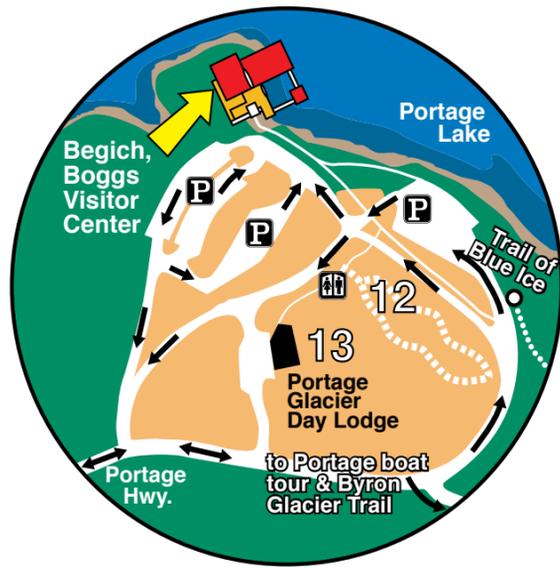


Begich, Boggs Visitor Center

Opened to the public in 1986, and rededicated with new exhibits in 2001, the Begich, Boggs Visitor Center is built upon the terminal moraine left behind by Portage Glacier in 1914.

The visitor center offers a unique opportunity to learn about the Chugach National Forest. At 5.4 million acres, the Chugach is one of the largest national forests in the United States.

Award-winning exhibits, educational presentations, the film "Retreat and Renewal" and information services are available to serve the public.



The **BEGICH, BOGGS VISITOR CENTER** is open daily 9am-6pm from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day.

The center is also available for special events, meetings, educational activities and may be rented. For more information call 907-783-2326 during the summer or 907-783-3242 year round.

Points of Interest

Portage Valley offers visitors a lot to see and do, from hiking and camping, to fishing, wildlife viewing and photography. Here are a few places you won't want to miss!

1. Moose Flats Day Use Area

A great spot to stop and have a picnic, enjoy a 1/2 mile walk on the interpretive boardwalk trail, or do a little trout fishing.

2. Alder Pond

Try your luck or practice your technique at this trout fishing location.

3. Explorer Glacier Viewing Area

This area offers a great view of Explorer Glacier. Keep a lookout for signs of beaver activity in the area.

4. Tangle Pond

Trout fishing opportunities exist.

5. Black Bear Campground

A 13-site campground designed for tent and small RV camping. Cleared sites, campfire rings, bear-proof dumpster, bear-proof food containers, water pump, picnic tables and outhouses. No hookups or dump station.

6. Williwaw Salmon Viewing Platform

Early August through mid-November you can see salmon traveling up the creek to spawn. Species normally seen are red (sockeye), chum (dog), pink

(humpy) and silver (coho). Williwaw Nature Trail starts here. This easy 1/2 mile trail connects the viewing platform to Williwaw ponds. The creek near the trail is closed to salmon fishing.

7. Williwaw Campground

A 60-site fully accessible campground designed for RV and tent camping. Paved sites with pull-through style parking pads, campfire rings, bear-proof dumpsters, hand-water pumps, outhouses, picnic tables and bear-proof food containers. No hookups or dump station.

8. Williwaw Ponds

Trout fishing opportunities exist.

9. Byron Glacier Trail

An easy to moderate trail along Byron Creek. Avalanche danger exists throughout winter into spring. Travel past

the maintained trail is not recommended. Avalanche debris fields and cave-like structures are not stable and serious injuries or death may occur. Length 0.9 miles. Time: one hour round trip. Elevation gain: 100.

10. Portage Glacier Cruises

Hour long tours of Portage Lake to Portage Glacier, operated by Holland America under a special use permit with the Forest Service. Forest Service interpreters provide narration during each trip. Cruise operates from mid-May thru mid-Sept. For information on trip times, ticket prices and reservations call: 1-800-544-2206.

11. Portage Pass Trail

Trail starts on the Whittier side of the tunnel. This moderate trail leads to Portage Pass with spectacular views of Portage Lake and Glacier, and the surrounding sub-alpine terrain, and continues to

lakeshore. Length: 2 miles. Time: Three-four hours. Elevation gain: 750 feet.

