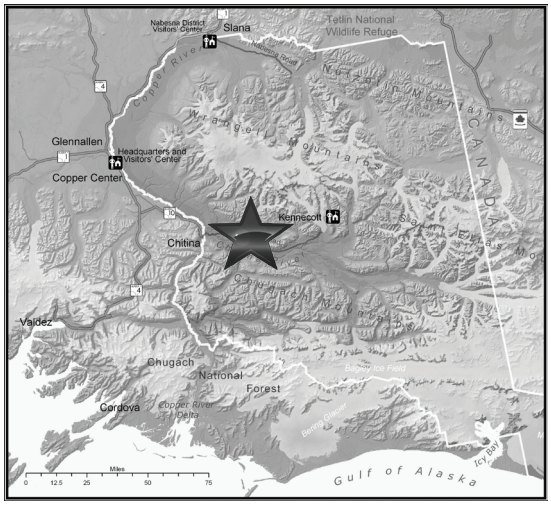
Nugget Creek Trail

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve



Access: Trailhead is located on Kotsina Road. Kotsina Rd turn-off is located at mile 14.5 of the McCarthy Rd, on the north side of the road. After about 2½ miles, the trailhead for Nugget Creek Trail is on the right. Parking at the trailhead requires permission and a small fee paid to the Chitina Native Corporation.

Distance: Approximately 15 miles one way.

Time: Allow 2-3 days round-trip and more time to do exploring.

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

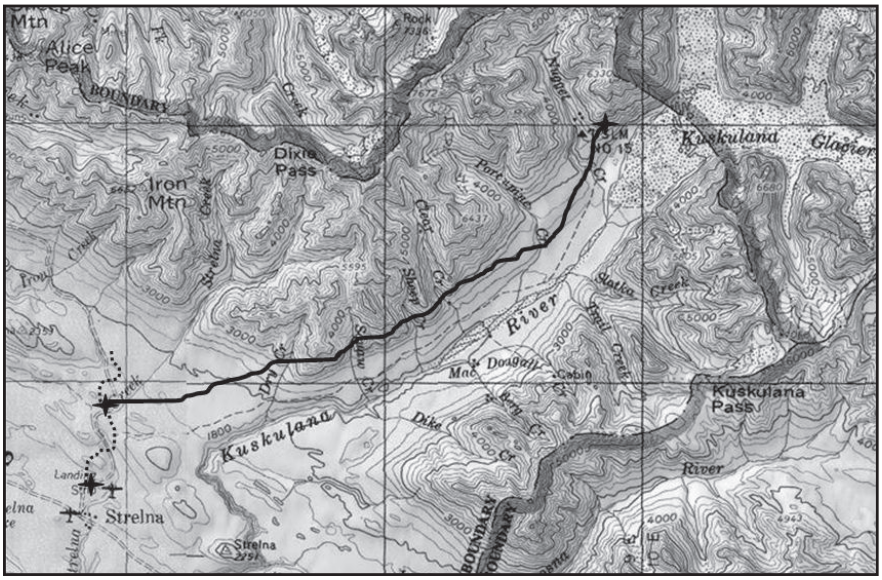
Difficulty: Easy and level, with moderate stream crossings. Occasional gentle climbs. This is a nice route for mountain biking, ATVs, and snowmobile travel.

Highlights: Road accessible, public cabin, great views of Mt. Blackburn

Route: The trail begins with a ford at Strelna Creek. Some wet and possibly muddy trail conditions will be encountered. This beginning portion is along an easement across private land which ends at approximately 3400 feet. Please do not camp in the first two miles. Drinking water may be difficult to find for the first 5 miles. After several miles, the trail gains some elevation and conditions are drier, making for relatively easy hiking for the remaining 13 miles.

There are small camping areas and water at Squaw, Clear and Sheep Creeks. These creeks are small and may have little or no water during drier weather conditions. Nugget Creek, near the end of the trail is the largest crossing after Strelna Creek. At very high run-off Nugget Creek may be impassible. The public use cabin is directly across the creek. There is a small camping area with a bear resistant food locker located on the west side of Nugget Creek.

Hazards: Swift and cold melt water streams may have sudden changes in water volume and velocity due to heavy precipitation upstream or excessive snowmelt caused by warm temperatures. Be prepared for various types of inclement weather, including rain and possible snow. Excursions onto the Kuskulana Glacier should not be attempted without prior knowledge and experience in glacier travel and safety. Proper food storage is required.



