

DENALI HIGHWAY

Distance in miles	Cantwell	Delta Junction	Denali Park	Paxson
Cantwell		214	27	134
Delta Junction	214		241	80
Denali Park	27	241		161
Paxson	134	80	161	

The 134-mile-long Denali Highway links Paxson at **Milepost V 185.5** on the Richardson Highway to Cantwell at **Milepost A 209.9** on the Parks Highway. When the Denali Highway opened in 1957, it was the only road link to Denali National Park and Preserve (then Mount McKinley National Park) until the completion of the Parks Highway in 1972. (Prior to 1957, the national park had been accessible only by railroad or plane.)

A highly scenic route, the Denali Highway has been a favorite destination for many Alaskans over the years. Long-standing businesses along the highway attest to this road's enduring popularity. Tangle River Inn at **Milepost P 20** has provided 30 years of friendly service. So much so that in 2003, the BLM honored owner Naidine Johnson by naming a mountain after her. Gracious House, at **Milepost P 82**, has been a familiar stop for Denali Highway travelers for 47 years. Tangle Lakes Lodge, at **Milepost P 22**, is a favorite summer and winter destination.

On her trip over the highway in fall 2005, field editor Sharon Paul Nault commented, "It was one of the most beautiful trips I have ever taken. The fall colors were just vivid and fiery."

The first 21 miles of the Denali Highway from Paxson and the first 3 miles from Cantwell are paved. The remaining 110 miles are gravel.

Summer road conditions on the gravel portion of the Denali Highway vary, depending on highway maintenance, weather and the opinion of the driver. Maintenance in 2005 included trenching along the roadway to improve drainage. This made some of the turnouts difficult to access. The road was in poor condition with long sections of potholes and washboard. Current status is unknown, but road grading is scheduled for spring and summer 2006.

Road surfacing normally ranges from good gravel to rough and rocky. Washboard and potholes can develop quickly. This can be a dusty drive for motorists—and a very dusty ride for bicyclists—in dry weather. BLM recommends a speed of 30 mph on gravel portions of the road.

The highway becomes narrower and more winding west of Maclaren Summit (elev. 4,086 feet). This is the second highest highway pass in the state, and represents the

Connects: Paxson to Cantwell, AK **Length:** 134 miles
Road Surface: 85% gravel, 15% paved **Season:** Closed in winter
Highest Summit: Maclaren Summit 4,086 feet
Major Attraction: Tangle Lakes–Delta River Canoe Trail

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The Denali Highway offers spectacular scenery and uncrowded campgrounds.
 (© Sharon Nault)

only significant grade on the highway.

The Denali Highway is closed to through traffic in winter. Motorists are cautioned to check on road conditions before attempting to drive the highway between October and mid-May.

The Denali Highway provides access to the Delta River canoe trail at Tangle Lakes, headwaters of the Delta National Wild and Scenic River. For detailed information on ORV use on public lands or canoeing the Delta River, contact the Bureau of Land Management office in Glennallen, phone (907) 822-3217. Also visit www.ak.blm.gov/gdo/denali.html for more highway and recreation information.

Birders will find Smith's Longspur, harlequin ducks, gyrfalcons, arctic warblers and more than 100 other species along the Denali Highway. Birders might want to stop in at Paxson Alpine Tours or at Denali Highway Cabins (www.denalihwy.com) at **Milepost P 0.2** to talk to Dr. Audubon L. Bakewell IV and view his resident nesting merlins. Dr. Bakewell is co-author of the *ABA Bird Finding Guide to Alaska*.

Emergency medical services: Between Paxson and **Milepost P 77.3** (Susitna Lodge), phone 911 or the state troopers at (907) 822-3263. Between **Milepost P 77.3** and Cantwell, phone the state troopers at (907) 768-2202. *NOTE: There is cell phone service from Paxson, but we did not get service on the highway beyond Paxson until Milepost*

P 129, just a few miles from the Parks Highway, when we traveled this road in fall 2005.

Denali Highway Log

Distance from Paxson (P) is followed by distance from junction with the Parks Highway at Cantwell (C).

NOTE: There were many missing mileposts along the Denali Highway in fall 2005.

