


Hiking the Chilkoot Trail

A Survival Guide to Planning, Preparations, and the Trail

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1

1



About This Session

- Isn't a general backpacking introduction
 - Focus on the stuff you need to know for the Chilkoot
 - Assume you know how to hike and camp in Alaska
- Ask questions as we go
 - Feel free to chime in with other info
- Information is current as of this week
 - Check before you reserve and/or go!

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History



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History

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- Originally a trade route for coastal Tlingits
 - Dominated trade in the region
 - Until European pressures broke it up
- Klondike Gold Rush of 1898 made it famous
 - One of several options to gold fields
 - The quickest
 - Required to carry a ton of goods to ensure survival

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Who Should Hike?



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Who Should Hike?

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- Official Line:
 - You must be physically fit, experienced in hiking and backpacking, free of injuries
 - Not recommended for young children
- But lots of people hike it every year
 - Careful preparation physically, mentally, and with wise gear decisions
 - Pets not recommended, but okay on leash *at all times*; gather and dump poop in outhouses

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When?



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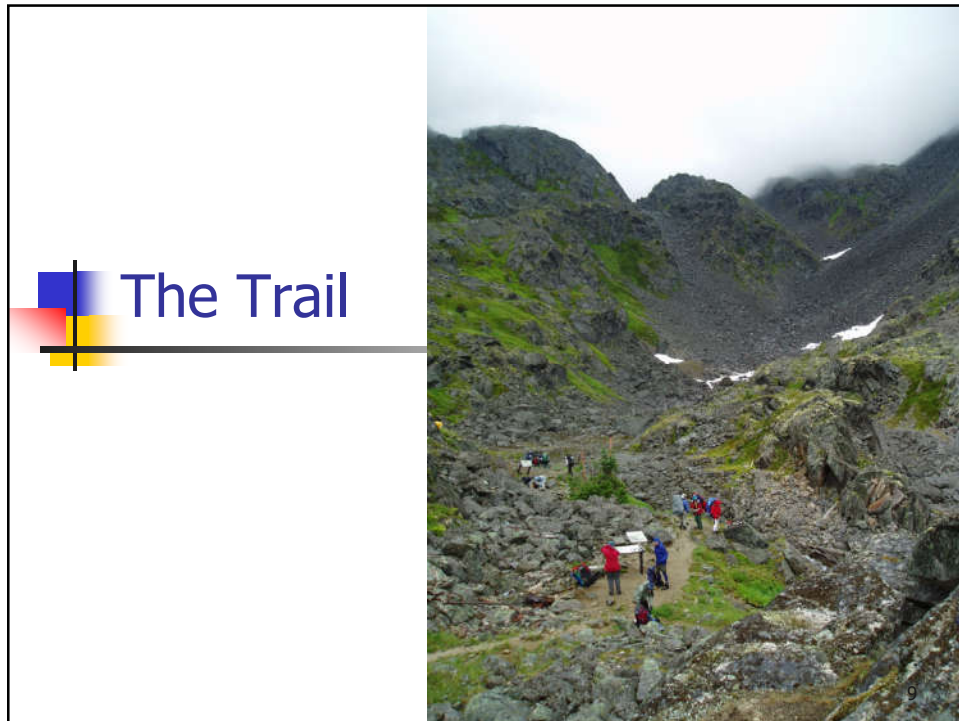
When?

