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

The Dalton Highway

Gateway to the Arctic

Visitor Guide

Contents

Planning the journey	3
Road history	4
Weather and services	5
Driving the Dalton Highway	6
Points of interest	7
Route maps	11
Recreation and camping	13
Wildlife and the Arctic	16
Contact information	21

Contents

Introduction *2-3*
General Safety *4*
Road Tips & Info *5*
Points of Interest *6-9*
Maps *10-11*
Mileage & Services *12*
Recreation & Campgrounds *13-15*
Watching Wildlife *16*
Bear Safety *17*
Good to Know *18*
Your Public Lands *19*
Contact Info *20*

All photos courtesy of the Bureau of Land Management unless otherwise noted.

Cover photo: View of Sukakpak Mt.and the Trans-Alaska Pipeline seen along the Dalton Highway.

Visitor Information Centers

In Fairbanks

Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center *and the* **Alaska Public Lands Information Center**

101 Dunkel Street, #110
Fairbanks, AK 99701
Phone: (907) 459-3700
Fax: (907) 459-3729
https://www.morristhompsoncenter.org/

At the Yukon River

Yukon Crossing Visitor Contact Station

Located on the east side of the highway just north of the Yukon River bridge.

No phone.
Closed in winter.

In Coldfoot

Arctic Interagency Visitor Center

Coldfoot, MP 175
Phone: (907) 678-5209
www.blm.gov/learn/interpretive-centers/arctic-interagency-visitor-center

Open daily from late May to early September.
Closed in winter.

Ultimate Road Adventure

The Dalton Highway is a rough, industrial road that begins 84 miles (134 km) north of Fairbanks and ends 414 miles (662 km) further north in Deadhorse, the industrial camp at Prudhoe Bay. It provides a rare opportunity to traverse a remote, unpopulated part of Alaska to the very top of the continent. Traveling this farthest-north road involves real risks and challenges. This publication will help you decide whether to make the journey, how to prepare, and how to enjoy your experience. Please read this information carefully. Throughout this guide, "**MP**" refers to the Dalton Highway **milepost** number.

Know Before You Go

Notice: There are no public services at Department of Transportation maintenance stations or Alyeska Pipeline Service Company pump stations.

There is no public access to the Arctic Ocean from Deadhorse.
You must be on an authorized tour.

Medical Facilities: There are no public or emergency medical facilities.

Banking: There are no banks. ATM machines are available in Deadhorse. Most services accept major credit cards and traveler's checks.

Groceries: There are no grocery stores along the highway. Snack food and cafés are available at limited locations.

Phone: Cell phone service and public internet connections are limited. AT&T and GCI cell service are available locally in Coldfoot and Galbraith Lake. Some other carriers such as Google Fi are able to piggy-back.

Trash: Trash disposal facilities are limited. Please reduce waste and pack your trash out.

Arctic Interagency Visitor Center

The award-winning Arctic Interagency Visitor Center introduces visitors from around the world to the unique and extreme environment of the Arctic. Explore interpretive exhibits, walk the nearby nature trails, and talk with our knowledgeable staff to learn more about the region's history, natural environment, and recreation opportunities. The visitor center is a partnership between the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the National Park Service (NPS), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

Open daily from Memorial Day through Labor Day, from noon to 9 p.m.
Hours are subject to change based on demand.
Phone: (907) 678-5209 or (907) 678-2014 (summer only)
www.blm.gov/learn/interpretive-centers/arctic-interagency-visitor-center
FREE digital public maps - www.blm.gov/maps/georeferenced-PDFs

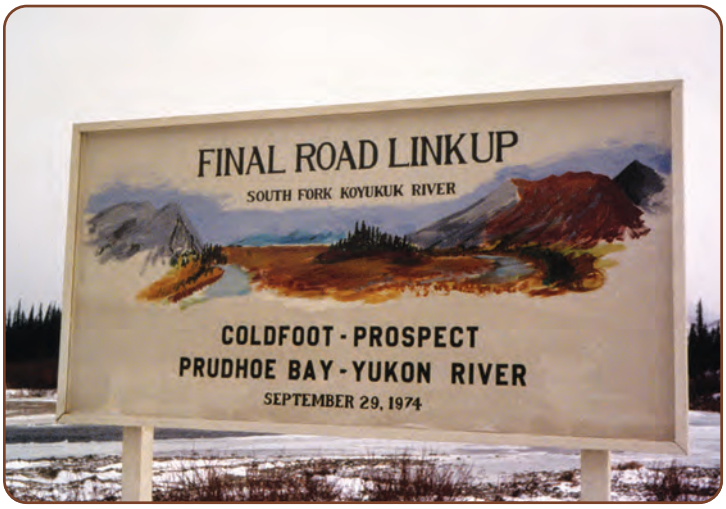
Built for Black Gold

In 1968, oil was discovered at Prudhoe Bay on Alaska's North Slope. Excitement was high at the prospect of new money to fuel Alaska's boom-and-bust economy. The nation was in the throes of an energy crisis and pushed for an 800-mile-long (1290 km) pipeline. But first, Native land claims had to be settled, permits granted, environmental safeguards designed, and a road built to get workers and supplies north to the oil field.

When finally approved, construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline was run like a wartime project—money was no object and time was of the essence. The weather conditions, terrain, and the immensity of the project were all extreme. Engineers overcame permafrost, mountain ranges, and the relentless flow of the Yukon River. Incredibly, the Haul Road was completed in just five months and the pipeline in three years (1974-77). The previously remote Arctic was changed forever.

Haul Road or Highway?

At first, the highway was called the Haul Road because almost everything supporting oil development was "hauled" on tractor-trailer rigs to its final destination. In 1981, the State of Alaska named the highway after James W. Dalton, a lifelong Alaskan and expert in arctic engineering who was involved in early oil exploration efforts on the North Slope.



Road crews worked to construct the Dalton Highway in both directions. One crew heading south from Deadhorse, one north from Fairbanks. This sign commemorates the meeting of the two crews.

The highway was open only to commercial traffic until 1981, when the state allowed public access to Disaster Creek at MP 211. In 1994, public access was allowed all the way to Deadhorse for the first time. Today, the Dalton Highway beckons adventurous souls to explore a still-wild and mysterious frontier. Respect this harsh land and appreciate the opportunity to visit a special part of our world.

Road Conditions

The road is narrow and has soft shoulders, high embankments, and steep hills. There are lengthy stretches of gravel surfaces with sharp rocks, potholes, washboarding, and, depending on the weather, clouds of dust or slick mud. Intermittent sections of pavement can be deceptively smooth, until unexpected and sometimes very deep potholes. Watch out for dangerous curves and loose gravel, especially between Livengood and the Yukon River (MP 0-56). You may encounter snow and ice north of Coldfoot any month of the year. Expect and prepare for all conditions.

Road construction occurs in various areas and can cause some delay.

Proposed Road Construction

- https://dot.alaska.gov/project_info

For current road conditions:

- 511.alaska.gov
- https://alaskanavigator.org/

Rules of the Road

- ✓ Big trucks and road maintenance equipment have the right of way.
- ✓ Slow down to 25-30 mph when passing other vehicles to avoid damaging them with flying rocks.
- ✓ Always drive with your lights on so others can see you.
- ✓ Keep your headlights and taillights clean so they are visible.
- ✓ Stay on the right side of the road.
- ✓ Don't stop on bridges, hills, or curves.
- ✓ Check your rear-view mirror regularly.
- ✓ If you spot wildlife, pull over to a safe location before stopping.
- ✓ Slower traffic should pull over at a safe location and allow other vehicles to pass.

