

The essential Glacier Bay reference.
Everything you need for a successful trip.

Volume 2

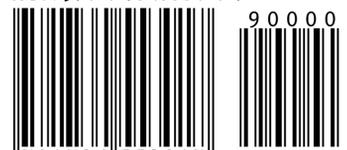
Exceptionally thorough, this beautiful three-volume guide covers every inlet of Glacier Bay's spectacular 760-mile-long wilderness coast. Find practical paddling logistics, campsites, extensive maps, and vital tips for dealing with 25-foot tides, brown bears, and icebergs. Ample photography helps each visitor locate stunning glaciers, emerald rainforests, and unsurpassed wildlife. While reading in the tent, dive into Muir's "glacier gospel," discover Huna Tlingit history, and learn how to spot the mythical Silent City, a mirage that swirled around Victorian-era steamships. Unearth fossils transplanted from Siberia, find glaciers that slipped on metaphorical banana peels, hunt "monstars," and revel in the science of whale's earwax, suck muck, blue bears, and more.

DAVID BAHR is a glaciologist and photographic artist. He was the 2013 Artist-in-Residence at Glacier Bay.

- ★ **VOLUME 2 COVERS** the entire east side of Glacier Bay, from park headquarters to the Upper Muir Inlet
- ★ Includes the popular East Arm and Beardslee Islands
- ★ 130 photographs
- ★ 16 maps
- ★ 127+ campsites
- ★ Engaging science and history for each inlet, including the bay's discovery, Camp Muir, whales, mountain goats, and glaciers as icy savings accounts with bank robbers



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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17. Bartlett Cove and Park Headquarters*

DIFFICULTY

Beginner

LOCATION

58°27'0" N and 135°55'0" W
Lower Bay. Park headquarters

DISTANCE

1.5 nmi east to west (1.7 mi, 2.8 km)
0.5 nmi to Beardslee Cut (0.6 mi, 1 km)

TIME TO TRAVERSE

1 hour from east to west in a kayak
3 hours to slowly explore both shores
30 minutes around Lagoon Island
15 minutes to the Beardslee Cut

TYPICAL NEXT DESTINATIONS

North: Beardslee Islands
Daily tour boat: For a fee, catch a fun ride to a Park Service drop-off

HIKING OPPORTUNITIES

Excellent. Try any official trail, or hike to Point Gustavus along the shore

SUMMARY

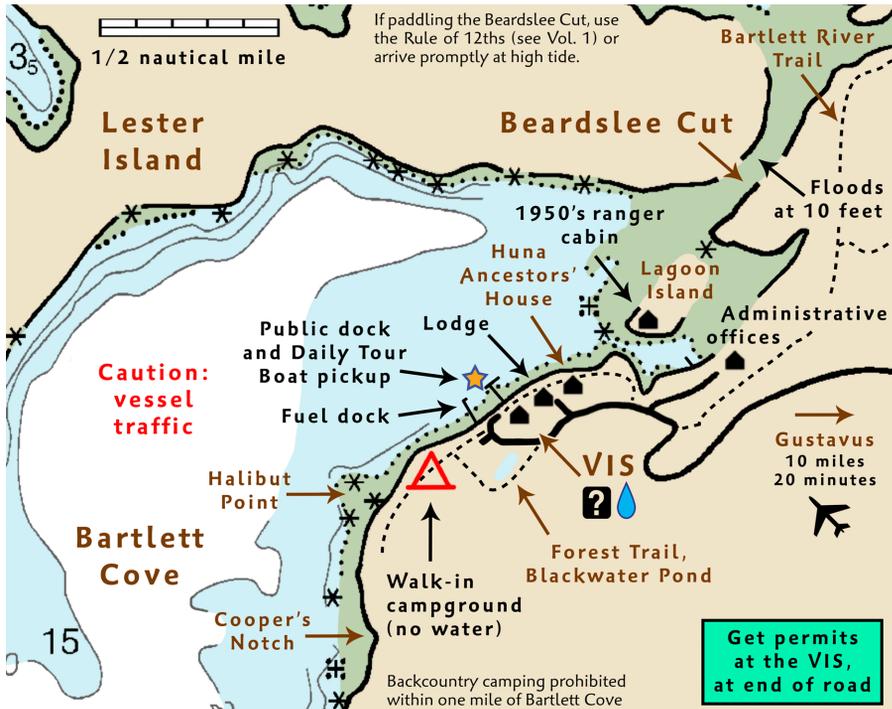
Most kayakers consider Bartlett Cove as little more than a logistical stop, a necessary and final flatland layover between the airport and the wilderness. Nobody mistakes Park Service buildings, yachts, and tourists for the backcountry, but despite the muffled distant views of the mountains, well-hidden by clouds and rainforest, Bartlett has that

