

Chugach National Forest

Portage Pass Trail
Iditarod National Historic Trail - Southern Trek



Glacier Ranger District

- Difficulty:** More Difficult

- Length:** 2 miles (one way)

- Time:** 2 hours

- Elevation Gain:** 800 feet

- Season:** Summer - Winter

- Public Use:** High. Foot traffic only April-June.

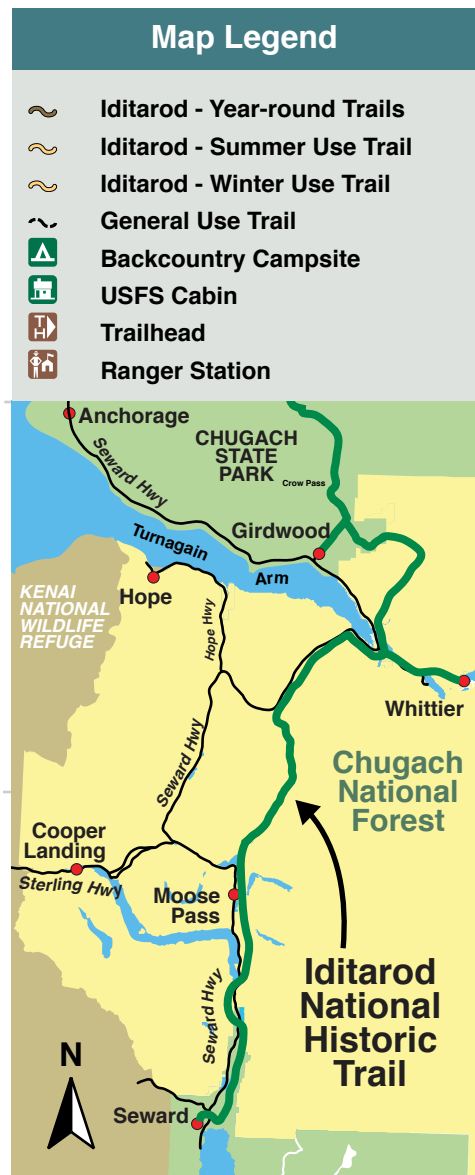
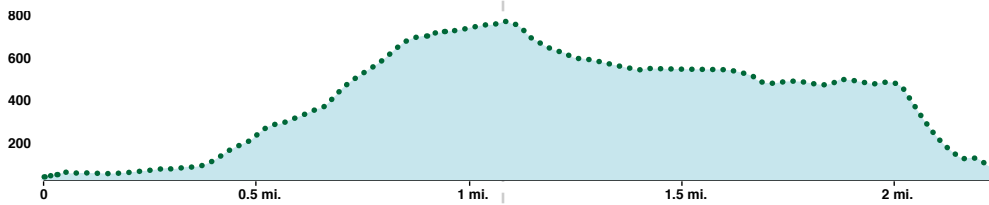
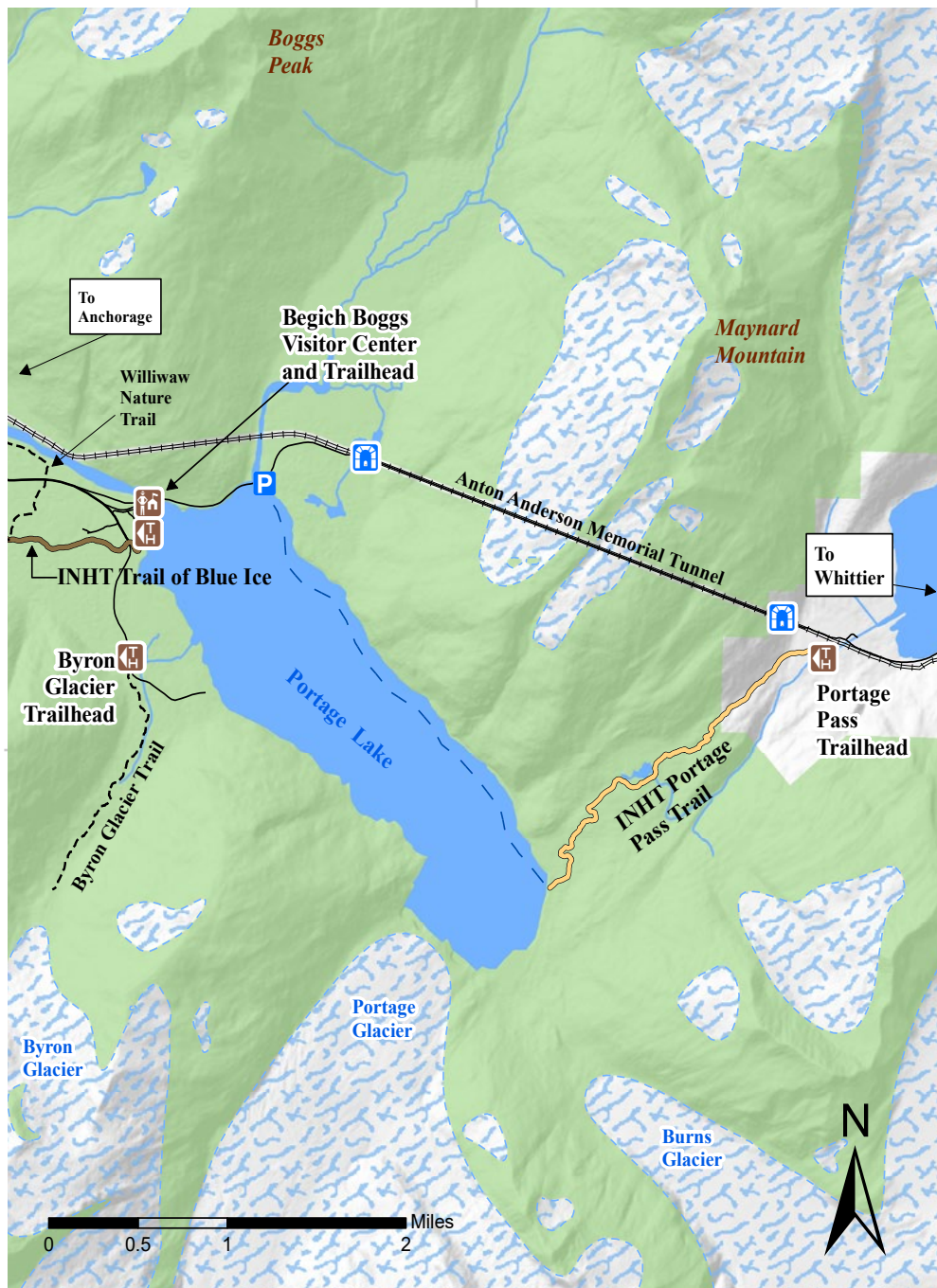
- Grade:** Steep uphill hike. Rocky

