

Pack Creek Brown Bear Kayak Camp

Frequently Asked Questions

General

- *How many people can participate on this trip?*

We can accommodate groups of up to 12 clients. However, permit restrictions limit the number of clients that can visit Pack Creek to six per day. For groups of more than 6 participants there will be two guides and they will be able to split the group and visit different areas.
- *What is the client to guide ratio?*

Our trips maintain a maximum of 6 clients per one guide.
- *What dates is this trip available?*

This trip is available May through August. The peak bear viewing season is July and August when the salmon are running. May through the middle of June, during the mating season, is also a good time to view bears.
- *What is Pack Creek?*

Pack Creek is a world-renown bear viewing area near Juneau, Alaska. Visitors have been observing bears in the area since the early 1900's and it became a protected bear sanctuary in the 1930's. The site is now jointly managed by the USFS and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Between June 1st and September 10th permits are required to visit. Between July 4th and August 31st, during the peak bear viewing time when the salmon are running, there is a limit of 24 visitors (including guides) per day.
- *What is your emergency response plan?*

Our guides will carry with them a marine radio with which they can contact the Wilderness Rangers stationed at Pack Creek/Windfall Island. The Rangers can contact their dispatch and request the appropriate rescue personnel. In most circumstances the quickest evacuation would be provided by one of the float plane companies that service the region. In the event that the Rangers are not present, then our guides would use a satellite phone or SPOT device to request assistance.

Camping Conditions

- *Where do you camp and what is the camping like?*

There are two sites near Pack Creek that are utilized by ABAK: Windfall Island at Late Point and Staunch Point on Admiralty Island. Larger groups will camp at Staunch Point and smaller groups will have the site chosen by the guide. The camping areas are undeveloped sites with tent platforms that are flat, bare ground that has been impacted by repeated use. Each location has established bear hangs. Cooking areas are set up in the intertidal zone. Bathroom facilities will either be in the open air of the intertidal zone or for larger groups, utilizing a portable toilet.

- *What food is provided while camping?*

Our guides are experienced backcountry cooks. We pride ourselves in providing high quality meals for our clients. All of our clients will complete a Client Expedition Form that requests information on allergies and food preferences. Based on these forms our guides will create a menu. Meals that have been cooked in the past include the following.

Breakfasts: breakfast burritos, egg-cheese-ham sandwiches, pancakes with fruit, yogurt and granola

Lunches: these are typically a combination of self-made sandwiches and wraps with fruit, snack bars, and a variety of trail mixes. Sandwich/wrap fixing often include – lunch meat, cheese, tomatoes, bell peppers, carrots, cucumber, hummus, condiments, peanut butter and jelly.

Dinners: salmon fillet with potatoes and vegetables, pesto pasta, chicken alfredo pasta with vegetables, burritos, fish tacos, backcountry pizza

- *What drinks are provided while camping?*

The drinks provided depend on clients preferences. Typically we will have coffee or tea in the morning and hot chocolate, beer, and/or wine in the evening. During the day we will drink water or water with flavored drink mixes added to it.

- *How do you treat your water?*

On all of our trips we will leave Juneau with at least one days worth of water. For subsequent days we will do a combination of boiling the water and adding chlorine based Aqua Mira drops to treat the water.

- *How do you camp in bear country?*

In bear country it is important to minimize food scents in the camp. To do this we will cook 100-300 feet away from our tents in the intertidal zone. Any scents from cooking should be removed by the rising tide, and while scents linger, they are at least away from where we sleep. Additionally all food and “smellables” (i.e. toothpaste) are stored in bear proof containers or hung from the trees. The toilet zone will be located 100-300 feet away from both the tents and the kitchen.

Weather

- *What is the weather like?*

The weather on Admiralty Island is about the same as it is in Juneau. Expect to have overcast skies with showers. There are about 300 cloudy days and 220 days with precipitation each year. However, the precipitation generally falls as intermittent showers. The average temperatures range between 50-65 degrees. The Windfall Harbor and Pack Creek area is generally protected from the wind and calm waters are the norm.

