

Donoho Basin

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve

Access: By car via the McCarthy Road, then by foot. Located near Kennecott/McCarthy. This route can be accessed from Kennecott Mill Town, via the Root Glacier Trail.

Distance: 5 miles (8 km) one-way from Kennecott to the first lake, 10 miles (16 km) round-trip or more if continuing to the second lake.

Time: 2 days or more.

Maps: McCarthy 1:250,000; McCarthy 1:63,360 (B-6), (C-5), (C-6)

Difficulty: Strenuous. Requires route finding and moderate trip-planning.

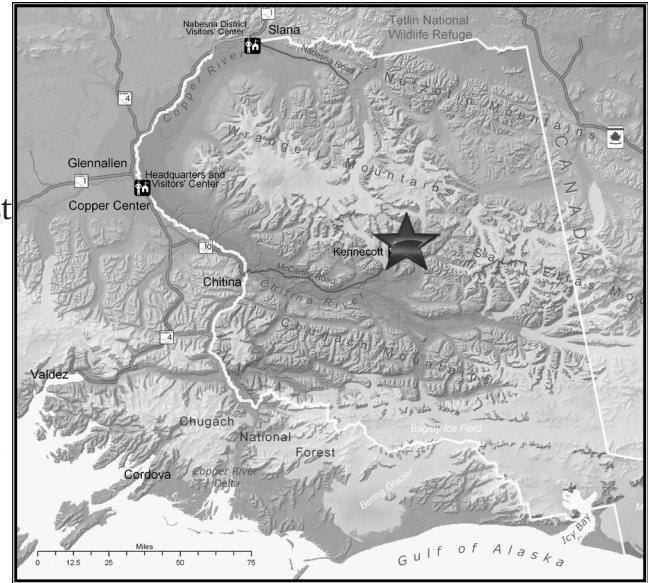
Highlights: Glacier travel, waterfalls, wildlife, fantastic views.

Route: From the Kennecott Visitor Center, walk through the Kennecott Mill Town north towards the Root Glacier. About a half mile beyond the visitor center, the road will split, veer left. The trail will soon cross over Bonanza Creek and then wind its way along the lateral moraines of the Kennecott and Root Glaciers. After about a mile, the trail curves sharply to the right and uphill; follow the trail to cross Jumbo Creek on the footbridge. After approximately another 1/4 mile (0.4 km), the trail reaches the Root Glacier access trail. (Primitive campsites, an outhouse and food lockers are available in this area.)

You will see a sign for the Root Glacier where the trail forks; turn left at the sign and follow the trail as it winds down the moraine to the toe of the glacier. After putting on crampons and carrying an ice axe and/or trekking poles, set out across the rolling ice for the approximately 1.5 mile (2.4 km) walk west northwest across the Root Glacier. You will need to negotiate a medial moraine and various non-technical icy slopes. Aim for the low spot (saddle) between Donoho Peak and the 3,100' hill at the south end of the peninsula.

Find a route off of the glacier that is easiest given the conditions. Accessing the moraine from the glacier can be very muddy with slippery footing. Find a good climbing route up the lateral moraine above you. From here, you can access a camping area with bear boxes or access the route across Donoho basin. The camping area with bear boxes is located on a flat part of the southern side of the moraine. The rolling hills of the moraine can hide the bear boxes. Be prepared to search for them as proper bear food storage is required. The GPS coordinate for the bear boxes are on the page 2 map.

The route across the Donoho basin to the lakes, starts off of the lateral moraine in the low spot described before, between Donoho Peak and the 3,100' hill at the south end of the peninsula. From the campsite continue east along the moraine to locate the start of the route. The GPS coordinates for this starting point are 61° 31.476'N, 142° 56.903'W.