frontier-edge-of-the-wilderness feel, a busy but relaxed oasis of excited paddlers and sightseers planning deep forays into the bay. To get into the correct mindset, imagine rainforest paradise rather than high mountain peaks, and good beer on a covered deck instead of dehydrated glop in the soaking rain. Enjoy the wildlife wandering through the parking lot and indulge in a plate of halibut at the lodge before taking a mossy hike through the beautiful woods.

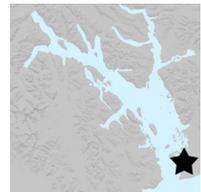
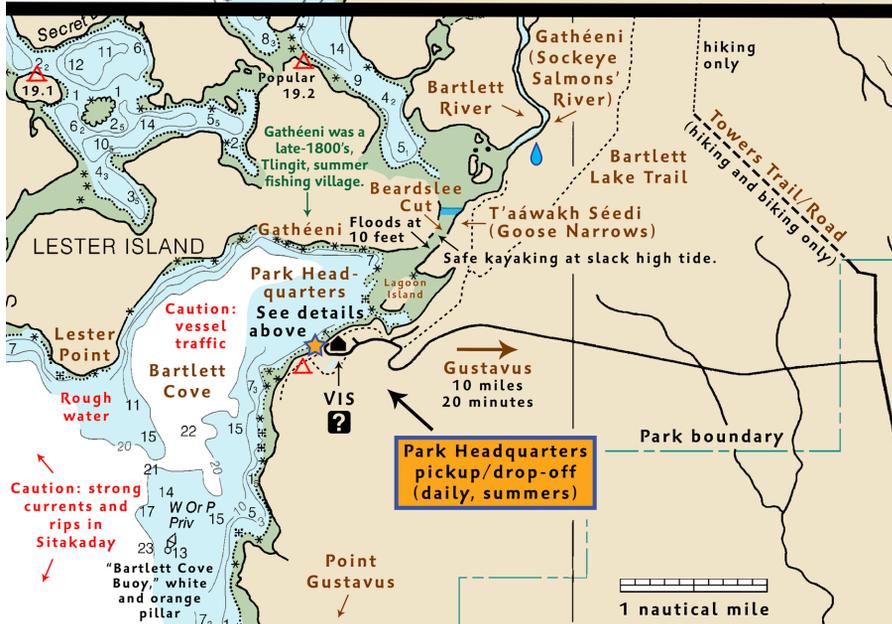
Bartlett Cove boasts the park's only official trails, gorgeous rainforest paths that drip in every shade of wet green. The 0.7-mile Forest Trail makes a leisurely 45-minute stroll past Blackwater Pond, perfect after a celebratory arrival dinner at the historic Glacier Bay Lodge. The two-mile Bartlett River trail takes three hours round trip; and at roughly the halfway point, the Bartlett Lake Trail splits off for a four-mile trek inland to the lake (about six to seven hours round trip). The park plans to realign and close trails while opening new options in the future, but regardless, any hike through the forest will be nice. Trails here are less about the destination and more about moseying through gorgeous Sitka spruce, spongy moss, and ferns. Don't worry about reaching the end of the line, and instead sit quietly in the woods or on one of the benches at Blackwater Pond. Keep an eye out for fungi, mushrooms, lichen of every variety, shy maidens, pond lilies, bunchberry dwarf dogwood flowers, late summer baneberries (red, poisonous!), devil's club, moose, bears, porcupines, sooty grouse, herons, and more.

As a kayaking destination, Bartlett excels primarily as a day trip, a suitable place for beginners to get their feet wet, or rather, hopefully not. Glacier Bay Sea Kayaks rents boats by the half day and full

* Why Chapter 17? Did sea otters typeset this book? Yes. See the *Preface*.