ALASKA ROUTE 8

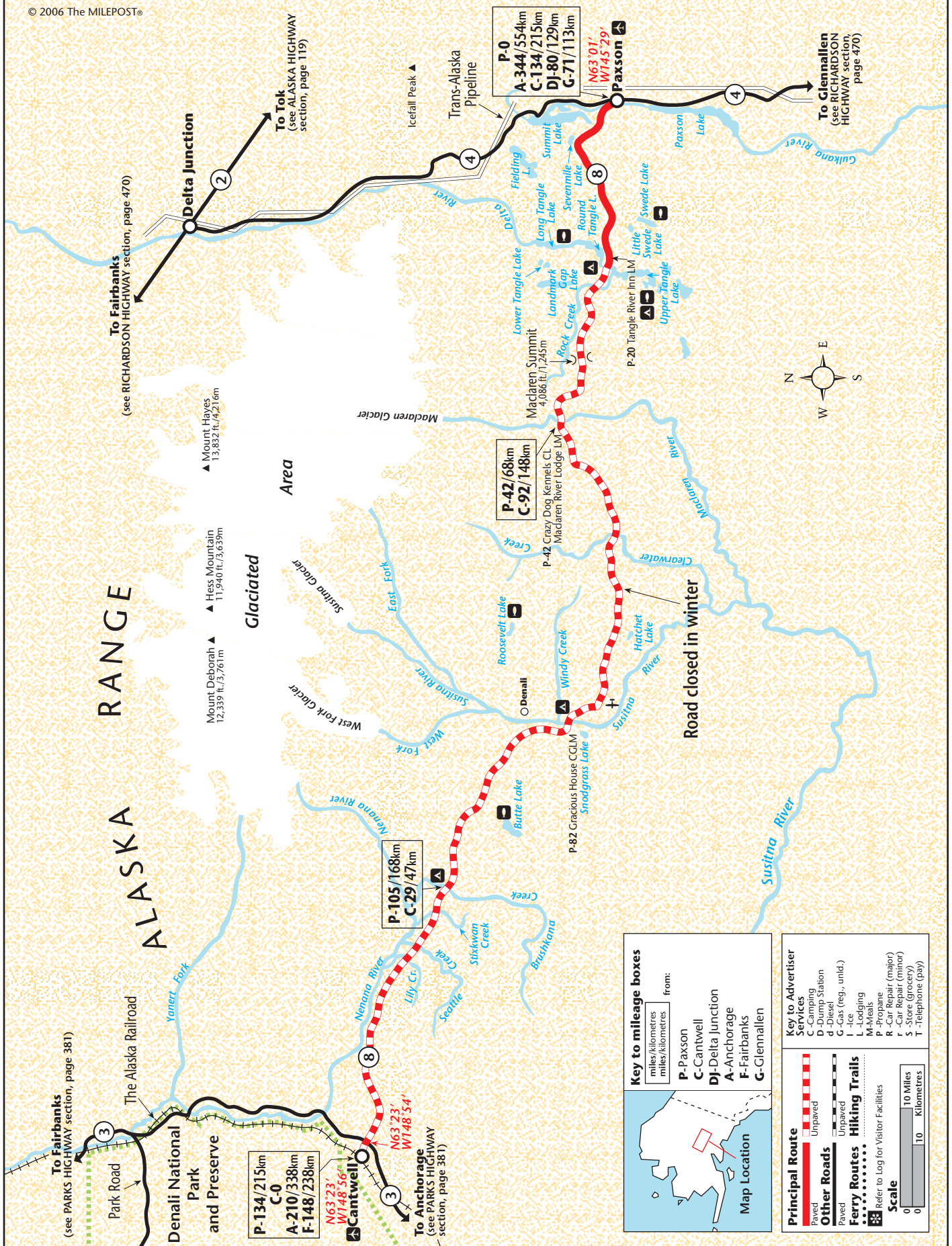
P 0 C 133.8 PAXSON (pop. 40; elev. 2,650 feet, N 63°2', W 145°30'), at **Milepost V 185.5** on the Richardson Highway, began in 1906 when Alvin Paxson established a roadhouse at Mile 192. He later built a larger roadhouse at Old Mile 191. The structure burned in the early 1970s; the ruins can be seen on the east side of the highway at **Milepost V 185.7** Richardson Highway. Today, Denali Highway Cabins is located here.

Junction of the Richardson Highway (Alaska Route 4) with the Denali Highway (Alaska Route 8). Turn to **Milepost V 185.5** on page 481 in the RICHARDSON HIGHWAY section for log.

Private Aircraft: Paxson airstrip, adja-

DENALI HIGHWAY Paxson, AK, to Cantwell, AK

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cent south; elev. 2,653 feet; length 2,800 feet; gravel; emergency fuel; attended.

Mileposts were missing between here and Milepost P 26 in 2005.

P 0.1 C 133.7 Gulkana River bridge. Side road north to Denali Highway Cabins (description follows); lodging.

Denali Highway Cabins offer what many visitors and natives call the state's finest road-accessible lodging. Oversized, very private riverside cabins boast mountain views, Serta Perfect Sleeper® mattresses, Hudson Bay blankets, full baths, TV/VCR, smoking patios, barbecues and complimentary beverages. Each cabin's own water system ensures no getting scalded by another's shower! Join naturalist-host Dr. Audubon L. Bakewell IV, co-author of the *ABA Bird Finding Guide to Alaska*, on wildlife float trips through the Paxson Reserve, featuring up-close views of moose, beaver, salmon, grizzlies, lynx. Join a wildflower or birdwatching tour of the spectacular Denali Highway tundra. Glacier hikes, bicycling, canoeing and much more make this a multi-day stop for all outdoor lovers. Phone (907) 822-5972; www.denalihwy.com. See display ad this section. [ADVERTISEMENT]

P 0.3 C 133.5 Gravel parking areas at west end of bridge; informal camping. Spawning sockeye salmon in season. (This portion of the Gulkana River is closed to salmon fishing.) Look for "harleys" (harlequin ducks). Trail to Mud Lake; grayling fishing. ➤

P 0.4 C 133.4 Entering Paxson Closed Area (sign) westbound. The area south of the Denali Highway and east of the Richardson Highway is closed to the taking of all big game.

