is an outstanding company and we have always trusted your decisions regarding safety and your experience as climbers to take us to new levels in the challenging, but rewarding, world of adventure.
- Alison



▶ TRAINING



Climbing Denali is a serious undertaking! The rigors of a 3-week expedition to high altitude require a lot of effort from its team members. Not only does being fit make the experience a lot more enjoyable, it is practically a prerequisite for expedition mountaineering and can make or break the climb. Besides spending long hours traveling the glacier and gaining altitude while carrying a heavy pack and pulling a sled, it is hard work setting up camp, shoveling tent platforms, and building snow walls. The more physically prepared you are for this workload, the better your chance of success on the mountain.

The training program we describe here is designed to get you fit and strong within a six-month period. This assumes that you already have a basic level of fitness (you should be used to about 3-4 hours of exercise per week), some prior mountaineering experience, and have done long hikes with heavy boots and a pack. The program is based on the concept of progression, which means increasing the length and also intensity of your workouts gradually and systematically to adapt your body to higher and higher effort levels, preparing you for 8 to 10-hour days on the mountain. To achieve this adaptation, both specific (simulating the climbing on Denali) and non-specific (general endurance work-outs such as running, biking, cross-country skiing) training methods are used. Our structured training program is split up into macro-cycles of 1-month sections incorporating work-outs of endurance, intensity, conditioning, and rest. You'll need to adjust the program to work for your level of fitness, your schedule, and your training environment. Check with your personal physician and have a physical done before you start – you must be healthy to handle these workouts! A rough number for your max heart rate is 220 minus your age. Contact us for monthly workout spreadsheets to better structure your training.

ENDURANCE - Aerobic fitness is gained by working out at a constant sub-maximum heart rate (about 65%) for longer than 30-45 min. The intensity level should be such that you can carry on a conversation, but are breaking a sweat. Hiking, running, cycling, cross-country skiing are all good ways of building endurance. You'll spend most of your time on these.

REST - Each week has rest days and the end of each 4-week macro-cycle has a good rest period to allow for physical and mental recovery before the next block. Don't skip these! The body needs this time to adapt to the progressively harder workouts.

INTENSITY - A workout with your heart rate up to 80% of max – now you're breathing hard! Think about climbing a steep section of the glacier with a heavy pack in deep snow... You'll work up to doing these workouts later in the schedule.

CONDITIONING - An important part of your preparation! A strong body, especially a strong core, is necessary for all sorts of things, such as carrying a heavy pack, building camp, and carrying loads back down the mountain. It is also a key element in preventing injuries and keeping your body balanced. This conditioning can be achieved in a variety of ways, choose what works best for you: cross-fit, yoga, pilates, strength training in the gym, or other.



▶ TRAINING

Contact us if you would like monthly training spreadsheets to better plan your training

T-MINUS

6

months

Focus on increasing aerobic capacity with endurance training and getting a conditioning program started.

Plan to spend about 4-6 hours per week doing general endurance training (outdoors or indoors, hike trails, run, bike, swim, ski, stair-master, etc.) with workouts lasting 40 min to 1 hour and one longer one lasting up to 1 1/2 hours of easy pace, and workout (45 min long) of conditioning (choose your own). You should have 3 rest days per week. At the end of the month, take 4-5 days completely off from your training, which will give you a good time to recharge mentally and physically.

Focus on increasing the length on your endurance workouts.

Spend 5-7 hours per week on general endurance training, starting to focus more on hiking, running or snowshoeing if possible, and less on other exercises such as biking. Work up to a 2 hour-long workout at an easy pace each week. Keep with your routine of 1 session per week of conditioning. Take 2-3 rest days per week and 3-4 days completely off at the end of the month.

T-MINUS

5

months

T-MINUS

4

months

Focus on all-around improvement – creating a foundation for the serious training block coming up.

Spend 6-8 hours per week on endurance training (again, try to incorporate specific training: hiking, running or cross country skiing). Start using your backpack. Add a work-out of 30 min of higher intensity training (heart rate 80% of max) – this could be for example running on hilly trails, hiking a steep mountain trail, a faster bike ride, or a skate skiing workout. Be sure to warm up and cool down for this workout. One of your endurance workouts should be up to 2 hour long. Keep with your conditioning routine or add a second session. Be disciplined and take 2-3 rest days per week. Take 3-4 days completely off at the end of the month. And take a deep breath – now we're getting serious!



▶ TRAINING

T-MINUS

3

months

Focus on specific training.