Safety Tips

Phones and Internet

- AT&T and GCI cell service are available in Coldfoot and Galbraith Lake, but not along the entirety of the highway. Some other carriers such as Google Fi are able to piggy-back.
- Pay phones: There are none.
- Consider renting a satellite phone or other communication device with satellite connectivity.

Drinking Water

It's best to bring water with you. If you must use stream water for cooking or cleaning, treat it first by boiling rapidly for 3-5 minutes, or by using iodine tablets or a water filter. Giardia, a tiny parasite (germ) that causes diarrhea, is widespread in Alaska waters and is highly contagious.

Preparing for the Long Haul

Before you leave Fairbanks:

- ❑ Make sure all vehicle tires are properly inflated
- ❑ Check all vehicle fluids
- ❑ Replace worn hoses and belts
- ❑ Empty RV holding tank and fill the water tank
- ❑ Purchase groceries and supplies

Bring for your vehicle:

- ❑ At least two full-sized spare tires mounted on rims
- ❑ Tire jack and tools for flat tires
- ❑ Emergency flares
- ❑ Extra gasoline, motor oil, and wiper fluid
- ❑ CB radio

Bring for yourself:

- ❑ Insect repellent and head net
- ❑ Sunglasses and sunscreen
- ❑ Rain jacket and pants
- ❑ Warm clothes, including hat and gloves
- ❑ First aid kit
- ❑ Drinking water
- ❑ Ready-to-eat food
- ❑ Camping gear, including sleeping bag
- ❑ Personal medications
- ❑ Toilet paper and hand sanitizer
- ❑ Garbage bags

Weather

Summer temperatures can occasionally reach the high 80s°F (27-30°C) south of the Brooks Range and average in the 50s°F (10-15°C) in Coldfoot. Thunderstorms are common in early summer, especially between Fairbanks and the Yukon River, and may bring lightning and sudden squalls. In general, June and July are drier months, but rainy days are frequent throughout the summer.

Weather on the North Slope is frequently windy, foggy, and cold. Snow can occur at any time of the year, especially from the Brooks Range north. In Deadhorse, average summer temperatures are in the 30s and 40s°F (0-5°C).

Flash Floods

Heavy or prolonged rain can cause local flash floods anytime during the summer. Running water may cover the road or wash out culverts and bridges. Do not attempt to cross flooded areas.

Wildlife

Treat all wild animals with caution and respect. Keep a clean camp so you don't attract wildlife. Do not approach or feed any animals. Moose and muskoxen may appear tame, but can be dangerous if approached too closely. Never get between a cow and her calves. If moose feel threatened they will flatten their ears, raise the hair on their neck, and may charge. Wolves and foxes on the North Slope may carry rabies. Avoid all contact between these animals and yourself and your pets. See page 16 for more information on where to look for wildlife and page 17 for how to be safe in bear country.

Wildfires

Motorists will see many burned areas alongside the Dalton Highway and may even see smoke or active wildfires. Nearly all wildfires in this region are naturally ignited by lightning. If they are not threatening any sites of value, they may be left to burn as part of the natural ecological process. Despite this, we ask that you are careful that your activities do not start a fire. If you start a campfire, make sure it is completely cold to the touch and never leave a fire unattended. Do not drive through an area of dense smoke or flames or you could get trapped by swiftly changing conditions. Obey all traffic signs and directions in areas with active wildfires.

For information about Alaska wildfires, go to akfireinfo.com or the Alaska Wildland Fire Information Map at https://arcg.is/1aa8Lq

Road Tips

Car Trouble

If your car breaks down, get off the road as far as possible and set flares. Towing services are available in Fairbanks, Coldfoot and Deadhorse. You will need to provide credit card information by cell phone (near Fairbanks or Deadhorse), otherwise by satellite phone or in person if you can arrange for a ride. For all commercial services along the Dalton Highway, please contact the Fairbanks Convention and Visitors Bureau at (907) 456-5774 or (800) 327-5774.

CB Radios

Truckers and road workers monitor Channel 19. With a CB you can ask them if it's safe to pass or tell them when it's safe to pass you. In poor visibility, you can warn oncoming trucks if there are other vehicles close behind you. You can communicate with flaggers, pilot cars, and heavy equipment operators.

Emergency

Be prepared for any emergency. In a critical emergency, use a CB radio to call for help and relay a message to the State Troopers. If you are in cell phone range you can call the Troopers at (800) 811-0911. It may be many hours before help arrives.

Rental Cars

Many rental car agreements prohibit driving on the Dalton Highway and other gravel roads. Violating the rental car agreement can be very expensive, especially in the event of a malfunction or accident.

Repairs

Prepare to be self-sufficient. Limited tire and repair services are available at only two service stations between Fairbanks and Deadhorse—a distance of 500 miles (800 km). They can have parts delivered from Fairbanks, but it is expensive.

Fueling up in Deadhorse.

How many mosquitoes can you count? See below for more information about bugs.

Frequently Asked Questions

How long does it take to make the trip?

Much depends on weather, road conditions, road construction, and your own interests. The roundtrip to Prudhoe Bay and back demands at least four days. Under good conditions, expect the following driving times from Fairbanks to:

Yukon River ..... 3 hours
Arctic Circle ..... 5 hours
Coldfoot ..... 6 hours
Atigun Pass ..... 8 hours
Deadhorse ..... 13+ hours

*Factor in an additional 1-2 hours per day for rest stops, wildlife viewing, construction delays, and bad weather.

Can I drive, walk or cycle to the Arctic Ocean?

NO. Public access ends at Deadhorse, about 8 miles (13 km) from the ocean. Security gates on the access roads are guarded 24 hours a day and permits for individuals to travel on their own are not available. There is only one authorized tour provider. Reservations must be made at least 24 hours in advance. See back page for information.

Are the bugs really that bad?

YES! Hordes of mosquitoes emerge in mid-June and last into August. Biting flies and gnats last into September. Insects are the worst on calm days and in low, wetland areas. Hike and camp on ridges or wide gravel bars along rivers where a breeze may provide relief. Insect repellents containing DEET are most effective. A head net and bug jacket are essential if you plan on any outdoor activities.

When is the best time to visit?

A late May trip offers a chance to see thousands of migrating birds, but snow may still cover the ground. From June until mid-July wildflowers brighten the tundra and caribou congregate along the Coastal Plain. Mid-August brings rain, cool days, frosty nights, and the northern lights. Brilliant autumn colors peak around mid-August on the North Slope, late August in the Brooks Range, and early September south of the Yukon River. Snow begins to fly by late August or early September.

Does the highway close in the winter?

No. The road remains open for trucks hauling supplies to the oilfields and camps. Although the highway is maintained year-round, in winter, services of any kind are only available at the Yukon River Camp (MP 56), Coldfoot (MP 175) and Deadhorse (MP 414). Winter driving conditions are extremely hazardous. Drivers face snow, ice, wind, whiteouts, and dangerous cold with windchills to -70° F (-57° C). Travel between late October and early April is not advised.

