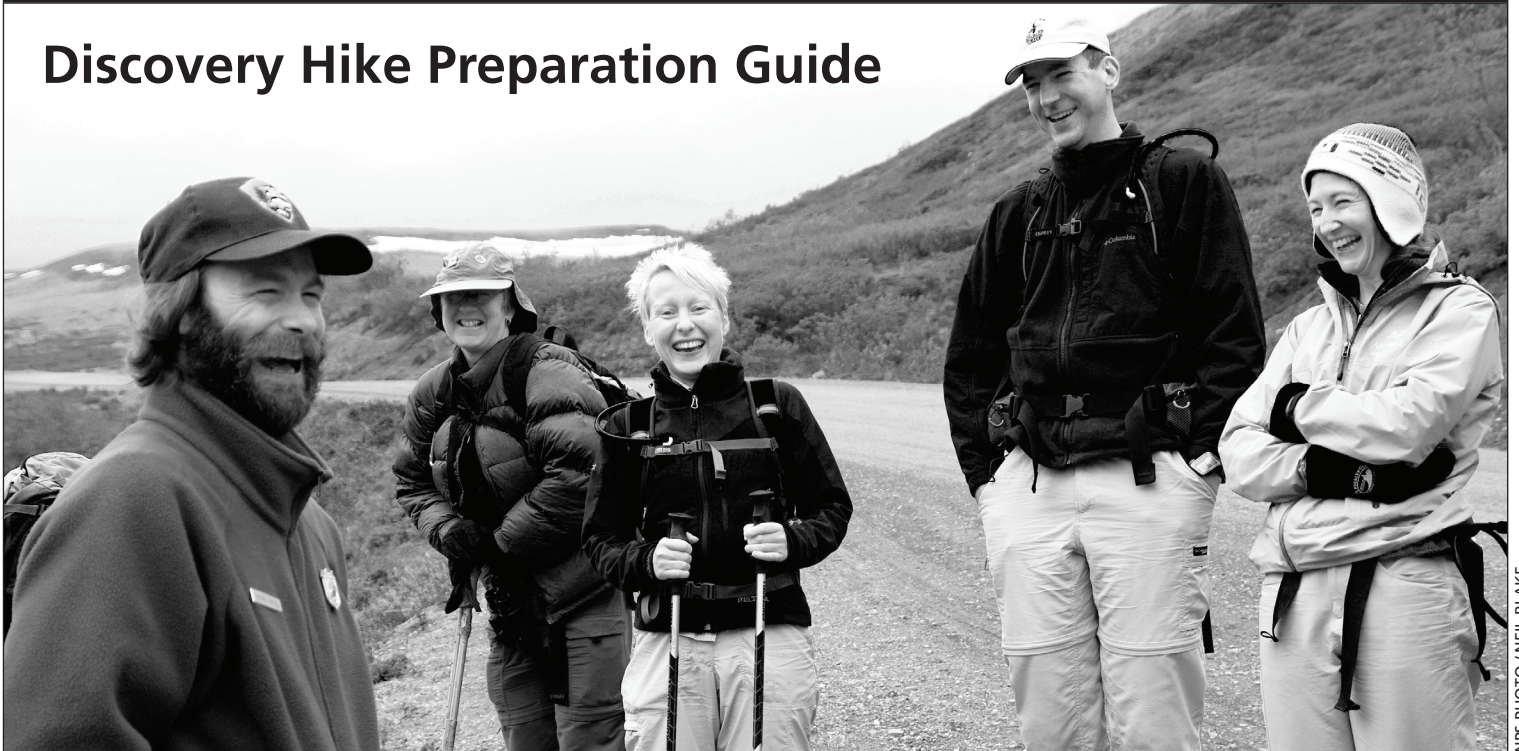




Discovery Hike Preparation Guide



NPS PHOTO / NEIL BLAKE

Hiking off trail with an interpretive ranger in the backcountry offers you an intimate opportunity to experience the landscape. For the safety and enjoyment of everyone in your group, come prepared. Plan to be in the park for as long as 11 hours, depending on the hike location and travel time on buses. You may be hiking for three to five hours and cover two to six miles. Bear in mind that it takes longer to cross terrain without established trails.