Bartlett Cove and Park Headquarters.



day (reserve well in advance). Most day trips, either guided or solo, head partway toward Lester Point or Point Gustavus; but if you can read tides, consider a fantastic two-hour trip through the Beardslee Cut (passage to the northeast) and up the gorgeous Bartlett River for a half mile until boulders block the passage. Return the same way. Great stuff, but the Beardslee Cut is only navigable at high tides, so enter the shallow channel an hour before the peak flood and return no later than an hour after the peak tide. If you miss this strict no-nonsense window, then your next opportunity to get back to Bartlett is 12 hours away or a grueling mile-long portage across slippery shin-bashing rocks. Let the Visitor Information Station (VIS) or Glacier Bay Sea Kayaks know your plans so that nobody panics if you return a half-day late.

If you own a kayak, can read tides like a pro, can interpret nautical charts with ease, and have substantial experience, then consider a truly epic day trip that heads west out Bartlett Cove, up Sitakaday Narrows to the Beardslee Entrance, past Eider Island, and then back to Bartlett Cove via the Beardslee Cut. With strong rips, Sitakaday is for advanced paddlers only. Time your departure to hit Sitakaday on a flooding slack tide so that you can get to the Beardslee Cut in time for the next high tide. The Cut requires 10 feet of water for paddling, so this trip takes just under six hours. Dilly-dally past the high tide and you're hosed.

Before heading into the wilderness on the next morning's daily tour boat (aka "The Day Boat" to locals), use Bartlett Cove to test your kayak's seaworthiness. Don't make the mistake of paying a thick wad of bills to transfer 40 miles up the bay and then discover that your seat and rudder went AWOL. Both have happened, and far worse. Check for frayed bow lines, bent rudders, broken pedals, spray skirt integrity, missing or broken hatch covers, dramatic holes in the hull (happened to my wife, but not in Glacier Bay), that kind of thing. While getting a feel for the seat and pedal adjustments,

TOWN

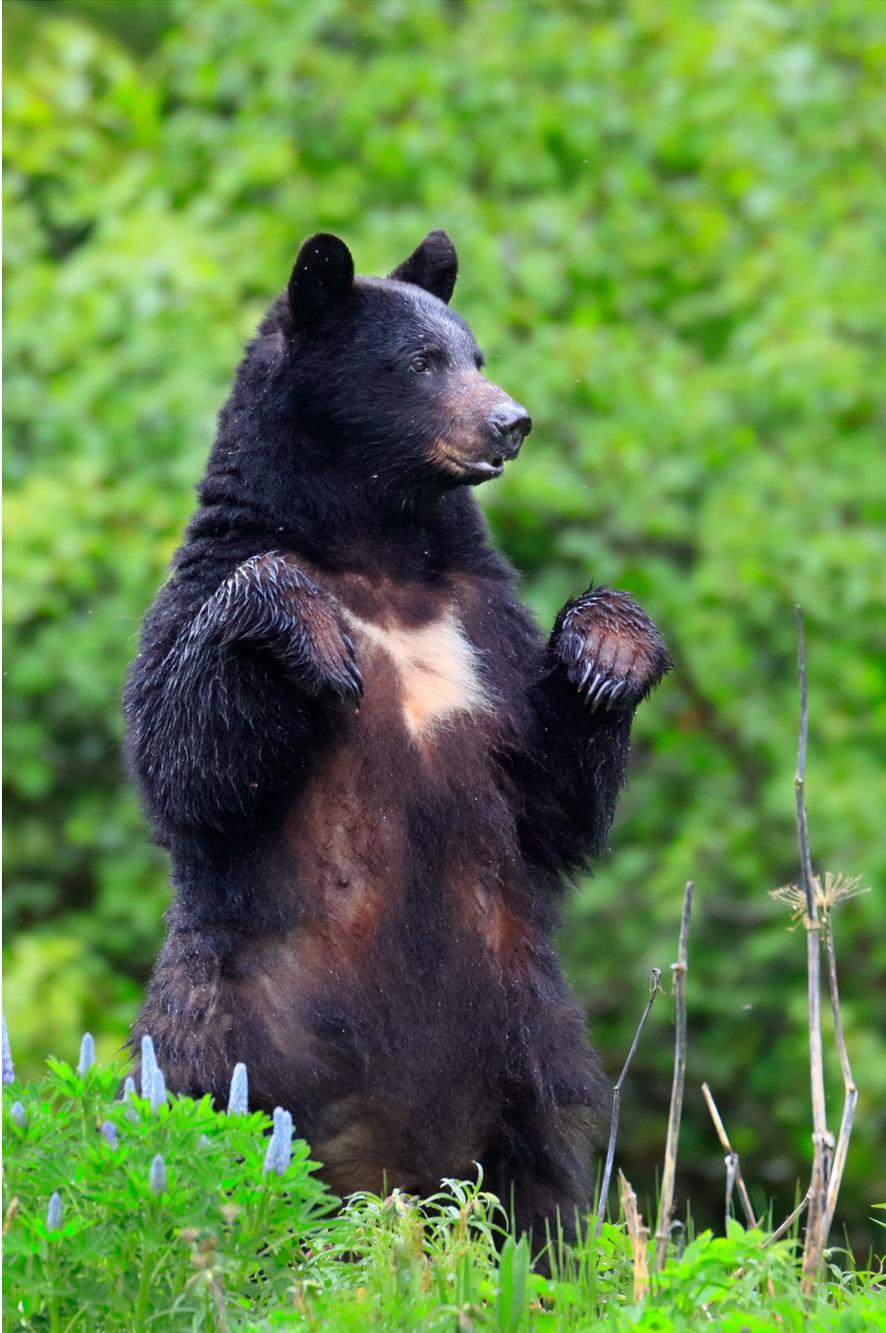
If biding time and done with logistics, taxis can whiz you back and forth to Gustavus. Request a drop at the ferry dock, the grocery store, the Clove Hitch Café (pizza night on Friday), at the super-cool old-timey gas station, at Pep's fish packing shop (great for grabbing a smoked-salmon appetizer or fresh halibut dinner for the campground) or at one of several short trails including the Nagoonberry Trail, Falls Creek Trail, and the short 1957 plane crash trail. The wreckage is still there.

