



# Bear Viewing 2015

Eyes widen and heartbeats quicken at the sight of a 1,000 pound grizzly as it lumbers to the river in search of food. Where there are salmon, there are bears; and in Alaska that means lots of bears and big bears. Alaska is bear country and home to the largest concentrations of bears in the world. It is these bruins that draw thousands of tourists to Alaska.

Polar bears are tenacious predators found in the arctic regions of Alaska. These white bears depend upon drifting ice makes polar bears an important indicator of global warming and its effects in the Arctic. There are approximately 4,700 of these predators ranging the pack-ice and coasts of northern Alaska, Canada, and Russia.

Brown bears are also big and powerful predators, but are as likely to be found eating berries and grass as ground squirrels or moose. There are approximately 35,000–45,000 of these giants roaming throughout Alaska. They are the most popular species for bear viewing.

Black bears are the most numerous and the smallest of Alaska's bears. They are found throughout southeast, southcentral and interior Alaska. Numbering over 50,000, they are the most likely bear to be seen in an urban setting. Black bears have been seen wandering downtown Anchorage in search of food.

You do not have to travel far to see bears in Alaska, so any outdoor activity needs to take bear safety into account. It should also be noted that bear attacks are very rare in Alaska. Most bears (other than polar bears) do not consider humans as food and try to avoid human contact. With proper bear safety precautions, your experience in the outdoors should be a safe and rewarding adventure.

The following areas are known for their concentrations of bears and quality of bear

viewing. In addition, many flight-seeing and fly-in fishing companies will take you to undeveloped, lesser known bear viewing areas.

## McNeil River State Game Sanctuary

**What You See:** Brown bears fishing for salmon and interacting with each other.

**Best Viewing Times:** Mid-June (at Mikfik Creek) or July to mid-August (at McNeil River)

**Location:** On the Alaska Peninsula, southwest of Anchorage across Cook Inlet, adjacent to Katmai National Park and Preserve

**Access:** By charter air service (access is tide dependent)

### Management:

Alaska Department of Fish & Game

**Facilities:** Primitive camping in designated camping area only. Four mile (6.4 km) round-trip hike to bear-viewing pad. Bring your own tent, sleeping bag and pad, hip boots, cookstove and cooking gear, clothes and food. Good physical condition is essential. Because of the hike and confinement to the viewing pad, traveling with children is NOT recommended. Pets are not allowed.

### Reservations:

**Permits are required and awarded by a lottery drawing.** Applications are available in January of each year. Applications must be received by March 1st and include a nonrefundable fee. Your name may only appear on one application. Applications must be mailed; they will not be accepted in person or by fax. Up to three persons may apply as a party. Winners of the lottery pay a user fee. Through the standard application, you can also apply for a standby permit which allows access to the viewing pad if a regular permit holder



**Bear Resistant Food Containers have greatly reduced incidents of damage to property by bears.**



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<http://twitter.com/AlaskaCenters>

decides to stay in camp, but access is not guaranteed. There is a fee for applications for standby permits.

**Information:**

McNeil River Sanctuary Manager  
Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game  
333 Raspberry Road  
Anchorage, AK 99518-1599  
Phone: (907) 267-2253

[http://www.wildlife.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=mcneil\\_river.main](http://www.wildlife.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=mcneil_river.main)



Bear at Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge

Photo by Kodiak Refuge staff

## Brooks Falls in Katmai National Park and Preserve

**What You See:** Brown bears fishing for salmon and interacting with each other

**Best Viewing Times:** Peaks in mid-July and again in September (but be prepared for cool, wet weather)

**Location:** Alaska Peninsula, southwest of Anchorage across Cook Inlet

**Access:** Charter air service directly to Brooks Camp or take commercial air service to King Salmon, then charter air service to Brooks Camp

**Management:**

National Park Service

**Facilities:** There is no entrance fee for Katmai National Park. The National Park campground is 1.4 miles (2.3 km) from Brooks Falls by trail. There are no fees for backcountry use.