Notes: At the end of the trail there is a rustic public use cabin that is available on a first come, first served basis.

Nugget Creek Cabin

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Location: At the end of the 15 mile Nugget Creek Trail, accessed from the Kotsina Rd at mile 14.5 of the McCarthy Rd. Refer to USGS Maps: McCarthy 1:250,000; McCarthy 1:63,360 (C-8). N61.626122, W143.713382

Reservations: No reservations are required at this time. Available on a first-come, first-served basis. The maximum stay in the cabin is 7 days in a 30 day period. This cabin is extremely busy during late summer. Please take camping gear in case the cabin is occupied when you arrive. (This cabin may be going back on the reservation system in the future.)

Access: Cabin can be reached from the 15-mile Nugget Creek Trail. The Nugget Creek trailhead is located on the Kotsina Road. The Kotsina Road turn-off is at mile 14.5 of the McCarthy Rd, on the north side of the road. The Kotsina Road is NOT marked, so be sure to pay attention to the mile markers. After about 2 miles on the Kotsina Road, the trailhead for Nugget Creek Trail is on the right. Parking at the trailhead requires permission and a small fee from the Chitina Native Corporation. Sometimes the Kotsina Road can be extremely rough and cars with low clearance will not be able to drive on it. If this is the case, we recommend that you turn around and park your car along the McCarthy Road. Please be aware that this will add two miles to your hike.

Cabin can be accessed by foot, horse, mountain bike, ATV (with a permit), or small airplane at a nearby gravel airstrip. Nugget Creek feeds into the Kuskulana River about 1/4 mile downstream from the cabin. Sometimes this creek runs high and may be difficult to cross. Stop in the Chitina Ranger Station or Kennecott Visitor Center for the latest trail conditions and information.

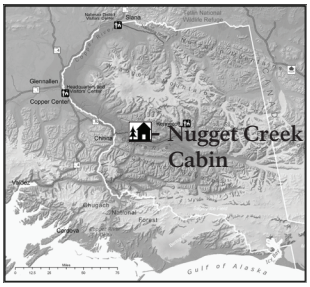
Description: This cabin is on the north side of Nugget Creek at about 3,000' elevation. There is no running water or plumbing. The cabin is 15 ft X 19 ft and contains:

- four standard twin wooden bunks (sleeps four people)
- a woodstove
- table and chairs
- a rustic pit toilet - Please bring your own toilet paper, as the toilet is not regularly stocked or maintained.

Occasionally we receive complaints about the conditions of this cabin. Please be aware that this is an older cabin and it is minimally maintained. There are no amenities. It is small and fairly dark inside. You should expect very rustic conditions. Please view this cabin as being basic indoor sleeping space.

Regulations: You must bring all personal belongings that you will require, including sleeping and dining equipment. Please clean the cabin and take all food and trash with you upon departure. Burying garbage is prohibited. Dogs are allowed, but please clean up after your pet. Please do not remove or relocate any artifacts or deface cabins or historic structures. There are numerous bugs in this area. Headnets and bug spray are strongly encouraged during June, July, and August.

Water & Firewood: Visitors may gather dead and down wood for firewood. Replenish any firewood stored in the cabin for the next user. Water can be obtained about 50 yds away from Nugget Creek.

Recreational Opportunities: The trail ends at the cabin, but there are opportunities to explore and hike beyond the cabin. This cabin is located in a remote, rugged area. Make sure you're familiar with backcountry safety before venturing out to hike. Visitors can do off-trail hiking to the terminus of the Kuskulana glacier. A trail extends for 1.5 miles beyond the cabin to access the old mine sites at the 3,800' elevation on the bench above Nugget Creek. Nearby Nugget Creek is not suitable for fishing and there are no other lakes or streams nearby. If you find a place to fish, a State of Alaska fishing license is required. This cabin is located in the park, so sport hunting is not allowed. Subsistence hunting is allowed, which is limited to local, rural residents. A State of Alaska hunting license is required and a federal subsistence hunting permit may be required. Please refer to state and federal hunting regulations. This cabin is a very popular cabin. Plan to bring camping supplies in case the cabin is already being used when you arrive. Snowmachines are allowed on the trail, provided that at least six inches of snow covers the ground. Recreational ATV use is allowed on this trail - a permit is required. You can obtain a permit from the Wrangell-St. Elias Visitor Center or Slana Ranger Station.

Airstrip: 900' gravel airstrip, approximately 200 yards from the cabin.