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Alaska Backpacking: Nizina Glacier Base Camp

Located within a short bush plane flight of McCarthy, Alaska; the Nizina Glacier offers a spectacular setting for a remote, wilderness base camping adventure. Surrounded by grand peaks, capped by hanging glaciers; the ice of the Nizina Glacier flows from the high snow fields surrounding 13,845 ft (4,219m) Regal Mountain. The glacier terminates in iceberg-filled Nizina Lake and forms the headwaters of the mighty Nizina River. Day hiking opportunities abound and wildlife sightings are not unusual.



Trip Highlights:

- Exploring Iceberg-Filled Nizina Lake
- Spectacular flight along the Mile-High cliffs
- Base camping near the ever-changing Nizina Glacier
- Day hiking in the remote Wrangell St. Elias National Park

Nizina Glacier Base Camp – Detailed Itinerary

The following is a sample itinerary for this trip. Due to individual abilities and goals, as well as the demanding environment of Alaska, all of our trips are customized as they unfold. The guide will constantly make decisions based on weather, logistics and group dynamics to maximize each day's experience. There can be quite a bit of variation, but we always strive to make every trip your best ever.

DAY 1 - Your Alaska backpacking adventure starts at our headquarters in the historic Motherlode Powerhouse in McCarthy. Our professional mountain guides have been busily making preparations for your trip and are excited to get to know you. You are in good hands as they review your itinerary, go over the menu, and make sure that you are properly outfitted for the trip. After the final checks are complete, the excitement builds as you and your guide head for the airstrip. There you'll meet your pilot and board a bush plane for the 20-minute flight east to a primitive landing strip at Doubtful Creek, alongside the Nizina Glacier. During the flight be sure to have your camera at the ready.

The landscape below is rich with history and stunning natural beauty as you fly past the rock glaciers of Sourdough Peak, sections of an old bridge that spanned the Nizina River in the 1930's, waterfalls pouring off of the Mile-high cliffs, and, off to the southeast, Mt. Andrus and Pyramid Peak (in 1988, Danny Kost a St. Elias Alpine Guide accomplished the first ascent of Pyramid Peak).



Flying up the Nizina River, the Nizina Glacier is straight ahead. This massive flow of ice creates a natural pass between the Chitina River Valley and the northern lowlands of the Tanana River. It was used during the gold rush of 1915 as a route to Chisana a hundred miles north of McCarthy. Your plane sets down on the rocky airstrip near Doubtful Creek and as the noise of its engines recedes you find yourself pleasantly immersed in the unparalleled

wilderness of the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park.

Shouldering your packs, you and your guide set out to locate an ideal basecamp from which to begin your adventure. The options are truly limitless as you explore serene beaver ponds nestled into the base of the Hole-in-the-Wall peaks, dryus covered moraine, and the bluffs overlooking the icebergs of Nizina Lake.

DAY 2 – The Nizina Glacier valley offers many unique formations to explore and hikes to choose from. Where you go simply depends on the group's goals and weather conditions. With a full day before you, you and your guide can head north, paralleling the Nizina Glacier, crossing

2 small creeks that flow from the forest covered slopes of Hole-in-the-Wall. Over the past decade, Skolai Creek has carved directly into the immense Nizina Glacier, cutting the thick ice like a knife and creating high, crumbling ice cliffs. Thunder rolls through this canyon as enormous blocks tumble hundreds of feet into the creek bed below. Your explorations may find you scrambling over sticky glacial sediment and hiking



through rocky moraine to finally gain the edge of the gravel bank overlooking the canyon and the calving Nizina. This is a wonderful place to eat lunch, snapping photos and marveling at this incredible example of the "Ice Age" come alive. You and your guide may decide to work your way as close as possible, and spend the entire day

watching, from differing vantage points, nature's show. A hot meal awaits you in the evening and the sound of rushing water lulls you to sleep.

DAY 3 – Morning creeps across the Nizina Glacier softly. You and your guide enjoy a hot cup of tea and marvel at the light playing across the ice and over the surrounding peaks. There is plenty of time today to continue your exploration of the area. A great option is to retrace some of your footsteps of the previous day, and scramble out onto the ice of the Nizina itself. Using crampons, you and your guide can explore this unique formation, gazing into deep moulins (deep holes carved into the ice by streams and forming wonderful vertical waterfalls). You may also discover azure blue pools as you hike to gain a vantage point to scan the immense lake formed at the terminus of the Nizina Glacier. This isn't just any lake, though, it is filled with icebergs the size of city blocks! If expansive views are more what you had in mind, you can climb the tundra slopes that sweep down from the Hole-in-the-Wall peaks and afford wonderful panoramas of the Wrangell and St. Elias Mountains. In the evening, the small bush plane returns to whisk you and your guide back to McCarthy and a hot meal. A soak in our rustic, wood-fired sauna is sure to ease your re-entry back to civilization.

What's Included?

As with all of our Alaska backpacking adventures, the Nizina Glacier Base Camp and Trekking trip includes professional, experienced backpacking guides with extensive local knowledge and medical training. We provide all food for the backcountry portions of your trip, including hot and delicious meals morning and evening and plenty of snacks and lunch food for mid-day nourishment. St. Elias Alpine Guides also provides shared group gear, including stoves, pots, and tents, as well as any technical gear, such as crampons. All you need to bring is your personal gear, (clothing, rain gear, boots, sleeping bag and pad) You can find a detailed list of the backpacking gear that we recommend you bring on our website: <http://www.steliasguides.com>.



If you would like us to arrange your transportation to McCarthy/Kennecott and/or lodging while in the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, we offer this as a free service to our multi-day clients. Please email or give us a call to discuss the details.