Try to train with your pack loaded with increasing weight. Try to get out on trails for your hikes and use your boots. If you can't get out to do the specific training, do stair master workouts or something similar. Do 2 sessions of conditioning per week. One 30-40 min workout of higher intensity integrated in it will prepare you for the harder efforts demanded of you on the mountain.

Focus on longer workouts.

By increasing the length of your workouts you are getting ready for the long days on Denali. Try to do one long workout per week, a hilly hike would be best and the pace shouldn't be too hard. Keep with your 2-session conditioning routine. Also keep your once-a-week intensity workout. Rest and relax at the end of the month.

T-MINUS

2

months

T-MINUS

1

month

Focus on adding intensity.

This is the final 4 weeks of preparation. Your base fitness should continue to get stronger. Adding one harder workout (a second intensity session) will give you the ability to withstand fatigue better, once you get to the mountain. Keep with your conditioning routine – increase the effort in your sessions. Do as much specific training as possible in your endurance and intensity workouts – this is when it really matters. At the end of the 4 weeks make sure you have several days of complete rest and recovery. Easy stretching or yoga would be great for this time. It's important to come to the expedition ready and relaxed – you want to be well rested and chomping at the bit to get going.



► CUSTOM TRAINING

How to customize this program: of course everyone has a different body, a different work schedule, and different terrain to train in. For this reason you must make adjustments to your own personal training plan. Make it work within your possibilities. Switch the training days around if necessary. If you don't have any mountains to climb nearby, try to at least hike outside some and do some stair-master workouts, climb the stair flights of a high-rise building, or cross-country ski (and carry your pack). If you can, find some hilly trails nearby and occasionally try to do longer climbs in the mountains. If it's dark when you come home from work, try an indoor routine and get outside on the weekends. Be creative.

a bit of general advice...

A 6-month training program can seem long and daunting. Don't get overwhelmed – instead, take it day by day. If you fall behind, don't try to catch up by taking shortcuts – adjust your progression to what is manageable for you. Also, don't increase your workload too fast – you'll risk getting injured or too tired. Listen to your body! If you're sore every day – you're training too hard. Find partners to do your workouts with – it's more fun and keeps you honest. If you develop an injury, back off right away – don't let it get bad. Adjust your workouts and see a doctor.

nutrition and hydration

It's important to develop good eating and drinking habits when you exercise frequently. Remember that this is what fuels your body! On long workout days (more than 1 hour), bring snacks with you (gels, bars, dried fruit, etc.) and drink water often. Drink several quarts of water a day if you sweat a lot. Replace your lost electrolytes after exercise – it will help you recover faster. Dehydration is hard on your body – try to avoid it.

final word

Besides being physically fit, an expedition takes a lot of preparation. You should train with all your gear (including your pack, your mountaineering clothes, boots, harness, personal gear, and so on). You should also mentally prepare – an expedition is always an adventure and the altitude, the weather, and the glacial environment can be very taxing at times. Be ready for the unexpected!

If you have questions or if you would like monthly spreadsheets to better structure your training, please contact us.

If you would like a custom-tailored training plan to get you ready, contact us and we can set you up with a personal Denali trainer.



EQUIPMENT list

** Indicates optional items

Please call or email with any and all equipment questions. **MAKE SURE YOU TRY EVERYTHING OUT BEFORE YOU BRING IT ON DENALI!!**

T. / 1 -970-369-1153

Email. / info@mountaintrip.com

BOOTS

MOUNTAINEERING BOOTS:

Boots fall into two categories, traditional double boots and triple boot systems with integrated gaiters. The goal is to have dry warm, comfortable feet! Try on a variety of boots as they all fit differently and get the one that fits well.

Recommended Triple Boots:

LaSportiva Olympus Mons EVO

Lowa Expedition GTX 8000, Boreal G1 Expedition

Recommended Double Boots:

Scarpa Inverno with High Altitude Liners or Intuition Denali Liners

LaSportiva Spantik or Baruntse

*** All double boots need Overboots and probably Gaiters (Unless you consult with us regarding your system)

___ OVERBOOTS: We are huge fans of the 40 Below Purple Haze. OR and Wild Country insulated overboots work OK if they fit with your crampons, but they tend to be a bit baggy. Supergaiters alone are not warm enough for Denali.

___ GAITERS: These must be full height, such as the Black Diamond GTX Frontpoint Gaiter or Outdoor Research "Crocodiles." Full coverage "Supergaiters" work great as well.

