

Dixie Pass Trail

Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve

National Park Service
US Department of the Interior



Access: Trailhead on Kotsina Road

Distance: Approximately 16-17 miles round trip

Time: 3-4 days

Maps: USGS Maps-Valdez (C-1); McCarthy (C-8) 1:63,360; Valdez, McCarthy 1:250,000

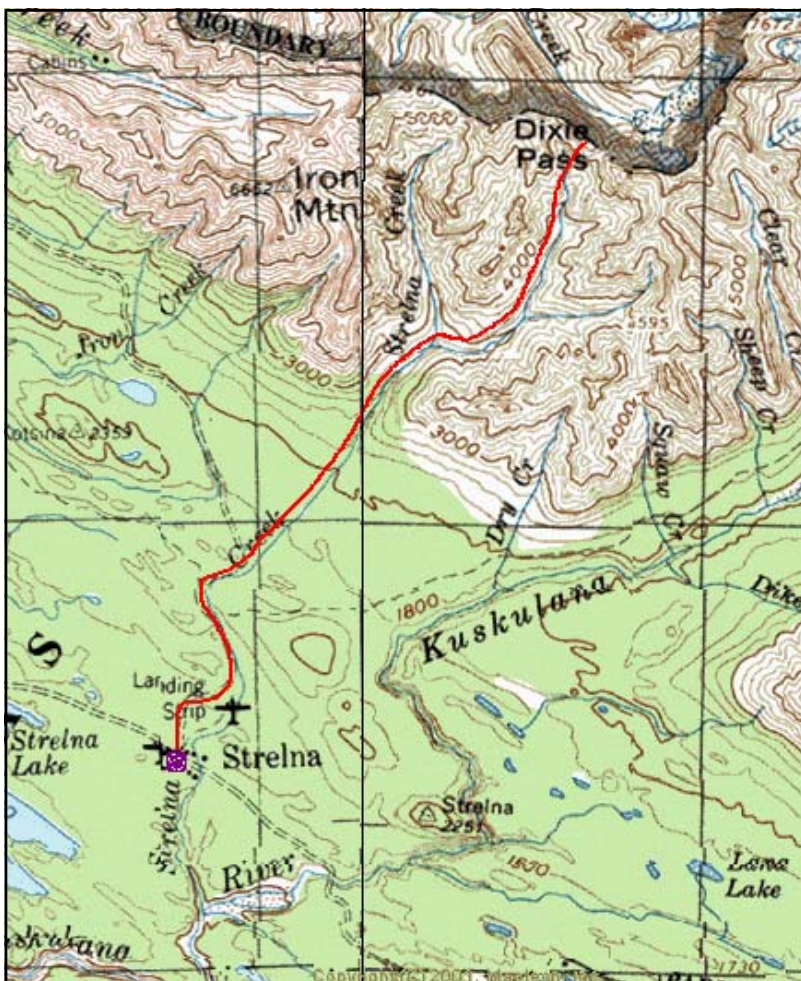
Difficulty: Moderately strenuous with moderate route finding and multiple creek crossings

Highlights: Accessible by road, alpine tundra, great views

Note: Proper food storage is required. Bear Resistant Food Containers are available from park visitor centers.

Route:

At mile 14.5 along the Chitina-McCarthy road, turn north across from the Strelna airstrip onto the road heading towards the Kotsina and Kuskulana valley. Medium to high clearance vehicles may be helpful on this one-lane road. The first two miles of road pass through non-federal land and continue onto Native Corporation land. After passing the Nugget Creek Trailhead, turn into the small clearing on the left side of the road at 3.8 miles from the Chitina-McCarthy road turnoff. If no parking is available you may need to park at the McCarthy Road and walk to the trailhead. The trail begins on the right side of the road.



For the first 2 miles, the trail follows a wooded bench before dropping down to Strelna Creek. After reaching Strelna Creek, stay on the west side of the creek for approximately 2 miles until reaching the confluence of Strelna Creek and the creek from Dixie Pass from the northeast. A good campsite is located at the confluence. Cross Strelna Creek above the confluence. Follow a series of way-trails along the (right) tributary from Dixie Pass. After about 1/2 mile, the trail turns into a route at this point. Follow way-trails along the creek, crossing several times on your way to the second confluence. At the second confluence follow the west (left) fork. You will come to a canyon that may be impassable at high water. If so, you will need to hike up and around it on either side of the creek. If you wade up the canyon, a scramble over a large boulder is necessary to avoid a deep pool. At the third confluence cross to the confluence of the two creeks where you will find a way-trail switch-backing up and then traversing the hillside, before dropping to near the valley bottom. Then pick your way directly cross country up to the pass or climb up to capture a traversing animal trail to the pass. This high trail crosses a pass and leaves the explorer to route-find steeply into the east branch of the third confluence.. Return via the same route.



View from the pass

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Above the pass



Along The Trail

Additional Comments:

- Campsites are found along Strelna Creek and the Dixie Pass drainage on sand/gravel bars. The saddle of Dixie Pass has room for 3 or 4 tents. However, Dixie Pass is a thru-way for bear and other wildlife and camping is not advised. Hikers may want to camp and day hike from the confluence 1 mile below the walled in canyon.
- Water is easily accessible for most of the trip except for the last mile or so up to the pass. At Dixie Pass, water may possibly be collected from snow field runoff (snow pack dependent).
- Dixie Pass is an obvious and natural corridor for wildlife. The hiker may find and lose the game trails many times before the trip is completed. As long as the map route is followed, the pass will be easy to find.
- Creeks must be crossed several times.



Potential Hazards:

- Bears may be present anywhere along this route. Precautions should be taken to avoid encounters with bears. Packing out all excess food and garbage will prevent habituation of wildlife.
- Stream crossings may present difficulties and dangers due to water volume and velocity that vary drastically according to the season, time of day and weather conditions. Temperatures of most creeks are just above freezing, even in mid-summer. A firm understanding of glacial creek and river crossing is essential.
- The hiker should be prepared for all types of weather conditions, including rain and snow in the higher elevations. Summertime brings snow to the saddle of Dixie Pass, use extreme caution when crossing snow fields as they may conceal drainage systems underneath.
- This is a remote area, and rescue or medical evacuation possibilities are limited and may take several days.