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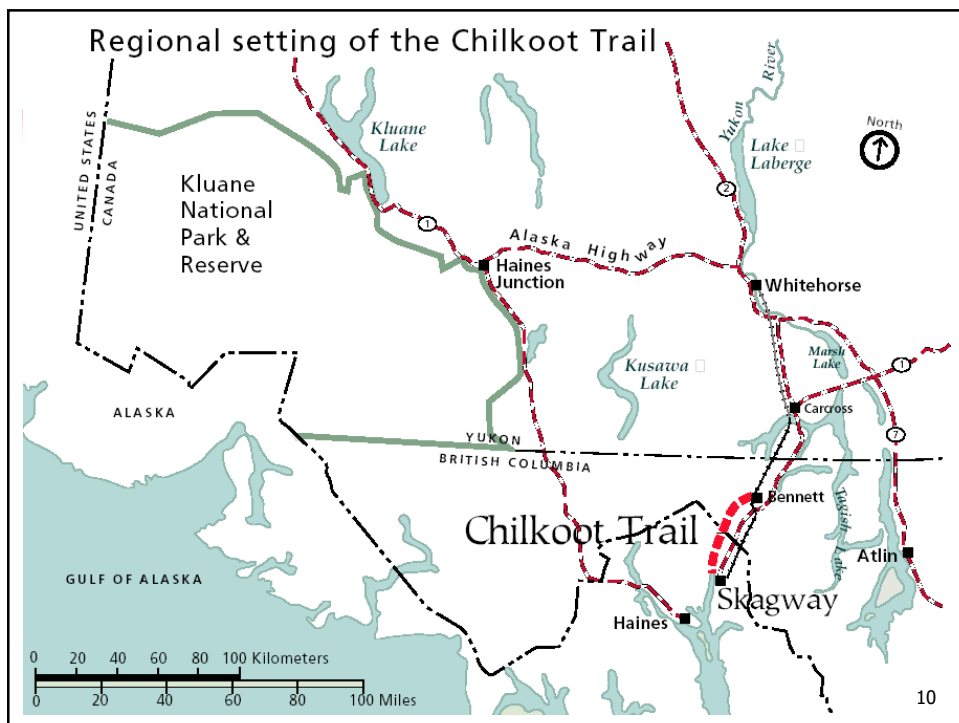
- Official season is early June to early September
- Gold rushers first did it in winter
- During season, rangers stationed at Sheep Camp, Lindeman City, and Chilkoot Pass
 - On cold days you're likely to get a cup of hot tea at the top
- Typical weather
 - June: winter, with heavy snow and avalanches
 - July/August: snow-free, but any weather
 - August/Sept: wet, windy weather
 - Sept-May: winter travel, "not recommended"