BIKING

If you have a few hours, a half-day rental bike at the Lodge will get you to town but note that all park trails (except the 1.5 mi Towers Rd) are off limits and bike availability depends on the whims of current management. You can bike eight miles to town, or alternatively you can — wait for it — bike to town. Go nuts. Your best extended ride is out the Rink Creek Road, perhaps stopping at the gravel pits near the end of the runway to check for tadpoles or to go for a swim — hardly the vacation stuff of dreams, but entertaining, nonetheless.

paddle out to Lester Island or take a swing around Lagoon Island at high tide.

With any leftover time, make a point of walking around the dock to ogle intertidal life clinging to the piers. The three-foot tall and one-foot wide orange "giant plumose anemones" appeal to the inner child in everyone, not to mention the skittering crabs and occasional giant octopus. Or attend a ranger talk, mourn the tragic loss of Snow now mounted as an articulated humpback whale skeleton, visit the spectacular Huna Tribal House



Black bear looks for her wandering cubs in Bartlett Cove. The white patch is a classic mark on many of the bay's black bears.

and totems and canoe (named Yúxch' Yaakw or Sea Otter Canoe), pick wild strawberries, or sit on the deck at the lodge and wait for wildlife to amble past in the meadow below. Bartlett Cove might be one step shy of the wilderness, but its charms will win you over.

LAGOON ISLAND

If looking for something unusual, grab some tall rubber boots and try a low-tide hike to nearby Lagoon Island, taking care not to step on the abundant starfish that line the shallow channel. Round the island to the west for a nice sand beach frequented by herons; or explore inland to find the old ranger cabin at the southwest corner. The park hopes to repurpose this slowly decaying building as an artist-in-residence and visiting scientist hideout.

