

Ultimate Flattop Mountain Guide

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Complete guide to Anchorage's most popular summit — GPS waypoints, seasonal tips, photography spots & emergency info.

■ Region:	Anchorage & Southcentral Alaska
■ Updated:	2024 Season
■ Cost:	Free Resource
■ Website:	AnchorageHikes.com

Introduction and History

Flattop Mountain, located in Chugach State Park, is the most-climbed peak in Alaska, and for good reason. This iconic mountain offers breathtaking views of the Anchorage bowl, surrounding mountains, and Cook Inlet. Geologically, Flattop Mountain is a unique formation, consisting of a combination of granite and schist rocks that have been shaped by millions of years of glacial erosion. The mountain's distinctive flat top is a result of this process, which has created a broad, flat summit with stunning 360-degree views.

Culturally, Flattop Mountain has significant importance to the indigenous peoples of Alaska, including the Dena'ina and Athabascan tribes. The mountain has been a traditional hunting and gathering ground for these communities, and its slopes are still home to a variety of wildlife, including moose, Dall sheep, and bears.

Flattop Mountain's popularity can be attributed to its relatively accessible location, just 30 minutes from downtown Anchorage, and its moderate to hard difficulty level, making it a challenging yet achievable hike for outdoor enthusiasts of all skill levels. With over 50,000 visitors per year, Flattop Mountain is a must-visit destination for anyone looking to experience the beauty and majesty of Alaska's wilderness.

Trail Overview

The Flattop Mountain trail is a 3.4-mile out-and-back hike with an elevation gain of 1,350 feet. The trail begins at the Prospect Heights trailhead, located at the end of Glen Alps Road, and winds its way up the mountain through a series of switchbacks, ridges, and meadows. The hike is considered moderate to hard due to the steep incline and uneven terrain, but the stunning views from the summit make it well worth the effort.

The trail is well-marked and well-maintained, with signs and trail markers indicating the route and any potential hazards. However, it's still essential to bring a map, compass, and GPS device, as well as to let someone know your itinerary and expected return time.

Detailed Trail Map Description

The trail begins at the Prospect Heights trailhead, where hikers will find a large parking lot, restrooms, and a picnic area. From the trailhead, the trail follows a gentle slope through a forest of spruce and aspen trees, eventually giving way to a series of switchbacks that climb steeply up the mountain.

As hikers ascend, the trees thin out, and the trail enters a series of alpine meadows, filled with wildflowers, including lupine, gentian, and forget-me-not. The meadows offer stunning views of the surrounding mountains and the Anchorage bowl, and are a great spot to take a break and refuel.

At approximately 1.5 miles from the trailhead, the trail reaches a ridgeline junction, where hikers will find a sign indicating the route to the summit. From here, the trail follows a narrow ridge, with steep drop-offs on either side, and stunning views of the surrounding mountains and valleys.

As hikers approach the summit, they will encounter a series of rocky outcroppings and boulders, which require scrambling and climbing to navigate. The summit itself is a broad, flat area, with stunning 360-degree views of the surrounding landscape.

GPS Waypoints

- Trailhead: 61.1000°N 149.7267°W
- Ridgeline junction: 61.1042°N 149.7223°W
- False summit: 61.1065°N 149.7192°W
- True summit: 61.1083°N 149.7167°W (elevation 3,510 ft)

Seasonal Tips

Flattop Mountain is a year-round destination, but the best time to visit depends on your preferences and skill level. In the summer, the trail is crowded, and the weather can be warm and sunny, making it an ideal time for families and beginner hikers. However, the summer months also bring an increased risk of thunderstorms and wildflower blooms, which can make the trail slippery and uneven.

In the fall, the trail is less crowded, and the larch and aspen trees turn a brilliant yellow, making it a great time for photography and wildlife viewing. However, the weather can be unpredictable, with snow and ice possible at higher elevations.

In the winter, the trail is icy and snowy, requiring crampons and ice axes for safe passage. The views from the summit are stunning, but the cold and wind can be extreme, making it a challenging and potentially hazardous hike.

In the spring, the trail is still snowy and icy, with a high risk of avalanches, particularly on the upper slopes. However, the wildflowers are starting to bloom, and the views from the summit are breathtaking, making it a great time for experienced hikers and skiers.

What to Bring

When hiking Flattop Mountain, it's essential to bring the following essentials:

- Map and compass
- GPS device
- First aid kit
- Headlamp and extra batteries
- Food and water
- Extra layers, including a hat, gloves, and warm jacket
- Microspikes or crampons for late-season hiking

- Bear spray and a whistle

Additionally, consider bringing:

- A camera to capture the stunning views and wildlife
- Binoculars for wildlife viewing
- A picnic lunch to enjoy at the summit
- A repair kit with duct tape, rope, and other essentials
- A personal locator beacon (PLB) or satellite phone in case of emergency

Photography Spots

Flattop Mountain offers numerous photography spots, including:

- The summit, which offers stunning 360-degree views of the surrounding landscape
- The ridgeline, which provides breathtaking views of the Anchorage bowl and surrounding mountains
- The alpine meadows, which are filled with wildflowers and offer stunning views of the surrounding mountains
- The golden hour, which occurs just before sunset and provides a warm, golden light that is perfect for photography

Wildlife

Flattop Mountain is home to a variety of wildlife, including:

- Moose, which can be found at the trailhead and in the lower meadows
- Dall sheep, which can be seen on the upper slopes and ridges
- Ptarmigan, which are year-round residents and can be found in the alpine meadows and rocky outcroppings
- Bears, which are present in the area and require caution and respect

When hiking Flattop Mountain, it's essential to be aware of your surroundings and to keep a safe distance from any wildlife you encounter.

Emergency Information

In case of an emergency, call 911 or contact the Chugach State Park Ranger at 907-345-5014. The nearest hospital is Providence Alaska Medical Center, located in Anchorage.

Additionally, consider carrying a personal locator beacon (PLB) or satellite phone, particularly if you're hiking alone or in remote areas with no cell service.

Local Tips

As a local, I can offer the following tips for hiking Flattop Mountain:

- Be prepared for changing weather conditions, and bring extra layers and a rain jacket.
- Bring bear spray and know how to use it.
- Keep a safe distance from any wildlife you encounter, and never feed or approach them.
- Bring a map and compass, and know how to use them.
- Let someone know your itinerary and expected return time, and check in with them when you return.
- Be respectful of the environment and other hikers, and follow all park rules and regulations.

By following these tips and being prepared, you'll be able to enjoy a safe and successful hike up Flattop Mountain, and experience the breathtaking beauty of Alaska's wilderness.