Bring layers for changing conditions

Any day of the summer could be sunny, rainy, sleeting, or snowy. As you travel farther west, the elevation increases. While it might be beautiful at the park entrance, it might be much cooler and windier farther out the Denali Park Road.

Bring layers to respond to changing conditions. Wear fleece, polypropylene, synthetic or wool under-layers to wick away moisture from your skin, and continue to insulate even when wet. Cotton tends to stay wet and have little insulating value.

Start hydrated, stay hydrated

Being properly hydrated will help your body adjust to changes in altitude, temperature, and exertion. Although it may be raining, Denali's climate is quite dry. As you sweat, you will need to replenish the fluid in your body. Start your day well-hydrated and bring at least two liters of water per person.

Bring all the water you may need with you. There are few or no sources of potable water available beyond the park entrance area. Surface water from streams and lakes should be both filtered and disinfected prior to human consumption.

Difficulty ratings

Moderate – Elevation gain of less than 1,000 feet (305 meters); may include some areas of thick brush, muddy or boggy ground, large and uneven tussocks, rocks and generally uneven terrain.

Strenuous – Elevation gain of 1,000 to 2,000 feet (305 to 609 meters); in addition to conditions mentioned previously, may include river crossings, extremely steep slopes and areas of loose rock.

About your hike

Discovery Hike bus loads at the Wilderness Access Center at 7:45 am

Date:	Ranger:	
Location:		
Distance:	Elevation change:	
Difficulty rating:	Moderate	Strenuous
Stream or river crossings:	Yes	No
Scree:	Yes	No
Brush:	Yes	No



NPS PHOTO / NEIL BLAKE

Gear checklists

Essential

- ☐ Water (two liters minimum)
- ☐ Rain jacket
- ☐ Rain pants
- ☐ Sturdy waterproof hiking boots
- ☐ Long pants (to protect against brush)
- ☐ Warm layers (synthetic/wool)
- ☐ Hat, gloves, scarf/neck warmer
- ☐ Extra socks
- ☐ Lunch and snacks
- ☐ Discovery Hike bus ticket

Smart to bring, if you have them

- ☐ Trekking poles
- ☐ Gaiters
- ☐ Camera
- ☐ Binoculars
- ☐ Insect repellent/head net
- ☐ Sunblock
- ☐ Field Guides
- ☐ Extra shoes for creek crossings

Common terms used in hike descriptions

Stream crossing: Less than knee deep, usually a single or few channels of clear, cold water.

River crossing: Up to thigh deep, usually several swift, silty streams comprise each braided river.

Gravel bar: A wide area of uneven rocks following the course of a glacially-carved river valley. May include stream or river crossings.

Stream- or river-crossing shoes: Spare footwear to keep your hiking boots dry. Sneakers offer the best foot protection. Sport sandals (rubber soles, canvas straps) are also acceptable. Some hikers prefer to cross in boots and change socks after the crossing or the hike.

Brush: Thick vegetation, often knee- to thigh-high. Wet brush will soak you if it has rained recently.

Willow or alder thickets: Up to 15 feet high. Pushing through thickets is exhausting. If the vegetation is wet you will get fully soaked.

Bog: Wet, spongy ground with shallow standing water mixed with grasses, sedges and rushes. Bog hiking is like walking on a leaky water bed.

Tussocks: Dense, wobbly clumps of grasses rising out of bogs. Tussock hiking is a bit like walking on basket balls.

Scree: Loose rocks usually found on steep slopes above tree line. Scree varies in size from peas to potatoes to pumpkins. Most of the mountains in Denali are covered with scree toward the top. Can be pleasant walking once you adopt a proper technique. First time scree walkers may feel uncomfortable as the rocks slide or roll underfoot.

Alpine tundra: Vegetated areas above tree line where plants grow in a thin, delicate carpet.