Kayaking and Equipment

- *What type of kayaks do you use?*

Above and Beyond Alaska stores kayaks at Windfall Island and Staunch Point. Clients will be in plastic double sit-in touring kayaks. There is one single kayak that is typically used by the guide. For expert paddlers it may be possible to use this single.

- *What kayaking accessories are provided?*
Rubber boots, rubber rain gear (if necessary), life jacket, spray skirt, kayak paddle, kayaking safety gear carried by the guide (bilge pump, paddle float, rescue sling)
- *What camping gear is provided?*
Above and Beyond Alaska can provide all of the camping gear, if you have your own and want to bring it, then please notify us. We will provide: 2 or 3 person backpacking style tents (Mountain Hardwear and Sierra Designs brand or equivalent), 0 degree sleeping bags (Marmot and Mountain Hardwear brand), Thermo-rest sleeping pad, tarp or social tent, camp stove, cooking pots/pans, utensils, mugs/thermos', bear cannisters and bear spray, headlamps, light weight rain gear.

Travel

- *What do you do in the event of a weather cancelation?*
Weather cancelations will be due to unsafe flying conditions caused by low clouds. Generally on these days the departure time will simply be delayed. If the weather doesn't clear then we will attempt reschedule the trip by one day. We recommend that you book your travel dates so that you have an extra day or two in Juneau following your trip to allow this as a possibility. If the trip is canceled in full by ABAK, then you will receive a refund (with the exception of the \$50 non-refundable permit fee).
- *What happens if we can't return at our scheduled time due to weather?*
We have never had a trip be unable to be picked up on their scheduled departure date. There have however been delays. In the event that weather prevents the float planes from returning us to Juneau we will wait until the next day. Through the Rangers or a satellite phone contact can be made with the float plane company if necessary. We recommend that you book your travel dates so that you have an extra day or two in Juneau following your trip to avoid having to reschedule travel plans due to a late return. Our guides will have an extra days worth of food on all of these trips.
- *Who does ABAK fly with and what type of planes do we fly in?*
We almost always use the reputable services of Ward Air in either a Cessna or Beaver float plane. The Cessna has capacity for 2-3 passengers plus gear, the Beaver has capacity for 5-6 passengers plus gear. They also have an Otter which can accommodate 10 passengers.

Wildlife

- *When is the best time to view Brown Bears?*
The peak bear viewing season is July and August when the salmon are running. During the peak season permits are limited for visiting the Pack Creek Bear Viewing Area.

May through the middle of June, during the mating season, is also a good time to view bears. Permits are available for any day during this time period.

- *What do you do for bear protection?*

There have never been any bear attacks or hostile bear encounters on any of our trips or at the Pack Creek Bear Viewing Area. Despite this we take the potential for a hostile bear encounter seriously. The best defense is to travel in groups, make your presence known to the bears, and practice good bear camping technique. We will do a safety briefing with all of our clients on how to react if there is a bear encounter and the proper steps to take. We also require that our guides carry bear spray with them.

- *Are we guaranteed to see Brown Bears?*

The bears in the area are wild and it's impossible to guarantee sightings. However, during the peak season it is incredibly rare to not see them. The likelihood of seeing bears or multiple bears increases with the time spent in the area.

- *What other wildlife do you see on this trip?*

The following animals are commonly seen, but like the bears we can't guarantee any specific wildlife sightings.

Land Mammals: Sitka black-tailed deer, marten, mink, and river otters

Marine Mammals: Harbor seals, humpback whales and (occasionally) Orca

Birds: There are a plethora of bird species in the area, a local birder spotted over 35 different species in one day trip to Pack Creek. Some of the most common include: bald eagles, loons, diving ducks (scoters, mergansers, harlequin ducks), sea gulls (bonaparte, herring, mew, glaucous), common ravens, northwestern crows, marbled murrelets