



BEARS OF THE KATMAI COAST

7-Day Itinerary/8-14 July 2018

There are few places in the world where you can experience the combination of wilderness, dramatic landscapes, and wildlife as you can on the coast of Katmai National Park. While it is indeed a landscape seemingly designed for

photography, one of the main goals of our trip will be to see and photograph the enormous Brown Bears of Katmai. These bears are some of the largest in the world and congregate in large numbers on the coast during July to graze on the sedge

meadows, dig for clams, and to fish for the newly arriving salmon.

We will fly in using a small bush plane and set up a comfortable base camp, not far from a sedge meadow and near a salmon stream where bears reliably appear.

For five days, our group will most likely be alone, and we will be able to fully dedicate ourselves to photography.

Join me on this unique photo adventure filled with the bears and scenery of the dramatic Katmai Coast!

Expectations

Our chances of viewing and photographing bears and mountain landscapes should be good during this excursion, **but are not guaranteed**. Bear behavior and weather conditions may impact our success, and so I request that you to be flexible in your schedule and expectations. Below is a sample itinerary and it is very much subject to change. Our camp on the Katmai Coast will be right in the mix of diverse bear habitat and bears are abundant. A short hike from camp puts us in a great bear-viewing and photography area, but you should be prepared to hike up to a few miles over rough terrain on some days. Rain and wind are also not uncommon; you and your gear should be prepared for any kind of weather nature can dish out.

Trip Details

Length: 6 Days, 5 Nights (plus optional add-on day)

Dates: 8-14 July 2018

Destination: Coast of Katmai National Park, Alaska

Transportation Provided: Round-trip from King Salmon to the Katmai Coast

Lodging: 1 night hotel, 4 nights camping, (optional add on includes one night hotel)

Food: All meals provided after arrival in King Salmon

Requirements: Must be physically able to hike several miles over rough and uneven ground, and have a flexible and positive attitude.

Activities: Photography, hiking, natural history, bear viewing

Hazards: Walking/Hiking in rough terrain, stream crossings, bears, true wilderness setting

Guide Services: Photography instruction, natural history information, bear safety, cooking and meal preparation.



Day 1

The group will convene in King Salmon at the King Salmon Lodge. Over dinner, we will discuss the coming trip, the week's logistics, hand out any rental or group gear, and answer questions.

King Salmon is a small, isolated village in southwest Alaska serviced by regular air service from Anchorage. While there is a small store, do not count on being able to find any forgotten camera or camping equipment in King Salmon. Please be certain you've got everything you need BEFORE arriving in King Salmon.

Day 2

In the morning, we will make our way to the flight service office. There, weather permitting, we'll load our gear and take off over the mountains toward the coast. The flight is not long, but very scenic, and we will hopefully have views of glaciers, volcanoes, and the enormous lakes of Katmai National Park.

Once over the mountains, the north Pacific will appear and the pilot will land on a sandy beach just south of Cape Douglas. We'll unload our gear and wave farewell to the pilot as he takes off and disappears back over the mountains, leaving us alone for the next five days.

We will set up a comfortable camp back in the dunes, before heading out on a short walk to the nearby sedge meadows or salmon stream to look for bears.

Day 3-5

Each day in the wilderness will be based around the weather and the interests of the group. We may stick close to camp, concentrating on photographing the bears in the nearby meadows, or we may head out on long hikes along the beach or up toward a nearby glacier. On these excursions further from camp, we will likely encounter bears and other wildlife, while also exploring new compositions of the dramatic landscape.

The good bear habitat is so close to our camp, that we can make short hikes in the sweet light of early morning or late evening. We may encounter bears fishing for salmon near the stream's outlet to the ocean, or as they pass along the fields of tall wildflowers near the dunes.

The possibilities are endless.





Day 6

We will break down camp in the morning and bid farewell to our ursine neighbors. If the weather is good, the plane will arrive around mid-morning to carry us back over the mountains to King Salmon.

Back in town, we'll make sure our gear is all where it belongs before the group disperses. Those who are sticking around for the add-on trip to Brooks Falls can head off for a shower at the King Salmon Lodge while those who are heading home can catch the evening flight back to Anchorage.

Day 7 - Brooks Falls (optional add-on day)

For those opting to spend a day at Brooks Falls, in the morning, we will make the short flight from King Salmon to the mouth of the Brooks River at Naknek Lake. Brooks Falls is probably the most visited site in Katmai National Park, and for good reason. The short Brooks River (only 3 miles long) connects two large lake systems and serves as a migration route for tens of thousands of Red Salmon during July. Mid-way along that short river lies Brooks Falls, a four foot waterfall which the salmon must leap to continue to their spawning grounds. The bears know about the obstacle and congregate there to fish for salmon.

Upon arrival we will have a short orientation with a park ranger before heading out to make images. Though we most certainly will not be alone, (in fact it will likely be crowded), this is a chance to capture the classic images of bears catching leaping salmon, and to watch as the bears fish and interact with each other. We will spend a few hours photographing the bears before returning to our plane and heading back to King Salmon in time for the evening commercial flight back to Anchorage.

About Your Guide



David W. Shaw has photographed and lived in Alaska for almost 20 years. He has both an undergraduate and masters degree in wildlife biology. By blending science, natural history, and adventure into his images and words, he has created over 100 engaging stories for national magazines, websites, and books. His articles on the art of photography have been featured in magazines like Shutterbug, Photographic, Photo Technique, Professional Photographer, and Amateur Photographer. He is an instructor at the Digital Photography School and at ExpertPhotography.com. Additionally, his knowledge of science and the natural world have led to many publications in magazines like Sierra, UnDark, Ensia, Birds and Blooms, Defenders, Birdwatching, Birdwatcher's Digest, Alaska, Resurgence, and The Ecologist. Dave has travelled across the planet from Alaska to Antarctica and leaves bits of his heart in the wild places he visits. He has a particular passion for Alaska's wilderness.

Questions?

If you have any questions or would like more details about what to expect, please don't hesitate to call or email.

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