There are several long upgrades and many turnouts the next 21 miles westbound. Wildflowers carpet the tundra in the spring and summer. Watch for nesting swans.

P 0.8 C 133 Large paved turnout to south.

P 1.5 C 132.3 Large paved turnout to south.

P 2.1 C 131.7 Westbound travelers may note the change in vegetation from spruce forest to alpine tundra.

Large paved turnout on hilltop to south.

P 3.4 C 130.4 Paved turnout to south. Several more turnouts next 3 miles westbound with views of Summit Lake to the north, Gakona Glacier to the northeast, Icefall Peak and Gulkana Glacier west of Icefall Peak, all in the **Alaska Range**. The 650-mile-long range, which extends across southcentral Alaska from the Canadian border southwest to Iliamna Lake, also contains Mount McKinley (Denali), the highest peak in North America.

Good views of trans-Alaska pipeline for Paxson-bound travelers.

P 3.9 C 129.9 Paved turnout to north.

P 4 C 129.8 Views to east next 3 miles westbound of Mounts Sanford, Wrangell and Drum in the Wrangell Mountains; see viewpoint at **Milepost P 12.7**.

P 4.8 C 129 Large paved turnout to north.

P 5.6 C 128.2 Paved turnout to north.

P 6.2 C 127.6 Turnout to south.

P 6.4 C 127.4 Side road to north leads to small lake.

P 7 C 126.8 Trail access (not signed) to **Sevenmile Lake** 0.8 mile north; excellent fishing for lake trout in summer. ➤

Large gravel turnout overlooking Sevenmile Lake. Two Bit Lake is the large lake to the north; Summit Lake is to the northeast.



Fall hunters travel through the brush on ATVs. (© Sharon Nault)

P 7.2 C 126.6 Paved turnout to north. Highway climbs westbound.

P 7.8 C 126 Paved turnout to north overlooking Sevenmile Lake. Summit Lake visible to east.

P 8.3 C 125.5 Federal Subsistence area boundary.

P 8.4 C 125.4 Paved turnout to north.

P 8.5 C 125.3 Entering BLM public lands westbound.

P 9.6 C 124.2 Paved turnout to south overlooking **Ten Mile Lake**. Short hike downhill to outlet. Fishing for lake trout, grayling and burbot in summer. ➤

P 10 C 123.8 Large paved turnout to south overlooking **Ten Mile Lake**.

P 10.5 C 123.3 Paved turnout overlooking **Ten Mile Lake** to south. ➤

Views westbound of extensive glacial outwash plain dotted with kettle ponds; known locally as Hungry Hollow.

P 10.7 C 123.1 Rough, narrow, gravel road leads 0.3 mile south to **Octopus Lake**; limited parking, fishing for lake trout, grayling, whitefish. Octopus Lake is fed from an outlet of Ten Mile Lake. ➤

P 11 C 122.8 Federal Subsistence area boundary.

P 11.4 C 122.4 Paved turnout to south. Look for blueberries in season.

NOTE: Watch for frost heaves next mile westbound.

P 11.7 C 122.1 Paved turnout to south.

Views of Hungry Hollow continue westbound.

P 12.1 C 121.7 Paved turnout to south with sweeping views of the tundra and lakes below.

P 12.6 C 121.2 Large gravel turnout at top of hill to south with panoramic views and a primitive campsite.

P 12.7 C 121.1 Paved turnout to south is Wrangell Mountain viewpoint. BLM information sign on Denali Highway campgrounds, trailheads, points of interest and services.

The Wrangell Mountains are about 78 air miles southeast of here. The prominent peak on the left is Mount Sanford (16,237 feet); Mount Drum (12,010 feet) is on the right; and Mount Wrangell (14,163 feet) is in the center. Mount Wrangell is the northernmost active volcano on the Pacific Rim.

P 14 C 119.8 Turnout to **14 Mile Lake** to south. Access via a trail off the highway. Area offers primitive camping and fishing for rainbow trout (ADF&G stocked lake). ➤

P 14.1 C 119.7 Paved turnout; small lakes to north. View of long lake to the south.

Highway begins descent westbound to Tangle Lakes area.

P 15.4 C 118.4 Paved turnout to south.

P 16.1 C 117.8 Swede Lake trail, 3 miles long, to south; **Little Swede Lake**, 2 miles. A new trailhead was built in 2005. Access via primitive gravel loop road (no sign). This trail connects with the Middle Fork Gulkana River branch trail (access to Dickey Lake and Meier Lake trail) and the Alphabet Hills trail. **Big Swede Lake** has excellent fishing for lake trout, grayling, whitefish and burbot. Little Swede Lake is excellent for lake trout. Inquire at Tangle River Inn for directions and trail information. ➤

P 16.2 C 117.6 Entering BLM **Tangle Lakes Archaeological District** westbound. Within this 226,000-acre area, more than 400 archaeological sites chronicle man's seasonal exploitation of the local natural resources. For more than 10,000 years, hunter-gatherers have dug roots, picked berries, fished and hunted big game (primarily caribou) in this area. You may hike along the same high, gravel ridges once used by prehistoric people and used today by modern hunters, anglers and berry pickers.