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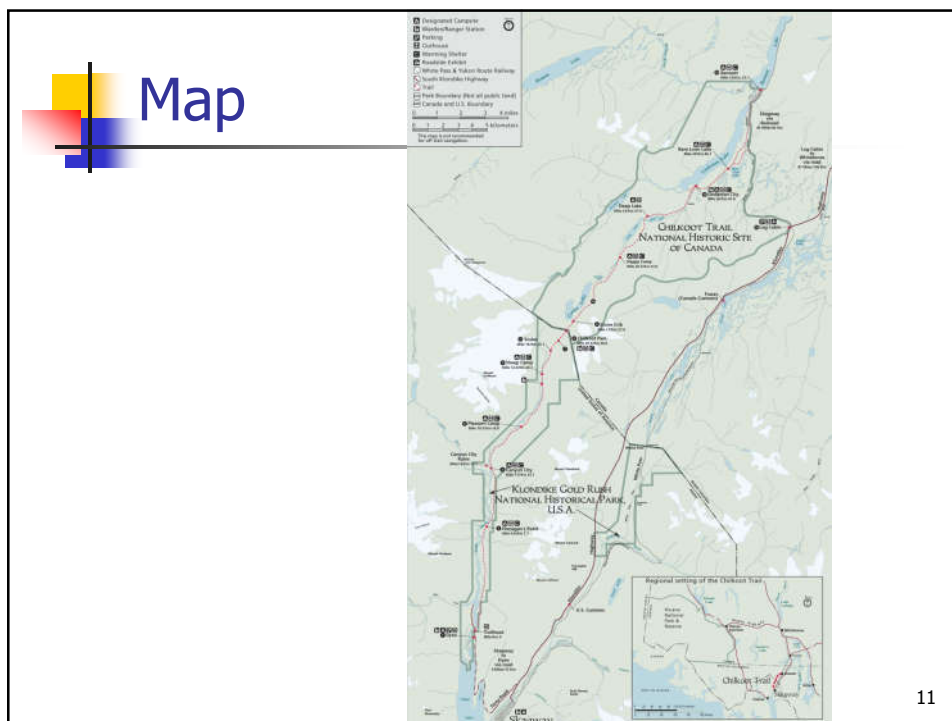
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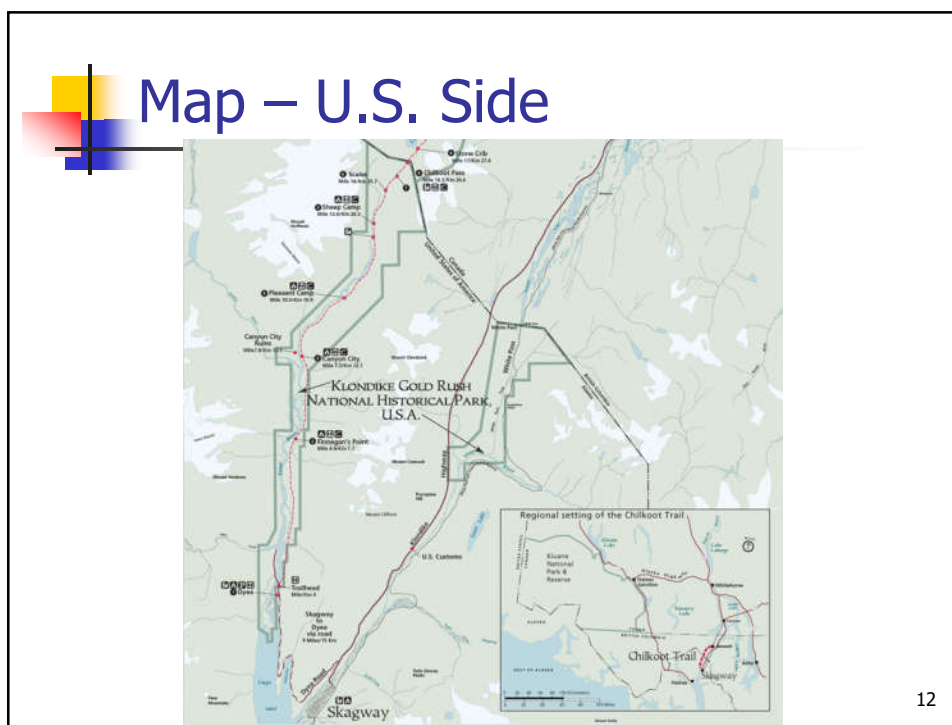
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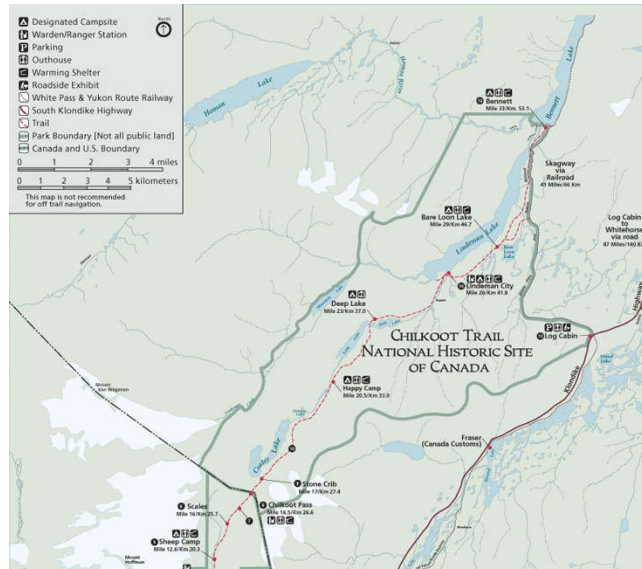


