

Denali National Park in Autumn



Autumn comes early to Denali National Park—barely a blink of an eye after the midsummer crush of visitors from the Lower 48 departs. The air is crisp and the tundra flashes spectacularly with red and gold. Snow dusts the high ridgelines and animals scurry about accumulating last-minute calories for winter.

Autumn in Denali offers the chance to photograph Alaska's greatest park cloaked as comparatively few see it. During any season, the park offers some of the most striking vistas found in Alaska, but at no other time is the vast tundra more colorful than in early fall.

A spectacular 90-mile drive across the park into the backcountry provides our group with a broad sampling of the exciting photo opportunities this remarkable park has to offer. With clear weather the drive places us within easy photo access of the great mountain itself—*Denali*. In autumn the mountain tends to be less frequently eclipsed by clouds, and stunning images can be made featuring it in sweeping fall-colored landscapes or reflected in lakes and tundra ponds.

During this time the tundra provides an endless variety of colorful macro subjects: dwarf willows and birch trees only a few inches or feet in height are in full golden hue, punctuated by the vibrant reds and magentas of wild blueberries and bearberries.

By September, most mammals have put on their heaviest and most photogenic coats in preparation for the coming winter.

Moose and caribou have lost their antler velvet and their mottled midsummer pelage and many animals are moving down from the high country. In reality, the wildlife in this park, though spectacular, is occasionally distant. The prize here is to place these animals in “Robert Bateman-like” landscapes—a photographic haiku in an inspiring panorama.



Our accommodations at the famed North Face Lodge are far from the centers of tourist activity. We have more than three full days at this picturesque location as our comfortable base for scenic, wildlife and close-up photography.

Photography is both exciting and challenging within the park. The immensity of the landscape, coupled with National Park Service’s and our lodge’s restrictions, create some limits in travel. Yet this is by far the best way currently available to have photographic access to some of the park’s most scenic areas.

Check out Gary Alt's [trip report](#) from our 2018 Denali photo tour.

Tour Itinerary

Day 1 (Sep 5)

We meet in the lobby of our Anchorage hotel for orientation and dinner. (D)

Day 2

Drive to Denali Park with stops to photograph whatever interests us. If the weather is clear we should get some spectacular views of “the great one” as we approach the park. (BLD)

Day 3

We drive the length of the park to its peaceful backcountry area. Many photo opportunities for wildlife work present themselves along this stretch of road, as we hope to see grizzly bear, Dall sheep, caribou, moose and wolf.

Between the Eielson Bluffs and Wonder Lake we approach within 30 miles of Denali—at 20,310 feet, the highest elevation on the North American continent. (BLD)



Days 4–6

These three full days we spend in pursuit of the exceptional images of autumn in Denali National Park. The vast tundra landscape should be in blazing fall color. We venture out daily to photograph Wonder Lake, the animals in the area, and the mountain that dominates the skyline. We also have photographic access to many elevations on the alpine tundra and possibly up to the snow line, weather permitting. Some light hiking is required. (BLD)

Day 7

We have an early departure to the park's entrance. On the return drive to Anchorage, we stop along the way for fall color and other photographic opportunities. (BLD)

Day 8 (Sep 12)

Participants may depart at any time today. (B)

About Our Backcountry Lodge *North Face Lodge is located 90 miles inside the borders of Denali National Park. It lies in the shadow of the mountain and just two miles from Wonder Lake. The lodge has a spacious public room with stone fireplace, dining room, patios and covered porches—all with incredible views of Denali and the Alaskan Range. Rooms have private baths and are decorated in the manner of a comfortable North Country guesthouse.*

Trip Details

Sep 05 - Sep 12, 2020

Fee: \$5,795 from Anchorage, AK

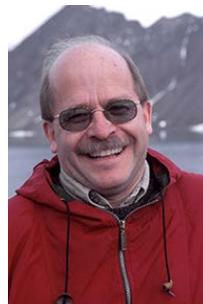
Deposit: \$1,000

Limit: 10 participants

Activity Level: Easy

CONTACT US ABOUT THIS TRIP

Tour Leader



GARY ALT