Points of Interest

Hess Creek Overlook (MP 21)

This pullout looks over Hess Creek meandering west to meet the Yukon River. In 2003, the Erickson Creek Fire burned almost 118,000 acres (47,200 ha) in this area.

Yukon River (MP 56)

The mighty Yukon River winds nearly 2,000 miles (3,200 km) from Canada to the Bering Sea. Athabascan people first traveled this river in birchbark canoes. During the gold rush, wood-fired sternwheelers ferried gold seekers and supplies for trading posts. Today, Yukon River residents use motorboats in summer and snowmachines in winter to travel this natural highway.

Five Mile Campground (MP 60)

Five Mile Campground is located five miles north of the Yukon River and is one of four public campgrounds operated by the BLM along the Dalton Highway. It is near an artesian well with potable water and the only public dump station. See page 13 for more details.

Roller Coaster Hill (MP 75)

North of the Yukon River, travelers encounter a series of steep hills named by truckers in the early years of pipeline construction, including Sand Hill (MP 73), Roller Coaster Hill (MP 75), Mackey Hill (MP 87), Beaver Slide (MP 110), and Gobblers Knob (MP 132). Truckers today use the same names.

86-Mile Overlook (MP 86.5)

At MP 86.5, turn west and follow an access road uphill to an active gravel pit for an excellent view of the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge to the east. Watch out for heavy equipment.

A truck crests the top of a hill near milepost 88 on Alaska's Dalton Highway on a chilly morning at -20 degrees Fahrenheit.

Finger Mountain

Finger Mountain Wayside (MP 98)

Stop at Finger Mountain to take in the panoramic views, explore the alpine tundra, and stroll the half-mile interpretive trail. Expect strong winds on this high ridge.

Arctic Circle Wayside (MP 115)

Follow the side road a short distance to the Arctic Circle sign and viewing deck with interpretive displays.

Enjoy your lunch in the picnic area or drive the side road one-half mile uphill to camp in the BLM Arctic Circle Campground (see page 13 for campground details). This campground was renovated and upgraded in 2020 and features both pull-through and tent-only sites. There is no water available here.

Gobblers Knob (MP 132)

The pullout here offers an excellent view of the Brooks Range to the north. To see the midnight sun on solstice, climb up the hill to the east.

Grayling Lake Wayside (MP 150)

An ancient glacier carved this U-shaped valley and left a shallow lake. Moose feed on the nutrient-rich aquatic plants in summer. Charcoal, stone scrapers, and other artifacts found nearby indicate that Native hunters used this lookout for thousands of years.

Coldfoot (MP 175)

The original gold rush town of Coldfoot was located on the Middle Fork of the Koyukuk River near the mouth of Slate Creek. It got its name in 1900 when early prospectors reportedly got "cold feet" and left before winter set in.

This replica of a miner's cabin is part of a gold mining exhibit in Coldfoot near the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center.

Marion Creek Campground is located in the foothills of the Brooks Range.

Marion Creek Campground (MP 180)

This developed campground is operated by the BLM and offers 27 sites. See page 13 for campground details.

Wiseman (MP 189)

Just after crossing the Middle Fork Koyukuk Bridge #1, take the turnoff to the west and follow the signs 3 miles (5 km) to the historic village of Wiseman. Established in 1907 when miners discovered gold in nearby Nolan Creek, the town was once a bustling community. Many residents today continue to subsist by hunting, trapping and gardening. They enjoy sharing their stories with visitors. Note that all buildings in the Wiseman area are private property. Please stay on the roads.

Sukakpak Mountain (MP 204)

A massive wall of limestone rising to 4,459 feet (1,338 m) that glows in the afternoon sun, Sukakpak Mountain is an awe-inspiring sight. Peculiar ice-cored mounds known as palsas punctuate the ground at the mountain's base. "Sukakpak" is an Iñupiat Eskimo word meaning "marten deadfall." Seen from the north, the mountain resembles a carefully balanced log used to trap marten.

Sukakpak Mountain

Points of Interest, *continued*

A truck climbs the north side of Atigun Pass on the Dalton Highway.

Farthest North Spruce (MP 235)

As you approach the headwaters of the Dietrich River, trees grow scarce until they disappear altogether. The last tall spruce along the highway, approximately 273 years old, was felled by a vandal in 2004.

Chandalar Shelf (MP 237)

Dramatic views encompass the headwaters of the Chandalar River to the east. The next few miles traverse a major winter avalanche zone. State transportation workers stationed here fire artillery shells to clear the slopes above the highway.

Atigun Pass (MP 244)

You cross the Continental Divide at Atigun Pass (elev. 4,739 ft/1422 m). Rivers south of here flow into the Pacific Ocean or Bering Sea, while rivers to the north flow into the Arctic Ocean. Watch for Dall sheep, which are often on the road or on nearby slopes. Storms can dump snow here even in June and July.

Galbraith Lake (MP 275)

This is all that remains of a large glacial lake that once occupied the entire Atigun Valley. A short distance to the east lies the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. To reach the Galbraith Lake Campground follow the access road at MP 275 west for four miles (6.4 km). The last two miles are on an unimproved road.

Toolik Lake (MP 284)

The University of Alaska Fairbanks established a research station here in 1975, and conducts studies on arctic ecosystems and global climate change. Please take care to avoid their research sites, which are scattered throughout the surrounding area. There are no public facilities here and no camping. Access to the station is by invitation only.

Slope Mountain (MP 300)

Slope Mountain marks the northern boundary of BLM-managed public land on the Dalton Highway. From here north, the Alaska Department of Natural Resources manages the land around the Dalton Highway and Prudhoe Bay.

Happy Valley (MP 334)

Originally the site of a pipeline construction camp, Happy Valley offers easy access to the Sagavanirktok River as well as room for camping. Do not camp or park on the active airstrip.

Watch for muskoxen near the Sagavanirktok River from here to the coast. When resting, they look like large, dark humps with a cream-colored "saddle."

Sag River Overlook (MP 348)

A short trail leads to a viewing deck with interpretive displays. On a clear day, you can see the Philip Smith Mountains 35 miles (56 km) away. “Sag” is short for “Sagavanirktok.” The name is Iñupiaq in origin and translates as “swift current.”