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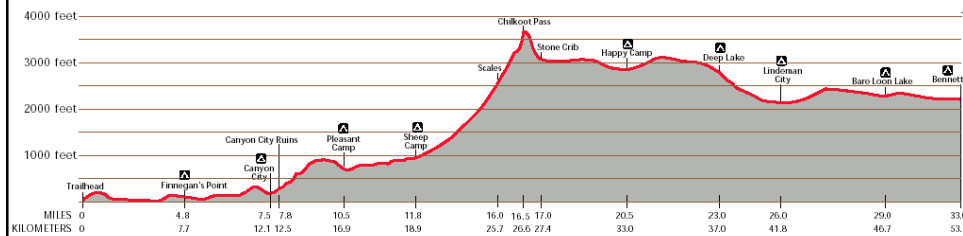
Map – Canada Side



13

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Profile



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Campsites

- US Campgrounds
 - Finnegan's Point: Mile 4.9 / Km 7.9
 - Canyon City: Mile 7.8 / Km 12.5
 - Pleasant Camp: Mile 10.5 / Km 16.9
 - Sheep Camp: Mile 12.6 / Km 18.9
 - Ranger talk at 7 PM during the season
- Canadian Campgrounds
 - Happy Camp: Mile 20.5 / Km 33
 - Deep Lake: Mile 23 / Km 37
 - Lindeman City: Mile 26 / Km 41.8
 - Bare Loon Lake: Mile 29 / Km 46.7
 - Often crowded
 - Bennett: Mile 33 / Km 53.1

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The Trail

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- Steep, rocky, wet, difficult in many places
 - Mud, mosquitoes, devils club, wind, rain, snow
 - Any weather, any time of the year
- One of the more heavily regulated trails you'll ever hike
- But some of the most beautiful country in the world!
 - Strange...few of the accounts from the 1898 gold rush talked of the beauty

16

16

Logistics



17

Getting to the Trailhead

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■ Options

- Drive to Skagway
 - Leave one car there, one in Dyea
 - Taxi and shuttle services available
- Fly to Juneau, ferry to Skagway
 - More like the Gold Rush miners did!
 - Still helps to have a car in Skagway

18

18



Trailheads – In

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- Start is at Dyea, 10 miles from Skagway
 - Good place to leave one car
 - Shuttles run between Skagway and Dyea
 - Campground ½ mile from trailhead

19

19



Trailheads - Out

- End is at Lake Bennett
 - White Pass & Yukon Railroad
 - Runs Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday only, 5/19 to 9/19/2020
 - 2020 fares, US\$ (adults/kids)
 - \$99/49.50 to Skagway, \$52/26 to Fraser on the highway
 - Bennett to Whitehorse train/bus - other options
 - Advance purchase required
 - Departs 3:00 P.M. **AKT** (check!), arrives Skagway 5:45 P.M.
 - Box lunches \$20, dogs \$25 each
 - ~~Hike back to highway (to Log Cabin)~~ **Trespassing**
 - Float plane from Lake Bennett
 - Alpine Aviation and others
 - Float out?

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Log Cabin Route

■ From Web site:

The Cut Off Trail is **closed between May 1 and November 30**. During this time travel on it is **prohibited** and you may be charged with an **offence under the Canada National Parks Act** if you are found travelling on the Cut Off Trail. The trail is **no longer maintained and a bridge has been removed**. There is therefore a greater risk to you of personal injury. Reduced sightlines due to **vegetation re-growth increases the risk of a surprise bear encounter**.

Using the **WP&YR railway right of way and tracks** to get to or from the Chilkoot Trail is **trespassing and illegal under the Railway Safety Act**. Travelling on the railway right of way is dangerous there is a risk of being hit by a train or other railway equipment. If you do so it is entirely at your own discretion and you accept any and all risks absolutely and **Parks Canada Agency is not liable to you whatsoever**.

[Emphasis is theirs]

21

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Logistics



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22



Official Park Regulations



- Do not remove or disturb any natural or cultural resources.
- Do not disturb, feed or entice wildlife.
- Do not leave packs unattended.
- Use food/garbage storage devices.
- Do not pollute. Pack out all garbage/food waste. Use grey water pits where provided.
- Cook and eat only in designated areas. No food at tent sites.
- Camp only in designated campsites (no camping in shelters).
- No campfires.
- Pets must be on a leash at all times.
- Fishing is restricted.
- Metal Detectors, firearms and mountain bikes are restricted.
- Maximum group is 12.
- A business license is required for guided groups.