Guides Tip! Do your pants really need gaiters? Some fit snugly enough at the cuff that they do not require gaiters to keep snow out. Give us a call...

___ BOOTIES**: Synthetic or down filled booties. These are great for camp and tent comfort and allow you extra opportunity to dry out your mountain boots. Look for ones with good traction soles such as the North Face Nuptse III. (Optional, but **HIGHLY** recommended)

GLACIER TRAVEL

___ SNOWSHOES: Atlas 9 or 10 Series, MSR Denali or Denali EVO ascent. 22-28 inch sizes are plenty big enough. Don't worry about getting the monster ones that the manufacturer tells you that you need for your weight plus your pack.

___ SKI POLES: Select a length for walking. Almost any ski pole will do, although adjustable poles work best and you need a fairly large basket for use on snow. We really like the Black Diamond Flick Lock poles.

CLOTHING

***Your clothing layers will consist of 5 total layers for your torso and 4-5 for your legs. This is high altitude ARCTIC climbing! Variations will always exist, but these are the goals. Please call or email us with any questions.

TORSO LAYERS

___ EXPEDITION PARKA (WITH HOOD): Marmot, Mountain Hardwear and Patagonia all make good, down filled parkas, but our Guides' Pick is the Feathered Friends Frontpoint Jacket as it is incredibly warm for its light weight. There are some synthetic options such as the Patagonia D.A.S. Parka and the Wild Things Belay Jacket, however; down is recommended as it is lighter and less bulky.

Guides' Tip! You probably don't need the burliest parka in a company's line, despite what the your store salesman tries to tell you. Trust us—we know Denali!!

___ SHELL JACKET: This should be a lightweight, yet functional piece that fits over your fleece layers. It does not need to be the burliest jacket on the market. A good soft shell might also work for this layer.

Guides' Pick: Patagonia Houdini Jacket is ultra-light weight

___ PRIMALOFT (PUFFY) JACKET: We are fans of puffy jackets, as they are warmer for the weight and compress down much smaller than fleece. A thick fleece will suffice, but a wind-proof puffy is easier to throw on over your other layers at rest stops.

Guides' Pick: Patagonia Micro-Puff Hooded Jacket.

▶ EQUIPMENT list

TORSO LAYERS contd.

- ___ VEST**: A puffy or down vest adds warmth to a light Expedition Parka. (OPTIONAL except for early season trips)
- ___ LIGHT WEIGHT FLEECE: This should be made from 100 weight or Powerstretch fleece. A zip t- neck is good for ventilating. **Guides' Pick: Patagonia's R1 Hoody is a staple layer of all of our guides.**
- ___ BASE LAYER: 1-2 synthetic or wool tops such as Capilene 1 or 2 or Wool 2 or 3 from Patagonia with a "Zip-T" neck are nice for ventilating. Consider a light color for warm days on the lower glacier.
- ___ T-SHIRT or SUN SHIRT**: A light synthetic shirt can be nice down low. (Optional)

LEGS AND FEET

Consider how your layers will work as a system. Think about how easy or difficult it might be to change layers when the temperatures drop...or rise. How will you negotiate things when "nature calls?"

- ___ DOWN or PUFFY PANTS: This layer must have side zippers, so they can be layered over your shell pants for easy and quick layer changes.
- ___ SHELL PANTS: These should be large enough to go over your base layers and must have side zippers. Again, these do not need to be the burliest Gore-Tex pieces you can find! **Guides' Pick: Patagonia Micro Puff Pants**
- ___ STRETCH WOVEN PANTS: Used to be considered optional, a "Soft Shell" layer is now considered standard due to the broad comfort range it provides. Pants made of Schoeller Dynamic or similar fabrics can be worn all the way to High Camp in lieu of less breathable shell pants. **Guides' Pick: Patagonia Alpine Guide Pants**
- ___ LIGHT FLEECE LAYER: Wool works too! **Guides' Pick: Patagonia R1 or Wool 3 pants**
- ___ BASE LAYER: Synthetic or wool Bottoms such as Light or Mid-Weight Capilene or Wool 2 from Patagonia.
- ___ REGULAR UNDERWEAR: Two to four changes should do the trick, although ladies might want a few more. Look for synthetics such as Patagonia Capilene. Ladies might also want a couple synthetic sports bras.
- ___ SOCKS: 3 - 5 sets of wool or synthetic

medium/heavy weight socks. Make certain your socks fit with your boots! The new system boots don't need as thick a sock as the boots of old... Early season climbers might add an extra pair.