P 16.7 C 117.1 Paved turnout to south by gravel pit; plenty of flat gravel parking space. **16.8 Mile Lake** to north (walk up creek 200 yards); lake trout and grayling. **Rusty Lake**, 0.5 mile northwest of 16.8 Mile Lake; lake trout and grayling. ➤

P 17.1 C 116.7 Paved turnout to north by **17 Mile Lake**; lake trout and grayling fishing. ➤

P 17.7 C 116.1 Paved turnouts both sides of highway.

P 18.1 C 115.7 Gravel turnouts by small lakes both sides of highway.

P 18.6 C 115.2 Paved turnout to north.

P 19 C 114.8 Turnout to Tangle Lakes Lodge. *Driving distance between physical Mileposts 18 and 19 is 0.7 mile.*

P 19.4 C 114.4 Paved turnout to south. Federal Subsistence area boundary. Delta



Camper and canine companion enjoy the view at a turnout along the Denali Highway. (© Sharon Nault)

U.S. Department of Interior Wild and Scenic River (sign).

P 20 C 113.8 Tangle River Inn to south; food, gas, lodging. Stop in and see the plaque honoring owner Naidine Johnson and the map showing the location of Mount Naidine.

Tangle River Inn. See display ad this section.

P 20.1 C 113.7 Large paved turnout to north overlooking **Round Tangle Lake**, one of a series of long, narrow lakes connected by the Tangle River and forming the headwaters of the Delta River. The name Tangle is a descriptive term for the maze of lakes and feeder streams contained in this drainage system. Canoe rentals available at Tangle River Inn and Tangle Lakes Lodge.

P 20.6 C 113.2 Paved parking area with toilet to north.

P 21 C 112.8 The Nelchina caribou herd travels through this area, usually around the end of August or early in September.

P 21.2 C 112.6 *NOTE: Pavement ends, gravel begins westbound. Watch for potholes, washboard and washouts westbound and frost heaves eastbound.*

P 21.3 C 112.5 One-lane bridge over Tangle River.

Turnoff to north for access to **Tangle Lakes BLM Campground**, 0.7 mile north

from highway on Round Tangle Lake; no fee, 23 formal campsites, some near lake, and several informal sites on gravel loop road, toilets, tables, firepits, potable water, bear-proof garbage cans, cement boat launch area with personal flotation devices (free use for children), campground host. A favorite place to camp for many Alaskans. Berry picking in season. Watch for ptarmigan, eagles and resident moose along the Tangle River. This is a very popular fishing spot for grayling and lake trout. ▲

NOTE: Turnouts and gravel areas along the road to the registration area are for day use only.

Large parking area and interpretive sign titled "Paths Across Time" at turnoff.

Easy access to boat launch for **Delta River Canoe Trail**, which goes north through Tangle Lakes to the Delta River. Self-register for river trips. The 2- to 3-day float to the takeout point on the Richardson Highway requires 1 portage. The Delta National Wild and Scenic River is managed by the BLM. For details on this river trail or the Gulkana River trail, contact the BLM, Box 147, Glennallen, AK 99588; phone (907) 822-3217.

Watershed divide. The Gulkana River joins the Copper River, which flows into Prince William Sound. The Delta River joins

the Tanana River, which flows into the Yukon River. The Yukon flows into the Bering Sea.

P 21.7 C 113.8 **Delta National Wild and Scenic River BLM Wayside and Boat Launch** to south, day-use only; picnic tables, firepits, garbage cans, toilets, potable water, boat launch, no fee. Launch point for Upper Tangle Lakes canoe trail, which goes south through Tangle Lakes (portages required) to Dickey Lake, then follows the Middle Fork to the main Gulkana River.

The Tangle Lakes system north and south of the highway (**Long Tangle, Round Tangle, Upper Tangle and Lower Tangle Lake**) offers good grayling and lake trout fishing. Fishing begins as soon as the ice goes out, usually in early June, and continues into September. Troll shelf edges for lake trout. 🐟

P 22 C 111.8 Tangle Lakes Lodge.

P 22.3 C 111.5 Thank you for visiting Delta Wild and Scenic River (sign). Federal Subsistence area boundary.

P 24.6 C 109.2 Double-ended turnout to south.

P 24.7 C 109.1 **Landmark Gap**, the cut in the mountains to the north, is visible from the highway. It is used by caribou during migration.

Road to well-marked, improved **Landmark Gap Trailhead**. The trail leads 4 miles north to the south end of **Landmark Gap Lake**; grayling and lake trout fishing. According to the BLM, this trail is suitable for mountain bikes and hiking. 🐟

P 24.8 C 109 **Rock Creek** 1-lane bridge; turnout and informal camping to north at west end of bridge. Grayling fishing. Parking and creek access both ends of bridge to north. 🐟

P 24.9 C 108.9 Landmark Gap South ORV trailhead and parking area to south just to west of Rock Creek bridge. This trail provides access to Oscar Lake area (11 miles) and to Tangle Lakes area (4 miles).