23

23



Permits



- Required for overnight trips and day trips
- 2020 Fees (all are Canadian \$s)
 - Chilkoot Trail Trip Permit
 - \$62.05 per adult; \$30.98 per youth (6 - 17)
 - Various other fees for day trips, US or Canada-only trips
 - Reservation
 - \$11.96 per hiker (in addition to Permit fee)
 - \$10.02 per extra night to camp at Lake Bennett
- Must pay reservation and permit fees at time of reservation
 - You need to be committed!
 - Permit fees are refundable up to 1 month before start
 - Reservation fees are non-refundable
 - They are flexible and reasonable (2011 story)

24

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International Border

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- Must be able to prove both identity and citizenship
 - US/Canadian Citizens: US Passport Card, Enhanced Driver's License, US or Canadian Passport, or a Trusted Traveler Program card issued by US Customs and Border Protection.
 - Minors need birth cert and letter of authorization if either parent is not on the trip
- If hiking north to south, must register with US Immigration *before* starting hike
- If doing anything novel, *research it before you go!*

25

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Schedule

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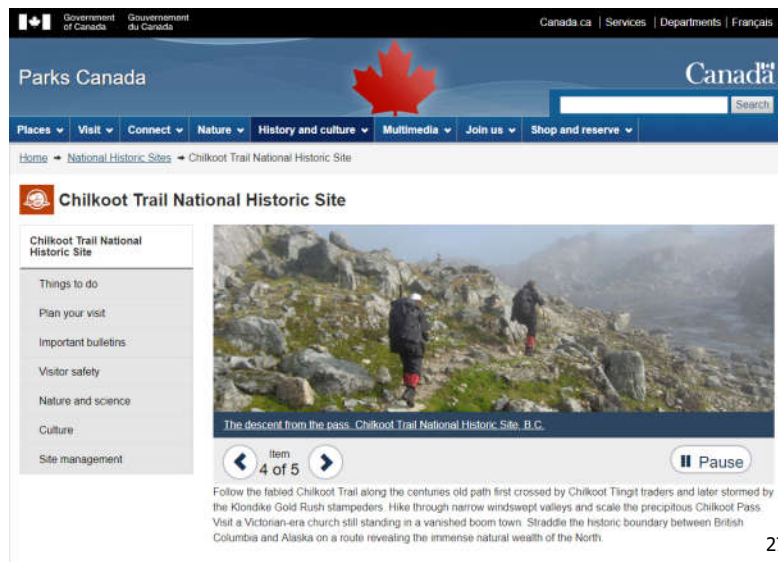
- One to five days, typical is 3 to 4
 - New page for day running the trail! How exit?
- Must camp in assigned campground
 - Sort of...
 - So must plan ahead
 - Sheep Camp is last before the pass
 - Typically full every night
- Traditional route is south to north
 - Dyea to Lake Bennett, then take the train to Skagway
 - North to south you'll be going against the tide
 - Great if you're a people person



26

26

Reservations



27

Reservations

- Maximum of 50 people over the pass each day
- Pick up permits from 8 to 5 in Skagway
 - Day before, or morning of start
 - *Everyone must be present! Mandatory orientation!*
 - Forfeited if don't get by noon (unless arrange before)
 - Orientations at 8am, 10am, noon, 2pm, 4pm ADT (30 min) – **NEW!**
- Reservations limited to 42 each day
 - Started taking in early January
 - Must designate your campsites
- Eight permits allocated to walk-ins
 - Starting at 1 P.M. day before trip starts
 - Forfeited permits available: 1 P.M. on day of start
 - Usually have to stay at Pleasant Camp instead of Sheep