SACRED GROUND

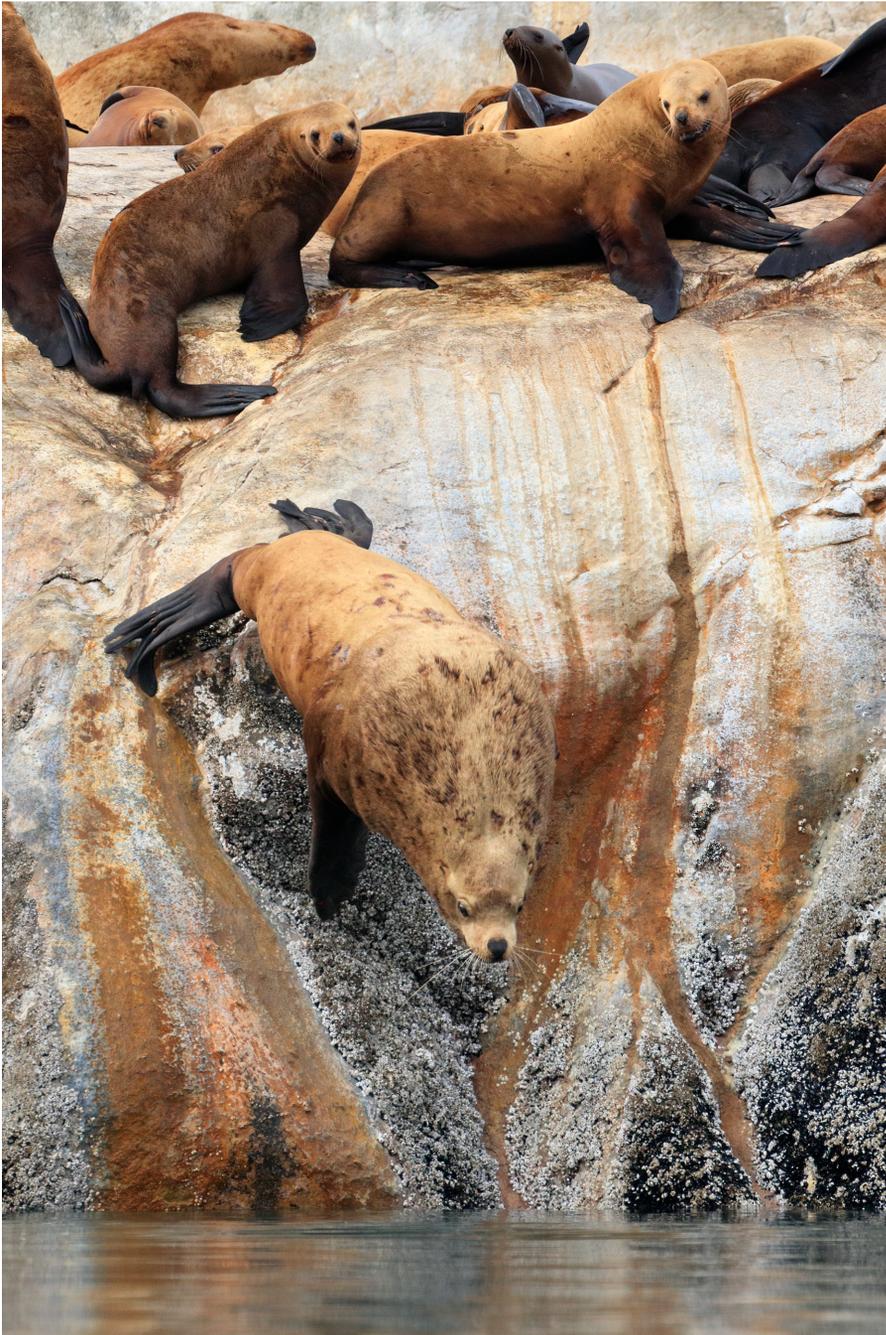
The small sand and boulder-strewn shoreline in front of the vis and short-term parking area is sacred Tlingit ground. Though plenty of people unintentionally walk through here, try to avoid the short stretch between the boat ramp and main dock. Instead, picnic, poke around the intertidal, and launch kayaks to the left of the boat ramp (as you face the water) or to the right of the main dock.

CAMPSITES AND LODGING

17.1 *Walk-in campground.* Your only camping option is the official Bartlett Cove walk-in campground, a beautiful and quiet rainforest retreat a quarter mile from the public dock with 33 sites. The Park Service

prohibits all other camping near park headquarters. The vis provides wheelbarrows for hauling gear. If desired, you can bring your kayak ashore near the numbered campsites and save some walking—from the water, look for the communal fire ring a little west of the campsite sign. Beware bears that visit daily, and keep food controlled, just like the backcountry. The park provides bear-proof food storage caches, and outhouses. There's free firewood for the intertidal fire-pit and the small pot-belly stove in the day-use warming shelter. Water is available at the distant vis, so bring sufficient containers to haul what you need. Showers and laundry are available at the Glacier Bay Lodge for a fee. A day-use 30-foot by 30-foot beach-side staging pavilion is in the works, and if built will be fabulous for trip prep. Get a free campsite permit and required orientation at the vis.