P 25 C 108.8 Well-developed, double-ended gravel parking to south.

P 25.4 C 108.4 Informal campsite to south.

P 25.6 C 108.2 Informal campsite to south.

P 27.8 C 106 Very small rough turnout to north is used as primitive campsite.

P 28.1 C 105.7 Gravel turnout on top of knoll and Downwind Lake north side of road.

P 28.9 C 104.9 Rough turnout to north.

P 29.3 C 104.5 Informal campsite beside small lake to south.

P 30 C 103.8 Rough downhill parking to north of road.

P 30.6 C 103.2 **Glacier Lake Trailhead** to north; recently improved and well-marked with signs.

P 30.7 C 103.1 Turnout to north on high, sometimes windy, overlook for Glacier Lake ORV trail, which leads north 3 miles to **Glacier Lake**; lake trout and grayling fishing. 🐟

P 31.7 C 102.1 Turnout to north.

P 32.1 C 101.7 Rough exit to turnout to north with dramatic view of Amphitheater Mountains above High Valley. Glacier Lake is visible in the gap in these mountains.

Turnout to south.

P 33.6 C 100.2 Parking area and informal camping to south.

P 35.2 C 98.6 Turnout to north. Wildflowers here include: various heaths, frigid shooting star, dwarf fireweed.

We're on the pavement

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P 36 C 97.8 36 Mile Lake 0.5-mile hike north; lake trout and grayling. 🐟

Driving distance between Mileposts 35 and 36 is 1.1 miles.

P 36.3 C 97.5 Small rough turnout to south (turns down steeply to south).

P 36.7 C 97.1 Oscar Lake ORV trail to south leads 8 miles to Oscar Lake. Good parking area to the south for this trailhead, also informal camping areas. The BLM also recommends this trail for mountain biking and hiking. Black currant berries in season. Good views of valley, lakes and rivers. Watch for swans, moose and other wildlife here. **Maclaren Summit ORV trail** to north leads 3 miles to views of the Alaska Range; mountain biking. Both trailheads are well marked. Informal parking area to the north for Maclaren trailhead.

Maclaren Summit (elev. 4,086 feet). Second highest highway pass in Alaska (after 4,800-foot Atigun Pass on the Dalton Highway).

P 36.8 C 97 Maclaren Summit elevation sign. Turnout with view of Susitna River valley, Mount Hayes (13,382 feet) and the Alaska Range. (There are several good view turnouts just below Maclaren Summit.)

P 37.6 C 96.2 Leaving Tangle Lakes Archaeological District westbound (sign); see description at **Milepost P 16.2**. Turnout to south.

P 39.8 C 94 Sevenmile Lake ORV trail to north; 6.5 miles long, parallels Boulder Creek, crosses peat bog. No sign, difficult to find. Ask at Camp Maclaren for details and directions.

P 41.3 C 92.5 Double-ended turnout and dirt track to south.

P 41.4 C 92.4 Rough turnout to north.

P 41.6 C 92.2 Turnout to north overlooks lakes.

P 42 C 91.8 Maclaren River Bridge, a 364-foot multiple span crossing this tributary of the Susitna River. Parking and litter barrels. Maclaren River Lodge to south on west side of bridge; boat launch (pay fee at lodge). Look for cliff swallows nesting under bridge.



Crazy Dog Kennels. See display ad this section.

Maclaren River Lodge. See display ad this section.

P 43.4 C 90.4 Maclaren River Road to north leads 12 miles to Maclaren Glacier; mountain biking. **CAUTION:** *This side road may not be driveable beyond the river crossing at Mile 4.5. The river crossing is very dangerous.*

The **Maclaren River** rises in the glaciers surrounding Mount Hayes. For the next 60 miles westbound, the highest peaks of this portion of the mighty Alaska Range are visible, weather permitting, to the north. From east to west: Mount Hayes, Hess Mountain (11,940 feet) and Mount Deborah (12,339 feet). Mount Hayes, first climbed in August 1941, is named after Charles Hayes,

an early member of the U.S. Geological Survey. Mount Deborah, first climbed in August 1954, was named in 1907 by Judge Wickersham after his wife.

Clearwater Creek Controlled Use Area to north (sign).

P 44 C 89.8 There was a handmade milepost 44 here in fall 2005.

P 44.1 C 89.7 Look for old beaver lodge in pond to south.

P 44.9 C 88.9 Turnout to south. Side road leads to gravel pit.

P 45 C 88.8 *Physical Milepost 45 read "5" in fall 2005.*

P 45.4 C 88.8 Highway crosses **Crazy Notch**, a gap in the glacial moraine cut by a glacial stream.

P 46.7 C 87.1 Road north to **46.9 Mile Lake**. (It may say 46.9 Mile, but this turnout is at Mile 46.7.) Fishing for grayling in lake and outlet stream. 🐟

P 46.9 C 86.9 Side road to informal camping on lake to north.