28

28



Outfitters

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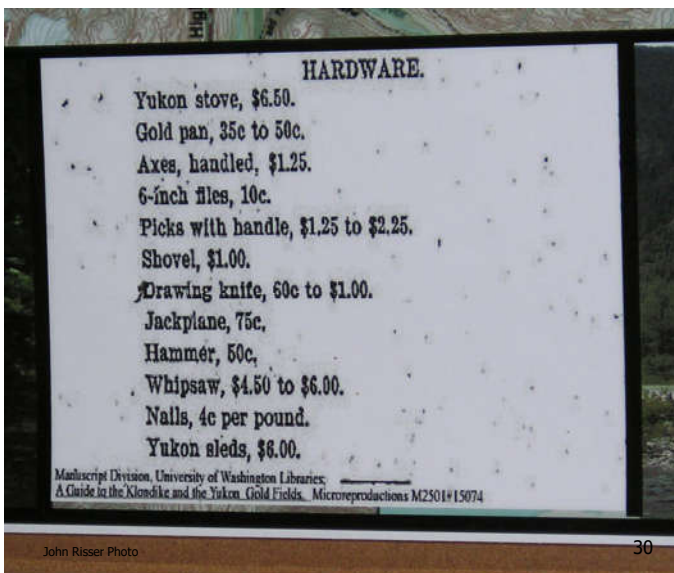
- If you don't want the hassle of planning it yourself, use an outfitter
 - Several listed on the Parks Canada Chilkoot Web site

29

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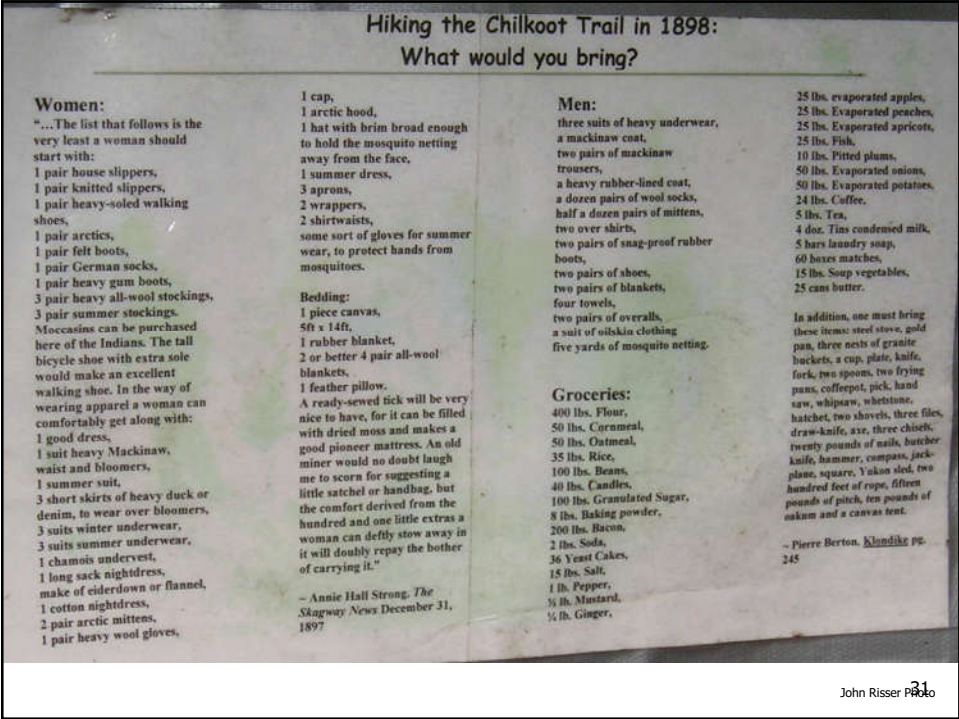


Equipment



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31



32



Conditions

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- Any time of the season, you can have
 - Snow
 - Rain (guaranteed)
 - Swollen creek crossings
 - Muddy trails (another guarantee)
 - Wind
 - Fog
 - Snowfields
- Route finding is easy: superhighway
 - Except in whiteout conditions...