**Reservations:** Both camping and day use must be made prior to your visit through the National Parks Reservation Service. From the U.S. or Canada call Toll-free 1-877-444-6777, outside those areas call 1-518-885-3639, or reserve through <http://www.recreation.gov>

**Caution:** Allow for delays in departure due to bear activity

Brooks Lodge, with private accommodations and food service, is about ½ mile (1 km) from Brooks Falls. Reservations are required for Brooks Lodge: Contact Katmailand, Inc. at 1-800-544-0551 or (907) 243-0649 or visit [www.katmailand.com](http://www.katmailand.com)

**Information:**

Katmai National Park and Preserve  
P.O. Box 7

King Salmon, Alaska 99613

Phone: (907) 246-3305

fax: (907) 246-2116

<http://www.nps.gov/katm>

## Silver Salmon Creek in Lake Clark National Park and Preserve

**What You See:** Brown bears fishing and foraging in the meadows.

**Best Viewing Times:** Fish run is late August-early September. Foraging in meadows is best late May-September.

**Location:** Near the mouth of Silver Salmon Creek across Cook Inlet and Southwest of Anchorage.

**Access:** Charter Air Service

**Management:** National Park Service

**Facilities:** A number of commercial lodges are located near the creek. ATV trails used by the lodges and hiking trails are available. There is no visitor center, but a ranger station is located on the southside of the creek.

**Reservations:** All lodging is commercially run. There are no established campgrounds.

**Information:**

Lake Clark National Park and Preserve  
Field Headquarters

Port Alsworth, AK 99653

Phone: (907) 781-2218

<http://www.nps.gov/lacl>

## Pack Creek-Stan Price State Wildlife Sanctuary

**What You See:** Brown bears fishing for salmon and interacting with each other.

**Best Viewing Times:** July and August

**Location:** Admiralty Island National Monument/Kootznoowoo Wilderness Area

**Access:** By charter boat or floatplane from Juneau.

**Management:** This U.S. Forest Service area is co-managed with the Alaska Department of Fish & Game.

**Facilities:** A bear viewing tower is accessible by trail one mile (1.6 km) from the beach. The main bear viewing area is on the creek bank about ½ mile (1 km) from the beach. This is a designated Wilderness Area. No camping is allowed in the viewing area. There are no overnight accommodations, developed campsites, outhouses, picnic tables or other facilities. Leave No Trace camping is allowed on nearby Windfall Island and Swan Island. You must have your own boat to camp on the islands.

**Reservations:** Permits are required to visit Pack Creek from June 1 to September 10. There is a maximum stay of 3 days. There are an unlimited number of shoulder season (June 1 - July 4; August 26 - September 10) permits. Peak season (July 5 - August 25) permits are limited and require advanced reservations.

Each application must be accompanied with the correct fee amount. On March 1, applications will be processed and awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. Half-price discounts are available for seniors and juniors. Visitors can also hire an authorized guide and avoid the permit reservation process. Contact the Forest Service for a list of authorized guides and costs.

**Information:**

Forest Service Information Center  
648 Mission Street

Ketchikan, Alaska 99901

Phone: (907) 225-3101

or TTD (907) 228-6222

Applications are available online at

<http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass/districts/admiralty/packcreek>

## Fish Creek Wildlife Observation Site in Tongass National Forest

**What You See:** Brown and black bear fishing for salmon in Fish Creek, harlequin ducks, herons, eagles, beavers.

**Bear Kit**

Students learn about the role of bears in Alaska's ecosystems, the management of bears in urban settings, and how to reduce encounters with bears in the wild. (Grades 6-8)  
Contact Joanne\_Welch@nps.gov for more information.

Each year the Alaska Public Lands Information Center distributes thousands of bear safety decals.