HANDS AND HEAD

PLEASE DO NOT SKIMP ON THE QUALITY OF YOUR GLOVES AND MITTENS!!

- ___ GLOVES: Light or medium weight fleece, Windstopper or Schoeller fabric (one or two pairs.) We really like the Schoeller versions. **Guides' Pick: Outdoor Research "Vert" Gloves.**
- ___ INSULATED GLOVES: Warm, insulated gloves with a gauntlet are the workhorse on Denali. **Guides' Pick: Black Diamond "Guide Gloves" are bomber and have removable liners for ease of drying.**
- ___ SUMMIT MITTENS: Thick, warm, non-constricting mittens made of pile, Primaloft or down. **Guides' Pick: Outdoor Research Alti Mitts. They aren't cheap, but are extremely warm (Divide the cost by 10 fingers!).**
- ___ WARM HAT: One medium warm hat or two hats of different weights. Wool or pile is fine. Your hat must provide ear coverage.
- ___ **BUFF: This is the brand name of a lightweight neck gaiter that can also serve as a hat or headband. (Optional- but the choice of virtually ALL of our guides!)
- ___ FACE MASK: Neoprene or Windstopper. The Seirus brand Neoprene ski masks with a light fleece lining is very effective.
- ___ SUN HAT: Baseball type or (better) wide brimmed sun hat for the intense sunshine of the lower mountain. You can combine a baseball hat with a bandana for good sun protection- again, think synthetic.
- ___ HAND WARMERS: Bring 5+ sets of the disposable versions. Toe warmers work well too and can keep camera batteries warm on summit day. Early season climbers should bring a couple extra pairs.
- ___ SUNGLASSES: They must provide **side protection** and filter 100% UVA and UVB rays. **Guides' Pick: Julbo Montebianco**

Ladies be sure to request our 'Women's Considerations' information for options and ideas.

▶ EQUIPMENT list



- ___ NOSE GUARD: You can purchase one (Beko makes nice ones) or make one out of duct tape, but this will save your nose on sunny days.
- ___ SKI GOGGLES: For use during storms or really cold spells. UV-protected Amber or Rose lenses work great. Troubled with chronic fogging? Consider goggles with a built-in fan.

PACKS

- ___ EXPEDITION PACK: 5500+ cu in. or 85+ liters, with emphasis on the "+". You'll need a large pack in order to carry your gear, plus group food & equipment. The Mountain Hardwear BMG is a nice pack, as is our [Guides' Pick: Osprey Aether 85](#).
- ___ LARGE ZIPPERED DUFFEL: (36-48") for use as a sled bag. Lightweight and inexpensive bags work great, but the Patagonia Black Hole Bag 120L is just about the perfect sled bag as it is almost waterproof and very light.

SLEEPING GEAR

- ___ EXPEDITION SLEEPING BAG: Rated to 20-30+ below Fahrenheit (-28-35C). Marmot Col or Cwm, Mt Hardwear Wraith or The North Face Darkstar are all great bags. Which to choose, down or synthetic? Down is lighter, less bulky, and has a longer lifespan, but is more expensive. Synthetic bags are getting much better, but are not our first choice. [Guides' Pick: Valandre Freja, a -22F bag that only weighs 3 lbs, 6 oz!](#)
- ___ COMPRESSION STUFF SACK(S): Look for light ones such as the Granite Gear Air Compressor or the Outdoor Research Helium Compression Sack. Essential for sleeping bags and we recommend one for your summit clothes, such as your parka, mitts and warmest pants.
- ___ 2 SLEEPING PADS: You need two pads, one closed cell pad such as a Ridge Rest or a Karrimat and a self inflating pad. DO NOT bring an extra wide pad or your tent mates might make you sleep outside! [Guides' Pick: Exped Down Mat 7 paired with a full length Deluxe Ridge Rest. The new Exped Downmats are very cozy, but require some additional effort and precautions to use on Denali. Check with us before purchasing one.](#)

