

## **Heather Bay to Valdez.. 6 days Backpacking**

The guides of Anadyr Adventures pioneered this backcountry-hiking trip. The route starts at sea level, involves a meandering approach to Columbia Glacier, it scrambles up and down a countless number of drainages, crosses numerous waterways both by foot and pack-raft, travels over two glaciers, ascends a mountain pass, and then descends via bushwhack to tide line at the face of a second tidewater glacier, before finally meeting a trail that leads back to Valdez. This trip is centered in an area where maps can't keep pace with the changes in the glacial landscape. This trip is meant for the adventurous, for those who want to tread where few people have, for those that want to see a new landscape as it is unveiled after thousands of years under ice. This trip is backpacking in Prince William Sound at its best!

Meet at Anadyr Adventures, 225 N. Harbor Dr, for the **7pm pre-trip orientation the evening before your trip leaves.**

### **Day 1**

The morning you've been waiting for.... load the water taxi then sit back and enjoy the 1 hour cruise to Heather Bay and your first views of Prince William Sound. The scene in Heather Bay is gorgeous, blue water and lush green mountainsides give way to white snowcapped peaks. We disembark the taxi at the old terminal moraine of Columbia Glacier. It's a perfect spot to stretch your legs before donning your pack and laying your first footsteps on the adventure of a lifetime.

The scale here is almost unfathomable. The largest tidewater glacier in Prince William Sound and the second largest on the continent, Columbia Glacier covers over 400 sq. miles and is among the most active glaciers in the world. Hiking among icebergs that have become grounded by an ebbing tide with a view of Columbia Glacier in the distance is an experience you'll never forget.

Our destination for the evening is the River No. 1 flats but between Heather Bay and that braided stream is a hike over millions of tons of moraine deposited long ago by the glacier's advance. It's an incredible journey along a bay where millions of tons of ice floats out toward sea from the calving face of Columbia Glacier. The last push to camp is a one-mile paddle across a kettle lake. Inflate the pack rafts and enjoy some time on the water and off your feet. After a day of exploring, you'll set up camp and relax or take time to explore on your own as your guide prepares a hot meal.

## **Day 2**

Before Columbia Glacier started its retreat in the early 80's, River No. 1 flowed at volumes that are today hard to imagine. Today, many of the braided channels are dry and lay ahead the hiker as natural trails leading towards the toe of Columbia Glacier.

Meander these old and modern waterways, detour for a look at an impassably steep canyon, and listen to the waterfalls that descend hundreds of feet down the mountainsides while we work further into the Chugach Mountain Range.

Set up for the night in a strategic position to access Columbia Glacier the next morning.

## **Day 3**

The Southeast toe of Columbia Glacier gradually climbs north into an area where few people have traveled since the early 1900's.

Then, gold prospectors explored here in hopes of finding riches.

Now, we are among the first to rediscover the scenic riches of this remote area.

Today, we'll hike several miles over ice thousands of feet thick towards "Boreas Lake". Maps of this area can't keep pace with the changes that occur in such an active glacial landscape. Boreas Lake has in very recent history drained, leaving ice stranded on the old lakebed, which is now being carved into a valley by streams from farther and higher places. We traverse the old lake bottom and then ascend into alpine country along a drainage that is home

to a two-tiered waterfall that pounds hard against bare rock creating cold blue pools. We'll travel around kettle ponds that offer a perfect reflection of the horizon, up and down drainages and onward. Tonight's camp overlooks the accumulation zone of Columbia Glacier and the snow and ice capped peaks of the Chugach Range.

#### **Day 4**

With our sights set first on Anderson Pass we set out through the alpine environment along the margin of Columbia Glacier. We soon are awarded our first views of Lake No. 1. Lake No. 1 has met the same fate as Boreas Lake and towers of ice lay scattered in the newly exposed valley. We descend from the alpine, traverse the old lakebed, marvel at this surreal landscape and then continue towards Anderson Pass.

Anderson Glacier rises as a dome at the top of the pass. March up the bulge of ice take a view from 2600 ft. and then start down towards Shoup Bay.

Some Alaskans classify bushwhacks much like whitewater paddlers rank rivers. If you're familiar with the convention then you know what we mean by saying that it is a class V bushwhack from Anderson Pass to Shoup Lagoon. We take our time and where a view can be had, pause to take it all in.

We camp at sea level with the face of Shoup Glacier in full view. Grab a hot drink and sit back to take in the sights and sounds of the night in Shoup Bay.

#### **Day 5 & 6**

Breakfast, a hot drink and then a short hike before inflating the pack-rafts for a paddle across Shoup Bay. Shoup Bay is home to the largest black-legged kittiwake rookery in PWS. Watch as 20,000 plus birds secure nesting spots, feed their chicks, and fend off the regular bombardment of predatory bald eagles and an occasional black bear or wolverine.

On the other side of Shoup Bay we meet the Shoup Bay Trail that

will lead us back to Valdez.

The trail parallels Port Valdez and offers a panoramic view of the mountains that border the sea. Port Valdez is a testament to the Pleistocene days when massive tidewater glaciers carved coastal Alaska and covered Prince William Sound to the Gulf of Alaska. High in the mountain valleys around Port Valdez you'll still spot apron and cirque glaciers, the smaller predecessors of the massive Pleistocene glaciers

Our last night is spent at Gold Creek, a designated camping area with amenities such as an outhouse and fire ring. It's a perfect spot to recount the previous days and nights that were spent far from civilization.

Leaving Gold Creek and heading to Valdez, enjoy your last day on the trail following the shores of Port Valdez.

**Departures:** ???? to Sept 15th

**Group size:** 4-8

**Minimum Age:** 12

**Difficulty:** Strenuous. Involves hiking on loose rock, steep ascents and descents, stream crossings and bushwhacking. Approximately 10 miles/day with a couple of one-mile paddles.