Franklin Bluffs (MP 383)

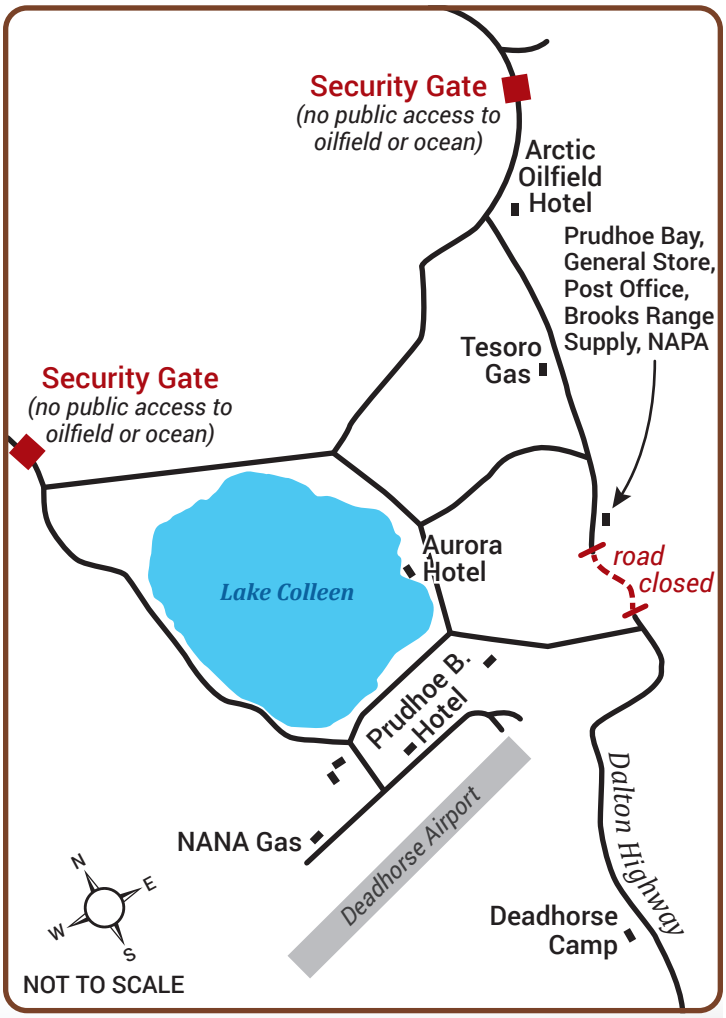
Iron-rich soils on the far bank of the river give the bluffs their vivid colors. They are named after Sir John Franklin, the British explorer who mapped the Arctic coastline and searched for the Northwest Passage. Scan the gravel bars along the river for muskoxen and caribou.

Deadhorse (MP 414)

Deadhorse is not a town but an industrial camp that supports the Prudhoe Bay oilfields. There are few amenities for visitors. Lodging is extremely limited and there are no grocery stores, public outhouses, or camping areas. The public highway ends about eight miles from the Arctic Ocean. You must be on an authorized tour to visit the Arctic Ocean. See back page for information.

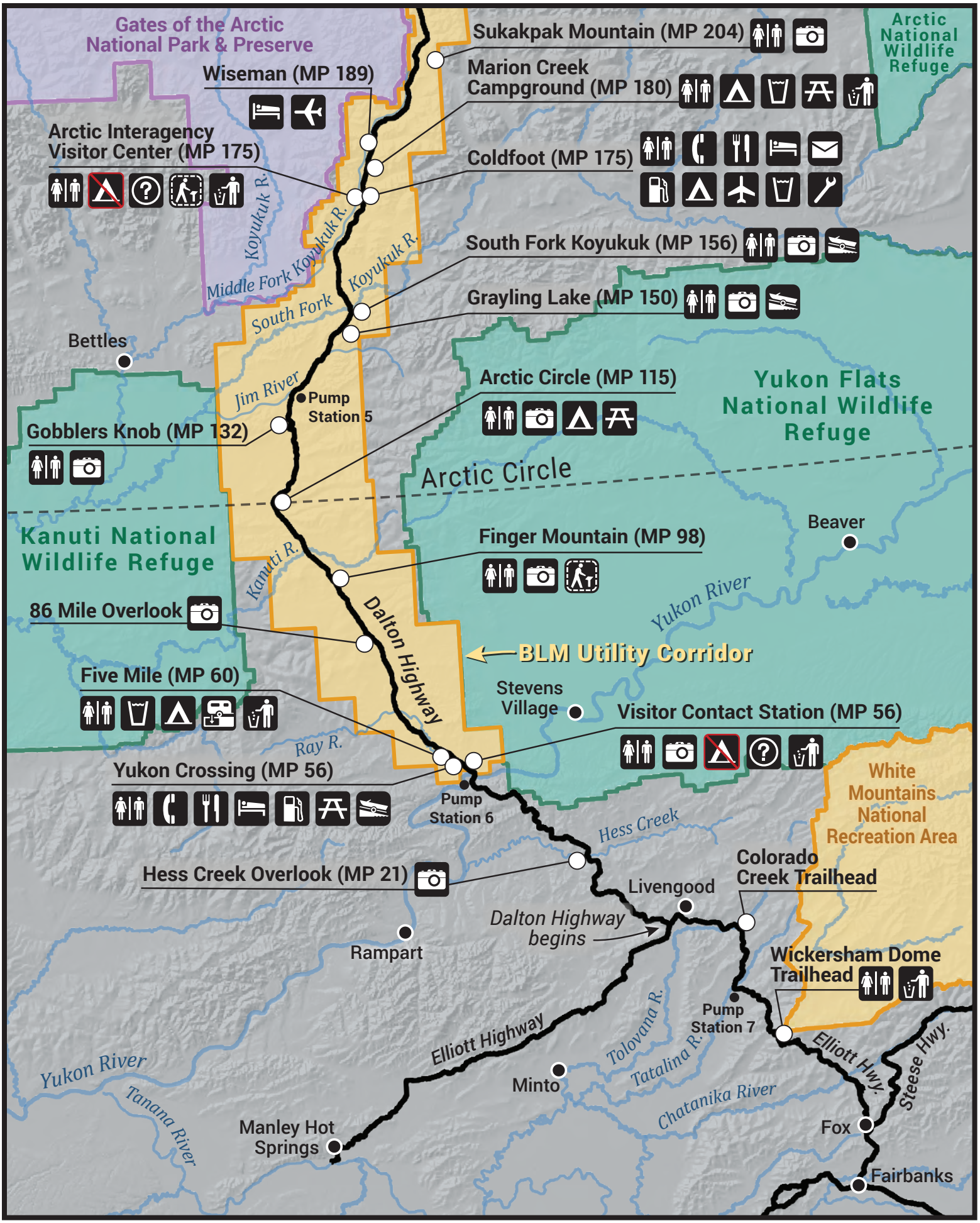
Visitors encounter the chilly waters of the Arctic Ocean.