TECHNICAL CLIMBING EQUIPMENT

- ___ ICE AXE: (with leash.) 60-80 cm length works well for the West Buttress and go 10-20 cm shorter for technical climbs. [Guides' Pick: the Black Diamond Raven Pro is very light yet has a durable steel pick and adze.](#)
- ___ CRAMPONS: 10 or 12 point crampons that FIT YOUR BOOTS! Step in or strap versions work equally well, just make sure they fit with your overboots. Aluminum crampons are generally not acceptable for Denali.
- ___ HARNESS: Your harness should have adjustable leg loops. The Black Diamond Blizzard and Couloir harnesses are both lightweight and functional.
- ___ ASCENDER: You need one full-sized, handled ascender such as the Petzl Ascension for climbing the fixed lines. You also need a prussik for lacier travel. If you do not have a foot prussik, bring 6 meters of 6 mm cord. This will be sufficient to make a prussik and to attach your ascender to your harness. We can help you rig this in Alaska.
- ___ CARABINERS: Bring three locking carabiners and eight regular carabiners. Mark them with colored tape for identification. Please, no bent-gate 'biners! These look very sexy in the gear shop, but save them for when you put on your neon lycra to go sport climbing. [Guides' Pick: Black Diamond Oz carabiners are very lightweight, yet also full sized.](#)
- ___ CLIMBING HELMET: Due to warmer than historic temperatures, there is now potential for rockfall along a short stretch of the route. We feel it is prudent for everyone to wear helmets as we negotiate this section. Look for the lightest helmet you can find that is compatible with your warmest hat. [Guides' Pick: Black Diamond "Tracer"](#)
- ___ PERLON CORD: Two - 10 meter lengths of 5-6 mm cord in different colors that you will cut up and use for sled and pack tie offs. You could also add a couple of 2 foot bungee cords for rigging sleds. Adding a length of parachute cord (+/-3mm) helps as well.

▶ EQUIPMENT list

All equipment on this list is available at AMH in Anchorage.
www.alaskamountaineering.com
Phone: +1-907 272-1811
Mountain Trip clients get a 10% discount.

ESSENTIAL PERSONAL ITEMS

- ___ STUFF BAGS (for your own items, plus one large stuff sac for a cache bag)
- ___ (2) ONE QT. WIDE MOUTH WATER BOTTLES
Please do not bring narrow mouth bottles as they are difficult to fill in the field.
- ___ INSULATED COVER (1-2 for your water bottles)
- ___ LARGE PLASTIC CUP for eating (2-4 cup bowl or "Fair Share Mug")
- ___ INSULATED CUP for hot drinks
- ___ LARGE PLASTIC (LEXAN) SPOON
- ___ LIP CREAM (with SPF 30+)
- ___ SUNSCREEN - 3-4 ounces of SPF 30+ in 1 ounce tubes. Big tubes are hard to keep thawed in the cold.
- ___ BANDANA - you can always use a bandanna!
- ___ TOILET PAPER (1-2 rolls)
- ___ TOILET KIT - Tooth brush & paste, floss, individually packaged handi-wipes or baby-wipes.... keep it small.
- ___ HAND SANITIZER A small bottle will suffice
- ___ P-BOTTLE - The wide mouth collapsible Nalgene work great- get the 96 ounce version- trust us! Ladies bring an adapter and please practice before you come.
- ___ A SENSE OF HUMOR
- ___ SMALL PERSONAL MEDICAL KIT (Blister kit, aspirin, antacids, lozenges, Ibuprofen, high altitude drugs) There are certain prescription drugs that are appropriate for high altitude climbing. Please discuss them with your personal physician. Contact us for a list of suggested high altitude drugs

OPTIONAL ITEMS

- ___ CAMELBACK -type hydration system (optional and DOES NOT replace a water bottle and works better on June trips)
- ___ CAMERA, with extra memory cards and an extra battery. Wide angle lenses are nice in the mountains.
- ___ BOOK(S) for storm day reading or and "e-reader"
- ___ DIARY & PENCIL
- ___ ALTIMETER WATCH
- ___ HAND and FACE LOTION
- ___ FOOT POWDER
- ___ MAPS/GPS
- ___ SWISS ARMY KNIFE or Multi-tool
- ___ NECK GAITER
- ___ SPARE SUN GLASSES
- ___ PERSONAL MUSIC PLAYER - iPod, etc. Please note that hard drives do not work above camp 2 or 3!
- ___ SAT PHONE - Iridium works best in Alaska
- ___ FAVORITE TREATS - We'll provide plenty of food, but having your favorite energy bar or drink mix on summit day can be really comforting- don't bring much.