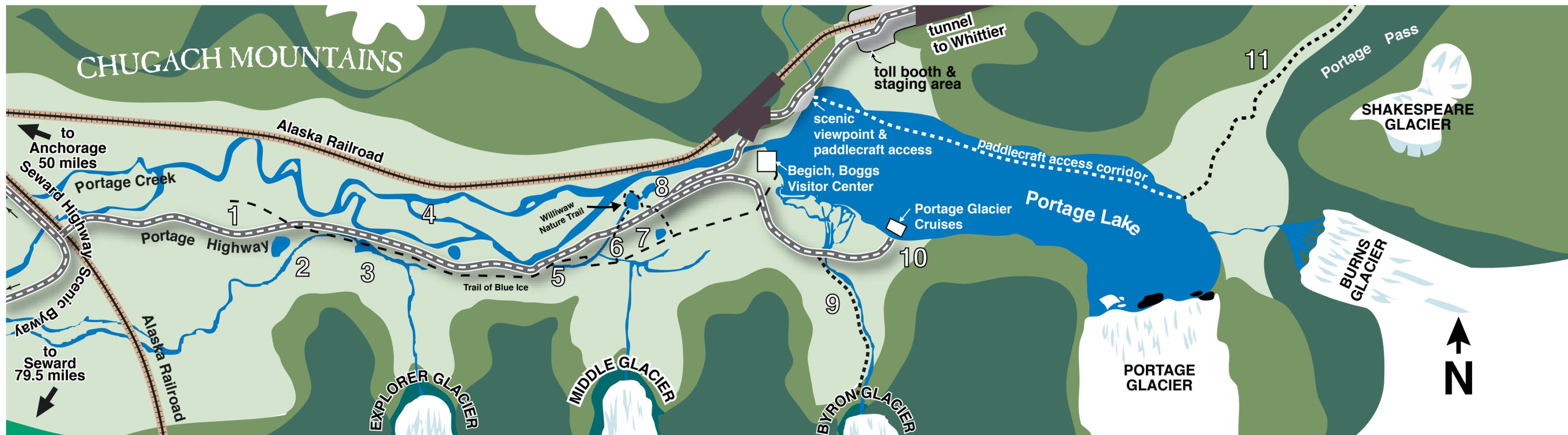
12. Gary Williams Moraine Nature Trail

An easy, self-guided trail showing glacial effects upon the landscape. Length: 1/4 mile loop. Time: 20 minutes. Elevation gain: 25 ft.

13. Portage Glacier Day Lodge

Privately owned gift shop and restaurant operated year around under special use permit from the Forest Service. For more information, please call (907) 783-3117.

If you plan on fishing, be sure to check the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's fishing regulations before you go.



Glaciers

These rivers of ice remind us of times long past. Yet, today, these icy giants continue to exert their influence on the land. Their effects can be seen throughout South-central Alaska. Some of the more common signs of glacial activity include:

U-shaped valleys

Rocks, embedded along the sides and bottom of the glacier, create the same erosive qualities as a large piece of sandpaper, scouring the mountainside. This, along with silt and gravel that is deposited by the glacier, create steep walled, flat-bottomed (or U-shaped) valleys like Portage.

Moraines

Large piles of rock and debris are deposited by glaciers as they flow down, or retreat from, valleys. In fact, the Visitor Center is built on a terminal (end) moraine that was deposited by Portage Glacier between the late 1890's and 1914, when it began its most recent retreat.

Silt

The unique milky blue coloration of Portage Lake and Portage Creek is due to the silt or rock flour that stays suspended in the water. As glaciers move over the landscape, the rocks they pick up along the way grind against the mountainsides creating the fine dust-like particles.

Why is the Ice Blue?

Glacier ice is formed under the weight of countless snowfalls, which squeezes out most of the air, leaving dense, compact ice. Sunlight, or white light, is made up of all the colors of the spectrum, with each color having a different amount of energy. In regular ice, like the ice in your freezer, the air bubbles scatter the light, creating the white appearance. When sunlight strikes glacier ice, the lower energy colors are absorbed by the ice and only the blue color, which has the most energy, is reflected back to the eye!

Did you know?



Before Portage and Burns Glaciers began their latest retreats, early traders, miners, and indigenous peoples traveled across these glaciers using them as a 'portage' between Prince William Sound and Cook Inlet. Today, the railroad and tunnel to Whittier provide this important transportation link for people.

The Visitor Center is named after Congressman Nick Begich of Alaska and Senator Hale Boggs of Louisiana. They, their pilot Don Jonz, and congressional aide Russel L. Brown, disappeared in 1972 en route to Juneau from Anchorage. They were last heard from as they flew over Portage Pass, and no sign of the men or their plane has ever been found.

Watchable Wildlife



Portage Valley is a wild place! From the tiniest of shrews to the large Alaskan moose - many creatures call Portage Valley home. With a few tips, some patience and a little luck, you'll be able to make your wildlife encounters enjoyable and memorable.



- Be considerate of wildlife.
- Use binoculars, spotting scopes & telephoto lenses for the best views.
- Keep a safe distance between you and any wildlife - be alert for changes in the animal's behavior that may indicate that you're too close!
- Never feed wild animals - it's dangerous for you and the animals!
- Keep your pets under control - it's best to leave them at home or in your vehicle.
- When hiking with pets always keep them on leashes.
- Harassing wild animals for any reason is never OK - it is against the law!
- To know where to look for wildlife, learn where they live.
- Remember most species aren't going to be active during the middle of the day - you may need to adjust your schedule to fit theirs.
- Wildlife can be seen anywhere, at anytime, but it's not always obvious.



These animals live in Portage Valley. Which have you seen?

