



# Lake Clark

National Park and Preserve  
Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## Tanalian Falls Trail Guide

As you round the bend and head down the hill on a summer day dwarf dogwood lines the trail, the sunlight dapples the forest floor and the roar of the falls in your ears is deafening. Cold glacial waters fall over a 30 foot cliff of ancient lava. The mist falls coolly on your face and the view takes your breath away.



### Exploring in the Wilderness

Tanalian falls is just one of the many spectacular features in Lake Clark National Park and Preserve.



Moose Track

Whether you are taking in the broad vistas, looking for animal sign, or pondering the names of plants, this trail is your invitation to explore Lake Clark National Park and Preserve. Use your six senses, yes six! Sight, sound, touch, taste, smell, and adventure.

Along the trail you will find a variety of things of interest. The land around Port Alsworth is private and trail easements allow access to the park. Please respect private property. Crossing the park boundary is akin to entering a "living museum". Leave whatever wonders your senses find for others to discover later. National Parks are established to conserve and protect natural resources unimpaired for present and future generations.

Beyond the falls the trail enters Lake Clark's designated wilderness. *"A wilderness... undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence... which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions... affected primarily by the forces of nature, with impact of man's work substantially unnoticeable... has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation..."* (Wilderness Act of 1964, Public Law 88-77). Keep the experience wild for you and for others. Pack out all trash, disassemble fire rings, dispose of human waste properly and camp at least 200 feet from water sources.

### Wilderness Means Bears

This is bear country, be alert. Travel with a partner and make noise, talk, sing, clap your hands. If you encounter a bear **do not run!** If it does not see you quickly and quietly leave. If the bear sees you let it know you are human, wave your arms and calmly talk to it, do not make direct eye contact. A bear may bluff charge stand your ground. If a brown bear attacks drop to the ground just before contact. Roll up in a ball to protect your mid section and use your hands to protect your head

and neck. Do not get up until you are sure the bear has left the area. Movement could provoke another attack. Use these tactics and your senses of sight and sound as tools to have a great hike!

### What You See and What You Get

The trail to the falls will take you on an adventure for your senses. You will pass plants and animal signs. You will also experience the geology.

Common wildflowers on the trail are dwarf dogwood, labrador tea, and fireweed. Many other flowers bloom throughout the summer as well. Use your senses of sight and smell to identify the others. Dwarf dogwood is a low growing, white flower. The center is dark and the leaves are smooth. In the fall clusters of red berries replace the flowers. These berries are reported to be edible when made in a pudding but may cause illness. The fireweed is the most tall, vibrant, pink flower growing in a spike. It is said once the fireweed blooms to the top summer is over. Labrador tea is the most widespread ground cover plant on the trail. It flowers in early summer. The leaves are thick. If you cup the plant between your hands and blow a warm breathe on it then smell the plant, you will learn how fragrant it is.



There are three common types of trees along the trail. The black spruce is a scrawny looking tree. If you feel the needles of this tree they are "spikey." If you roll the needle between your fingers you can feel the square edges. White birch is commonly seen for the entire length of the trail. The bark is white and peeling on mature trees. You will discover some alder at the beginning of the trail. Alder grows as a shrub. Feel the raised veins on the underside. New leaves and buds are sticky.



Blueberries, lowbush cranberries, salmon berries, and crowberries grow along the trail. These berries are all tasty. Blueberries and salmon berries

are sweet. Crowberries and cranberries are a tart treat for the tastebuds. The surrounding landscape provides the right environment for all these plants.

### Geology is Under Everything

The shape of the land and the type of soil influences which plants and animals will live in a certain area. These features are shaped by geologic forces, and in Alaska those forces are glaciers and volcanoes. Hiking to Tanalian Falls you can see evidence of glaciers at work. About 10,000 years ago glaciers covered the Lake Clark valley, including the valley now occupied by the Tanalian River. As temperatures warmed up the glaciers retreated up the valley. As the glaciers retreated they would pause for a time and during those pauses deposits of rock debris called moraines were left. You hike over moraine to get to the falls. Are you standing on it now? Is the ground rocky and gravelly? Are the rocks the same size or different sizes? If the area is gravelly and the rocks are different sizes you are on a moraine. Glaciers do not sort rocks as rivers do, so you can find rocks of different sizes in one place. Use this rule of thumb at home to find glacial moraines in road cuts.

### The Big Picture

The forest is a community with many complex relationships, above and below ground. Look at the big picture, see how the plants, animals, and geology are linked together. The forest is a community like the one you live in. Each organism has a purpose and an affect on others. You can read these relationships as you walk along the trail. "A bear feeds on some wild berries. After he eats he scratches his back on a tree leaving fur stuck in the bark and sap. A bird finds the fur on the tree and collects it to line its nest. The bear leaves scat behind, depositing undigested seeds and fertilizer for the new plant that will develop. The new berry bush is used by a snowshoe hare for shelter...."

The cycle would continue on and on. Look around the trail to see if you can come up with a story about this forest's ecology. Try it at home. What role do you play in your own community?