RENTAL ITEMS

- ___ SNOWSHOES (\$50)
- ___ SKI POLES (\$20)
- ___ CRAMPONS (\$30)
- ___ ICE AXE (\$25)
- ___ ASCENDERS (\$20 ea.)
- ___ EXPEDITION PACK (\$75)
- ___ SUMMIT PARKA (\$60)

*** Ask about other rental items that you might need

BONUS

FEATHERED FRIENDS in Seattle will give you a 10% discount if you tell them you are joining us on an expedition.
www.featheredfriends.com
+1-206-262-6292

DENALI



Recommended Reading:

A Map of Mount McKinley, Alaska by Brad Washburn 1947-53
Mount McKinley: Icy Crown of North America by Fred Beckey 1993
A Tourist guide to Mount McKinley by Brad Washburn 1974

Denali Geography

Rising to an elevation of 20,320 feet, Denali is the highest mountain in North America. It is located at 63 degrees north latitude, just over 3 degrees south of the Arctic Circle, and it is the tallest mountain in the world above 43 degrees latitude. With 18,000 feet of rise above the tundra few mountains in the world surpass it in terms of relief. Denali is part of the broad continuous mountain belt known as the Alaska Range. On the west, the range flows to the Bering Sea and on the south and southwest into the Gulf of Alaska.

Surrounding Denali are many magnificent peaks, including Mt. Foraker (known by the Athabascans as Denali's Wife) at 17,004 feet, Mt. Hunter at 14,570 feet, Mt. Huntington at 12,240 feet, Mt. Crosson at 12,800 feet, Mt Silverthrone at 13,329 feet and Kahiltna Dome at 12, 525 feet. Denali consists of two summits. The highest is the south summit at 20,320 feet, while the north summit is 19,470 feet high. Glaciers, separated by razor edge ridges, massive granite rock walls and spectacular summits, surround all the peaks in the Alaska Range.

Denali's height and latitude make it one of the coldest mountains on earth. In May or June summit temperatures may drop to 40 degrees below zero Fahrenheit. The mountain is so massive it creates its own weather. Wind speeds on the upper mountain can reach speeds in excess of 150 mph and large lenticular clouds over the summit may be seen from hundreds of miles away.

Denali may be approached either by foot or airplane. Climbers usually fly from Talkeetna to the 7,200 foot Base Camp on the Kahiltna Glacier. From here it is 16 miles and 13,000 feet of elevation gain to the summit. On the north side it is 40 miles and 18,000 feet of elevation gain from Wonder Lake to the summit. Wonder Lake can be reached via a NPS shuttle bus on the park road. The road usually opens in late May.

The state of Alaska totals 586,000 square miles or one-fifth the size of the rest of the USA. The word Alaska comes from the Aleut word Alyeska, which means Great Land. The name is well deserved. It is a land of midnight sun, Northern Lights and miles and miles of glaciers, rivers and tundra. Much of Alaska sits on permafrost, which is ground that is perennially frozen.

A Brief History of Climbing Denali

The first known attempt on Denali was in 1903 by Judge James Wickersham and his 4 climbing partners.

They reached an elevation of 8,100 feet on a spur on what is now known as the Wickersham Wall.

Also in 1903 Dr. Frederick Cook and 5 climbing partners made the first circumnavigation of the Denali and Foraker massifs, reaching an elevation of 10,900 feet on the Northwest Buttress. This remarkable feat was not repeated until 1995 when Daryl Miller and Mark Stasik completed the first winter circumnavigation.

In 1906, Cook and Ed Barrille claimed to have summited Denali via the Ruth Glacier (named after Cook's wife), but research by Bradford Washburn illustrates that they probably only reached a 5,500 foot satellite peak. The first ascent of the North Peak (19,470 feet) was on April 3, 1910 by Peter Anderson and William Taylor. These Sourdoughs climbed the peak via the Pioneer Ridge, carrying a 20 foot spruce pole to the summit.

In 1912, Belmore Browne, Herschel Parker, and Merl LaVoy came within 100 vertical feet of reaching the summit of Denali, but were driven back by high winds. This was Browne's third attempt to reach the summit. He later wrote a fascinating account about his attempts in a book originally published in 1913 titled *The Conquest of Mount McKinley*.

Finally on June 7, 1913 Hudson Stuck, Harry Karstens, William Harper and Robert Tatum reached the summit of the south and highest peak via the Karstens ridge. Hudson Stuck recorded an account of this expedition in *The Ascent of Denali*.

The first ascent by a woman was in 1947 by Barbara Washburn. The first ascent of the West Buttress was on July 10, 1951 by Bradford Washburn and his party.