33

33



Hypothermia

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- Conditions are perfect for it!
- Prevent it
 - Stay warm and dry
 - Don't take cotton, just wool and synthetics
 - Eat well, with snacks throughout the day
 - Stay hydrated! If your urine is yellow, triple your water consumption



34



Clothing

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- Dress in layers of wool and/or synthetics
- Water proof outer layer
- Be prepared for a Fairbanks winter day. With wind. Rain in the morning, snow at night.
 - That way you'll get fine, warm weather!
- Sturdy boots that are *broken in*
 - Walking stick or poles can be useful

35

35



Miscellaneous

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- Pack It In, Pack it Out
 - No trash receptacles on the trail
- Purify water by boiling, treating with iodine or bleach, or filter it
 - Know how to do it safely ahead of time!
- Tent with rain fly is critical
- Be prepared with an evacuation plan
 - Insurance? Self-pay? Can be expensive!

36

36



Bears



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- May affect your hiking plans
- No guns or other deterrents, other than pepper spray
 - Up to 500ml canisters
 - You're passing through Canada
- Every camp has a food-storage locker
 - Except for Pleasant Camp (has bear pole; bring your own rope)
- Currently don't require bear barrels

37

37



Food

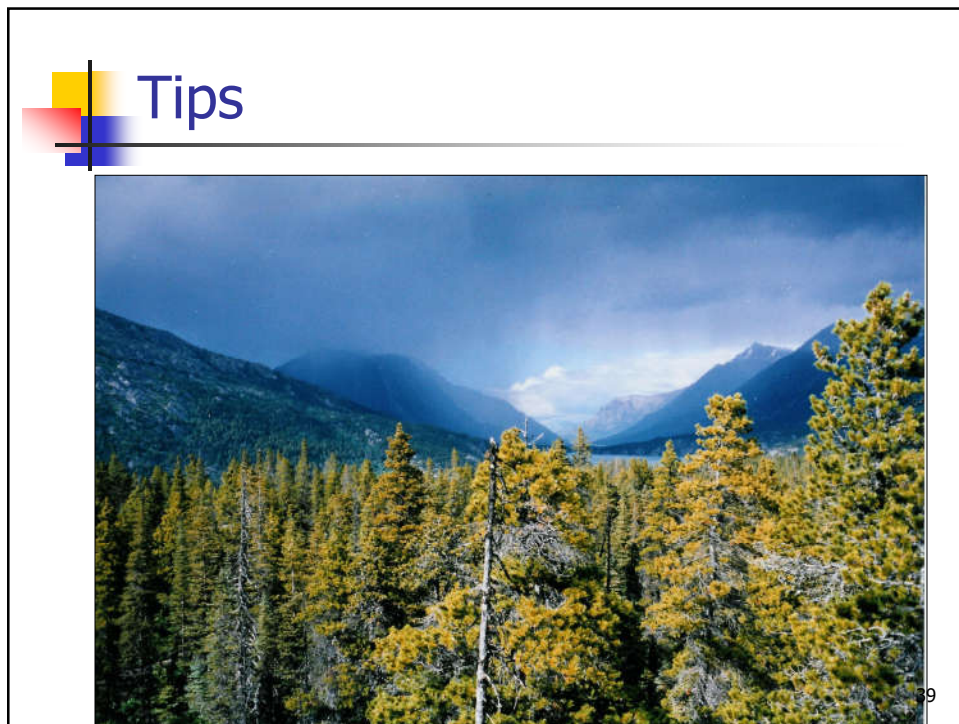
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- Take an extra day's worth, plus fuel
- Must use stove for all cooking
- Canadian camps have wastewater pits
 - In U.S., put in fastest part of river




38

38




39



Tips

- Don't go to get there! Enjoy the experience!
- Explore!
 - Stray from the trail!
 - Look for signs of the gold rush. Think what it was like to do the trail in winter with gold on your mind. Look back on the trail.
 - Displays at Lindeman City and Lake Bennett
- Touch and examine the artifacts, but don't move or remove



40

40



Resources



41



Questions

Thanks for attending!

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**Check out the Fairbanks Area Hiking Club at
<http://www.fairbankshiking.org>**

42

42