Deadhorse vicinity map

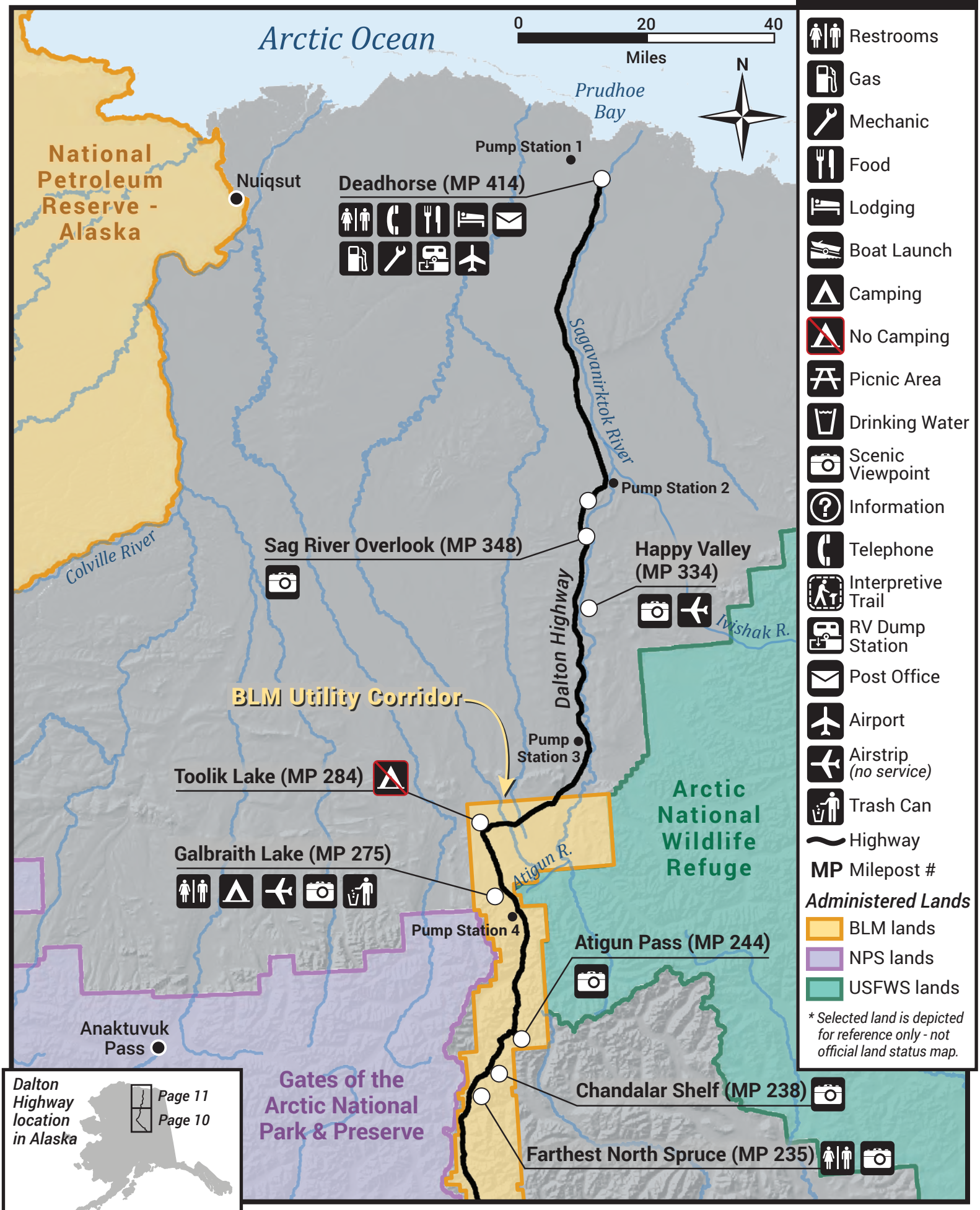


Permafrost lies only inches beneath the surface of the Coastal Plain, creating a bizarre landscape of wetlands and ice-wedge polygons. From Deadhorse, you travel over permafrost up to 2,000 feet (600 m) thick.

South Dalton Highway - Fairbanks to MP 210



North Dalton Highway - MP 210 to Deadhorse



Mileage Chart

Miles (km)	Fairbanks	Livengood	Yukon River	Arctic Circle	Coldfoot	Atigun Pass	Galbraith Lake	Deadhorse
Fairbanks	●	84 (134)	140 (224)	199 (318)	259 (414)	328 (525)	359 (574)	498 (797)
Livengood	84 (134)	●	56 (90)	115 (184)	175 (280)	244 (390)	275 (440)	414 (662)
Yukon River	140 (224)	56 (90)	●	59 (94)	119 (190)	188 (301)	219 (350)	358 (573)
Arctic Circle	199 (318)	115 (184)	59 (94)	●	60 (96)	129 (206)	160 (256)	299 (478)
Coldfoot	259 (414)	175 (280)	119 (190)	60 (96)	●	69 (110)	100 (160)	239 (382)
Atigun Pass	328 (525)	244 (390)	188 (301)	129 (206)	69 (110)	●	31 (50)	170 (272)
Galbraith Lake	359 (574)	275 (440)	219 (350)	160 (256)	100 (160)	31 (50)	●	139 (222)
Deadhorse	498 (797)	414 (662)	358 (573)	299 (478)	239 (382)	170 (272)	139 (222)	●

Services

SERVICES	Yukon Crossing	Five Mile*	Coldfoot	Wiseman**	Deadhorse
Gas	Y	N	Y	N	Y
Tire/Vehicle Repair	N	N	Y	N	Y
Restaurant	Y	N	Y	N	Y
Lodging	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
Cell Service	N	N	Y	N	Y
WiFi	N	N	Y	N	N
Post Office	N	N	Y	N	Y
Shower	Y	N	Y	N	Y
Water	N	Y	Y	N	Y
Laundry	N	N	Y	N	Y
Dump Station	N	Y	N	N	N
Tent Camping	N	Y	Y	N	N
RV Parking	N	Y	Y	N	N
Gift Shop/Local Crafts	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
Visitor Center/ Museum*	Y	N	Y	Y	N

Y = service available N = service not available *closed in winter **limited services in winter

Recreation Along the Dalton

Here you can experience wild Alaska, where the land beyond the highway and pipeline lies virtually untouched. There are no trails, bridges, or signs to point the way. Choose your own route, encounter your own challenges, and make your own discoveries.

This wild country demands caution, preparation, and self-reliance. Even for a short day hike, prepare for challenging terrain, unpredictable weather, and medical emergencies. If you have questions about where to go or how to prepare, talk with staff at the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center in Coldfoot.

Camping

Recreational camping is limited to 14 days at any one spot. Park well off the road—passing vehicles can fling rocks more than 30 feet (9 m) off the highway—and do not block access roads to the pipeline.

The BLM has four campgrounds (see chart below); none have electrical hookups. Marion Creek, 5 miles (8 km) north of Coldfoot, is a developed campground with potable water (hand pump), both pull-through and tent-only sites, and a campground host available from late May to early September. The Arctic Circle Campground was renovated and upgraded in 2021. Located on the hillside above the Arctic Circle Wayside, this campground features both pull-through and tent-only sites. There is no water available here.

Hiking

The best hiking is in the Brooks Range, where ridges and stream drainages provide firm footing and the forest thins to low-growing tundra. Throughout the Arctic there are wetlands and bogs that hinder walking.

Areas of tussocks—basketball-sized clumps of sedge surrounded by watery moss—are particularly aggravating. Tussock fields occur in mountain valleys and dominate the landscape of the North Slope. Waterproof boots with good ankle support are essential.

Hiking east from the highway will lead you to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, while hiking west leads to Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve. Choose your route with care and bring topographic maps and a compass with you; a GPS can also be useful. Note: the declination varies 27°-30° or more east of true north–be sure you adjust your compass.

Campgrounds

NAME	LOCATION	SERVICES	NOTES
Five Mile (undeveloped)	4 miles (6.4 km) north of the Yukon River at MP 60.	• potable water • nearby dump station • vault toilet • no host on site	Fee area.
Arctic Circle (19 sites)	MP 115, 1/2 mile uphill from the Arctic Circle sign.	• NO WATER • 2 vault toilets • trash can • fire rings • picnic tables	Fee area. Scan & Pay available. Pull through, back-in, and 2 walk-in/cycle sites.
Marion Creek (27 sites, some for RV's)	5 miles (8 km) north of Coldfoot at MP 180.	• potable water • vault toilet • trash can • host on site	Fee area. Scan & Pay available. A 1.7-mile undeveloped hike leads to a waterfall.
Galbraith Lake (undeveloped)	MP 275, follow signs to airstrip, then continue past buildings 2.5 miles (4 km) on unimproved road.	• creek nearby (treat water) • vault toilet • trash can • no host on site	Fee area. Scan & Pay available. Spectacular views of the lake and Brooks Range.

