



# Bear Safety at Brooks Camp



## Welcome to Brooks Camp at Katmai National Park

Katmai protects some of the highest densities of bears in the world. Due to the high seasonal concentrations of brown bears at Brooks Camp, you are required to follow special rules and regulations during your visit.

When arriving at Brooks Camp, you must attend a brief bear safety orientation. The information on this paper is only designed to supplement the orientation, not replace it. Remember, we need your help and cooperation in protecting this experience and everyone's safety at this amazing place.

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## Safety

Maintain at least 50 yards (48 meters) from any bear at all times. Approaching any large mammal within 50 yards and remaining within 50 yards of a bear using a concentrated food source is prohibited. Brooks Camp is a unique situation where bears are often given the right-of-way. Within Katmai, bears are less likely show curiosity or defensiveness towards people when we maintain distances greater than 50 yards.

When traveling, avoid surprising bears and make your presence known. It is best to talk and travel in groups. Alerting bears with your voice can be especially important where visibility is limited. Remember, however, that you are not making noise to scare bears away, only to alert them to your presence. Once a bear identifies you as a human, making loud noises may agitate the animal.

Never run from any bear. During a close encounter, speak to the bear in a calm voice and back away from the bear until it resumes normal activities like resting, traveling, or feeding.

Bears may not recognize children as human due to their small size. Children should be supervised and under the control of an adult at all times, and should not be allowed to run free.

National Park Service rangers may direct you at any time. There are occasional exceptions to the wildlife distance regulations, and rangers will inform you of these circumstances.

The floating bridge across Brooks River is not a safe viewing platform. The bridge will be closed when bears are within 50 yards of the bridge or trail leading to the bridge. Walk quickly across the bridge to minimize your chances of encountering a delay or not reaching your destination.

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## Food

Properly storing and managing your food is the key to the unique experience at Brooks Camp. You have a responsibility to keep bears from associating people with food. Do not feed any animals or allow them to obtain food from you.

To avoid instances of bears associating people with food, all food items must be secured within the designated food caches at the Brooks Camp Visitor Center, in the campground, or at the Lake Brooks Picnic Area. Food can only be consumed inside buildings or at the designated picnic areas.

Outside of these designated picnic areas, you cannot possess any food (even gum and candy) or beverages other than plain water. Dispose of all garbage inside of buildings.

Please ask a park ranger about food storage regulations if you are traveling outside of Brooks Camp. Properly storing and managing food is the most important way to maintain a safe experience around the bears of Katmai.

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## Equipment

A bear's natural curiosity can lead it to investigate and destroy unattended equipment, and it may eventually associate our property as toys. Play rewards, in the form of unattended equipment, can be a strong motivator for bears to approach people and buildings.

No clothing, bags, or other equipment can be left unattended at any time. Do not place anything on the ground unless you keep it within your immediate reach. Extra clothing and equipment may be stored inside of buildings. Designated gear caches are provided at each picnic area for storage of extra equipment.

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## Fishing

Fishing the Brooks River is an exciting experience that comes with responsibility. Never let a bear acquire a fish from you, so be alert at all times. Fishing must be terminated within 50 yards of any bear—no lures can remain in the water. When playing a fish, always be prepared to break your fishing line in case a bear approaches.

In the past, bears have learned to associate people with fish. These situations can lead to fishing closures, threats to human safety, and even the eventual destruction of a bear. If you plan on fishing, it is your responsibility to know and follow all fishing regulations. Stop by the visitor center for a list of current regulations.

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## Viewing Platforms

Three elevated viewing platforms are the only places where bears can be safely observed at close distances. While these platforms provide us with remarkable opportunities to watch bears, we still need to follow a few rules of etiquette to minimize our impact on these amazing animals.

On the platforms, please keep your voices low and avoid cheering for bears. Certain bears will avoid feeding near the platforms or along the river when large groups of people are present. Flash cameras have also been known to disturb bears, so please turn your flash off when taking photographs.

Do not set anything on the railings. If an item falls off a platform it may not be recoverable. No smoking is permitted on the platforms, and do not stop on the walkways between

the viewing platforms so that bears can pass underneath undisturbed.

For space considerations, the Falls Platform has a maximum capacity of 40 people. After one hour, you may be asked to yield your spot on the Falls Platform to allow others access to Brooks Falls. This rule applies only when the platform is full and when others are waiting to view bears at Brooks Falls. You may sign up and return to the platform as soon as space is available.

The platforms will get crowded, so please be respectful and courteous to each other. Help to reduce crowding on the platforms by minimizing the amount of space used by tripods and other equipment. Neither the Riffles nor the Lower River Platforms have a time limit or capacity, and they can offer just as many rewarding bear viewing opportunities as Brooks Falls.

