

Tracy Arm Kayak Expedition

Frequently Asked Questions

General

- *How many people can participate on this trip?*
The maximum number of clients on this trip is 6 clients.
- *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 mid-May through September. In mid to late May there are times when it is not possible to get close to the tide-water glaciers due to the presence of too many icebergs.
- *Where is Tracy Arm?*
Tracy Arm is located 60 miles south of Juneau. From Juneau a boat will travel south down Stephens Passage to Holkham Bay. Holkham Bay has two long glacially carved fjords that feed into it: Tracy Arm and Endicott Arm.
- *What is your emergency response plan?*
Our guides will carry with them a marine radio and SPOT communication device or a satellite phone. In the event of an emergency one or more of these devices would be used to request help. Depending on the nature of the incident assistance would be provided by a good Samaritan vessel, an ABAK motor boat, or the coast guard.

Camping Conditions

- *Where do you camp and what is the camping like?*
There are limited locations in the Arm to camp as a result of the steep walls of the fjord that were carved by the glaciers. All of the camping areas are undeveloped sites in beautiful settings. Tents are placed on the bare ground on rock, the forest floor, or beach grass. Cooking areas are set up in the intertidal zone. Bathroom facilities will be in the open air of the intertidal zone. Food is stored in bear cannisters that are kept away from the tents.
- *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 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. The toilet zone will be located 100+ feet away from both the tents and the kitchen.

Weather

- *What is the weather like?*

The weather in Tracy Arm is similar to Juneau’s weather. In Juneau there are about 300 cloudy days and 220 days with precipitation each year. However, the precipitation generally falls as intermittent showers. The presence of the glaciers make the average temperature cooler with a typical range between 45-60 degrees. The winds in the Arm generally are cold breezes that move down off of the glaciers. The closer to the glaciers you are the colder and windier it becomes.

Kayaking and Equipment

- *What type of kayaks do you use?*

Clients will be in plastic double sit-in touring kayaks. There are single kayaks that are available for experienced paddlers. The number of single kayaks available will depend on the number of clients on the trip. The boat transport has a maximum kayak carrying capacity of 4 kayaks.

- *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), Therma-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 are unlikely on this trip. They would be caused by seas that are too rough for the transport boat. If the conditions are too hazardous for the transport boat to make the trip to Tracy Arm, then we will attempt to reschedule for the following 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 full refund.

- *What happens if we can't return at our scheduled time due to weather?*

It is possible that the sea conditions could worsen while we are camped in Tracy Arm and prevent the transport boat from returning to pick us up. If this occurs then we will wait until the next day. 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.

Glaciers

- *How many glaciers do you see in Tracy Arm?*

There are two large tidewater glaciers at the end of Tracy Arm and North Sawyer Inlet. The glaciers are the North and South Sawyer Glaciers and they flow for several miles down from a 6000' elevation in the Stikine Icefield to reach the ocean. There are also numerous hanging alpine glaciers that are visible on the mountainsides.

- *How close can we get to the glaciers?*

The glaciers are tidewater glaciers that are actively calving. When a glacier calves it can create large waves that have the potential to capsize a kayak. As a result, we stay ¼ to ½ a miles away from the face of the glacier.

- *Will we see glaciers calving?*

More than likely, yes. After being dropped off by the transport boat you have the option to spend as long as you like sitting in the kayaks in front of the glacier. The North and South Sawyer glaciers are actively calving and it's just a matter of waiting to see it happen.

Wildlife

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

Tracy Arm is home to one of the largest harbor seal pupping areas in Southeast Alaska. The seals migrate seasonally to the face of the Sawyer glaciers to have their pups and use the ice floes as floating platforms for nursing. Harbor porpoises, humpback whales, and orca also frequent the Arm. Closer to Holkham Bay steller sea lions are found. In addition to the marine mammals the following animals are also seen.

Land Mammals: Black bear, brown bear, mountain goat, and river otters

Birds: There are a plethora of bird species in the area. Some of the most common include: bald eagles, diving ducks (scoters, merganzers, harlequin ducks), pigeon guillemots, sea gulls (bonaparte, herring, mew, glaucous), and marbled murrelets

- *Are there bears in Tracy Arm?*

Tracy Arm is home to both brown bears and black bears. Brown bears are rare and are seen closer to Holkahm Bay. The black bears frequent the glacially carved valleys found spaced out along the Arm.

- *What do you do for bear protection?*

There have never been any bear attacks or hostile bear encounters on any of our trips. 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.