Scan & Pay

SCAN &PAY
RECREATION.gov

The ***Recreation.gov*** mobile app now features Scan & Pay to pay directly from your mobile device for first come, first served campsites. Even in remote areas with no cell service, Scan & Pay allows you to pay when you're offline and then processes your transaction once you're back online. ***Download the app before you drive north!***

Recreation Along the Dalton, *continued*

Hikers head up Nutirwik Creek.

Backcountry

Backcountry visitors to Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve may register at the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center in Coldfoot (open daily in summer). All hikers may borrow bear-resistant containers for free from the center on a first-come, first-served basis.

Hunting

Sport hunting is permitted in most areas, but there are special regulations. From the Yukon River north, hunting with firearms is prohibited within 5 miles (8 km) either side of the highway. Bow hunting is permitted within most of this area. Hunting is prohibited in the Prudhoe Bay Closed Area. Sport hunting is prohibited in Gates of the Arctic National Park, but permitted in Gates of the Arctic National Preserve. Be sure you have accurate maps of the boundaries.

For complete regulations, maps of closed areas, and assistance in planning your hunt, please contact the Alaska Department of Fish and Game at 907-459-7207. Learn more at https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=hunting.regulations

Fishing

Arctic grayling, whitefish, Dolly Varden, arctic char, lake trout, burbot, and northern pike can all be found in the far north. Fish in the Arctic grow and reproduce slowly and are susceptible to overharvest. Anglers are encouraged to use barbless hooks and release fish without injury.

You need an Alaska sport fishing license and a current regulations booklet for the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim Region. Learn more at https://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=fishing.main

Off-Road Vehicles

State statute prohibits off-road vehicle use within 5 miles (8 km) either side of the highway from the Yukon River to the Arctic Ocean.

Gold Panning

Panning is permitted on a few federal stream segments along the Dalton Highway south of Atigun Pass (MP 244). No panning in the pipeline right-of-way (27 feet/8.2 m on either side of the pipeline) and no panning on federal mining claims without permission. Suction dredging is prohibited in the Utility Corridor.

For detailed information, pick up a copy of Panning for Gold along the Dalton Highway at one of the visitor centers. This free brochure lists creeks and rivers that are open to the public for recreational panning and rates their potential for gold.

A gold panner tries his luck on Minnie Creek along the Dalton Highway.

Paddling

There are several excellent river trips alongside the Dalton. For more detailed descriptions of these rivers, check with the Alaska Public Lands Information Center in Fairbanks or the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center (see back page).

- The Jim River and Middle Fork of the Koyukuk River: Class I-II, several access points along the highway.
- Atigun and Sagavanirktok Rivers: Class III-IV+ whitewater, access Atigun at MP 271; Sag at MP 306. For expert boaters only.
- Ivishak Wild and Scenic River: Class II, access by chartered air service from Deadhorse or Coldfoot.

Lisa Shon Jodwalis

Kayaker paddling down the Atigun River. Many boaters portage around the big drops.

Touring bicyclists on a rainy day.

Biking

Get ready for the ride of your life! The Dalton Highway provides unique challenges and adventures for bicyclists. You will encounter dynamic weather, seemingly endless stretches of rough gravel, and few services as the highway leads you across a vast wilderness. However, the reward is great for those who plan carefully, train properly in advance, keep realistic expectations, and adapt quickly to changing conditions. Completing a ride to or from Deadhorse, near the Arctic Ocean, is a lifetime achievement that will give you many tales to tell.

How much time should I allow for the trip?

Trip duration ranges from 7 to 15 days. An average of 40-50 miles (64-80 km) per day is reasonable, although some endurance cyclists can do 70-100 miles (113-161 km) per day. Your daily progress can be influenced by weather, road conditions, fitness, personal preferences, and the amount of gear you carry. Consider having a support team to carry your food and equipment, set up camp, and help prepare meals.

Elevation gains/losses

The elevation of Fairbanks is 436 feet (132 m), while Deadhorse is near sea level. The highest point along the highway is Atigun Pass (MP 244) at 4,739 feet (1,444 m). There are numerous steep, winding hills with grades of 10% to 12%. Some truck drivers say the uphill grades are steeper traveling south from Deadhorse, than north from Fairbanks.

How can I resupply?

You can mail supplies ahead of time to Coldfoot or Deadhorse. Contact the post office to set up an agreement before sending supplies:

- Write to Postmaster, Coldfoot, Alaska 99709 or call (907) 678-5204.
- Write to Postmaster, Prudhoe Bay, Alaska 99734 or call (907) 659-2669. What can I expect for road conditions?

What can I expect for road conditions?

The Steese and Elliot highways, leading to the Dalton Highway, are paved. Gravel sections are treated with calcium chloride to reduce dust. However, expect blinding dust when vehicles pass. Road conditions are highly variable, ranging from slick mud to wet cement, to grapefruit sized rocks, to smooth and hard. For more information and construction schedules call the Alaska Department of Transportation at (907) 451-2207 or visit 511.alaska.gov.

Vehicles kick up dust along the Dalton Highway.

Backcountry Hazards

If you venture off the highway, know that there are very real risks and proceed with caution. You will probably not see anyone else, and you are likely to be far from help.

- Streams and rivers are bitter cold, and heavy rain or snow can swell them to dangerous levels. Know the proper techniques before attempting to cross, or change your route to avoid hazardous crossings.
- Minimize animal encounters: Keep your camp and gear clean; cook at least 100 feet (30 m) from your tent site; use bear-resistant food containers and store them away from camp and cook areas; carry out all waste.
- Treat all water to prevent infection by Giardia.
- Prepare for sudden and severe weather; snow can fall anytime in the Brooks Range and on the North Slope. Know how to prevent, recognize, and treat hypothermia before heading out.

Watching Wildlife

Keep a safe viewing distance to avoid disturbing wildlife.

Boreal Forest

The boreal forest is the largest forest ecosystem in the world. It encircles the entire northern hemisphere. A cold, dry climate and areas of permanently frozen ground dictate what grows here. Scraggly spruce trees may be more than a century old. Wildfires and floods recycle nutrients into the soil and create new sources of food and shelter for wildlife.

Here you will see few animals unless they cross the road. The forest hides moose, wolves, red fox, black bears, American marten, snowshoe hares, Canada lynx, and over 50 species of songbirds. North American beavers, muskrats, and mink may be glimpsed in streams and ponds along with trumpeter swans, horned grebes, widgeon, bufflehead, and northern shovelers.

Brooks Range

Steep, rocky peaks and glacier-carved valleys dominate this rugged landscape. Extending over 700 miles (1120 km) from east to west, the Brooks Range separates the Arctic's plants, wildlife, and weather systems from Interior Alaska.