## Best Viewing Times:

July and August

**Location:** Three miles outside the town of Hyder in Southeast Alaska

**Access:** The Cassiar Highway provides road access from British Columbia, Canada. Access also by charter aircraft.

**Management:** U.S. Forest Service

**Facilities:** A wildlife observation deck provides opportunities for viewing and photographing bears. A parking lot is located 200 feet north of the deck. Forest Service interpreters are on-site to assist with questions.

**Reservations:** None needed

### Information:

Forest Service Information Center  
648 Mission Street  
Ketchikan, Alaska 99901  
Phone: (907) 225-3101 or  
TDD (907) 228-6222  
[http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass/recreation/rec\\_facilities/mistyrec.shtml#fishcreek](http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass/recreation/rec_facilities/mistyrec.shtml#fishcreek)

**Special Notes:** To reduce disturbance to bears, please do not park or leave your car unattended on the side of the road. Food is not permitted at the viewing site. Bears are wild and unpredictable, so keep your distance and respect their need for space. Read and observe all bear safety information provided on site.

## Anan Wildlife Observatory in Tongass National Forest

**What You See:** Black and sometimes brown bears fishing for salmon; various birds, bald eagles, mink and marine mammals. Close encounters with bears are not uncommon.

**Best Viewing Times:** July through mid to late August



Black bear in Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, NPS

## Bear Safety

1. **Make noise** so you don't surprise a bear!
2. **Buddy up!** You are safer in a group in bear country.
3. **Use your senses** to stay aware. No headphones!
4. **Move cautiously**, especially along creeks, on blind corners, and in heavily vegetated areas. **High speed = high chance of surprise!**
5. **Leash your pet** or leave it at home.
6. **Carry bear spray**, have it readily accessible, and know how to use it.
7. **Don't feed bears.** Handle food, fish, and other items responsibly.
8. **Never run** from a bear!



Traveling through bear country can be an enjoyable memorable experience. Please read and obey any posted signs. These signs are to ensure the safety of both bear and humans in the future.

**Location:** Anan Creek is 31 miles south of Wrangell on the mainland of the Cleveland Peninsula in Southeast Alaska.

**Access:** By boat or floatplane from Wrangell or Ketchikan. There is no road access. Contact the Wrangell Ranger District for a list of authorized guides and approximate costs.

### Management:

U.S. Forest Service

**Facilities:** The half-mile (1 km) trail to the observatory begins at the red and white diamond-shaped trailhead marker just above the rocky beach at the mouth of Anan Lagoon. The beach can have treacherous footing. The trail is partial board-walk, moderately steep, and has many staircases and bridges which are slippery when wet. The observatory consists of a deck overlooking the falls, covered shelter, and nearby outhouse. During the main viewing season, interpreters staff the trailhead and the observatory. The following are not allowed: camping, pets, food or beverages (except for water), and off-trail travel.

**Reservations:** Anan has gone to a permitting system for the period July 5 to August 25. Permits are limited to 60 permits per day including guide services. Four extra daily passes are provided to Anan public cabin renters. Call the number below for more details on permits. Guide services are available from Wrangell and Ketchikan. The Anan Bay public recreation cabin can

be reserved up to 180 days in advance by calling (877) 444-6777 or visiting <http://www.recreation.gov>

### Information:

U.S. Forest Service  
525 Bennett Street  
Wrangell, Alaska 99929  
Phone: (907) 874-2323  
Email: [anan@fs.fed.us](mailto:anan@fs.fed.us)  
[http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass/recreation/wildlife\\_viewing/ananobservatory](http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass/recreation/wildlife_viewing/ananobservatory)

**Special Notes:** Talk or make noise along the trail to alert bears of your presence, stay in tight groups, and do not approach bears.

## Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge

**What You See:** Brown bears fishing for salmon and foraging for berries.

**Best Viewing Times:** Bears fishing for salmon early July-early August and September. Bears forage for berries late May-early October.