AIR

- black-billed magpie
- bald eagle
- fox sparrow
- Wilson's warbler
- orange-crowned warbler
- golden-crowned sparrow
- common redpoll
- ruby-crowned kinglet
- Steller's jay
- common merganser
- common goldeneye

LAND

- moose
- brown bear
- black bear
- mountain goat
- beaver

LAND (continued)

- porcupine
- short-tailed weasel
- coyote
- grey wolf
- hoary marmot
- snowshoe hare
- red squirrel
- red-backed vole
- common shrew

WATER

- dolly varden
- rainbow trout
- pink (humpy) salmon
- red (sockeye) salmon
- silver (coho) salmon
- chum (dog) salmon

WILDLIFE CHECKLIST

Wild Weather



Due to its location, Portage Valley is host to a variety of wild weather situations. As clouds rise over the Chugach and Kenai mountains they drop lots of rain and snow on the mountains below. So even though it may be sunny in Anchorage only 55 miles away there may be gale force winds driving heavy rains in Portage Valley.



Strong winds in Portage Valley create flag trees; branches only grow on the side out of the wind.

Portage Pass is a narrow land bridge between Prince William Sound and Turnagain Arm. As the air pressure between the two areas equalizes, extremely high winds can be created. These winds

have snapped 50 foot flagpoles like twigs, peeled away asphalt, and lifted boxcars from the railroad tracks.

Play It Safe And Enjoy Your Stay



Be prepared for quick changes in weather. Heavy rain/snow and strong winds can occur any time.



Keep in mind that medical help is far away! Plan ahead and prepare.



Stay off the lake ice in the winter. Periods of freezing and thawing throughout the winter make the ice very unstable.



Avalanche danger exists in Portage Valley even in the summer months. Stay off avalanche debris and out of cave-like structures - they can collapse without warning.

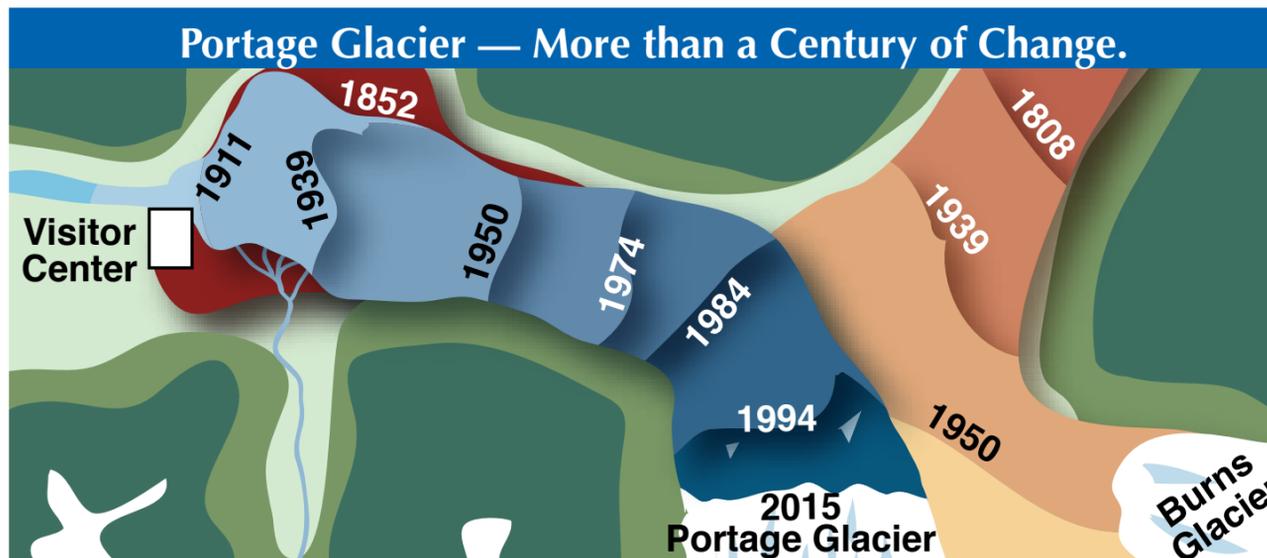


Don't approach wildlife! Make noise when hiking, especially in brushy areas, and know how to handle an encounter with a wild animal if you have one. Keep food in airtight containers. When hiking, pack out any food.



Be alert for moose and bear that may bolt out in front of your vehicle.

Travel anywhere on the Forest is inherently dangerous. You are responsible for your safety at all times.



Portage Glacier has advanced and retreated over the years, due to climatic fluctuations. This diagram illustrates the retreat of both Portage and Burns Glaciers over the last two centuries. Blue indicates the current position of the lake (the main retreat of Portage Glacier) and brown indicates land (the main retreat of Burns Glacier).

For more information about Portage Valley please contact:

Begich, Boggs Visitor Center
Glacier Ranger District
(Summer) PO Box 129, Girdwood, AK 99587
(907) 783-2326 or (907) 783-3242
or
Chugach National Forest
(Year-Round) 161 E. 1st Ave. Door 8
Anchorage, AK 99501
(907) 743-9500
www.fs.usda.gov/chugach

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotope, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

All photos © 2003 Burnie Schultz

USDA
BEGICH BOGGS
R10-FRG-233

Welcome to
PORTAGE VALLEY

CHUGACH NATIONAL FOREST PORTAGE, ALASKA