Scan open areas and alpine valleys for moose, caribou, wolves, wolverines, and grizzly bears. Search the sky for soaring golden eagles and rocky slopes for northern wheatears, Dall sheep, and the Alaska marmot—which is a species unique to the Brooks Range.

North Slope

North of the Brooks Range, spruce and birch forests give way to an expanse of arctic tundra. Only tough, ground-hugging plants can survive the frozen ground, frigid temperatures, icy winds, and short growing season. In this treeless landscape you can see animals from great distances. Grizzly bears, red fox, caribou, muskoxen, and willow ptarmigan sometimes forage near the highway. Birds of prey such as the northern harrier, short-eared owl, peregrine falcon, and gyrfalcon hunt Arctic ground squirrels, lemmings, and small birds such as the Lapland longspur and golden plover. Scan brushy swales for unusual songbirds, especially Smith's longspur, yellow wagtail, and bluethroat.

Coastal Plain

With annual precipitation of about five inches—less than the Sonoran Desert—we expect the Arctic to be dry. But here, underlying permafrost seals the ground. Vast wetlands provide protein-rich vegetation and huge populations of insects and other invertebrates—a banquet for migratory birds and other foragers.

Here you may see truly Arctic species such as the Arctic fox, snowy owl, and pomarine jaeger. Caribou congregate to feed in late June and early July. Muskoxen browse along the Sagavanirktok River. Around the numerous ponds, look for tundra swans, ruddy turnstones, red-necked phalaropes, white-fronted geese and long-tailed ducks. At the coast, you may see Sabine's gulls and three species of eiders: common, king, and spectacled.

For more information on watchable wildlife along the Dalton Highway, grab a BLM Watchable Wildlife brochure from the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center or from one of our offices.

Wildlife Viewing Tips

- ***Take your time.*** Stop at watchable wildlife viewpoints and spend time exploring. The more time you take, the more likely you are to observe wildlife.
- ***Bring binoculars.*** View large expanses of terrain with binoculars to increase your chances of spotting animals. Use binoculars to notice small details.
- ***Time viewing.*** Wildlife are most active at dawn and dusk. Certain tides can be important for viewing marine birds and mammals. Learn which months or seasons you can expect to see different wildlife.
- ***Click.*** Use a telephoto lens and a tripod to get good closeup photos. You are too close to an animal if you can get a good closeup on a cellphone camera.
- ***Find evidence.*** Animals leave clues behind that tell you they were there. Look for scat and tracks in the dirt and snow. Watch for bark, branches, or leaves that were munched on by herbivores.
- ***Learn more.*** Read field guides and other informational booklets. Study how to recognize animals by their tracks, scat, and vocalizations. Research traditional knowledge, subsistence use of wildlife, and habitat management by Alaska Native peoples.

This Is Bear Country!

You may encounter bears anywhere along the Elliott and Dalton highways. Both black and grizzly bears are found south of the Brooks Range, and grizzlies roam all the way to the Arctic Ocean. All bears are potentially dangerous. It is illegal to feed wildlife or leave food where they can get it. Food-conditioned bears become a threat to people and frequently must be killed.

The following tips provide minimum guidelines. Learn as much as you can about being safe around bears!

Bears often appear tame but are unpredictable. Keep your distance!

Avoid Encounters

LOOK AND LISTEN: Bears are active both day and night and may appear anywhere. Fresh tracks and droppings indicate that bears may be close.

DON'T SURPRISE: A startled bear may attack.

MAKE NOISE: Let bears know you're in the area—sing, yell, or clap your hands loudly. Bells may be ineffective. Be especially careful in thick brush or near noisy streams.

NEVER APPROACH: Stay at least 1/4 mile (400 m) from any bear. Sows may attack to defend their cubs.

KEEP A CLEAN CAMP: Store food, scented items, and trash in airtight containers away from your tent.

If You Encounter a Bear

DO NOT RUN! Running may elicit a chase response. If the bear does not see you, backtrack or detour quickly and quietly away. Give the bear plenty of room. If the bear sees you, back away slowly. Speak in a low, calm voice while waving your arms slowly above your head.

IF A BEAR APPROACHES stand still and keep your pack on. Remain still until the bear turns, then slowly back off.

IF A GRIZZLY MAKES PHYSICAL CONTACT, PLAY DEAD. Lie flat on your stomach and lace your fingers behind your neck. Your pack will help protect your back.

IF A BLACK BEAR ATTACKS, FIGHT BACK.

Should I carry a firearm?

Firearms are permitted for personal protection in the Dalton Highway Corridor, although they are prohibited for sport hunting within 5 miles (8 km) either side of the highway. If you choose to bring a firearm, be sure you know how to properly load, aim and fire in an emergency situation. An injured bear may attack more violently or create a problem for other people.

Does bear spray work?

Learn how to properly deploy bear spray -- a very strong pepper spray that has been used successfully in deterring aggressive bears and other wildlife -- and keep a can accessible. Most sprays have an effective range of about 30 feet (9 m), but are greatly affected by wind. Spray should not be used like insect repellent—don't spread it on your clothes or equipment. Before taking it on an airplane, tell the pilot so it can be stored safely.

Black bears are smaller than grizzly bears and reside south of the Brooks Range divide.

Do Your Homework

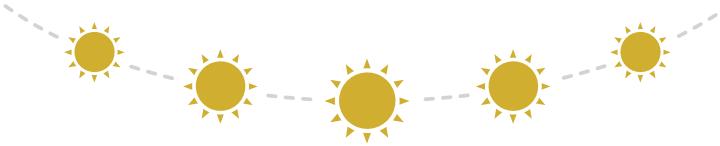
- Ask for the brochure "Bear Facts," free at any state or federal visitor center. Go to www.adfg.alaska.gov and type "living with bears" in the search bar.
- View the video "Staying Safe in Bear Country" at the Arctic Interagency Visitor Center.

Percy Pingo, near MP 376.

What's a pingo?

The low angle of the sun in the Arctic means less heat to combat frigid temperatures. Thus, permanently-frozen ground, or permafrost, lies beneath much of northern Alaska. Ice creates strange features such as pingos--isolated hills with thick cores of ice. As groundwater freezes it forms a lump of ice. As more water migrates inward the lump slowly grows and forces the ground upwards. Pingos can be decades or thousands of years old. Open-system pingos arise from artesian water in the warmer Interior: a tree-covered one lies west of the road at MP 32.7. Closed-system pingos form out of ice beneath old lake beds on the much-colder North Slope.

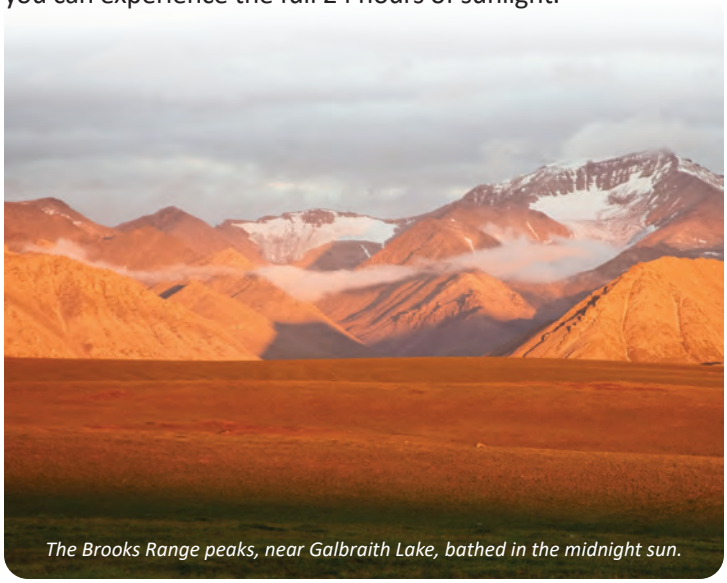
What is the Arctic Circle?