Recommended Reading:

The Conquest of Mount McKinley, by Belmore Brown, 1956 (original publication 1913).
To The Top of Denali, by Bill Sherwinot, 1990
The Ascent of Denali, by Hudson Stuck, 1977 (original publication 1914).
Mount McKinley: The Conquest of Denali, by Bradford Washburn & D. Roberts.1991
In the Shadow of Denali, by Jonathan Waterman, 1994
Surviving Denali, by Jonathan Waterman, 1991

DENALI

Recommended Reading:

Alaska Wildlife Viewing Guide, by Michelle Sydeman and Annabel Lund, 1996.

Birds of Mount McKinley, Alaska, by Adolph Murie, 1963.

The Grizzlies of Mount McKinley, by Adolph Murie, 1981.

Mammals of Mount McKinley National Park, by Adolph Murie, 1962.

The Wolves of Mount McKinley, by Adolph Murie, 1944.

Denali Tidbits and Natural History:

Athabaskan natives living in the interior of Alaska call the mountain “Denali.” This is generally translated as “The High One,” but has also been said to mean “Home of the Sun.” Other native names are Doleyka (from tribes in the Susitna Valley) and Traleyka (from Indians living near the shores of the Cook Inlet). Today, many Alaskans refer to the mountain as Denali and there has been an effort for a number of years to change the official name from Mount McKinley to Denali, but a Senator from Ohio has always derailed this. Out of respect to the Alaskan natives, Mountain Trip uses the name “Denali”.

In 1896 William Dickey, a prospector, performed rough surveys of Denali and determined it’s height to be 20,000 feet. Then in 1897 Dickey wrote in the *New York Sun* that he had “named our great peak Mount McKinley after William McKinley of Ohio.” McKinley was running for United States President at the time and would later be elected.

Geology and Glaciology

Denali, at 20,320 feet, is the highest mountain in North America. It has a vertical relief of 18,000 feet, making it visible from more than 200 miles away.

The core of the Alaska Range is granitic. The granite of Denali, Foraker, and Hunter intruded during the Mesozoic time through older, tightly folded sedimentary and metamorphic rocks. The granite is about 60 million years old, having cooled from a molten state, exposed through uplift and erosion. It is in sharp contrast with older rock as seen near Denali’s summit where the granite met an overlying layer of black slate. Denali itself is located at a bend in the Denali fault system, where one crust block is shoved against another. It is believed this may be the reason the mountain is so high.

The Alaska Range contains 5,300 square miles of glacial ice. In the Denali area some 20 glaciers exist with lengths over 5 miles. The longest is the Kahiltna, which is 45 miles long. The Muldrow glacier on the north side is second longest at 39 miles. The Ruth Gorge, when measured by sonar to the glacier bed and to the summit of adjacent Mount Dickey is considered to be the world’s deepest at 9,000’ deep. Most of the glaciers in the Alaska Range are receding or stagnant, but there have been surges in recent years.

Wildlife

Denali National Park and Preserve is one of Alaska’s finest sites for wildlife viewing. There are 37 different species of mammals in the 6 million acre park, including caribou, grizzly bears, black bears, Dall sheep, moose, wolves, marmots, beavers, wolverines, porcupines, lynx (now rare), and red foxes. Some of the smaller species include snowshoe hare, weasels, mink, shrews, voles, pika, and arctic ground, red, and northern flying squirrels. There are 159 species of birds that can be spotted in the park, including the golden eagle, ptarmigan, arctic terns (that winter as far south as Antarctica), owls, magpies, and common ravens.

The only animal one is likely to see on the glacier while climbing the mountain is the common raven. It is not unusual to see this bird as high as 17,000 feet, looking for climbers’ food that has not been properly stored. Occasionally a songbird that has been blown up glacier will be seen on the lower Kahiltna, but they do not survive long.

Climbers traversing Denali, may see caribou, grizzly bear, and arctic ground squirrel while walking out to Wonder Lake.

Flora

Denali is dominated by glaciers, but is surrounded by a wide expanse of open tundra and taiga. The word tundra refers to treeless areas and means “barren land.” The tundra supports the growth of willow, dwarf birch, and alders. There are over twenty varieties of willow in the park, ranging in height from 2 inches to 20 feet. The low ground cover in the park includes lichens, mosses, cotton grass, tussocks, and herbaceous plants. Flowers generally bloom in May and June, but blossoms can be seen later at higher elevations. One might encounter moss campion, mountain avens, forget-me-nots (the Alaska state flower), lousewort and fireweed. There are more than 650 flowering plants in the park.