P 48 C 85.8 Excellent grayling fishing in **Crooked Creek**, which parallels the highway. 🐟

P 48.2 C 85.6 Turnout to north. **CAUTION:** *Watch for soft shoulder on both sides of road.*

P 48.6 C 85.2 Informal campsite by small lake to south. Turnouts both sides of road.

P 49 C 84.8 The road follows an esker between 4 lakes. Parts of the highway are built on eskers. Watch for ducks, geese, grebes and shorebirds in lakes, as well as bald eagles, moose, caribou, beaver and fox in the vicinity. Look for a pingo (earth-covered ice hill) at lakeshore.

P 49.6 C 84.2 Turnout to north. Good views of lakes and mountains

P 49.7 C 84.1 Turnout to north overlooks **50 Mile Lake**. Interpretive plaque on glacial topography and wildlife:

Pools of Life: Hundreds of small lakes and ponds along the Denali Highway are reminders of ancient glaciers passing. As these glaciers receded they left behind blocks of slower melting ice that formed depressions called kettle holes or kettle lakes. The kettle lakes are home to beaver, loons, lesser yellowlegs, arctic terns and migrating trumpeter swans.

P 49.9 C 83.9 Road access north to 50 Mile Lake.

P 50.6 C 83.2 Small turnout to north. Watch for moose to south.



Fishermen put on their hipboots at Delta River day-use area. (© Sharon Nault)

P 51.8 C 82 Private hunting camp to south. Trail and overlook to north.

P 55.6 C 78.2 Dirt track south to informal campsite.

P 56 C 77.8 **Clearwater Creek** 1-lane bridge. Wayside with toilet west side of bridge; informal camping, grayling fishing. Large turnouts both sides of bridge to west. 🐟

Physical Milepost 56 read "156" in 2005.

P 57.5 C 76.3 **Clearwater Creek** Controlled Use Area, walk-in (no motorized vehicles) hunting area north of highway. Gravel turnout to north.

P 58.8 C 75 Road winds atop an esker flanked by kames and kettle lakes. Watch for moose.

P 59 C 74.8 Narrow turnout to north.

P 59.1 C 74.7 Long turnout to north.

P 59.9 C 73.9 Turnout to north.

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The few remaining physical mileposts on the Denali Highway are often pockmarked with bullet holes. (© Sharon Nault)

P 60 C 73.8 Road south to large, informal campsite.

P 61.9 C 71.9 Side road to south leads to informal camping.

P 63.1 C 70.7 Turnout to north by small lake.

P 63.8 C 70 Rough double-ended turnout to south. Good views of valley and river to south.

P 64 C 69.8 Road descends westbound into Susitna River valley. Highest elevation of mountains seen to north is 5,670 feet.

Mileposts were missing from here to Milepost 77 in 2005.

P 64.4 C 69.4 Turnout drops down to parking area south of highway. Scenic views.

P 65.9 C 67.9 Turnout to north.

P 67.8 C 66 Nice gravel turnout to south.

P 70 C 63.8 Great view of Susitna River valley as highway descends westbound.

P 72.5 C 60.8 Dirt access road leads north to informal campsite near lake.

P 73 C 60.8 *Road widens westbound. Road narrows eastbound.*

P 74 C 59.8 Clearwater Mountains to north; watch for bears on slopes.

P 74.8 C 59 Turnout to south.

P 77 C 56.8 Airstrip to north.

P 77.3 C 56.5 Large turnout. Lodge on lake to north.

P 78.1 C 55.7 Narrow dirt track south to scenic viewpoint overlooking Susitna River.

P 78.4 C 55.4 Expansive view of Susitna River and bridge.

P 78.7 C 55.1 Clearwater Creek Controlled Use Area (sign). Valdez Creek Road (open to public). Former mining camp of Denali, about 6 miles north of the highway, was first established in 1907 after the 1903 discovery of gold in the Clearwater Mountains. The Valdez Creek Mine operated at this site from 1990 to 1995, producing 495,000 ozs. of gold. Area mining equipment was donated to the Museum of Transportation and Industry (see **Milepost A 47** in the PARKS HIGHWAY section). *Do not trespass on private mining claims.*

Fair fishing reported in Roosevelt Lake and area creeks. Watch for bears. ➡

P 79.1 C 54.7 Susitna River boat launch.

P 79.2 C 54.6 **Susitna River Bridge** (1-lane), a combination multiple span and deck truss, 1,036 feet long. Butte Creek trail-head. Some parking on east side of river at boat launch. No parking at west end of bridge.

CAUTION: Bridge is slippery when wet.

The Susitna River heads at Susitna Glacier in the Alaska Range (between Mounts Hess and Hayes) and flows southwest 260 miles to Cook Inlet. Downstream through Devil's Canyon it is considered unfloatable. The river's Tanaina Indian name, said to mean "sandy river," first appeared in 1847 on a Russian chart.

Entering Game Management Unit 13E westbound, leaving unit 13B eastbound.

P 80 C 53.8 Gravel pit; parking to south.

P 80.3 C 53.5 Parking areas both sides of highway (used by hunters in season; watch for ATVs on road).

P 81.1 C 52.7 Gracious House campground on lake to north.