The Arctic Circle is an imaginary line encircling the Earth at latitude 66°33' north where the sun does not set on summer solstice (June 20 or 21) or rise on winter solstice (December 21 or 22). As you travel north of the Arctic Circle there are more days with 24-hour sunlight in summer or 24-hour night in winter. At the top of the world—the North Pole—the sun doesn't set for 180 days.

Where's the best place to view the midnight sun?

At the Arctic Circle, the midnight sun circles the northern horizon and drops behind the Brooks Range. The closest view is from the hill above Gobblers Knob at MP 132, 17 miles (27 km) farther north. If you travel north of Atigun Pass (MP 245) you can experience the full 24 hours of sunlight.



The Brooks Range peaks, near Galbraith Lake, bathed in the midnight sun.

When is the best time to see the aurora borealis?

Any dark night with clear skies offers an opportunity to see the aurora borealis, also known as the northern lights. However, the best time of year to view the aurora tends to be around the dark of the moon near the spring equinox (March). Be sure to check the University of Alaska Fairbanks Geophysical Institute's Aurora Forecast at:
https://www.gi.alaska.edu/monitors/aurora-forecast

The Aurora Borealis shimmers over Sukakpak Mountain.

How cold does it get in winter?

The coldest temperature ever recorded in the United States was -80°F/-62°C at Prospect Camp, 39 miles (62 km) south of Coldfoot in 1971. On January 28, 2012, an unofficial temperature of -79°F/-62°C was recorded at nearby Jim River Maintenance Station. Then, the weather station battery died.

A BLM employee holds a thermometer reading -55°F on the Dalton Highway.

Wild Spaces, Public Places

Most of the land you see from the Dalton Highway is federal public land, a legacy for future generations. The uniqueness of these areas prompted Congress to establish designations which honor their special values to the nation and the world.

The Utility Corridor

www.blm.gov/visit/dalton-highway

In 1971, after oil was discovered on the North Slope, the Utility Corridor was established to protect the route of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. The Corridor's boundaries vary from less than a mile to nearly 12 miles from the pipeline. While the primary function of the corridor is the transportation of energy resources, the BLM encourages recreational activities such as hiking, fishing, gold panning, and canoeing on these lands.

Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve

www.nps.gov/gaar

Much of the Brooks Range west of the Dalton Highway lies within one of the premier wilderness areas in the National Park System. Forester and conservationist Robert Marshall explored the area in the 1930s. Impressed by two massive peaks flanking the North Fork of the Koyukuk River, he called them the "Gates of the Arctic." Encompassing 8.4 million acres, the park and preserve protect primeval landscapes, their flora and fauna, and the culture and traditions of Native people.

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

www.fws.gov/refuge/arctic/

Bordering the Utility Corridor near Atigun Canyon, this refuge extends east across the Brooks Range and North Slope to Canada. It offers extraordinary wilderness, recreation, and wildlife values. The Porcupine Caribou Herd (named for the Porcupine River on the herd's migration route), polar bears, muskoxen, and snow geese depend on its unspoiled environment. Pioneer Alaska conservationists Margaret and Olaus Murie traveled the region by dog team and canoe, and were instrumental in gaining refuge status for the area.

Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge

www.fws.gov/refuge/kanuti/

Located west of the Finger Mountain area and slightly larger than the state of Delaware, this refuge protects large wetland areas that are critical to nesting waterfowl and other wildlife. These resources provide sustenance for the people of the Koyukuk River valley.

Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge

https://www.fws.gov/refuge/yukon_flats/

Encompassing an area larger than Vermont and Connecticut combined, this refuge protects a vast complex of lakes and rivers in the Yukon watershed upstream from the Dalton Highway. Wildlife, especially migratory birds such as ducks, geese, and songbirds, thrive in these wetlands and support the hunting and gathering traditions of Yukon River villages.

LEAVE NO TRACE

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare
2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
3. Dispose of Waste Properly
4. Leave What You Find
5. Minimize Campfire Impacts
6. Respect Wildlife
7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors

LEAVE NO TRACE

Stream near Galbraith Lake.

Contact Information

https://www.blm.gov/visit/dalton-highway

Atigun River, north of Atigun pass.

Emergency Numbers

Medical emergency

There is limited cell phone service along the Dalton Highway. From land lines at Yukon Crossing, Coldfoot and Deadhorse, call the Alaska State Troopers or use CB Channel 19 to relay messages for assistance to the Troopers.

Alaska State Troopers

Rural Alaska (800) 811-0911
Fairbanks (907) 451-5100

To report wildfires:

Alaska Fire Service
(800) 237-3633

To report hunting or fishing violations:

Alaska Fish and Wildlife Protection (907) 451-5100

Alaska Fish and Wildlife Safeguard (800) 478-3377

Land Managing Agencies

Bureau of Land Management

Central Yukon Field Office
(800) 437-7021 or (907) 474-2200
www.blm.gov/visit/dalton-highway

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

(800) 362-4546 or (907) 456-0250
www.fws.gov/refuge/arctic/

Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge

(877) 220-1853 or (907) 456-0329
www.fws.gov/refuge/kanuti/

Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge

(800) 531-0676 or (907) 456-0440
https://www.fws.gov/refuge/yukon_flats/

Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve

Fairbanks Headquarters: (907) 457-5752
Bettles Ranger Station: (907) 692-5494
www.nps.gov/gaar

Alaska Department of Natural Resources

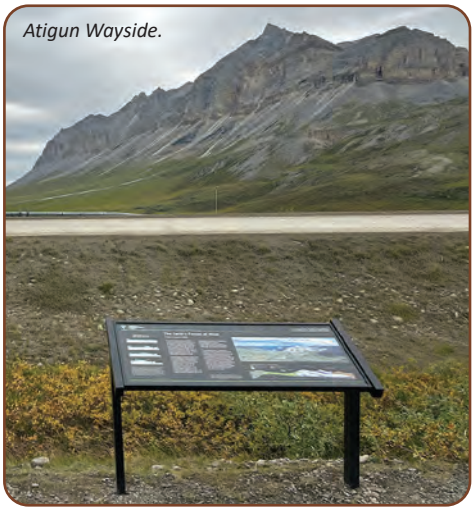
(907) 451-2705
http://dnr.alaska.gov/commis/pic

Tours and Commercial Services

For all commercial services along the Dalton Highway, please visit the ***Fairbanks Convention and Visitors Bureau***
(907) 456-5774 or (800) 327-5774
www.explorefairbanks.com

Hunting and Fishing

Alaska Department of Fish & Game
Hunting & Wildlife: (907) 459-7206
Fishing: (907) 459-7207
www.adfg.alaska.gov



Atigun Wayside.

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