Berry producing plants are plentiful and are an important source of food for both birds and mammals. Blueberry, crowberry, cranberry, and bearberry are widely distributed. Berries usually ripen in late July and August.

Taiga refers to the woodland of the north. In Denali one can find white and black spruce, birch, quaking aspen, willow, larch and balsam poplar (cottonwood). White spruce is the most common conifer. The black spruce is tolerant of wet conditions and is seen mostly in boggy areas. Tree line in the park is at 2,700 feet.



DENALI

Recommended Reading:

Denali, National Park Service brochure, 1996.

Discovering Wild Plants: Alaska, Western Canada, the Northwest, by Janice Schofield, 1989

Mount McKinley: Icy Crown of North America, by Fred Beckey, 1993

Guide to Alaska Trees by US Dept. of Agriculture

Field guide to Alaska Wildflowers by Vera Pratt 1989

Alaska & Yukon Wildflower Guide by Helen White 1988

Alaska Natives, by H Anderson and WC Sills, 1975

Native American History

Cro-Magnon man probably first crossed the Bering Land Bridge around 25,000 years ago. These Stone Age hunters followed herds of mammoth and reindeer across the tundra, killing their prey with spears. The early humans that migrated to the coastal areas became ancestors of Eskimo and Aleuts. The first sites of human habitation in the Alaska Range are dated between 9,500 and 6,000 years ago.

Denali has long been known and revered by Alaska's Native people. The mountain is visible from over 200 miles away and, due to its height and vertical relief, was visible to many Athabascan tribes, including those of Cook Inlet and the Susitna Valley. It is the Tena Indians who named the mountain "Denali."

The Northern Athabascans who inhabited land in the present park were nomadic and hunted caribou, moose and sheep in the hills in the northern parts of the park.

If you are interested in the history of Alaskan natives, we recommend that you visit the Alaska Native Heritage Center in Anchorage, Alaska.

THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE AND ITS MISSION:

America's National Park Service was created by Congress to "...conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein, and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such a manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." Additionally, Congress has declared that the National Park System should be, "...preserved and managed for the benefit and inspiration of all the people of the United States." The National Park Service has as its overall mission the preservation and public enjoyment of significant aspects of the nation's natural and cultural heritage.

DENALI NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE:

The original area of Denali National Park was dedicated as Mt McKinley National Park on February 26, 1917, when President Woodrow Wilson signed the McKinley National Park Establishment Act. "... for the preservation of animals, birds, and fish and for the preservation of the natural curiosities and scenic beauties thereof. That the said park shall be and is hereby established as a game refuge."

The park was later expanded until reaching its present size following the passage of Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) in 1980. The resulting Denali National Park and Preserve was established to protect the Alaska Range massif, and to protect habitat for fish and wildlife, including grizzly bear, moose, caribou, Dall sheep and wolves and to provide opportunity for wilderness recreational use.





OUR SOAP BOX

Mountain Trip is committed to Low Impact Practices in all aspects of our operations. We travel among some of the most beautiful mountain environments in the world and believe it is our responsibility to protect these places in whatever way we can. We practice the Leave No Trace policy in the wilderness to minimize our impact in the pristine mountains where we lead our trips.

As mountain guides, we are lucky to be able to travel to remote locations around the globe and visit different peoples and places. While acknowledging that our mere presence in some regions is an impact, we will always do our best to learn about and respect local cultures in all our travels.

Moving forward in the new millennium, we need to be conscious of the fact that the choices we make affect the footprint that we leave on this planet. We try to do our part to make this world a better place by purchasing healthy expedition food with minimal packaging and packing out our trash on expeditions. We support vendors who practice lower impact policies. Our Mountain Trip T-shirts are made from organic cotton and we utilize a solar-powered web service to power our website. Starting in 2008, we began purchasing carbon offsets to reduce the impact of our Alaska operations.

As a company, we have tried to invest in our guides and we think that you will notice what a difference this makes on our trips. Mountain Trip has always felt more like a family than a corporation and this is a big reason that so many of our guides return year after year. A result is that all of our lead guides are among the most experienced and respected on Denali. We encourage you to call our office with any questions or comments. When you call, you will likely reach someone who has climbed Denali many times and can give you advice based on personal experience not based on an informational “cheat sheet”.

We love what we do and are excited to share the high mountains with you. Thanks for your trust and we'll see you in Alaska!