P 82 C 52.8 **Gracious House** to south. Centrally located on the shortest, most scenic route to Denali National Park. 27 modern units including a large den with adjoining rooms for groups, most with private baths. Bed and breakfast atmosphere. Bar and cafe featuring ice cream and home-baked pies. Tent sites, parking for self-contained RVs overlooking lake. Water, restrooms and showers available at lodge. Gas, towing, welding, mechanical repairs, tire service. Air taxi, for the most beautiful scenic flights in Alaska. Guide service available for hiking, biking, fishing, hunting and photography tours. Northern Lights viewing and winter snowmobiling. Same owners/operators for 49 years. Reasonable rates. For brochure on hunting and fishing trips, write to the Gracious Family. Summer address: P.O. Box 88, Cantwell, AK 99729. Winter address: P.O. Box 212549, Anchorage, AK 99521. Message phone/fax (907) 333-3148 or lodge phone/fax (907) 259-1111. Email: crhoa36683@aol.com. Internet: www.alaskaone.com/gracious. See display ad this section. [ADVERTISEMENT] ▲

P 82.7 C 51.1 Side road to south leads to gravel pit and informal camping with large areas of level ground.

P 84 C 49.8 **Stevenson's Lake** 0.5 mile south; grayling fishing. Watch for moose here (especially on autumn mornings). ➡

P 84.2 C 49.6 Turnout to north.

P 84.8 C 49 View of Stevenson's Lake for southbound travelers.

P 85.1 C 48.7 Turnout to north. There are numerous informal campsites heavily used by hunters and campers the next 10 miles westbound.

P 85.2 C 48.6 Lake to south very close to road.

P 86.9 C 46.9 Turnout to north. Primitive gravel camping area to north. Pothole-type lake to south.

P 87.6 C 46.5 Turnout and side road to south.

P 88.2 C 45.9 Turnout to south.

P 88.4 C 45.7 Turnout to north with sweeping view of mountains.

P 88.5 C 45.6 Lake next to highway to north.

P 89.2 44.9 Turnout to north with good mountain views.

P 90 C 43.8 Turnouts both sides of road. Scenic view to north; turnout to south is very muddy in wet weather.

P 90.1 C 43.7 Turnout overlooking lake.

P 90.5 C 43.3 Pond to south. A major water drainage divide occurs near here. East of the divide, the tributary river system of the Susitna flows south to Cook Inlet. West of the divide, the Nenana River system flows north to the Yukon River, which empties into the Bering Sea.

P 92.1 C 41.7 Turnout to north.

P 93 C 40.8 Scenic gravel viewpoint and informal campsite.

P 93.2 C 40.6 Turnout to north.

P 93.8 C 40 **Butte Lake ORV trail** leads 5 miles south to lake; well-used road to trail-head. Best fishing June through September. Lake trout, troll with red-and-white spoons or grayling remains; grayling, small flies or spinners. ➡

P 94.5 C 39.3 Short road north leads to parking area above pond identified for many years by a homemade sign tacked to a tree as "Jaiden Lake." View of Monahan Flat and Alaska Range to the north. Interpretive

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plaque on earthquakes.

Begin steep downhill westbound.

P 94.8 C 39 Bridge over Canyon Creek. Turnout to north at west end of bridge. Access both sides of road.

P 95.5 C 38.3 Turnout to north.

P 95.8 C 38 Turnout and overlook to north. Primitive firepit and level parking.

P 96.3 C 37.5 Turnout to south. Rough access north leads to viewpoint of the West Fork Glacier. Looking north up the face of this glacier, Mount Deborah is to the left and Hess Mountain is in the center.

P 97.6 C 36.2 Side road leads south to parking area. Looking at the Alaska Range to the north, Mount Deborah, Hess Mountain and Mount Hayes are the highest peaks to your right; to the left are the lower peaks of the Alaska Range and Nenana Mountain.

P 101.1 C 32.7 *CAUTION: Watch for soft shoulders on both sides of road.*

P 103.1 C 30.7 Long narrow turnout to north. Highway is built on an esker between kettle lakes.

P 104.6 C 29.2 Brushkana River bridge (narrow). River access on both sides of bridge. Well-maintained BLM campground to north at west end of bridge (drive down road into camp, go by the first road to the left to get to tent sites, and straight on into the main camp, where the fee box is); 22 sites (tent sites with some platforms) beside river, tables, picnic shelter, firepits, toilets, firewood (fee), litter barrels and potable water. Camping fee \$8/night. Campground hosts. Very good fishing for grayling. BLM Brushkana Creek trail (2 miles). ➡

P 106.5 C 27.3 Canyon Creek, grayling fishing. Side road to north. ➡

P 107.2 C 26.6 Stixkwan Creek flows under highway in culvert. *CAUTION: Watch for washout; it is a common occurrence in this area.*

P 108 C 25.8 Swift stream runs through culvert under highway.

P 109 C 24.8 Roads lead off into brush on both sides of highway. Informal parking area to south.

P 110.2 C 23.6 Road to gravel pit to north.