17.2 *Glacier Bay Lodge.* Reserve a room well in advance at the super-convenient, historic Glacier Bay Lodge. Built in 1966, the centrally located 48-room accommodation won several architectural design awards, and some of that charisma still shines through, though later structural adjustments and upkeep failures have left the building slightly less than proud. Your stay should be nice, but moderated expectations might help. Trees block the special higher-priced “ocean view” rooms, so save your hard-earned cash unless someone goes crazy with a chainsaw during the off season, a genuine possibility proposed by park management and awaiting approval. Personally, I love the rainforest scenery outside the regular rooms, and despite the aging facilities, thoroughly enjoy staying here. At some point, the park hopes to revitalize the main lodge and



A thousand-pound sea lion launches into the water from South Marble Island.

30. Wachusett Inlet

DIFFICULTY

Beginner

LOCATION

58°56'0" N and 136°15'0" W
East Arm. Long inlet branching westward from mid-Muir Inlet

DISTANCE

10 nmi (11.5 mi, 18.5 km)

TIME TO TRAVERSE

5 hours 30 minutes

TYPICAL NEXT DESTINATIONS

North: McBride Glacier, Riggs Glacier
South: Lower Muir W Shore, Forest Creek

HIKING OPPORTUNITIES

Relationship destroying. Except for the longer beaches and a few open slopes

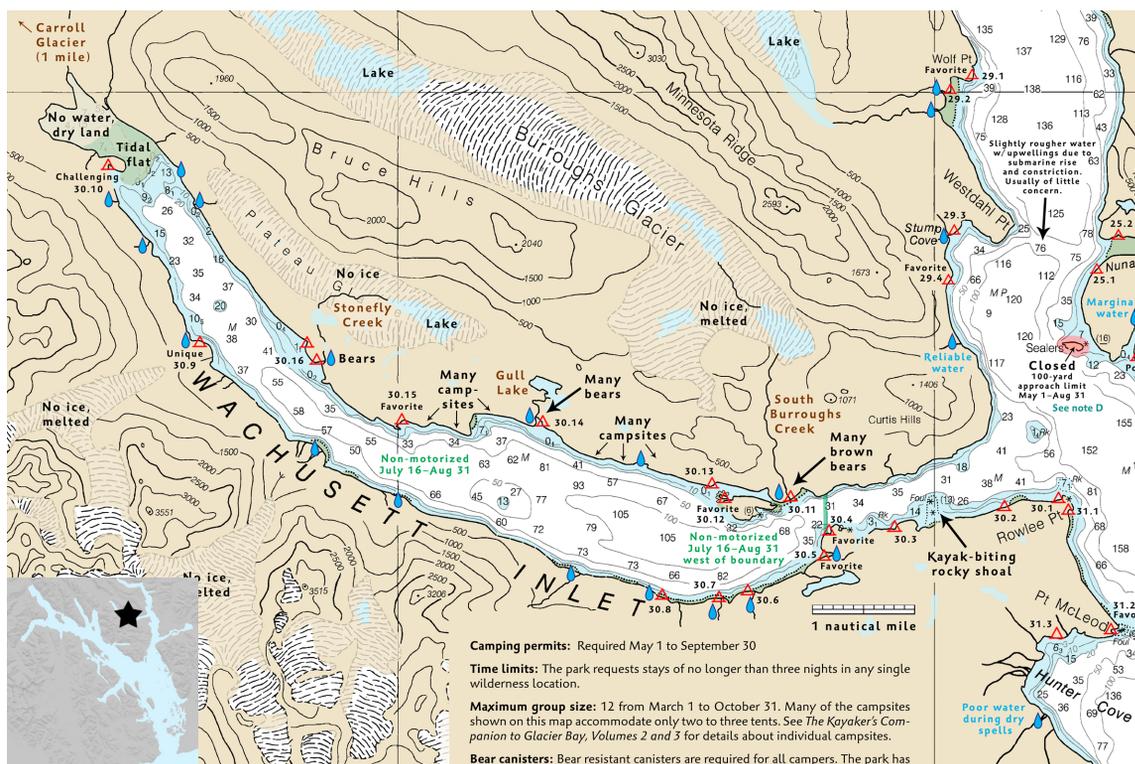
SUMMARY

Ignore the mapmakers. Once again, the rapid pace of melt and rebound has left cartographers in the dust, with both the Trails Illustrated map and the NOAA chart showing ice where none exists, land where there's water, and water where there's land. Sadly, although it used to calve into the inlet and is still marked on many maps, the Plateau Glacier is gone forever, completely melted, kaput. The Carroll Glacier dominates views to the northwest but has receded far up the valley leaving behind piles of uneven rock and mud and certainly doesn't calve into the water as shown on the 2019 Trails Illustrated map. Rebounding upward while filling

with silt, the last mile of the inlet is essentially land instead of water for everything northwest of the obvious uvula-like peninsula (58°59'19" N and 136°25'13" W) where the Trails Illustrated map shows an adjacent water depth of 275 feet. Uh, no. That's barely three feet deep at high tide and will probably be completely above water by the time you read this sentence. (Wait for it... Yup, it's above water now.) An unmapped large two-mile-long lake fills the valley north of the Bruce Hills, fed by meltwater from the clinically depressed Burroughs Glacier which is nothing but a sad dirty remnant of its past, hidden from view and doomed.