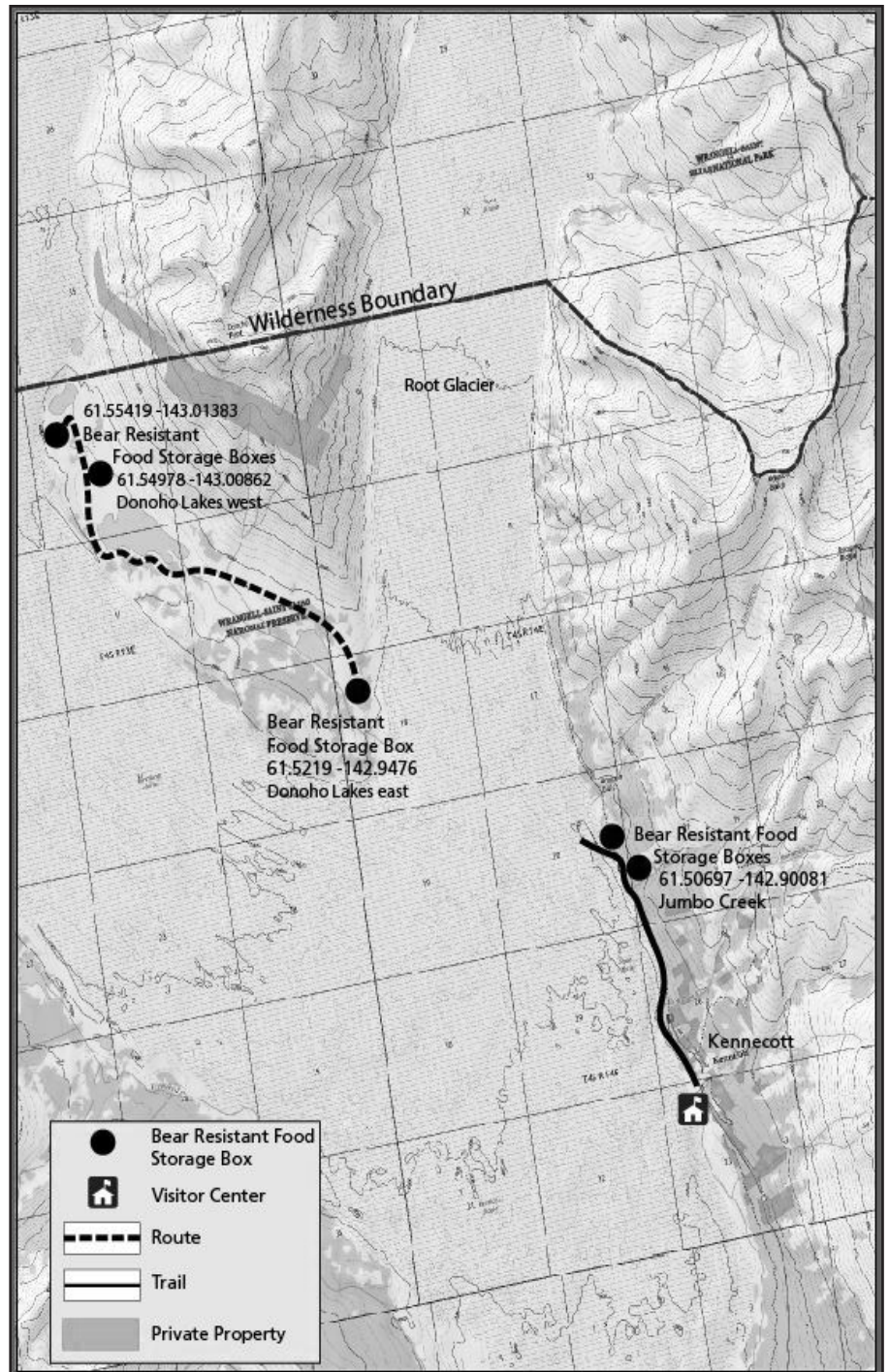


Once on the main route you will climb up to and along the north side of a small lake. Be prepared to get your feet wet near the lakes. You will travel through brushy tundra and cross an outlet stream to travel along the south side of the the second and larger lake.

Past the second lake, the route across the basin starts to become less distinct. To access the camping area and bear boxes on the west side of Donoho basin, hikers will travel through low brush and dry stream beds. A nice campsite can be found in the sandy area near the Kennecott and Gates Glacier junction.

Hazards: Travel in this area should be done only by experienced parties who are able to read and follow a map and compass. This is a remote area and the hiking is strenuous. Help is not readily available, you must be prepared to self rescue.

The trail is often difficult to follow with dense brush and frequently encounters steep slopes to climb and slippery scree; use your best judgment regarding safety and current conditions. There is a glacier crossing - crampons are required. Because the glacier changes yearly the best access on and off the glacier can also change. There is the possibility of deep mud and slippery footing while getting on and off the glacier. Travel with caution near and around glacial melt pools and potholes.



Bears are commonly sighted and encountered in the area. Proper food storage is required. Bear Resistant Food Containers (BRFC) are limited and may be available from park visitor centers or rent them in advance at private outdoor recreation businesses in Anchorage or Fairbanks. In addition, there are bear boxes for food storage. The GPS coordinates for the bear boxes are on the map.

Notes: Please call the Kennecott Visitor Center at (907) 205-7106 for assistance with trip-planning.

If you have a group between 8-12 people and plan to camp in the Donoho Basin area of the park, your group is required to register with the park and obtain a permit. You can register by calling the Kennecott Visitor Center or by sending an email to the park at wrst_info@nps.gov.