**Location:** Multiple locations exist including; Frazer Lake (Dog Salmon Creek), Karluk Lake, Uyak Bay, and the O'Malley River. Each location offers a different viewing opportunity and various levels of service. Options range from self guided camping to a fully guided lodge experience. Contact Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge for details.

**Access:** By commercial air service or ferry to Kodiak, then by charter air service from Kodiak (70 miles, about 40 minutes flying time). There is no road access.

**Management:**

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

**Facilities:** The South Frazer public use cabin is a twelve by twenty foot structure. The cabin comes complete with drip stove heater, bunk style beds, kitchen counter, dining table, and meat cache. There is no electric service or indoor plumbing. Visitors must bring their own food, fuel, camping and cooking gear. A boat trip or a moderately strenuous hike is required to access the bear viewing site along Dog Salmon Creek.

**Reservations:** The Refuge offers nine public use cabins for rent. Each cabin has its own potential to offer unique bear viewing opportunities. Cabins rent for \$45.00 per night. To make a reservation please visit

<http://www.recreation.gov>

**Information:**

Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge  
1390 Buskin River Road  
Kodiak, Alaska 99615  
Phone: (907) 487-2600  
or Toll Free (888) 408-3514  
<http://kodiak.fws.gov>  
<http://www.kodiak.org>

### Polar Bear Viewing in Barrow & Kaktovik

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

**Best Viewing Times:** Spring and fall whaling season (whale carcasses may attract polar bears). In fall, the presence of bears also depends on the formation of the pack ice, usually in late September or October.

**Location:** Coast of the Arctic Ocean, extreme northern Alaska

**Access:** By commercial air service from Fairbanks or Anchorage. There is no road access to Barrow or Kaktovik.

**Management:**

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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

**Information:**

City of Barrow  
P.O. Box 629  
Barrow, Alaska 99723  
Phone: (907) 852-5211; Fax (907) 852-5871



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

City of Kaktovik  
P.O. Box 27  
Kaktovik, Alaska 99747  
Phone: (907) 640-6313; Fax (907) 640-6314

### Denali National Park and Preserve

**What you see:** Grizzly bears, usually individuals or small family groups in interior Alaska's alpine tundra habitat. Bears are often visible only at a distance.

**Best Viewing Times:**

Late May through September

**Access:** By road on the George Parks Highway (Alaska Highway #3)

**Management:**

National Park Service

**Facilities:** There are seven campgrounds in the park. Many hotels, cabins, and B&Bs in neighboring communities. Park concessionaires operate shuttle buses daily which take visitors into the park.

**Reservations:** Shuttle bus tickets and campsites are available by advanced reservation.

Mail or fax your request to:  
Doyon/ARAMARK Joint Venture  
241 North C Street  
Anchorage, Ak 99501  
Email: [reservedenali@aramark.com](mailto:reservedenali@aramark.com)  
Phone: (866) 761-6629  
Fax: (602)331-5258  
<http://www.reservedenali.com>

**Information:**

Denali National Park and Preserve  
P.O. Box 9  
Denali Park, Alaska 99755

Phone: (907) 683-2294 or  
<http://www.nps.gov/dena>

### Wolverine Creek Cove in Redoubt Bay State Critical Habitat Area

**What you see:** Brown and black bears fishing for salmon.

**Best Viewing Times:**

Mid-June through Mid-August

**Location:** Western side of Cook Inlet, east of Lake Clark Pass

**Access:** By plane and then by boat. Flights are available from Anchorage, Ninilchik, and Homer and many locations in between. Check with local visitor bureaus for more information.

**Management:**

Alaska Department of Fish and Game

**Facilities:** None

**Information:**

<http://wildlife.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=wolverinecreek.main>

### Other Viewing Opportunities

Many commercial guides and outfitters offer one-day or multi-day bear viewing and wildlife photography excursions. For listings of these tour operators and others, visit the Alaska Travel Industry Association [www.travelalaska.com](http://www.travelalaska.com)

Call (907) 929-2200  
or 1(800) 862-5275



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