The good news? The poorly mapped Wachusett remains as enchanting as ever, a wonderfully quiet corner of the park that's closed to motorized travel from July 16 to August 31. Far from any accessible glaciers, and absent the highest of the high peaks, the inlet stays relatively tranquil even in the early summer when only occasional yachts and research vessels chug up the waters. In fact, there's a guiding principle here—if you want to avoid people, then avoid the easy glaciers and most impressive summits. Disappointing? Yes, a little. But it's also a handy insider tip for budding misanthropes looking for a beautiful corner to call their own.

And gorgeous solitude it is. Near the entrance of the inlet, the alpenglow on Red Mountain, the heavily crevassed Riggs Glacier to the north, and John Muir's inspirational Snow Dome to the east will make your inner artist sing. Further back in the inlet, a long series of cirques flank the south shores, topped by the same summits as seen in Queen's Inlet, but here filled with an over-abundance of waterfalls that mostly trickle but occasionally rumble over every little bluff, especially after heavy August rains. Inevitably, your eyes will settle on the



Wachusett Inlet. Note extensive corrections to the underlying 2015 NOAA chart.

Carroll Glacier at the head of the inlet, one of the flattest, widest, and longest in the park, spanning almost two miles across the valley and slooowly climbing on and on and forever northward into the distant clouds.

This brings up the noteworthy fact that if you allow for their Canadian origins, the Carroll and Grand Pacific vie back-and-forth for the title of longest single glacier in the park, 30 to 40 miles in length for each. If you get a miraculously clear day, the high peak behind the ice is the excitingly named Boundary Peak 158, the summit of which sits on the border with Canada. At this peak the uber-long glacier takes a right turn out of view, traveling another 15 miles into Canada's Tatshenshini-Alsek Provincial Park.

The bay's greatest-glacier winner — Carroll versus Grand Pacific — depends on the year, their state of decline, whether one or the other has surged forward (not in ages), or most importantly, who's doing the measuring and with what measuring stick. "Length" becomes surprisingly subjective for multi-branched glaciers that have a complicated tree-like fractal shape (see *Johns Hopkins Inlet, Vol. 3*). As the sentimental favorite whose namesake ancestor stretched to the mouth of Glacier Bay, cartographers often declare the Grand Pacific Glacier as the gold medal champion, but measurement-happy glaciologists might beg to differ. This matters little to Wachusett visitors, so suffice to say, the Carroll is huge, and staring from the water at its distant ramping hulk drives this point home.



The stunning turquoise waters of Wachusett Inlet. Fine sediments called “glacier flour” create the intense blue, as described in the chapter Johns Hopkins Inlet, Vol. 3.

Despite the great and glorious, bestest-everest, longest-this, widest-that accolades, the Wachusett Inlet comes nowhere close to matching the towering majesty of West Arm inlets like the Johns Hopkins. Honestly, the real treat here is the inlet’s quieter and less-dramatic wilderness moments — thousands of scoters floating calmly in the fog, moose babies teetering along the shore, mysterious clouds swirling about waterfalls, electric teal water, fields of puffy dryas, and a dozen brown bears angling and fighting for salmon in the same river.

Um, OK, I admit, that last one has some drama. I’ve never witnessed anything quite so violent as two full-grown males sparring over the last few pink salmon at the end of the season; the roars

shake the world with heart-stopping chases, boxing, batting, ear-biting, and splashes as they fall wrestling into the ocean. But then it’s over, leaving a once-again calm world for the aging notch-finned porpoise that settles in every summer at the end of South Burroughs Creek and who three times in three years played off my bow for miles as I paddled west through the inlet. Look for him. He’s nice kayaking company.

CAMPsites

Surprisingly few campsites have views of the Carroll glacier, so if that’s a priority, check out *Stonefly Creek*, the last one listed below. Each of the alluvial