

Kluane

National Park Reserve of Canada

Pronounced “Kloo - wah - nee”

Climate

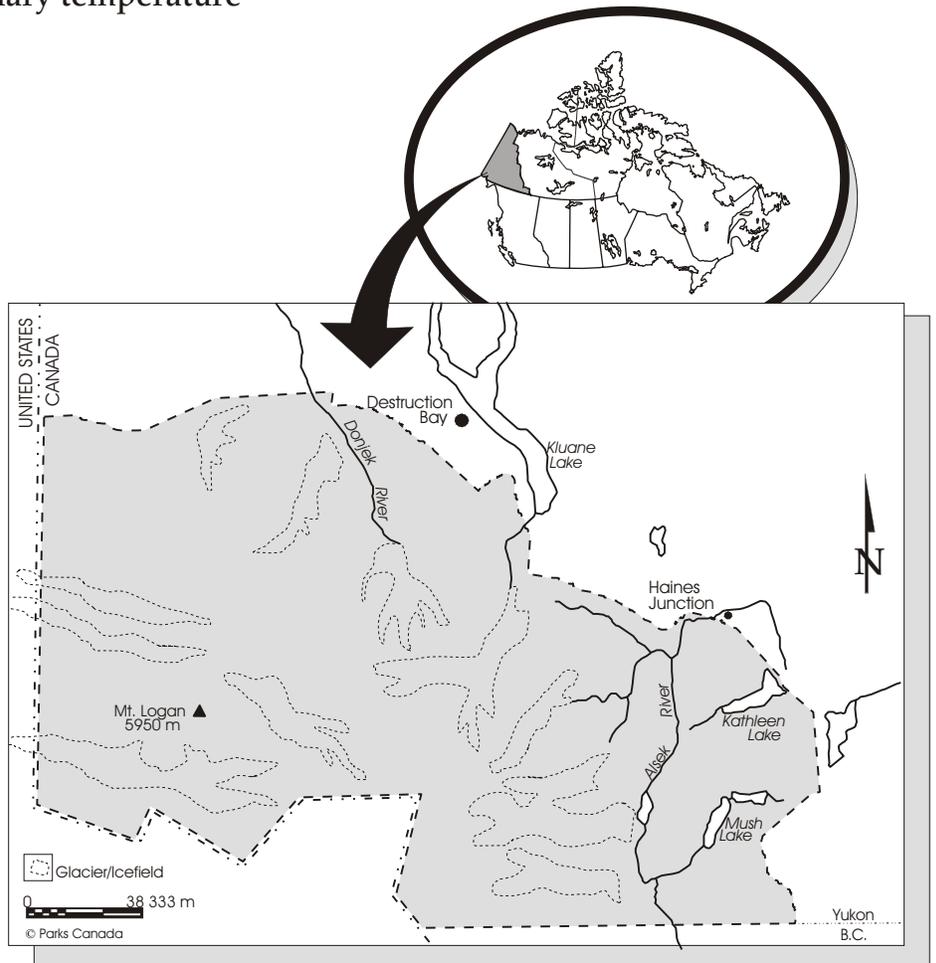
Kluane's climate is a contrasting blend of moisture and temperature conditions due to its size, mountainous terrain, and proximity to the Pacific coast. Much of the park experiences a dry, cold, continental climate, being in the rainshadow of the St. Elias Mountains. The southern part of the park is subjected to a maritime influence, with generally higher temperatures and more precipitation. Warm, short summers can see daily temperatures ranging as high as 11°C, while the average January temperature is around -21°C.

Geology

Kluane features the highest and most massive mountains in Canada, including Mount Logan, Canada's highest peak. The park has the most extensive non-polar ice fields in the world, covering nearly half of the park. Glacial movement can be sudden and astounding, and stream erosion and glacial scouring are evident everywhere. Steep slopes and cliffs, and outwash plains make up the remaining land forms.

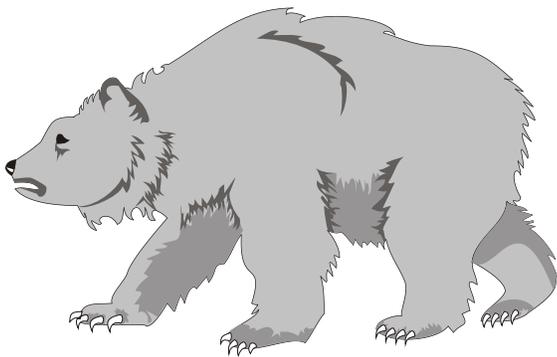
Location

Kluane National Park Reserve is located in the southwest corner of the Yukon Territory, bordering on both British Columbia and Alaska. The reserve was established in 1976, and protects 22 015 km² of Canada's Northern Coastal Mountains Natural Region. The park can be reached by driving the Alaska Highway to Haines Junction, which is about 160 km west of the Yukon's capital, Whitehorse, and 249 km north of Haines, Alaska. The park's mountains are part of the Wrangell - St. Elias chain. Kluane and its American counterpart, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, were jointly declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1979. Kluane is located in the Boreal Cordillera and Pacific Maritime Ecozones.



Vegetation

The flora of Kluane is a blend of coastal, arctic, western mountain, northern prairie, and steppe species. Grasslands of bluegrass, wheatgrass, sedges, and pasture sagewort are found in some valleys. Most lower valleys and slopes are covered by a montane forest of white spruce, trembling aspen, and balsam poplar. The timber line is at about the 1 050 - 1 200 m elevation point, above which one finds a level of stunted shrubbery composed mainly of willows, alder, and dwarf birch. Above 1 400 m is an alpine tundra. Alpine flora number over 200 species, giving Kluane the largest diversity of pacific and arctic flora north of the 60th parallel. Summer wildflowers include Arctic poppies, purple saxifrage, mountain heather, and moss campion.



Wildlife

Some of North America's finest animal populations are found in Kluane. Dall sheep are the most common mammal, numbering about 4 000 animals. There are also mountain goats, caribou, grizzly and black bears, moose, wolves, wolverines, muskrat, mink, marmot, red fox, lynx, otter, coyote, beaver, snowshoe hares, and ground squirrels. Kluane's birdlife is equally diverse. Over 150 species have been recorded in the Kluane area. These include rock ptarmigan, magpies, hawk owls, mountain bluebirds, Arctic terns, golden and bald eagles, and peregrine falcons.

Activities

Visitors are welcomed in Haines Junction which offers quality accommodations and restaurants as well as all the basic amenities for the traveller. The park offers camping facilities at Kathleen Lake, a Day Use area, a seasonally operated Visitor Centre at Sheep Mountain and hundreds of kilometres of trails from novice to intermediate level in addition to wilderness routes spanning endlessly across the alpine terrain. Mountaineers come to ascend Kluane's considerable peaks, while others prefer to hike in the interior. All overnight trips must be registered with the park office. Other activities include fishing (Kluane means "place of many fish") for lake trout, arctic grayling, rainbow trout, and kokanee. Remote fishing spots include Mush Lake. The park offers limited boating. Canoeing is not recommended due to unpredictable winds. The landscape is singularly excellent for nature photography. Guided trips are offered through the park as well as the private sector. Interpretive staff present programs to help visitors discover and understand the natural and cultural heritage of Kluane.

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