- Tread width:** 24-48"

Trail Condition: Snow may persist into late spring. Second part is steep and rocky with a final descent to Portage Lake.

Getting there: 1.5 miles west of Whittier. Drive or walk paralleling the railroad tracks toward the tank farm. Stay off railroad tracks. Follow signs. Trailhead is on right when coming from Anchorage side of tunnel. Trail can be accessed from eastern side of Portage Lake at the giant rock cairn.

Users:



PART OF THE IDITAROD NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL

The Iditarod National Historic Trail - Southern Trek (INHT) is a 180 mile portion of the 1000 mile-long route. Winter travellers used it from the late 1800s to early 1900, though parts have been used for millenia by Alaska Native cultures. When you walk the INHT, you're walking in the footsteps of Alaska's indigenous people, and its gold miners, pioneers and dogsled mushers.

Map Legend

- Iditarod - Year-round Trails
- Iditarod - Summer Use Trail
- Iditarod - Winter Use Trail
- General Use Trail
- Backcountry Campsite
- USFS Cabin
- Trailhead
- Ranger Station

TRAIL INFORMATION

Portage Pass is a great day hike for all ages, and provides spectacular views of Passage Canal and the surrounding mountains and glaciers.

Though the hike is short it has its steep sections. Looking west from the top of the pass gives hikers a fantastic view of retreating Portage Glacier. Midway on the hike, Divide Lake makes a good picnic spot.

The trail starts in low shrubs, then winds past alders and finally into open tundra at the top of the pass. The hike can be extended by taking the route to Portage Glacier overlook for great views of the glacier and lake.

It then drops back down through the alders, past a small lake, before ultimately ending on the eastern shore of Portage Lake.

Users can continue their hike by strolling along the lake shore, with more great views of Portage Glacier.

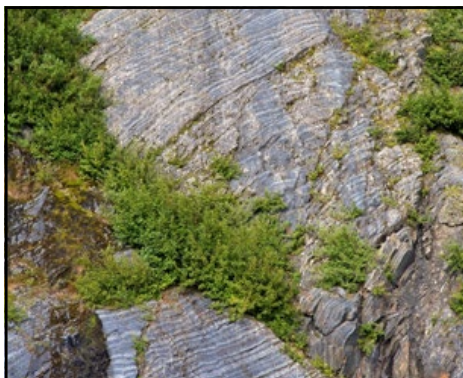
The Portage Pass Trailhead is just outside of Whittier. If you are not already in Whittier, you have to pay a fee and drive through the Anton Anderson Memorial Tunnel. The trail's endpoint on the eastern shore of Portage Lake can only be reached by kayak or canoe after putting in near the Begich, Boggs Visitor Center.



ONE OF THE OLDEST TRAILS

Portage Pass is one of the oldest sections of the Iditarod National Historic Trail. Hundreds of years ago Russian traders and Alaskan Native Cultures such as the Alutiiq people, or *Sugpiaq*, used Portage Pass to access Passage Canal.

During the late 1800s Portage Glacier still covered the entirety of Portage Lake, and prospectors and settlers traversed the ice to get to Turnagain Arm.



A WINDOW INTO TIME

The scouring and grating of the glacial ice has, over time, left some unique rock formations in the area around Portage Glacier.

Layered beds from the Cretaceous period, about 100 million years ago, have been uplifted and tilted by mountain building events, and then exposed over time. This can be seen in the surrounding rock faces.

BEST VIEW OF THE GLACIER

As the Portage Glacier retreats from view, the top of Portage Pass has become the best place to see it.

A short hike gives visitors access to a spectacular panorama of the lake and surrounding area.



ANTON ANDERSON MEMORIAL TUNNEL

The 2.5 mile tunnel, which leads to the port town of Whittier, opened to cars in 2000 and is the second longest highway tunnel in North America.

The first load of passengers made their way through in 1942 on the railcar shown below.

Portage Pass Trailhead is located on the Whittier side of the tunnel.



KNOW Before you GO!

There is private land on both sides of the lower section of the trail near the trailhead.

Although the pass is low in elevation, snow often remains through June.

There is a fee to travel through the Anton Anderson Memorial Tunnel. Check the tunnel schedule online at the Alaska Department of Transportation website.

PLAN AHEAD

You are responsible for your own safety. Proper equipment and good judgment are essential for safe travel while on the Chugach National Forest.

Filter or boil water for five minutes before drinking to avoid giardia.

All creeks present hazards that can be dangerous. Cross creeks at low water levels. During winter use extreme caution when crossing bodies of water. Remember you cross at your own risk.

Winter travel can be hazardous and trails can cross through avalanche-prone slopes. Visit www.cnfaic.org for the latest avalanche conditions.

Let someone know your travel plans. Be Bear Aware and keep your distance from wildlife.

Contact a USDA Forest Service office for specific trail safety precautions.

FOR MORE INFORMATION...

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www.fs.usda.gov/chugach



- Plan Ahead & Prepare
- Travel & Camp on Durable Surfaces
- Dispose of Waste Properly
- Leave What You Find
- Minimize Campfire Impacts
- Respect Wildlife
- Be Considerate of Other Visitors