P 110.3 C 23.5 *CAUTION: Steep downgrade westbound next 0.7 mile to Seattle Creek; trucks use low gear.*

P 111 C 22.8 Seattle Creek 1-lane bridge. Fishing for grayling and Dolly Varden. Boat access to north on east side of bridge. ➡

P 111.1 C 22.7 Turnout to south.

P 111.4 C 22.4 Turnout to north with vista.

P 111.9 C 21.9 Matanuska–Susitna Borough boundary.

P 112 C 21.8 Lily Creek. Side road to north leads to informal camping.

P 113.2 C 20.6 View to east of the Alaska Range and extensive rolling hills and valleys grazed by caribou.

P 113.4 C 20.4 Turnout with view to north.

P 115.5 C 18.3 Informal turnout to north with beautiful view of the Nenana River area (when brush has been cut).

P 115.6 C 18.2 Formal turnout to north with BLM interpretive sign about the Denali Highway. The Denali Highway parallels the Nenana River westbound. The Nenana River heads in Nenana Glacier and flows into the Tanana River, a tributary of the Yukon River, which empties into the Bering Sea. The Nenana is popular with professional river rafters—particularly the stretch of river along the Parks Highway near the Denali



Access to the Nenana River is from the Mile 16 Put-In at Milepost P 117.9.

(© Sharon Nault)

Park entrance—but it is not good for fishing, due to heavy glacial silt.

Steep downgrade westbound.

P 117.2 C 16.6 Informal campsite in a small hollow to the north of the highway. There is river access here, but respect posted private property near this area.

Westbound motorists are leaving BLM public lands.

P 117.9 C 15.9 Turnout to north on Nenana River at **Mile 16 Put-In** for Nenana River Users. There is a very narrow parking area and a steep, narrow boat launch. *(NOTE: In fall 2005, the boat launch access was in poor shape due to flooding along this stretch of highway in 2003. Current status unknown.)* Sign reads: “The Upper Nenana River float runs approximately 18 river miles from Mile 16 of the Denali Highway to takeout at Nenana River One Bridge at Parks Highway **Mile 215.7**. The river along this stretch is rated Class I to II. Warning: Below the Nenana River One Bridge the river rating changes to Class II, III and IV white-water. The Nenana River is about 45°F; an unprotected person will survive 6–10 minutes.”

P 118.2 C 15.6 Large stream runs through culvert under highway.

P 118.5 C 15.3 Large turnout to south in old gravel pit.

P 119.5 C 14.3 River access to north, path to river.

P 120.7 C 13.1 Turnout to south with dirt path to river.

P 121 C 12.8 Turnout at gravel pit to north.

P 122.3 C 11.5 Large turnout to north. Views westbound of Mount McKinley/Denali (weather permitting).

P 123.7 C 10.1 Parking area to north.

P 123.8 C 10 Turnout overlooking lakes to south.

P 125.7 C 8.1 Turnout to south with parking and lake access. **Joe Lake**, about 0.5 mile long (large enough for floatplane), is south of highway. **Jerry Lake** is about 0.2 mile north of the highway; grayling. ➡

P 125.9 C 7.9 Turnout to south on Joe Lake.

P 128.3 C 5. Fish Creek. Access to creek and turnout to south at east end of bridge.

Beautiful view (weather permitting) of

Talkeetna Mountains and Mount McKinley to the south.

P 129.8 C 4 *We got cell phone service here in fall 2005.*

P 129.9 C 3.9 Rough turnout to south. “Radar bounce” visible on ridge to north.

P 130.8 C 3 Large turnout to north. End winter road maintenance eastbound (sign). Sign put in place for winter travelers on this highway reads:

“Travel beyond this point not recommended. If you must use this road expect extreme cold/heavy snow. Carry cold weather survival gear. Tell someone where you are going.”

P 131.1 C 2.7 Large turnout to north. No parking within 50 feet of school bus (sign).

P 131.2 C 2.6 *Gravel ends, pavement begins, westbound. Pavement ends, gravel begins, eastbound. Watch for potholes, washboard and washouts on highway east from here.*

P 132 C 1.8 Turnout to north.

P 132.1 C 1.7 Large gravel turnout to north.

P 132.3 C 1.5 Small paved turnout to south.

P 132.7 C 1.1 Power station to north.

P 132.8 C 1 Turnout to south.

P 132.9 C 0.9 Large gravel turnout to south.

P 133.3 C 0.5 Cantwell Station DOT highway maintenance camp.

P 133.4 C 0.4 Alaska State Troopers to north.

P 133.6 C 0.2 **Backwood Lodge**, open year-round; overnight lodging.

P 133.8 C 0 **Cantwell** (N 63°23', W 148°54') at intersection of Denali Highway (Alaska Route 8) and Parks Highway (Alaska Route 3); food, gas and lodging. Turn north on Parks Highway for Denali Park and Fairbanks. Turn south for Anchorage. See description of Cantwell on page 409 in the PARKS HIGHWAY section.

Junction of Denali Highway and Parks Highway at Cantwell. Turn to **Milepost A 209.9** on page 409 in the PARKS HIGHWAY section for log.

Travelers eastbound on the Denali Highway, read this log back to front.